



Houston
ASTRONOMICAL
Society



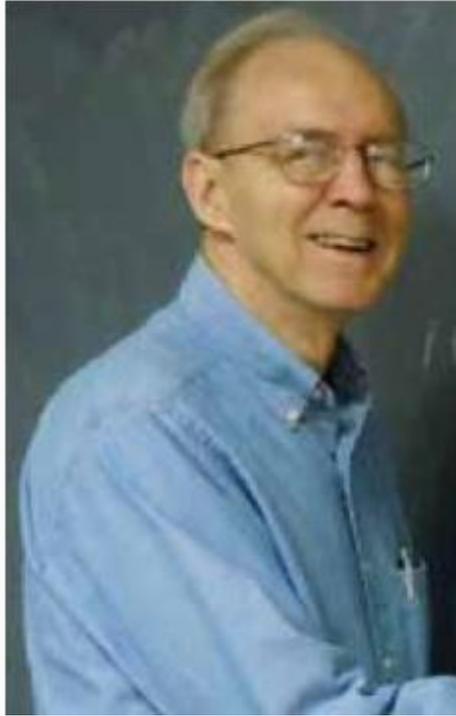
GUIDESTAR

March 2020

Fostering the Science and Art of Astronomy
Through Programs that Serve our Membership

and the Community

Picture Credit - Digital Sky Survey data processed by Don Selle



HAS Monthly Meeting

March 6, 2020

6:00pm to 8:30pm

Trini Mendenhall Community Center

1414 Wirt Rd, Houston, TX 77055

7:15pm

"How We Got Appolo to the Moon and Back Again"

Don Cooper - NASA Physicist and Mathemetician

Novice Talk

Navigating the Spring Sky

Debbie Moran

[More Info](#)



President's Letter Messier Marathon!

Joe Khalaf

Just a few weeks ago, several members of the H.A.S. leadership group met to conduct our annual planning meeting for 2020. We spent every bit of allotted time we had – before gently being reminded that the Mendenhall Center was going to be closing – coming up with ideas and programs to provide more for our members to do this year. If you've taken a look at our club calendar at all lately, you'll see a whole slew of events – from outreach star parties, Novice Labs at the dark site, and Loaner Scope training to help members familiarize themselves with the telescopes they borrow from our inventory.

One of those upcoming events is the Messier Marathon. which we're going to host at the H.A.S. dark site near Columbus on Saturday, March 21.

Image Credit: NASA, ESA, S. Beckwith (STScI), and the Hubble Heritage Team (STScI/AURA)

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Field of View

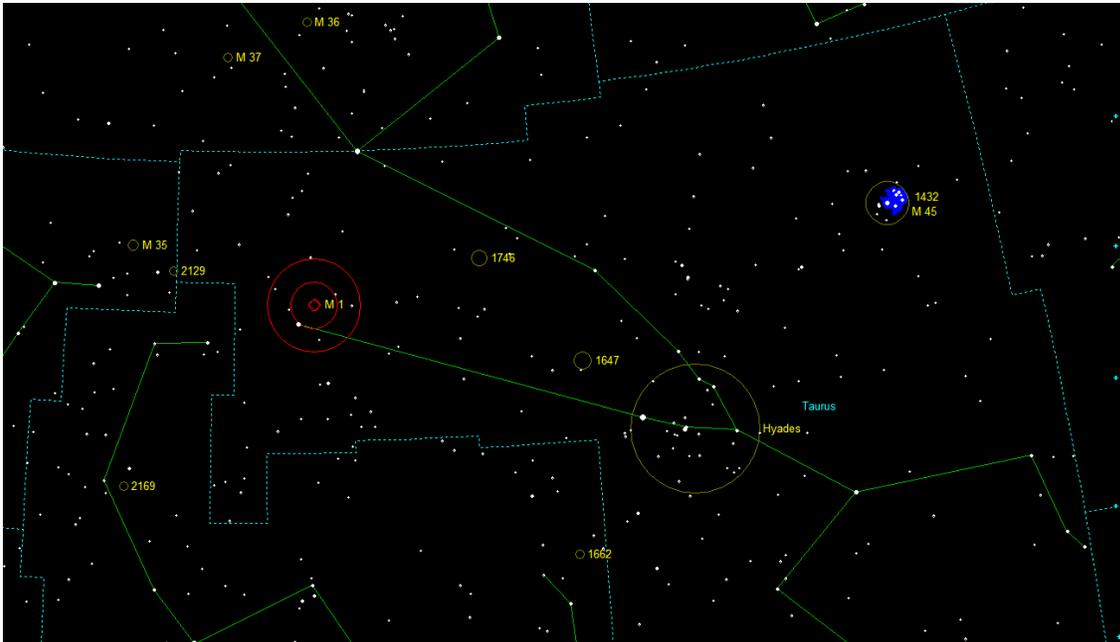
Notes from the Editor

Don Selle

Welcome to the March 2020 issue of the *Guidestar*, the award-winning monthly newsletter of the Houston Astronomical Society. If you take the opportunity to check out the *Guidestar* issues that are archived on our website, you will see that there is almost 20 years' worth of back issues available to download. That is only part of the story, since the *Guidestar* has been in publication almost as long as HAS has existed. It has been, and I

hope it will continue to be the primary means by which we communicate, enlighten and nurture a community of amateur astronomers in the greater Houston area.

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Messier of the Month

by Jim King

This is the first installment of a series of columns revolving around observing the Messier Catalogue. The intent is to provide the reader a small sampling of the Messier objects that are most visible in the time frame the column is published. Hence, these objects should be easily identifiable in and around the month of February and early March.

In this article :

M1 - The Crab Nebula

M103 - Open Cluster

M42 - Orion Nebula

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Observatory Corner

Chris Ober

I'm a reader, not a writer. At least, I think that's how the saying should go. When I was asked to write a "short" Observatory Corner piece, I had my trepidation. I prefer to leave the wordsmithery and coining to the experts; i.e., not me. How does one start when writing these things? How do I start? With a deficit of creative juices in the written word arena, this will have to do:

The past:

2019 turned out to be a fairly busy year if you look at the amount of maintenance that went on out at the Dark Site. For the major jobs, we replaced the well pump that failed and added an iron breaker to improve the quality of the water. The air conditioner and dehumidifiers in the main observatory were replaced with more energy efficient units and a couple of

the large breaker boxes were replaced. The main roof motor was replaced along with the gear reducer and a few electronic components.

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GET YOUR OBSERVING ON!

Stephen Jones

In my personal opinion, the greatest benefit of membership in HAS is the access to our Dark Site. One thing I see so often on astronomy forums is people like us who live in urban areas talking about the things they have to deal with when trying to do astronomy from dark locations.

Things like needing portable power packs, to dealing with critters, local law enforcement, or even yokels with guns. On top of this, many of these people, especially in the Northeast, have to drive for 3+ hours just to get to a site decently dark enough for deep-sky astronomy. How fortunate we are that we don't have to deal with any of these things.

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February's Asterism The Coat Hanger - Collinder - 399

By: Steve Goldberg

Asterism: a grouping of stars that form a recognizable pattern.

Constellation: Vulpecula

Right Ascension: 19 h, 26 m 12s

Declination: 20° 06' 00"

Magnitude: 3.6

Size: 60' (minutes)

The "Coat Hanger" is a group of stars in the constellation Vulpecula, between Cygnus and Sagitta. It is easily located between the star Albireo in Cygnus and the 2 brightest stars in Sagitta: Alpha and Beta. This open

cluster has the official names of Collinder 399 (CR 399) and OCL 113 (Open Cluster). ...

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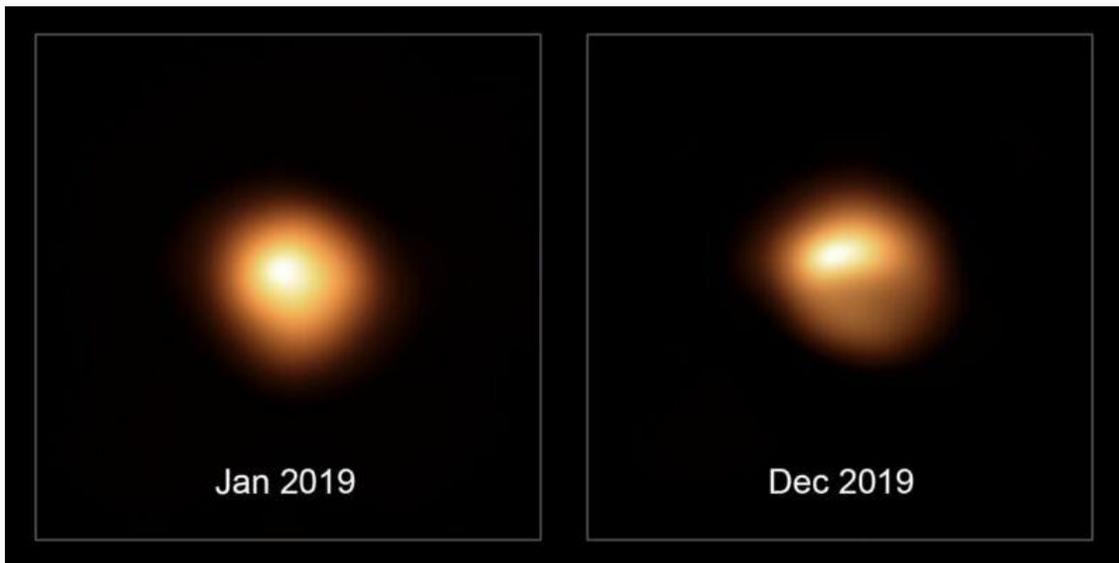
Outreach report for Valentine's event at the Schaefer Observatory

by Rene Gedaly

Friday night February 14th could not have been better weather for a public observing event. Folks seemed to know it, too, as they travelled to Schulenburg from as far away as the east side of Houston. Inside a warm classroom, I gave a brief talk about what we were going to see, and why, to a couple of dozen stargazers ranging in age from 3 to 63. For this crowd, Lepus became the Bunny Rabbit and Orion the Hunter was armed with

shield and club. We did have several teenagers, so Messier 35 in Gemini became Castor's toe ring. One 12-year-old boy didn't see the Big Dipper asterism rising in the north but the Rocket Ship! You can see it, too, if you extend the end stars of the dipper bowl to the snout of the Big Bear. I told him I'd be using that asterism of his from now on.

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Credit: ESO/M. Montargès et al.

Dimming Betelgeuse had astronomers and the public speculating that the star might go supernova. The wait continues as the giant star has started brightening again.

If it really will be one hundred thousand years before the fireworks, none of us will be around to see them. Read more and find out what Betelgeuse will look like after it goes BANG!

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MARCH 2020

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Holidays and Observances: 17: St. Patrick's Day

www.wiki-calendar.com

EVENT CALENDAR FOR MARCH 2020

Click on Events for More Info

[Mar 14th - Novice Lab at the Dark Site](#)

[Mar 15th - 2:00pm - Planetary Palooza - A Family STEM Activity](#)

[Mar 21st - HAS Dark Site - Messier Marathon](#)

[Mar 27th - Schaefer Observatory Star Party](#)

Mar 28th - Messier Marathon - Rain Date