

THE CENTRAL FLORIDA ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY, INC.

MESSIER OBSERVING CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

1. **Introduction:** Welcome to the CFAS Messier certificate program. This program has been created by CFAS to foster a greater interest in astronomical observing by our members. It's been shown that by having a structured observing goal amateur astronomers will enjoy the hobby more, and by doing so learn more about the universe. This program is designed for all CFAS members whether they are experienced observers or just beginning. The majority of these objects can be found through binoculars or small telescopes. However to do so requires viewing from a dark site during periods of no moon. The CFAS eight inch loaner Dobsonian telescopes are perfect for viewing all these objects. Each of these telescopes is equipped with a TELRAD finder that can be used with supplied Messier star charts to easily find these objects. You will not only just enjoy observing these objects, but will learn the night sky as well.
2. **Why observe Messier Objects in the first place?** The **Messier Catalog**, sometimes known as the **Messier Album** or list of **Messier objects**, is one of the most useful tools in the astronomy hobby. In the middle of the 18th century, the return of Halley's comet helped to prove the Newtonian theory, and helped to spark a new interest in astronomy. During this time, a French astronomer named Charles Messier began a life-long search for comets. He would eventually discover 15 of them. On August 28, 1758, while searching for comets, Messier found a small cloudy object in the constellation Taurus. He began keeping a journal of these nebulous (cloudy) objects so that they would not be confused with comets. This journal is known today as the Messier Catalog, or Messier Album. The objects in the catalog are commonly referred to as **Messier objects**. It remains to state that all of Messier's instruments could probably not compete with a modern 4-inch refractor or 6-inch Newton reflector. Therefore, even moderately equipped amateurs of current days can easily hunt down all the objects he observed and cataloged.
3. **Procedure.** In the CFAS Observing Messier Certificate section of our web site you will find the following documents:
 - a. [CFAS Messier Observing Program Instructions.pdf](#). This document.
 - b. [Messier Certificate Data Log.pdf](#). Print this document to record your field observation.
 - c. [Messier Certificate Data Log.docx](#). Use this excel document to permanently record your field observations. Use it also to help plan your observing sessions. It is full of hot links to the messier objects including star charts with Telrad targets. When you have completed the program, print off this Log and submit it to the CFAS Observing chairman.
 - d. [The Ultimate Messier Guide and Log.pdf](#). This is another great guide. Use it in its electronic version. Not recommended to print out since it is over 100 pages.
 - e. [Messier Guide.pdf](#). This is another Messier reference document with Telrad star charts included. You can print off star charts for your observing sessions.

The program requires you to log your observations on the Messier Certificate Data Log. When completed turn it into the CFAS observing chairman. You will be awarded a Formal Messier Certificate and pin at the following meeting. You can use a Goto scope system, but must indicate this on your Certificate Data Log. You may consider using a Goto scope first and then do it again with a Dobsonian telescope. The only other equipment you need is a planisphere to help you find the constellations.