

NAS viewing night September 07

Hi all

The weather was surprisingly good for the viewing night. Sky was darkest I've seen for a long time. Milky way was vivid. Not too cold either especially earlier in the night.

I used Star Atlas pro on my laptop as a star map. Found the Dumbbell Nebula in Vulpecula. Easily seen in my 6 inch scope. Much larger in Ron Williams 12 inch (we used that for the rest of the night). Put in the UHC nebula filter, it was stunning, the hourglass shape clear as well as the faint glow between that.

Ron suggested we try for the Ring Nebula in nearby Lyra. I looked up its position on Star Atlas pro, went to Ron's scope and in less than 10 seconds had it in view. Good to see my observing skills haven't waned since I've been using the Argo Navis telescope computer at home to find objects rather than manually like here :) The ring neb was a vivid green small donut, very nice.

The star Alberio was a nice sight through Ron's scope, a white and blue star together.

As the Veil nebula was nearby went for that next in Cygnus. I was surprised to see it so well, the part ngc 6960 near a bright star appearing as a vertical bar of diffuse nebulosity clearly seen. Star Atlas prop calls this the "filamentary nebula lace-work Nebula. On to the other section called NGC 6992 the "Network Nebula" it appears as a huge curved line of nebulosity that one has to move the scope to follow, its very large.

Now onto the Milky Way, where we observed some Messier globulars including M54, M70 and M69, also much fainter NGC 6652. Twin globulars NGC 6528 and 6522 were great, against the milky way backdrop, 2 fuzzy glows in the same view. Saw Planetary Nebula IC 4776, just 0.1 arc minutes in size, looking like a star that would not focus to a point. Onto Corona Australis where globular NGC 6723 was a nice resolved view. I was sunned also to be able to see in the same view the reflection nebulas NGC 6726 , around an isolated star and NGC 6729, isolated glowing areas in an otherwise nearly starless area of sky as there's a big dark nebula there blocking background starlight. I could actually see detail in the reflection nebulae.

We saw the helix Nebula in Aquarius. Without the filter it was a barely visible glow, with the filter a clearly visible smoke ring. The Saturn Nebula nearby a small bright greenish blob.

After moonrise found Uranus , high power showed a clear grayish disk.

Thanks to Ron for bringing his scope. Overall I'd say that the sky at this night was among the darkest I've seen at the Shortland site, quite dry, no dew and very few mosquitoes. Only after moonrise did it really start to cool off and get more humid. Was windy earlier for about an hour or so, from the west but it died down fast.

Scott