

ASSA: ASTROPHOTOGRAPHY SECTION ANNUAL REPORT (2018-2019)

THE STATE OF ASTROPHOTOGRAPHY AND IMAGING

The Astrophotography Section (formally known as the Imaging Section in the ASSA constitution) was originally created to coordinate and promote the use of astronomical imaging technology in amateur observations, and to collect images created by amateur astronomers. In recent years, more and more South African amateur astronomers have begun using their imaging equipment to collect and provide data to professional astronomers around the world. The quality of artistic astronomical images produced by both professional and amateur photographers in South Africa continues to improve.

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

During the past year members received International recognition for their contributions. This includes an APOD for Cory Schmitz, a credit for Angus Burns on the Celestron web page, and two APOD GrAG images by Martin Heigan. Clyde Foster's prolific contribution to Planetary imaging, continues to inspire all of us.

MEMBER ACTIVITY

The Astrophotography Section continues to encourage the submission of photographic images of astronomical subjects, which are stored in the ASSA image archive. This archive is kept on Flickr, with all original files kept in a cloud storage folder as backups. The images in the archive are displayed on the ASSA website, under the Gallery section, grouped by photographer and subject. We only accept submissions from South African photographers, or images that were captured in South Africa. We do not require the photographer to be an ASSA member, nor do we refuse submissions based on quality, in line with the requirement that the section work to promote and encourage the art of Astrophotography.

NEW INITIATIVES

As image submissions to the ASSA Gallery have been in decline over recent years, a collaboration between the Astrophotography Section and the Deep-Sky Section helped us to get more members to submit their images for possible publication in Nightfall Magazine. A special word of thanks to Douglas Bullis for all his hard work in this regard. A new Astrophotography email Contact List has also been created, as an effective way to communicate relevant news with everyone in South African with an interest in Astrophotography.

ASTROPHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION AT SCOPEX

The Astrophotography Competition at ScopeX 2018 only had a handful of entries, so we updated the competition's rules to keep up with the times. The ScopeX 2019 Astrophotography Competition now allows digital entries (and expensive printing is no longer a requirement). We also opened the competition for National participation, to attract a larger amount of Astrophotographers from across the country. New categories have been introduced, including "Beginner", "Mobile Phone" and "Advanced" Astrophotography, to encourage from beginners to advanced Astrophotographers to enter. Relevant Celestron prizes have been sponsored by G & L Agencies for each category. I would like to thank Lerika Cross and Chris Stewart for all their hard work to ensure that we get great

prizes sponsored for the competition, and of course G & L Agencies for sponsoring very exciting Astrophotography prizes.

SECTION DIRECTOR

The current Section Director is Martin Heigan (which took over from Allen Versfeld in the past year), after Allen moved to the Citizen Science Section.