

used to encourage them to submit more material. Your complimentary remarks and encouragement kept me going for longer than I really wanted. As you must have noticed in the last year or so, I found it more and more difficult to get issues out on time due to other commitments. I therefore decided reluctantly not to go for re-election when nominations became due this term.

This issue will thus be my last with Case Rijdsdijk now taking over as Editor. I am confident that Case's solid science background and impressive track record of popularising astronomy at all levels will take *MNASSA* to new heights. Please welcome him and give him the support I experienced from passionate *MNASSA* readers over the past almost five years.

Willie Koorts

Annual General Meeting 2010

ASSA Council Report 2009 – 2010

Michael Poll, President

Membership for 2009 – 2010

Members: 246, including 31 new members who joined in the year ending 30 June 2010.

Council Persona

Council started the year without a Secretary, Membership Secretary or Business Manager.

No progress has been made towards appointing a Secretary. There have been no offers to do the job and no-one has been nominated for the position for 2010 – 2011. Thanks are due to Pat Booth and Ian Glass for preparing Agendas and for taking Minutes at various times.

Maureen Rogers offered to do the work of Membership Secretary and was co-opted on to Council at its meeting of 8 Septem-

ber 2009. Council is grateful to Maureen for taking on this task. Thanks are due to Lerika Cross and Margaret Kumalo for their interim input. There are no nominations for this post for 2010 – 2011.

Concerning the position of Business Manager, taking into account the importance of the post, especially with respect to processing orders from commercial customers for *Sky Guide*, a consensus emerged amongst Council members that, in order to attract a suitable person, the Business Manager position should be remunerated. Isobel Bassett agreed to take on the task, but she said that she would start the work first to see what it entailed before discussing a remuneration amount. Isobel has done a good job under difficult circumstances and Council expresses its gratitude to her. Isobel continued to work until December 2009 and then indi-

cated that she wished not to continue. In the absence of a replacement, she has carried on with the work free of charge and continues to do so until a replacement can be found. There are no nominations for this post for 2010–2100

Considering that there are no nominations for any of these three posts for 2010–2011, Council must examine its options at its first meeting following the AGM. The provision in the constitution for this type of situation is in Section 10: “Council shall have the power to fill any vacancy that may occur in any offices of the Society or in its own body until the next election of officers and members”.

Remuneration principles

The decision to remunerate the Business Manager led to a debate amongst Council members about the principle of remuneration for people doing ASSA work. It has been queried as to why some people should be paid and others were not. For example, the *Sky Guide* editor is paid but *MNASSA* Editor is not, Business Manager was paid but Membership Secretary was not. It would be fair to say that this debate is still open. It should be noted that certain members of Council are paid honoraria.

Sky Guide, Africa South

Tony Jones relinquished the position of *Sky Guide* editor effective from the date of dispatch of the 2010 edition to the printers. Council has appointed Wayne Trow as editor for the 2011 edition. Council expresses its gratitude to Tony Jones for the work he has

put into the publication in the four editions that he has edited. Considering the problem of finding a Business Manager, who would normally be the person to process *Sky Guide* orders, Council, through its Editorial Board, has approached the publisher Struik with a view to contracting them to do the marketing, printing, warehousing and distribution of *Sky Guide*. A print run of 5 000 copies is envisaged, 250 copies will be passed on to ASSA for distribution to members.

MNASSA

Willie Koorts is currently the editor of *MNASSA*. However, he has indicated that he wishes to step down as the editor. He notes that he has found it increasingly difficult to get *MNASSA* out on time due to other commitments. At present he is staying on until a replacement can be found. The incoming Council will need to consider this matter at its first meeting following the AGM. The June edition was delayed because of lack of material for publishing.

The Editorial Board has agreed that *MNASSA* will eventually be circulated by electronic means only. Subscribers to *MNASSA* will be notified by the end of August about the proposed change. Printed copies will still be sent to ASSA members until at least June 2011, but it is suggested that, at some stage, members may be offered a reduced subscription if they are willing to receive the electronic version. A memorandum about the proposed changes, with further details, including financial implications, will be published in a future edition of *MNASSA*.

Website

The ASSA website has been well managed by Christian Hettlage during the year. Christian was nominated for the position of webmaster for 2010 – 2011, but was reluctant to accept because he felt that he had not done as much as he could have. He said that if nobody else was volunteering, he would be willing to continue. The incoming Council will need to consider this matter also at its first meeting following the AGM.

Sections of ASSA

ASSA includes a number of Observing and other Sections, each under the guidance of a Director. Section Directors are required to submit, by 30 April each year, an annual report reflecting the activities of each section for the previous calendar year. It is disappointing to note that only six reports out of the 11 expected have been submitted. Of the six received, only two were submitted by the due date.

Professor Phil Charles

At the end of January 2010, Prof Phil Charles, Director of SAAO, was suspended by the National Research Foundation. At its meeting on 2 February 2010, Council resolved to express its support for Professor Charles, and its concern at the manner in which the matter of his suspension had been handled by the National Research Foundation. ASSA has made representations about this matter. On behalf of ASSA Maciej Soltynski prepared a press release dated 18 March, expressing ASSA's concern about the

summary nature of the suspension, called for the charges to be made public, and asked that a public enquiry be held to examine the background to the affair. Ian Glass summarised the situation thus far in *MNASSA* April 2010.

Prof Belinda Bozzoli (Chairperson of the NRF) was delegated lead a process of engagement with the SAAO and the broader astronomy community in order to listen to their concerns and priorities. On Friday, 9 April Soltynski, representing ASSA, met with Professor Bozzoli to give input on behalf of ASSA. On Friday, 2 July Soltynski met with NRF President Albert van Jaarsveld. It was learned that the Bozzoli report will not be made public and that the Minister considered the Charles' part of the matter closed.

IAU Office

The President sent a motivation on behalf of ASSA, supporting the proposal to establish the IAU Office for Astronomy Development (OAD) in South Africa. It has since been learned that South Africa was selected to host this office. The agreement was to be signed in Pretoria on 30 July 2010. Kevin Govender is the contact person. The President wrote to Kevin on 29 May offering, on behalf of ASSA and its Centres, to make its resources available to assist in making the venture a success.

The locating of the OAD in Africa, and in particular South Africa, would have a direct impact on one of the most underdeveloped regions of the world – yet it would be

situated in a country which boasts modern world class infrastructure and services necessary to fulfil the purpose of the OAD. The experience gained by the officers of the OAD, by being situated in this region, would be translated and expanded to developing regions across the world. South Africa has already positioned itself as an ideal venue out of which astronomy development activities can be coordinated. The support (so far) has been overwhelming, with words of encouragement and pledges of support coming from individuals in Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia, Gabon, Mauritius, Nigeria, UK, Malawi, US, Sudan, Uganda and Germany.

NRF Astro-Geosciences Cluster Five Year Performance Review

The Institutional Review of the National Research Foundation (NRF), including the performance of its National Research Facilities, is planned to take place in 2010. This review is scheduled in terms of the five-year reviews of the Science Councils in South Africa commissioned by the Department of Science and Technology. It is intended to be a retrospective view on the performance of the NRF during the period 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2009. ASSA has been invited to give input into this review which is done by an international panel of experts. The NRF Astro-Geosciences Cluster comprises the South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO), Hermanus Magnetic Observatory (HMO), Hartebeesthoek Radio Astronomy Observatory (HartRAO). ASSA will be represented by Maciej Soltynski.

ASSA Constitution

Michael Poll has been working on a re-draft of the Constitution. It is hoped that the revised constitution can be finalised, approved and implemented in time for the 2011 AGM. Thanks are due to the members of Council for input, and also to Advocate AJ Nel who has given input from a legal point of view.

Thanks

ASSA members should note that some longstanding members of Council were not nominated for office for 2010 – 2011, including Cliff Turk, Pat Booth, and Peter Martinez. Kevin Govender did not wish to be re-nominated. Council and members would like to acknowledge, and thank these persons, and any others, for the time and effort that they have given in support of, and the running of, ASSA. Thanks go to all Council members who have offered help and support during the year.

Personal Note

On a personal note, this year of being the president of ASSA has not been easy. I have turned over more than 1200 ASSA-related e-mails since taking office. In effect, I have been acting as Secretary as well as being President. Dealing with these e-mails has occupied nearly every morning of every day, and some evenings and weekends as well. I have to thank my wife for putting up with ASSA in our lives. I have to thank her for her support and tolerance of me spending so much time on ASSA business, and for allowing me to share ASSA problems with her. ☆

Annual Report of the Comet, Asteroid and Meteor Section for 2009

TP Cooper, Director

Five meteor showers were observed by five individuals totalling 32 hours observation.

Summary of Observed Meteor Showers

Observer (no. of showers observed)	Showers Observed and duration	Total Time hrs
Tim Cooper (3)	eta Aquarids (1.9), Orionids (10.8), Geminids (2.0)	14.7
Mary Fanner (1)	Geminids (4.0)	7.6
Wayne Mitchell (2)	Orionids (2.2), Geminids (3.0)	5.2
Kos Coronaios (2)	Northern Taurids (2.0)/Pi Puppids (1.3)	3.3
Cliff Turk (1)	Geminids (1.2)	1.2
Total		32.0

Notes on some Specific Showers Observed

Pi Puppids - the shower was found to be inactive by Kos Coronaios on the evenings of 22/23 April.

Eta Aquarids - Observed by Tim Cooper. Observations were possible on only one morning due to unseasonal cloud and rain.

Orionids - peak rates were observed by Tim Cooper on the night of 21/22 October, seeing 35 Orionids in the hour 0020-0120 UT under LM=6.4.

Northern Taurids - Kos Coronaios registered a single Taurid on the night of 11/12 November under LM=5.3

Geminids - observations from Gauteng were badly affected by clouds. On the night of 12/13 December Wayne Mitchell observed 19 Geminids and 7 sporadics from 22h00-01h00 UT with LM=5.0. Tim Cooper observed from 21h30 to 23h30 UT seeing 29 meteors of which 16 were Geminids. The night of traditional maximum was met with heavy showers of a different sort. In the Cape Mary Fanner managed to observe on the nights of 12/13 and 13/14 December logging 95 Geminids and 32 sporadics on the latter. The night of 14/15 December was misty.

Summary of Observed Fireballs

2009 saw a total of 7 fireball reports. The full details have been submitted for publication in *MNASSA* as a separate article. There were two particularly bright fireballs during the year. On the evening of 24 August more than 40 individuals witnessed a fireball from four independent sites from Cape Town to Sutherland. Then on 21 November a very bright bolide, estimated magnitude -18, travelled from south to north, exploding in the Limpopo area. This latter event will be described fully in a separate *MNASSA* article.

Summary of Observed Comets

Three comets were observed by Magda Streicher (STR03) and Nigel Wakefield (WAKxx) during 2009, as follows.

ICQ Observer Code	88P	144P	C/2008 Q3
WAKxx			•
STR03	•	•	

Notes on Specific Comets Observed

144P Kushida - observed by Magda Streicher in January at magnitude 10.5

C/2008 Q3 Garradd - observed by Nigel Wakefield in June at magnitude 8.

88P Howell - observed by Magda Streicher in September at magnitude 11.2

Summary of Asteroid Observations

Photometry was conducted by Tim Cooper and Paul Ludick on the following objects. Both observers are still in the development phase, but Paul obtained some good photometric runs on several objects. Tim

Cooper met with the project leader Anna Marciniak during August to understand and further refine the program for the future.

- 193 Ambrosia
- 714 Ulula
- 895 Helio
- 1056 Azalea
- 1130 Skuld

All observers of comets, asteroids and meteors, are heartily thanked for their contributions. ☆

Report of the Cosmology Section

Frikkie de Bruyn, Director

The purposes of the Cosmology Section are twofold: (1) To promote an interest in the study of cosmology among members of ASSA and (2) To promote the scientific study of cosmology.

The number of members of the Section is currently 49.

An article was circulated to members, at least once a month, ranging from matters such as the entropy of the universe, gravitational entropy, the Standard Model of Cosmology, etc. Developments at the LHC at CERN are being closely watched in view of the importance of the study of

the extreme first moments of the universe. Scientific papers and articles of interest were regularly circulated to members. Research into neutrinos as Majorana particles and the possible influence on the movements of the Magellanic Clouds and the Milky Way Galaxy continues.

The Cosmology Section has been established as a special interest group in Google's Cosmology and Quantum Physics section. Circulation of articles etc. to the section is being dealt with by Google free of charge. It is believed that the Cosmology Section is the first ASSA section to have done this. ☆

Education and Public Communication (EPC) Section Report

Case Rijdsijk, Director

General

In terms of receiving information about the activities of various centres, things have improved, but regrettably, they are still incomplete! I know that many centres are active and it would be great if a short report of these for the year could be sent in to me by June next year, one that could be used by the local centre at their AGM as well.

Centre Activities

Cape Centre

As usual they continue to help out with the SAAO Open Nights, but now have one night per month that they run the Open Night for the SAAO: a spin-off from IYA2009! There are regular Dark Night outings to Paardeberg which have been well supported. The centre's initiative to set-up the "Friends of the Observatory" is to be commended and it is to be hoped that they will achieve all they set out to do. A highlight was a visit to the SKA site at Carnarvon.

Hermanus Centre

Although the centre is new it has an extremely rich outreach programme visiting all 20 of the local schools, holding regular public meetings and giving extended presentations to ~10 eco-schools in the area.

Natal Midlands Centre

They too are active with several public talks having been given in the course of

the year on topics ranging from volcanoes to supernovae.

Johannesburg Centre

Their highlight of course is the ScopeX exhibition, which this year was bigger and better than ever, again drawing people from all walks of life, and many spending the day there enjoying many of the activities on offer. SAASTA is to be thanked for again giving substantial support to the event, especially in supplying transport for the many schoolchildren who attend. Thank you Lerika for a sterling job! In addition there are regular open nights at the Observatory: these are well attended by the public, as are the regular dark nights.

Pretoria Centre

Little news for here, but they have given huge support to the Johannesburg Centre during ScopeX.

Garden Route Centre

The highlight was undoubtedly the visit to Sutherland by a local group of about 23 people. The director led the group and from all reports it was a most successful excursion with two nights in Sutherland. The SAAO staff were most helpful and added to the ease of setting up the trip. Talks have been given to the public, including a short course on astronomy to the U3A group in Knysna and George – both well attended. The centre has also set up good relations

with the local chapter of the SA Institute of Electrical Engineers, and one meeting each year is now set aside as a joint meeting.

Director

He has had a full year, the highlight of which was being able to attend the CAP 2010 conference organized by the IAU in Cape Town. It was great to see several ASSA members there as well (see report in *MNASSA* 60, 3&4, by Kerchil Kirkham). He attended ScopeX and the National Science Festival in Grahamstown. Numerous afternoon and evening talks were presented to a wide range of people from schools to volunteer park rangers. The director continues to write regular columns for the

media and also still has his radio slot.

It was great to hear the news that South Africa has won the bid to host the IAU Office for Astronomy Development at the SAAO. ASSA looks forward to supporting this initiative where ever it is able to.

Acknowledgements

The director would like to thank SAAO for continued support with resources for outreach, and Tony Jones for again producing an outstanding *Sky Guide*. Also Auke Slotegraaf for his efforts at EPC here, there and everywhere and to Magda Streicher who does all those things that we all forget! ☆

Historical Section Report

Chris de Coning, Director

During the calendar year 2009 the following events occurred concerning the History of Astronomy section:

Website

The Website has undergone a major change. While in 2007 the look and layout was totally changed, in 2009 more content was added. This process is ongoing in nature

Archive

The old minute books of the Cape Astronomical Association (1912 – 22), ASSA Council (1922 – 35; 1979 – 2001), and the Cape Centre (1928 – 45) were tracked down, photographed and, where applicable, placed in the ASSA Archive.

Publications

Individuals in their private capacities wrote articles with historical content. Please note my appreciation to the following people:

- R.W. Argyle for “Using the Innes telescope again” published in *MNASSA* 68, 1&2, February 2009.
- Greg Roberts for “Amateur Space Detectives” published in *MNASSA* 68, 3&4, April 2009.
- Michelle Knight for “Reawakening a Masterpiece” published in *MNASSA* 68, 5&6, June 2009.

Obituaries

MNASSA published an obituary on Anthony Fairall: *MNASSA* 68, 3&4, April 2009.

Friends of the Cape Town Observatory

The dome and floor-lift system of the McClean Telescope building is giving problems. To repair this telescope and help to maintain various other pieces of equipment requires an enormous amount of money. The “Friends of the Cape Town Observatory” was founded in order to find people with the necessary expertise, to raise funds and to promote awareness of historically important equipment.

International Year of Astronomy (IYA)

2009 was a momentous year because of the 400th anniversary of Galileo using the telescope to study the heavens. The Historical Section wishes to thank Kevin Govender and his team who headed the IYA events, and for all those who participated in outreach projects. During this year an event took place which is of historical significance in its own right. On 24 April 2009 the Astronomy Geographic Advantage Act (AGA Act) was signed into power by President Kgalema Motlanthe. ☆

Variable Star Section Report

Christopher Middleton

The following observations were submitted to the AAVSO database during the 2009 observation year.

David Blane	Henley-on-Klip	BLD	300 visual
Dale Botha	Capetown	BDAA	2 visual
Tim Cooper	Bredell	COM	95 visual
Brian Fraser	Henley-on-Klip	FBN	65 PEP
Percy Jacobs	Pretoria	JPM	46 visual
Berto Monard	Tiegerpoort	MLF	7018 CCD
Michael Poll	Gezina	PMO	52 visual
Jan Smit	Pretoria	SJX	239 visual
Peter Wedepohl	Somerset West	WPT	221 visual

It is regrettable that the numbers during the last year were substantially down upon previous years but the usual significant contributors (Gauteng area) were plagued with an exceptionally wet summer that ran well into winter.

the pool of variable star observers in SA, I have found a general lack of interest in active observation programs from ASSA members nationally.

This year has seen a change in my personal observation program away from extrinsic variables, to intrinsic. ☆

Whilst efforts have been made to increase

Occultation Section Report

Brian Fraser, Director

Once again most of the favourable minor planet occultation predictions for South Africa were spoilt by unfavourable weather and no positive events were recorded. None of the local lunar occultation observers were active during the year.

We were geared up to participate in an

occultation of a star by Pluto on 21 April but this event too, was spoiled by cloudy weather. The team of USA observers at Boyden, Sutherland and Namibia obtained positive results.

We have again relied heavily on the minor planet occultation predictions provided by Steve Preston. ☆

ASSA Scholarships Report for the calendar year 2009

Maciej Soltynski (Convenor, ASSA Scholarships Committee)

The ASSA Scholarship was established in 2000 to encourage the study of Astronomy at any Southern African university at the 2nd and 3rd year level. The Scholarship is funded by ASSA with significant financial support from the ASSA Endowment Trust.

In 2009 there was disappointingly only one applicant for the ASSA Scholarship, who was unsuccessful. The holder in 2008, Daniel Oliver, continued his BSc studies in modules other than Astronomy at UNISA. The holder in 2006 and 2007, Wendy Williams worked towards her MSc in astronomy at UCT in 2009. Renée Holzek, holder of the ASSA Scholarship in 2005, continued with her DPhil studies in cosmology at Oxford University.

South African Astronomical Observatory - Astronomical Society of Southern Africa Scholarships

The purpose of the SAAO–ASSA Scholarships is to encourage current or *intending* undergraduates (i.e. 1st, 2nd or 3rd year) studying for a BSc degree at any university in South Africa, who have a stated interest in astronomy, to prepare for furthering their interest. The Scholarships are financed by SAAO and are administered by ASSA. 2009 saw a third SAAO–ASSA Scholarship being made available, so that from now on in any year there may be a maximum of three Scholarships awarded. The value of each Scholarship in 2009 was R4 600, up from R4 000 in the previous year.

There were five applicants in 2009, of whom two were successful.

Rocco Coppejans was re-awarded the Scholarship for his final year of study for his BSc degree at the University of Pretoria. He successfully completed his degree with distinctions at the end of 2009, and has been accepted into the National Astrophysics and Space Science Programme (NASSP) at UCT where he will study for his BSc (Hons) in 2010.

Tshepo Molane was awarded the Scholarship in support of his first year BSc studies at UCT.

Mpati Ramatsoku, who held the Scholarship in 2007 and 2008, completed her BSc at UCT in 2009, and has been accepted into

the National Astrophysics and Space Science Programme (NASSP) at UCT where she will study for her BSc (Hons) in 2010.

Expression of appreciation

Dr Abe Mahomed retired from the Committee early in 2009. His contributions to the deliberations of the Committee since its inception in 2000 are gratefully acknowledged. Dr Ian Glass, Kevin Govender and Andrew Gray are thanked for their valued inputs in the evaluation and selection of candidates during 2009. Thanks go to Cliff Turk for dealing with the financial administration of the Scholarships, and to the university lecturers who supplied assessments of candidates. ☆

ASSA Awards 2009 – 2010

At the AGM, ASSA announced the following awards:

Gill Medal – Lerika Cross

The Gill Medal is awarded in recognition of services to astronomy. Prior recipients have all put in considerable effort over time to practise astronomy, in ways that have certainly reflected well upon the society and have made contributions to astronomy in South Africa, but in this day and age there are other ways of serving astronomy.

In successfully driving the ScopeX initiative for nine years, an event which has drawn in thousands of South Africans, Lerika Cross has contributed not only

towards the objectives of the society, but also to astronomy. It must be stressed that the purpose and effect of this event is to serve astronomy in Southern Africa, and not specifically the Society or any particular Centre of the society. Whereas many of the Society’s activities are focused inwardly (public observing sessions and some “outreach” programs notwithstanding), ScopeX seeks to bring together a wide cross-section of the community for the purpose of informing, inspiring, educating, and engaging them in astronomy. It showcases the achievements of amateurs and professionals alike, and spurs on, for example, amateur telescope makers and astrophotographers. It is also an opportunity for people with an interest

in astronomy to “network”. These aims have consistently been achieved, despite extremely limited resources.

Producing ScopeX involves engaging a host of participants: amateur and professional astronomers, the academe, commerce & industry, Government in the form of DST and SAASTA, NGOs and more. This is done on a small budget, and credit is given considering the limited volunteer resources and facilities. As a participant in the preparations the proposer has had a very clear view of the effort, commitment and personal sacrifices required of Lerika Cross to make it all happen. Each event takes the equivalent of about six months’ full-time application. The work for ScopeX is done in addition to the secretarial and managerial tasks that she has so willingly performed for about a decade for the Johannesburg Centre, the telescope making class, and the ASSA Council, all of which is done to a very high ethical standard.

While giving time and applying effort for a good cause are commendable, results and outcomes are what truly count. Of all the society’s initiatives during its long history it is doubtful that any programme, or collection of events and activities, has attained the wide-reaching influence on public awareness that ScopeX has. Thousands of previously disadvantaged learners have been exposed astronomy and science, redressing a woeful gap in their education curriculum. We have cer-

tainly had enough feedback from them, and the public, to know it is well received. Two learners are known to have started science at tertiary level with the intention of doing astronomy.

In support of the Citation, it is noted that Richard Berry (former editor of *Astronomy* magazine, which has the world’s highest circulation of such a publication) visited ScopeX in 2007 as a guest speaker. Since he is regularly invited to and involved in similar events around the world (though primarily in the US), Berry’s feedback is therefore a good basis for comparison. Berry declared ScopeX to be “world class” and commented favourably about the general enthusiasm and the level of innovation. He later communicated that the Riverside Telescope Making Conference (held the following month and which is probably the largest of this type of event) had been very disappointing by comparison. It should be noted that similar big conventions in the US attract huge sponsorship and are put together by large teams.

Accordingly ASSA has no hesitation in accepting Lerika Cross as a recipient of the Gill Medal. Doing so is entirely consistent with the spirit of the Award, and, of all the awards conferred by the Society, this is surely the most appropriate means to recognise Lerika’s contribution to astronomy in South Africa.

President’s Award – Auke Slotegraaf

Auke has been involved in outreach

and communication of astronomy for some considerable time. By this involvement he has made an outstanding contribution to Astronomy Education and the promotion of astronomy in South Africa. He has achieved this through, amongst other things, his talks at Sutherland, and running workshops for previously disadvantaged schoolchildren. He was also largely responsible for creating the new look ASSA *Sky Guide*.

Michael Poll, President 2009 – 2010

Section Awards

Cosmology Section: Bruce Dickson & Maciej Soltynski

Comet, Asteroid and Meteor Section: Cliff Turk, Kos Coronaios, Mary Fanner, Paul Ludick, Wayne Mitchell, Magda Streicher & Nigel Wakefield

Deep-sky Section: Kos Coronaios, Richard Ford, Dale Liebenberg & Pete Scully

Double Star Section: Dave Blane ☆

Sky Guide 2011

The Society has made a printing and distribution agreement with Random House Struik for the 2011 *Sky Guide Africa South*. This is part of the plan to reduce the administrative complexity of the Society.

ASSA will no longer distribute indi-

vidual copies, which will have to be purchased from a bookshop at the retail price of R85.00. Members of ASSA will however receive copies as part of their subscription. ASSA may in addition, purchase copies at a discount of 35% for up to 50 copies and a discount of 40% for this number or more. ☆

news notes

Complete planetary system discovered

Planetary astronomy and, in particular, the search for extra-solar planets is currently one of the most interesting research areas in astronomy in recent years. [The extra-solar planet count stands at 452 as of 13 September 2010.]

One of the most interesting discoveries so far has just been announced by the European Southern Observatory (ESO). Using the HARPS (High Accuracy Radial veloc-

ity Planet Searcher) instrument attached to their 3.6m telescope at La Silla in Chile over six years, a group of astronomers have discovered a planetary system containing at least five planets, orbiting the star HD 10180, a G1 dwarf of visual magnitude 7.33 situated 127 light years from us. There is tantalising evidence that two other planets may be present, one of which would have the lowest mass ever found. This would make the system similar to