

March 3th at Big WoodChuck

Here in Pittsburgh, we had a mild afternoon with clear blue skies. I spent the afternoon out in the backyard observatory creating new flats for using later that night. Headed back outdoors at 7pm to open the observatory roof and prep the telescope. Tested the new flats on the HorseHead in Orion and M35 in Gemini. Looks good. Unfortunately, by 8pm, clouds began moving thru overhead, and 15 minutes later, after a quick check of the weather satellite, I shutdown the scope, close the roof and headed indoors. No observing tonight, but it was a good equipment check session, LOL.

March 4th at Big WoodChuck

Another beautiful clear afternoon, so I had hopes for better luck tonight. Headed outside at 8pm, and after quickly setting up the laptop and powering on the telescope, I was soon EAA observing the Medusa nebula, Also known as Abell-21 or SH2-274 in Gemini using the 8" SCT @ f6.3 and the ASI294MC Pro camera & L-eNhance narrowband filter. Abell-21 was one of the March CloudyNights EAA observing objects. Here's the observation:



(180 second sub exposures, livestacked for 9 minutes).

I then dropped down in altitude to the planetary nebula NGC2440 in Puppis. I needed an EAA observation of the object for the March Observers Challenge report. This turned out to be a bit difficult as the reflected glare from the neighborhood patio lights was causing gradient issues. It didn't help that a steady breeze had sprung-up and clouds began to glide out of the southwest. Here' the observation with the 8" SCT:



(60 second sub exposures, livestacked for 5 minutes).

Decided to call it quits at 10pm.

March 11th at Big WoodChuck

After a day of scattered clouds, at sunset the sky cleared, so I hurried out at 8pm and opened up the observatory. Except for the occasional wind gust, it was a decent night. Started off in Orion observing planetary nebula NGC2022, a pretty little blue-green orb. Here's the observation with the 8" f6.3 SCT & ASI294MC:



(15 second sub exposures, livestacked for 15 minutes).

I continued in Orion hunting several small SH2 emission nebula, SH2-266, SH2-267, and SH2-269 before Orion sets behind the observatory western sidewall. Here's the best two, SH2-266 & SH2-269 with the 8" SCT:



(60 second sub exposures, livestacked for 15 minutes).

Having much better luck tonight, I dropped back southwards to Puppis for another go at NGC2440.

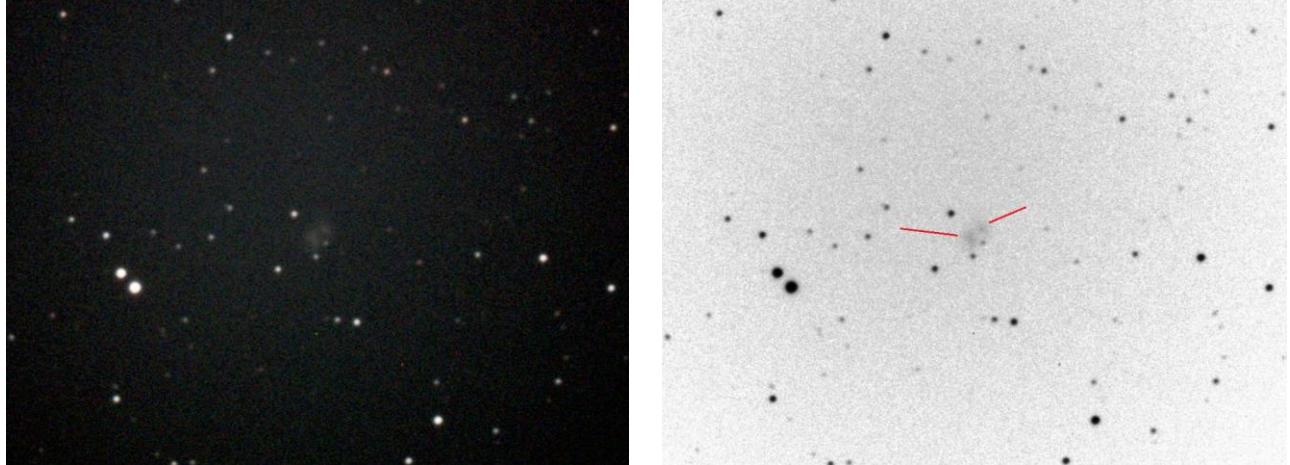
This time, I went with a much lower exposure of only 5 seconds so as not to overexpose the planetary.

Using EAA techniques, the two bright bi-polar condensations can be seen, while with a higher stacked exposure, grainy ansae appear to either side of the core. The central star was not visible. Here's the observation:



(5 second sub exposures, livestacked for 15 minutes).

With most of the Winter Milky-Way heading towards my southwest horizon, I slewed the telescope over eastwards to Hydra for a little Arp Peculiar galaxy hunting. These included Arp7 – MCG3-23-9, Arp257 – UGC4638, and Arp275 – NGC2881. The best of these was the NGC galaxy, Arp275:



(Using the L-Pro broadband filter, 120 second sub exposures, livestacked for 16 minutes).

With the time past 1am, I decided to call it a night.

Parked the scope, shutdown the laptop, closed the observatory roof, turned off the propane heat, and walked back up the hill to the house.

Was planning on heading back out the next evening, but at sunset the sky had gone to a hazy hell, so stayed in. The following day, with a still poor forecast showing for that evening, I decided to pack up my imaging kit and bring it back up to the house to prepare for the April trip for the Solar Eclipse.
Thus ends this winter deep-sky season at Big WoodChuck Observatory!

Larry