



Webmaster's Focus

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Messiers Wrapped Up

Remember the times when every astronomer was a visual observer and Messier objects were the most popular targets?

The [Messier List](#), created by comet hunter Charles Messier 250 years ago, was intended to record deep sky objects which could be confused with a comet. It was top heavy with globular clusters but became a very popular catalogue of bright objects.

Our Society once handed out [certificates](#) for observers who ticked off 30, 60, 90 and 100 Messiers by star-hopping. Sometimes, Messier nights were held and it was a race to see who bagged the most in one session.

I was slow. It took me two years to log 100 Messier eye-piece sightings. Then, after I ceased observational astronomy and became an astro-photographer, I reset the count to zero. It's taken me ten years to image 57 Messiers.

I doubt if I will go much further. There are too many other attractive targets that are not Messiers. That's because astro-photographers can see deeper than Messier did, by exposing for hours.

Shapley, Sharpless, Gum, IC, NGC, Abell, Lynd, RCW, Arp, Caldwell....the [available lists](#) are seemingly endless.

But spare a thought for the demise of the once all-important Messier List.

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