

Deep Sky Report to the AGM (2016 June)

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I'm pleased to report to this meeting that the Section has had a good year.

Dave Blane, both Double Star and Variable Star Collaborator, continues active observing in these areas. He has submitted 1,738 variable star observations to the AAVSO and has participated in a number of observing programmes arranged by them. Dave also completed their course on DSLR Photometry, and I look forward to learning from him. Dave continues with the measures of Dunlop's double stars, as well as other selected interesting double stars.

The Nebulae & Clusters activity area has been supported by several good folk, including Hannes Pieterse. Hannes has accepted the role of Programme Co-ordinator for Deep-Sky Marathons, and has created a highly-detailed resource on the ASSA website, to my knowledge the first such one-stop shop for marathon info. Hannes has assisted John Gill (ASSA Durban) with the planning of a marathon for the Centre.

The two stalwarts of the Section, Magda Streicher and Richard Ford, continue their vigil at the eyepiece. Magda's work on Volume 2 of her "Deep-sky Delights" nears completion. She also continues to write columns for MNASSA and the ASSA Pretoria Centre newsletter. She gave an address at the February Southern Star Party about her personal take on deep-sky observing.

Richard continues to work hard towards completing the Bennett Catalogue; within the next weeks he should have reached this milestone. As of this writing, his contribution to the deep-sky database totals 393 sets of observations.

Feed-back on observing has been given to Dirk Rossouw, Cheyenne Kersting, Johan Brink, Pierre de Villiers. Feed-back on deep-sky photographs has been given to Dawie Venter, Johan Moolman, Leslie Rose, Christine Kersting.

Several observers are working on the ASSA Top-100 list. Dawie Venter has announced his intention to photograph all 100 objects, while John Gill of ASSA Durban has successfully photographed them, and is to be congratulated. (For the record, the first to do this was Michael Moller, in 2013.)

Hannes Pieterse and Carol Botha have helped with the completed planning of the Big 5 Project. Metal badges were designed and produced and are now available for distribution. They are individually numbered and as they are allocated, the names of the recipients will be listed on the Section's web page. Designs and costing for Big 5 t-shirts and sticker sets were finalized, and are ready for production. The support of ASSA Council, in the form of significant funding for the production of these materials, is gratefully acknowledged.

The first Big 5 observation has already been received, from Dewald van Rensburg of Despatch, Eastern Cape. The formal launch of the programme will only be later this year, though! Two non-ASSA members joined the Big 5 Whatsapp chat group.

The second edition of 'Nightfall' will appear in October. Contributing authors are Owen Brazell, Doug Bullis, Bruce Dickson and Magda Streicher.

The Deep-sky Observer's Companion online database (DOCdb.net) continues to be used as a growing online repository, with 233 registered users. To date, 3,584 observations are collected in the database. Prof Courtney Seligman continues to provide updates from time to time.

Finally, it's a great pleasure to announce that John Gill has earned an Observing Certificate for his observing notes and photographic record of the ASSA Top-100 Objects.

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