

Research Committee report for April 2015

Balmy weather without mosquitoes yet. What could be better for observing?

Several people took lots of images, and many are stunning in their detail and color.

1. The Moon was imaged in a mosaic fashion by Clif Ashcraft from first quarter to nearly full gibbous phase. It is interesting to watch the changing contrast of the rays from Crater Tycho as the angle of the sunlight changes.

2. The planet Jupiter was the focus of Tony Sharfman as well as Clif. They admired the shrinking Great Red Spot, now nestled in a V-shaped trough in the South Equatorial Belt. Clif also provided the first picture of Saturn for this year. It should get even clearer as it rises higher above the horizon this summer.

3. Favorite deep sky objects for study included the galaxies M51 (Whirlpool), M101 (Pinwheel), M81, and M82 by Tolga Gumusayak. Tolga was honored to be featured in the e-magazine Amateur Astrophotography (<http://astrophotomag.com/issue14/> page 12) for his image of the Rosette Nebula. Helder Jacinto took graceful images of the spiral galaxies M95 and M96 in Leo, and Dan Silber imaged the Leo Triplet (M66 group) about 35 million light years away from us.

NEAF, the largest conference of amateur astronomers on the East coast. What could be better for starting discussions of mounts, cameras, image processing, and projects? Many people attended, talked with vendors and speakers, then discussed what they had learned.

4. I moderated two days of Pro/Am sessions and enjoyed getting to know eight speakers and several keen amateurs from around the world. The most interesting for me were Ben Jenkins on spectroscopy, Michael Richmond on supernova photometry, Ted Blank on asteroid occultations, and Matt Francis on deep imaging. They have provided ideas for research projects which are interesting and also possible with our equipment.



M51 on April 17 in RGB colors by Tolga Gumusayak

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Lou West, Research Committee Chair