

2020 December Observations from Big Woodchuck Observatory

----- Original Message -----

Subject:[ORAS] Thursday and Friday night at Big Woodchuck

Date:Sun, 13 Dec 2020

Hi all,

After nearly a month of unusable skies, we finally got a break on Thursday 12/10 and a few hours on Friday 12/11. Since returning from my November trip to the ORAS Observatory, I have transitioned my ZWO ASI294MC camera with filter drawer back to the Atlas mount's main 8" SCT f6.3 optical tube and was back to using the 60mm f4 refractor as a guidescope. Additional wide-field imaging would now be done using only the Canon Zoom lens that also piggybacks on the 8" tube.

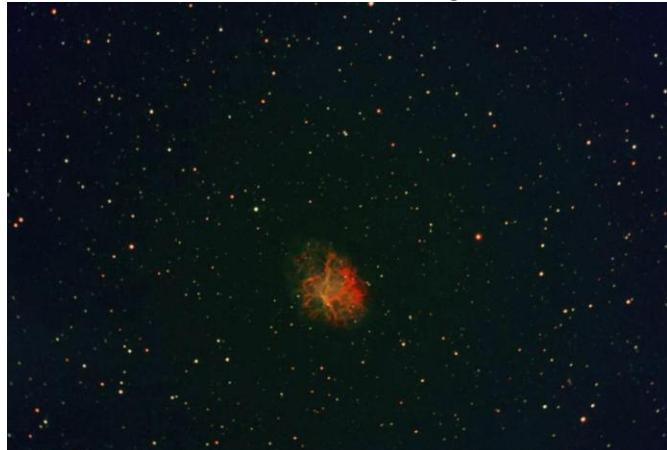
Thursday evening cleared-off nicely, but with the ground moist from the rainy weather earlier in the week, dew was heavy in the air giving the sky a slight hazy look toward the horizon. While I turned-up the dew heaters on the main scope, I forgot to turn on the domecam heater and by the time I remembered, it was too late for it. No video tonight. Having finished focusing the cameras on the telescope, I headed for clearer skies and slewed the 8" SCT on the Atlas mount to Cassiopeia high overhead.

Spent some time imaging a number of Sharpless-2 nebula with the L-eNhance narrowband filter, the best including NGC281 (SH2-184) "Pacman Nebula" and Simeis22 (SH2-188) a supernova remnant:



(ROI=4144x2822, 60 sec exposure each, for 30 minutes)

I then moved over to Taurus and imaged another SNR, Messier-1.



(ROI=4144x2822, 60 sec exposure each, for 30 minutes)

During the evening, several of us who were also out observing kept tabs in a txt chat. Denny was at his home observatory, Ed had his mobile observatory down in WV at Calhoun Park, Dean was out with his Binocs, and Dan was offering encouragement.

With the local time now after midnight and the prime Winter Constellations hitting the meridian, I decided to switch over to my wide-field project and image open clusters using the Canon Zoom lens and ASI290MC camera. (no filters). (M41, M50, M46, M47 - zoom lens set to 100mm @f5.6, ROI=1936x1096, stack of 40 subs, 15 secs, for 10 minutes)



M41



M50



M46



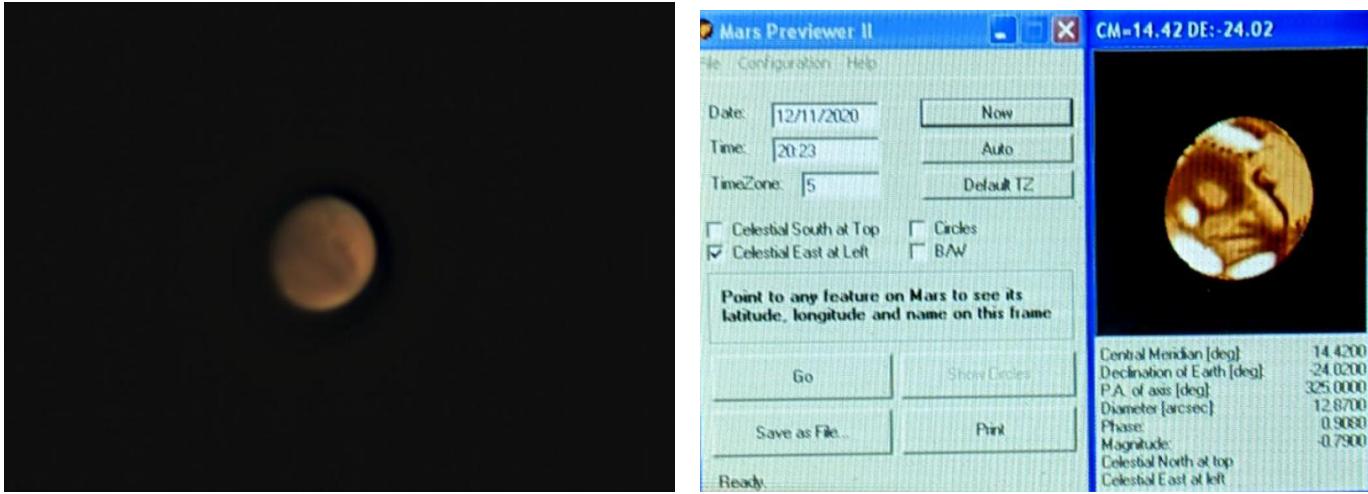
M47

By now, most of the other guys had already called it quits for the night, but I stuck it out till 4am before closing up. It was a good night!

Friday afternoon, the sky began to go downhill with hazy, scattered clouds.

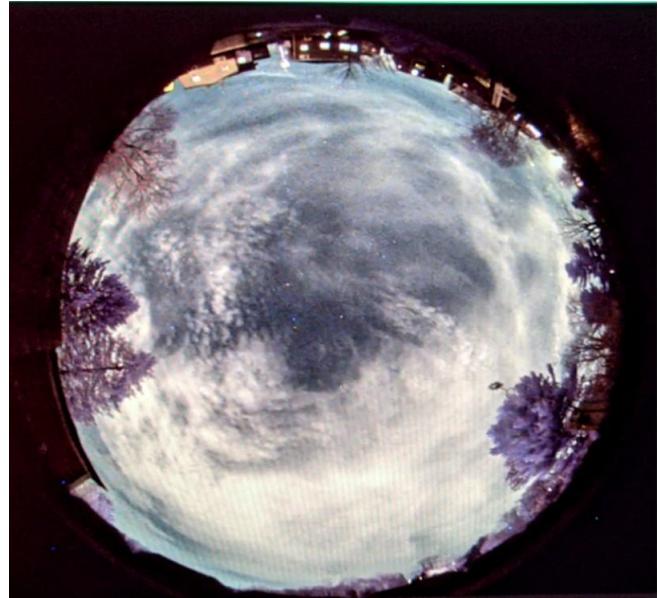
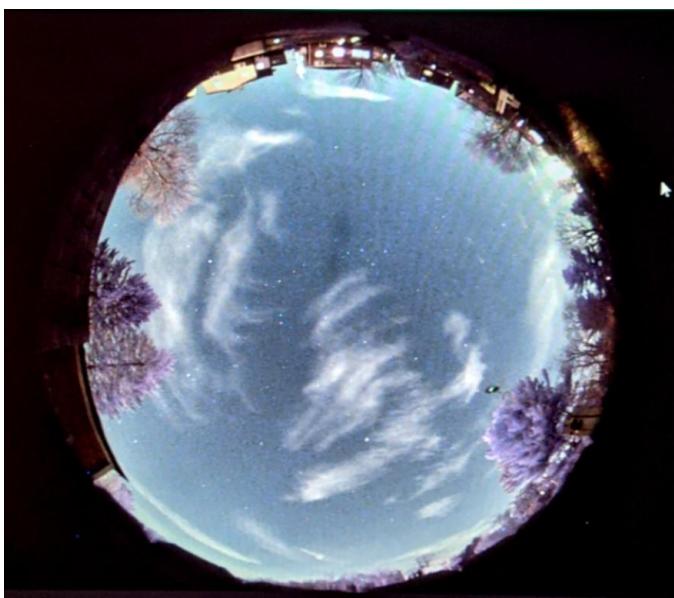
As I had everything setup and ready from the previous night, I decided to head outback and at least try for Mars, and maybe a few bright deepsky objects. Also, with the upcoming Sunday night peak of the Geminids looking to be a washout, I wanted to let my domecam (with dew heater this time turned on), image all night in hopes of capturing a few early Geminid meteors.

With Mars now having dropped several magnitudes in brightness and 10+ arc seconds in disk diameter since its close approach in October, this will be my very last image of the Red planet for this opposition. Surface detail, while still visible, was smaller and un-sharp. Using my home observatory 8" LX200GPS SCT and my ZWO ASI120MC camera & IR filter, I captured a 90 second avi clip and processed that with Registax6, stacking around 2500 frames. Here's the result:



Sinus Sabaeus and the South Pole are the most prominent features.

While imaging Mars, I was keeping an eye on the domecam, watching more clouds intruding overhead.



I abandoned doing any long exposures, and quickly pointed the 8" f6.3 SCT on the Atlas mount to open cluster M103 in Cassiopeia. I was able to get in an image with the ASI294MC camera and L-Pro filter.



M103: (ROI=4144x2822, stack of 40 subs at 15 secs for a 10 min exposure)

Shortly after finishing the cluster, the clouds took over and I called it a night.

The next day, after flipping though all the images captured by the domecam (ASI220MC camera & fisheye lens), I did manage to snag one meteor thru the clouds. Here's a close-up:



So, here's hoping for another backyard observing session in the coming New Moon period.
Also, fingers crossed for clear skies on the 21st for the Jupiter/Saturn conjunction!

Larry