

## **Annual report for ASSA Observing section (deep and shallow sky combined) ending July 2023**

Angus Burns Director

With the amalgamation of the shallow and deep sky sections of ASSA under the Observing section, it was agreed that an approach would be pursued to develop interest in the night sky through the creation of a new platform as a means towards achieving this. The “Southern Skies Quarterly” was thus developed and was met with initial interest and support. The idea behind the publication was to offer an opportunity for members of ASSA and the general public to share what they have observed/imaged over the course of 3-4 month periods, questions to be answered, reviews on astronomical equipment to be shared and ASSA events mentioned.

Over the course of the period June 2022-July 2023, there was a steep decrease in submissions for the Southern Skies Quarterly with only 1 publication being released representing observations and imaging from around South Africa. The reasons for this decline may be attributed to general apathy but was also as a result of challenging weather conditions around the country. That being said the publication was well received and there is currently a 2<sup>nd</sup> edition for 2023 being developed for finalization shortly.

The first and only edition of Southern Skies Quarterly was released in February 2023 and featured 24 observations from KZN and the FreeState. Submissions included a mix of shallow and deep sky images/observations with the Mars occultation and comet C/2022 E3 (ZTF) featured.

From this period until now, there were also 12 queries logged about a “bright object towards the west after sunset” which on each occasion turned out to be the planet Venus.

In addition, further queries (total 3) were logged about the planet Jupiter as it moved closer to the western horizon

In summary:

Month	Provincial contributions	Total observations logged via Southern Skies Quarterly and via whatsapp/Messenger/Instagram and email
Southern Skies Quarterly: August 2022 - February 2023	KZN, FreeState (2 provinces)	24
Whatsapp/Messenger/Instagram and email: July 2022 – June 2023	KZN, Western Cape & Gauteng (3 provinces)	15
Grand total (Observations)		
<b>39 Observations</b>		

## Outreach

The astronomy evening at St Dominics in Newcastle in August 2022 was exceptionally well attended with over 800 attendees. A prize was sponsored by Celestron South Africa, the full Moon Rise was projected onto a big screen (much to the delight of all in attendance) and excellent media coverage enjoyed locally.

Two events are being planned for August 2023 and September 2023 respectively:

- 1) An astronomy evening (a power point presentation and guided talk on the night sky) at Ferrum High School in Newcastle on 8 August 2023 and
- 2) A repeat of the St Dominics Astronomy event on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023 with 3 telescopes sponsored by Celestron South Africa as prizes. The event will have live entertainment, 3 astronomy related talks (from myself, the student winner of the telescope from the previous year's event and duo from JHB known as "SkyGirl and the Bear," who will do a guided talk with live projections of celestial objects). Entry will be free, and the prizes will be for students 18 years and under only.

## Conclusion

I would like to express my gratitude to all who supported me in my second year as Director for this expanded section within ASSA. Due to increased work pressure, my ability to attend ASSA meetings has become a challenge. In addition, the Southern Skies Quarterly, although initially well supported has experienced diminishing support during the last year. I propose the following options:

- 1) I resign and a suitable replacement is found to direct the Section.
- 2) I remain as Director and continue to support ASSA as I can (within my time constraints which may or may not improve).
- 3) I resign and support a new Director as I can.
- 4) The "Southern Skies Quarterly" is rebranded as "Southern Skies" and published twice a year.
- 5) We cease to publish the "Southern Skies Quarterly."

Whatever is decided I will abide by.

Kind regards



Angus Burns

20 July 2023