

## Deep Sky Report to the AGM (2017 July)

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

Administratively, the Section was de-bundled, with Double and Variable Stars now a separate section, capably managed by Dave Blane. The Section's Collaborators continue, and are Carol Botha (Big 5 of the African Sky) and Hannes Pieterse (Deep-Sky Marathons as well as the Big 5).

During the year under review, observing pins were issued to Percy Jacobs, John Maynier, Dave Blane, Andy Overbeek and Louis Lombaard for observing the ASSA Top-100 Deep-Sky Objects. John Gill received a joint award (with the Astrophotography Section) for photographing the ASSA Top-100.

Two successful observing marathons were reported during the year. The first was conducted during the 2016 Free State Star Party, of the ASSA Top-100. During the 2017 Summer Southern Star Party, Deon Begemann, Ronel Begemann and Cheyenne Kersting (14) marathoned the Messier objects, capturing 85 of them during a 7-hour observing period. Special thanks to Deon for planning and managing this event.

The first Big 5 observations of the season were received from Mark Burkhardt, who is to be congratulated. Mark is now eligible to buy a t-shirt and a mug to proudly show off his accomplishment.

Richard Ford continues to observe the Bennett objects and submit observations from time to time.

Work on the LMC/SMC Atlas project continues. The intention is to produce an observing guide to the Magellanic Clouds, combining modern photography with visual observations. John Gill (Durban) has produced a low-resolution mosaic of the SMC, while Johan Moolman (Pretoria) has nearly completed a medium-resolution SMC mosaic. Magda Streicher and myself are contributing new visual observations. Other observers are most welcome to take part, too!

Deep-sky astrophotos from several members were received, annotated and discussed, and added to the DOCdb online database. Dale Liebenberg has submitted a series of mostly galaxies, for which he is thanked.

Percy Jacobs continues to inspire & challenge his group of deep-sky observers, including Neville Young who is contemplating compiling a book format version of the Top-100 observations, together with an observing form of his own design.

The ConCards free star atlas was updated and is available for download from the Section's web pages.

The Deep-sky Observer's Companion online database (DOCdb.net) continues to be used as a growing online repository, with 248 registered users (a 6% increase).

The Section's newsletter failed to appear on time, due entirely to my fault, and I'd like to apologize to the authors who have already submitted material: Owen Brazell, Doug Bullis, Bruce Dickson and Magda Streicher. On a much happier note, Doug has very kindly (although tentatively) offered to take over editorship - negotiations continue and in a few weeks, we'll know more!

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