

AOS Messier Marathon Observing Awards

It is even more fun if shared with a group. To help with that you might look to see if there is an organized marathon in your area like the All Arizona Messier Marathon. A few dozen marathoners really adds to the excitement as well as provides a lot of mutual support when you get stuck or need a little encouragement to make it into the wee hours of the morning. To find a list of events across the country (or even a couple other countries) you can go to the best marathon resource on the web, <http://www.seds.org/messier/xtra/marathon/mm2004.html>. You can also read through a history of the results of past marathons, including the first marathons.

The Messier Marathon presents an opportunity to view the entire Messier List in one night. Each spring, the period around the Vernal Equinox on March 20, allows observers to view all 110 of the Messier objects in one observing session. During other weekends in March and April, the appearance of the moon during part of the night will hinder observers from viewing the whole list.

To make your Messier Marathon more fun and rewarding, the AAAA has provided a Messier Marathon Packet in Adobe Acrobat 3.0 PDF format. The packet contains a checklist and observing sheet for you to use to keep track of your observations. This is intended to be a fun project, so observing and recording on the checklist is done on the honor system. Finding objects and sharing observations with other observers is OK.

You may use any size telescope or binoculars for the Marathon, since the intent is to SEE the object, rather than to OBSERVE and LOG it. For this reason, it is OK to use setting circles and other electronic devices, even though such observations would not qualify you for the Astronomical League's Messier Certificate.

Start with M77 right after sunset, and continue on to M30 just before dawn. Use your own star charts and maps to help you find the individual objects if you do not already know where they are. You will find there will be periods of inactivity while you wait for the next object to come up, and periods of frantic activity trying to find that one last object before it sets. While the objective is to see all 110 objects, a very difficult project, whatever total number of objects you observe will be a successful night. And if you do not see all of the objects in one night, you can always try again next year!

You can observe anytime during March or April that you have an opportunity to be out. The objects will be up!

This is a great club project for any astronomy club. Get your friends together and go out and observe! Messier Marathon, with a log sheet/checkoff list and telrad circle finder charts, just for the download. It's at <http://www.messiermarathon.com/>. These have the suggested order to try them in as well as locations magnitudes, level of difficulty etc. check them out,

For those interested in trying the Messier Marathon at our AOS observing sessions, there are awards to be received.

<u># of objects viewed in one night</u>	<u>Award Level</u>
20	Novice
40	Intermediate
75	Expert
100 or more	Master

Document when, where and through what equipment. Descriptions and/or drawings not required. Submit all reports to the Activities Director within 30 days.