

Research Committee report for October 2015

October has been a quiet month for the solar system but a busy month for deep sky observing.

First, thanks to everyone who attended the class on “Spectroscopy for Beginners” on October 25. Steve Lowe and I enjoyed teaching it and we look forward to presenting “Intermediate Spectroscopy” in the spring.

Clif Ashcraft has continued his measurements of close double stars. It is hard to imagine separating stars only .39 arcseconds apart, isn't it? His next task is to calibrate his system really well. He is working on a new method to determine his focal length and plate scale using the rotation of the Earth rather than the separation of Albireo's components. Next February Clif will give a talk to Barry Malpas' astronomy club in Arizona, and be part of a workshop on speckle interferometry there too.

Helder Jacinto exclaimed that the Milky Way is full of stars (!), especially in open clusters NGC 7129 in Cepheus and M103 in Cassiopeia with its prominent central red star. His image of the red Pacman Nebula (NGC 281), an HII region in Cassiopeia, is more realistic but less detailed than Tolga's deeper yellow and blue version. This month Tolga has also imaged the Elephant Trunk Nebula and the Cave Nebula in Cepheus, and Melotte 15 (star cluster heart of the Heart Nebula), the nearby Fishhead Nebula, and the Bubble Nebula in Cassiopeia. He also processed an image of the Ghost Nebula using Mike Miller's data for a contest. Tolga was very pleased that his image of the Soap Bubble Nebula was chosen by Adam Jaffe of the Astro Imaging Channel on YouTube as the image of the week on October 4.

Tony Sharfman imaged the edge-on spiral galaxy NGC 891 in Andromeda and compared single and stacked 10-second subframes. He found that even if an object doesn't show up in a subframe, you can still bring it out by stacking, which defies some common wisdom we see on the web.

Al Witzgall has found some old equipment: a barn door tracker, and a Celestron NexImage solar system imager. Who wants to try either of these out?

Respectfully submitted, Mary Lou West, Research Committee Chair



M103 center by Helder Jacinto



Ghost Nebula processed by Tolga Gumusayak