

ASSA OBSERVING DIRECTOR REPORT 2014 – 2015

It seems that it was only yesterday that the 2013 -2014 Observing Report was submitted, the 2014 – 2015 year has certainly flown by with plenty of observing opportunities, especially with load shedding during the evening.

Observable and astronomical related events have been posted using the various channels and include sightings, images, comments and questions from the public, to which I respond or pass on to the relevant ASSA Sections, specialists and collaborators. For this I would like to thank, Dave Blane (Shallow Sky Director), Tim Cooper and Greg Roberts for their help. Sightings are documented on the ASSA web page.

Thank you to Michael Poll (ASSA Pretoria Centre) for once again submitting the Centre's observing reports this year. These will be archived on the ASSA web page. I would like to encourage the other Centres to also submit theirs.

Comets featured prominently the past year, with C/2013 A1 (Siding Spring) making headlines as it approached Mars, as well as Rosetta and Philae's landing on comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimko. Comet C/2014 Q2 Lovejoy was a splendid naked-eye apparition with 15P Finlay, Pan STARRS (C/2012 K1) and C/2013 V5 (Oukaimeden) reasonably easy binocular and telescope targets. Comet C/2015 G2 (MASTER), was the first South African comet discovery in 37 years and is still visible in our early evening skies (25th June). Cloudy skies countrywide hampered documenting the close approach to Earth of asteroid BL 86 in January, Tim Cooper and myself did however manage to capture some images. South African astrophotographers and observers imaged and documented some of these events, as well as the novae in the constellation Scorpius and Sagittarius.

Various calls for the participation of South African observers have come from abroad and these have been passed on via the ASSA discussion group as well as posted on the Facebook page which in the last year has nearly doubled, with just short of 800 visitors participating (women 46%, men 54%).

Some interesting statistics are shown at the end of the Director's report, below are some of the posts that attracted the most engagements.

- 12/08/2014 At the Annual General Meeting, held August 06 and hosted by the Johannesburg Centre, the following awards..... **Reached 382.**
- 16/08/2014 For those up early - Venus and Jupiter shine as two brilliant "Morning Stars" this month.....(Sky Guide, 2014, p.39)..... **Reached 389.**
- 02/10/2014 Lunar eclipse - 2014 October 08..... **Reached 324.**
- 18/08/2014 A reminder about the Siding Spring/Mars encounter tomorrow, South African observers have the best seats for this one..... **Reached 397.**
- 28/10/2014 Updates for our popular introductory star charts are now available for free download from the ASSA website..... **Reached 502.**
- 18/11/2014 Ian Glass and Auke Slotegraaf will be speaking in Cape Town on Thursday, November 20 - and you're invited!..... **Reached 977.**
- 01/01/2015 What's Up in the southern sky this month..... **Reached 917.**

- 27/01/2015 Asteroid 2004 BL 86 has a moon..... **Reached 416.**
- 13/04/2015 First South African Comet Discovery in 35 Years. **Reached 460.**
- 17/04/2015 Ian Glass explains the workings of the historic Franklin Adams astrograph at the Toppieshoek observatory..... **Reached 492.**
- 27/04/2015 Comet C/2015 G2 MASTER on the morning of the 27th April, 02:40 UT.....
Reached 454.

The monthly “What's Up” posting are consistently reaching averages of around 400 people per post, with some of the more popular postings reaching as many as 900.

In conclusion I would like to wish observers clear skies for the 2015 – 2016 year.

Kos Coronaios
ASSA Observing Director

FACE BOOK STATISTICS

Broken down into countries:

South Africa	563
United States of America	28
India	14
Brazil	14
Spain	11
United Kingdom	9
Australia	8
Italy	6
Colombia	6
Iran	5
Namibia	4
Mexico	3
New Zealand	4
Botswana	4
Peru	4
France	4
Tunisia	4
Canada	4
Venezuela	3
Egypt	3
Belgium	3
Kosovo	3

Kenya, Uganda, Argentina,
Bangladesh, Netherlands,
Pakistan, Nepal, Germany,
Sri Lanka, Turkey, Paraguay,
Philippines, Algeria, 2 each

Denmark, Qatar, Puerto Rico,
Nigeria, Vietnam, Syria, Slovenia,
South Korea, Albania,
United Arab Emirates 1 each

Broken down into cities:

Cape Town, Western Cape, South Africa	115
Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa	103
Pretoria, Gauteng, South Africa	53
Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa	29
Bloemfontein, Free State, South Africa	19
Somerset West, Western Cape, South Africa	13
Centurion, Gauteng, South Africa	12
Stellenbosch, Western Cape, South Africa	10
Randburg, Gauteng, South Africa	8

Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa	7
Louis Trichardt, Limpopo, South Africa	7
George, Western Cape, South Africa	7
Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, South Africa	7
Polokwane, Limpopo, South Africa	5
Roodepoort, Gauteng, South Africa	5
London, England, United Kingdom	4
Potchefstroom, North West, South Africa	4
Bogotá, Cundinamarca, Colombia	4
Boksburg, Gauteng, South Africa	4
Vereeniging, Gauteng, South Africa	4
Bellville, Western Cape, South Africa	4
Rustenburg, North West, South Africa	4
Lima, Peru	4
Welkom, Free State, South Africa	3
Meyerton, Gauteng, South Africa	3
Vanderbijlpark, Gauteng, South Africa	3
Wellington, Western Cape, South Africa	3
Tunis, Qabis, Tunisia	3
Windhoek, Namibia	3
Maracaibo, Zulia, Venezuela	3
Benoni, I Gauteng, South Africa	3
Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa	3
Carnarvon, Northern Cape, South Africa	3
Bonnievale, Western Cape, South Africa	3
Hillcrest, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa	2
Kempton Park, Gauteng, South Africa	2
Sandton, Gauteng, South Africa	2
Kathmandu, Bagmati Zone, Nigeria	2
Kampala, Kampala District, Uganda	2
Brakpan, Gauteng, South Africa	2
Cairo, Egypt	2
Spring, Gauteng, South Africa	2
Iyabuswa, Mpumalanga, South Africa	2