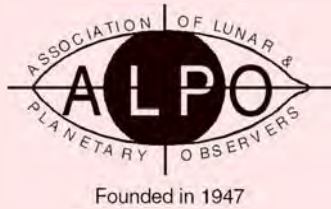


Journal of the Association of Lunar & Planetary Observers



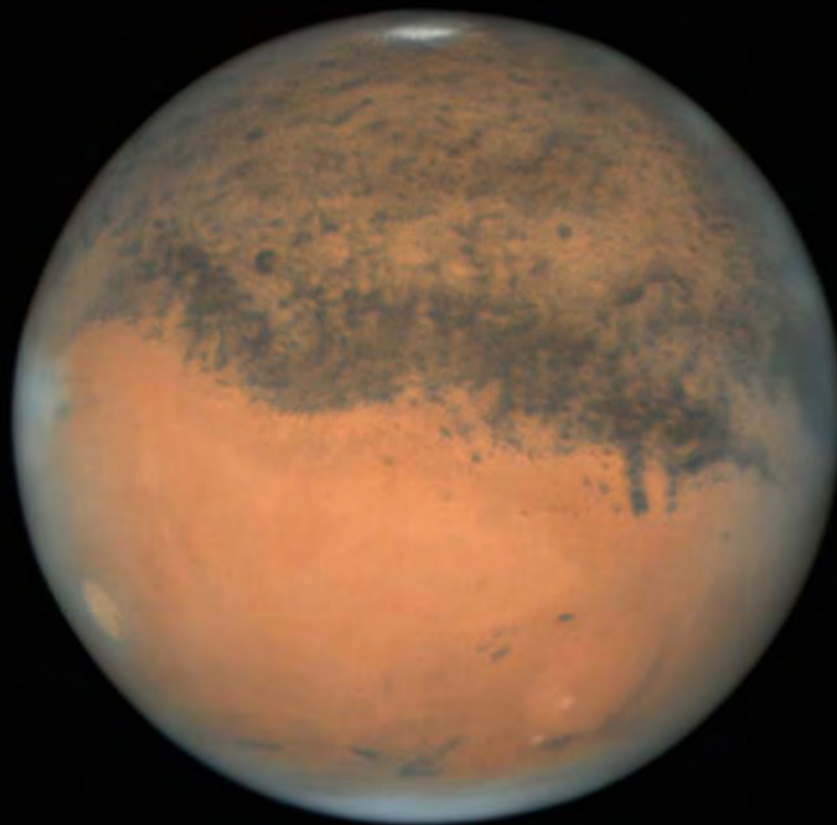
The Strolling Astronomer

Volume 63, Number 2 Spring 2021

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Mars: Almost within arm's reach
(See page 3 for image details.)

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Volume 63, No.2, Spring 2021

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The purpose of this journal is to share observation reports, opinions, and other news from ALPO members with other members and the professional astronomical community.

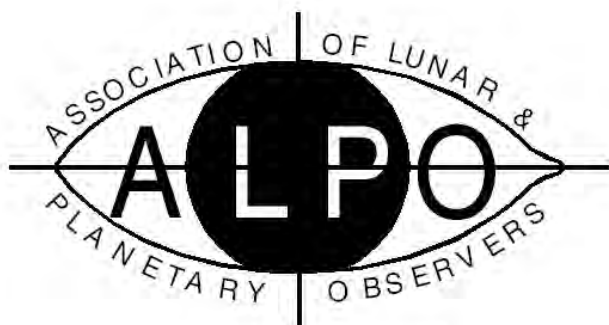
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Inside the ALPO Member, section and activity news

Individuals interested in participating in the programs of the ALPO Venus Section are encouraged to visit the ALPO Venus Section online <http://www.alpo-astronomy.org/venusblog/>

Lunar Section

Lunar Topographical Studies / Selected Areas Program

Report by David Teske,
program coordinator
drteske@yahoo.com

The ALPO Lunar Topographic Studies Section (ALPO LTSS) received a total of 225 observations from 29 observers in 8 countries during the October-December 2020 quarter. The countries represented by observers were Argentina (10), USA (6), Italy (2), Columbia (1), Uruguay (5), France (1), Bolivia (1), Mexico (2) and unreported (1).

It is most impressive to have so many high-quality lunar observations submitted from so many observers throughout the world, particularly Latin America. A total of 27 articles were published in addition to numerous commentaries on images selected in the monthly newsletter *The Lunar Observer*, which had an average page count of 71 pages per issue during the quarter. It was placed on the *Cloudy Nights* website and viewed an average of 161 times in each month of the quarter.

Throughout the quarter, *The Lunar Observer* included a section called “By the Numbers,” which looked at observer’s locations and telescopes used for Moon gazing. In all three months, Schmidt-Cassegrain telescopes were the most common telescope for lunar observations, followed by Maksutov-Cassegrain telescopes.

The “Focus-On” series continued under Jerry Hubbell, with the continuation of the “Lunar 100” observing program



Pastel drawing of the Moon-and-Mars conjunction on September 9, 2020, at 06:00 UT by Michel Deconinck (Aquarellia Observatory, Verdon, France). Observed with a 152 mm (6.0 in.), f/8 Bresser refractor; magnification 32x. Time span to complete this drawing, 05:50 to 07:00 UT.

during this quarter. Every other month starting in May 2020 explores 10 of the “Lunar 100” targets. In November 2020, the fourth 10 items on the “Lunar 100” list were featured, and in January 2021 the fifth set of 10 were explored. We have had an incredible response from across the globe, including contributions images and drawings of these lunar subjects.

Future “Focus-On” articles will highlight observations from the Lunar 100 observing list. The “Lunar 100” observing list was originally compiled by Charles Wood as a list of 100 targets to observe on the Moon from very easy (Lunar 100 number 1, the Moon) to very challenging (Lunar 100 number 100, Mare Marginus swirls). Every other month will feature 10 of the “Lunar 100” targets in the “Focus-On” series. March 2021 will feature “Lunar 100”



Inside the ALPO Member, section and activity news

Introducing Michel Deconinck

Michel is the newly appointed acting assistant coordinator for the ALPO Comets Section and works with that section's lead coordinator, Carl Hergenrother. Below is how he entered the world of astronomy and the ALPO:

A retired nuclear engineer, Michel worked first for different nuclear medicine projects and then as senior principal consultant at Oracle.

He's been a fan of the cosmos since the very beginning of the space conquest. "I still remember, I was age 5, the 'bip-bip' of the first Sputnik. And then follows the different missions with 'supermen' on board of incredible spaceships."

He joined the CAB (the Brussel Astronomical Club) as member and quickly moved up to being president. "I worked for some specific jobs at the Royal Belgium Observatory, mainly around the solar specialties (Wolf number estimation, corona polarization during eclipse, spectroscopy, solar interferometry...). Jannik (my wife) helps me with this passion; she is very motivating and this is a huge help!"

He first learned of the ALPO by way of his interest in meteors. "I've active in naked-eye meteor observation since 1970. At that time, I joined the past IUAA (a sort of an IAU branch for the amateur, as coordinator for the meteor section). For example I'm in contact with Robert Lunsford (of the ALPO Meteors Section and the American Meteor Society). On the cloudynights.com forum, I regularly read Carl Hergenrother's great comets notes, so the link with ALPO was natural."

Michel also is an avid sketcher, as well as an observer. "As a long-time astro-sketcher, I was interested first in the huge database of comet images maintained in ALPO. For me, this is "THE" world's best reference. In parallel, I'm interested in information about the Lunar, Mercury and Venus sections of the ALPO, where I send my sketches, as well.

As an imager, he had a chance to catch a good photo of the comet West 1975. That photo was used in national newspapers and some books and "was probably the starting point for my comet passion." In 1986, Michel joined the International Halley Watch in order to collect observations from Belgian astronomers and also organized a specific exhibition for the Université libre de Bruxelles (a research university in Brussels).

His mobile observatory (a lovely California van) is equipped with the following: a pair of Vixen 126mm, f/5 binoculars; a 102mm, f/10 refractor on an EQ3 mount motorized for right ascension; a 70mm, f/5 refractor on an altazimuth mount. In addition, Michel's backyard home observatory includes: a 152mm, f/8 refractor equipped with a white light filter and is dedicated mainly to daily sunspot counting and is used alongside a 35mm H-alpha Lunt solar telescope (both of which are on an EQ5 mount motorized for declination and right ascension; and 250mm, f/10 and f/15 Takahashi Mewlon (Dall-Kirkham) telescopes on GoTo EQ6 mounts. All are used only for observation and sketching.

I'm a navigator, sailing for years with my wife on our two-mast sailing boat in the Atlantic, the North seas and the med seas, and... using stars with a sextant to know where I was.

I'm an artist, today I teach art in different painting schools in Provence. Since years I specialize myself in night watercolors. I put in scene (with precision), the stars, planets and comets, this is the scientific part of the view, and in the foreground, I like to paint houses, trees, mountains and sometime an observer (with less precision but creativity) for the artistic counterpart.

I send astronomical alerts to the French speaking community. New objects as cataclysmic stars, aurora, meteors, etc... and of course new comets. I ask the contacts I have now, to share their photos, sketches and observations to ALPO.

I share to ALPO my own observations of comets, estimation of magnitude, coma diameter, DC, tails characteristics as well as the sketches done.

