

ASSA OBSERVING DIRECTOR REPORT 2015 – 2016

Observable and astronomical related events, ASSA competitions etc. 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. A warm thank you once again to Michael Poll (ASSA Pretoria Centre) for 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 once again featured prominently during the course of the year with Comet C/2013 X1 (PANSTARRS) visible in our evening skies at present. The comet's outburst in early January this year was photographed by the Director.

During August 2015, two reasonably bright comets were visible in our evening skies, Comet C/2014 Q1 PANSTARRS at around +6 magnitude in Crater and C/2013 US10 Catalina in Pavo, at magnitude +7.5.

In March this year comet 252P/LINEAR increased in brightness and coma size putting up quite a show and it was a naked eye apparition from dark sky locations. Observations and images via the various channels were submitted by Tim Cooper, Neville Young, Mark Burkhardt, Oleg Toumilovitch and Christoph Hohlfeld.

Various calls for the participation of South African observers have come from abroad and these have been passed on via the ASSA discussion group. Queries from local astronomy enthusiasts such as the ones below have been answered or sent to the relevant Centre's.

- Are there days where I can observe the sky from the observatory in Johannesburg?
- Please could I kindly ask you to assist me. I would like to enquire whether the southern cross will be visible in the early hours of tomorrow morning (13 November 2015) from the Skukuza area. I have tried many websites but so far I have had no luck.
- Please would you also furnish me with the details on becoming a member.

The big event of the year had to be the transit of Mercury, which was observed by many ASSA members from various of locations, with the Pretoria Centre hosting a successful observing event at the CSIR Conference Centre.

The Geminids meteor shower, Orionids and Eta Aquariids were well advertised via the various channels and the Director was fortunate to be able to observe the Eta Aquariids over the course of four mornings (4 -7 May 2016), in conjunction with Tim Cooper.

A live feed from the town of Springbok was provided to Slooh for the lunar eclipse in the early hours on the 28th September 2015. The experience gained will hopefully stand in good stead for the upcoming live feed of the partial solar eclipse (1st September 2016) that ASSA members will make available country wide.

The Director is committed to actively promoting astronomy and ASSA by holding numerous outreach and Club (Soutpansberg Astronomy Club) events at public venues and schools as well as stargazing evenings in the Limpopo region.

In conclusion I would like to wish observers “clear skies” for the 2016 – 2017 year.

Kos Coronaios
ASSA Observing Director

C/2013 X1 PANSTARRS 4 to 7 January 2016.