

THE LUNAR OBSERVER

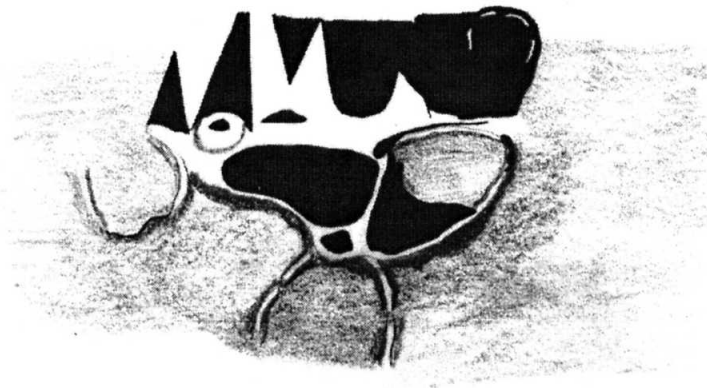
A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR STUDENTS OF THE MOON
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FEATURE(S) OF THE MONTH

Agatharchides ($19.8^{\circ}\text{S} - 30.9^{\circ}\text{W}$)

Hippalus ($24.8^{\circ}\text{S} - 30.2^{\circ}\text{W}$)



Sketch by Patrick Thibault - Willmar, MN.

8" Reflector - 102X - North ==>

On the western edge of Mare Humorum lie the craters Agatharchides and Hippalus. Agatharchides is 49 km in diameter and has discontinuous walls which rise, at their highest point, about 1,500 meters above its floor. The floor has obviously been flooded with mare material and is virtually featureless in a small telescope. Hippalus is slightly larger at 58 km and its walls have been heavily damaged. Several very prominent clefts cross the region, one of them runs right through the floor of Hippalus. The only other prominent feature on the floor of Hippalus is a 5 km crater (Hippalus-B).

On February 8, 1998, Patrick Thibault of Willmar, MN sketched the region around these two craters and submitted the following report:

"Skimming along the terminator with my 8-inch f/6 reflector I noted a spectacular display of sharp-angled, black and white, triangular markings. Two craters also filled this area: Agatharchides and Hippalus. Hippalus, in the drawing, displays just an outline, almost horseshoe in shape at the south end.

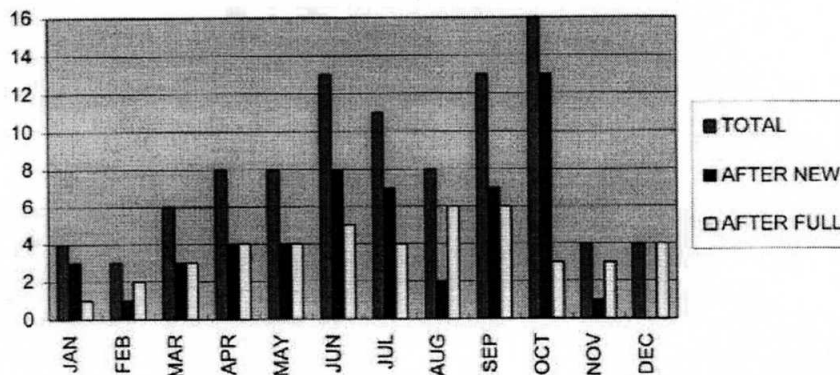
Agatharchides occupies the north end and a liquid pool of black covers almost half of the interior. This crater is a flooded crater. West of Agatharchides is an outline of a ghost crater, just the tops of the rim can be seen."

Thanks to Patrick for his sketch and written observations. This pair of craters can be found on Map #52 of Rukl's Atlas of the Moon and should be under similar lighting about eleven days after New Moon.

Lunar Observer's Notebook:

How clear are your skies? Are they pretty good, or just average, or are they awful? Living in western Pennsylvania I knew that mine were awful. I think it was even listed on my birth certificate: Weight: 8 lb. 4 oz., Skies: Awful. But just how awful is awful? I decided to find out.

Every night, for all of 1997, I charted the sky overhead. I made no allowances for sub-zero temperatures or high winds, both of which can make observing impossible on clear nights. I simply charted the sky in terms of "clear or cloudy." Being primarily a lunar observer, I did keep records in relation to the lunar phase. I divided the nights into two broad categories; After New (including New) and After Full (including Full). The accompanying graph shows the results.



My location had a total of only 98 clear nights out of 365 (26.8%). Subtract from that the nine clear nights that occurred within a day of New Moon, when lunar observing is rather unrewarding, and the total becomes 89 (24.4%). That seems to quantify "awful" but it's not the whole story.

Here's the interesting part: Of the 89 possible nights for lunar observing, how many did I actually utilize? I'm embarrassed to say that it was fewer than 30. Oh, sure, nearly half of the 89 came after the Full Moon when observing is "inconvenient" but is that the result of bad skies? Is the weather man the only villain here? If you decide to quantify your skies, be sure to take a look at how many of the clear nights you're utilizing. And, for a real eye-opener, try keeping track of how many minutes per session you actually spend observing. You may be unpleasantly surprised.

..... *Bill Dembowski*

Observations Received During The Month:

Francis G. Graham - East Pittsburgh, PA - Photograph of Mare Nectaris

Robert H. Hays, Jr. - Worth, Illinois - Sketch of Pythagoras

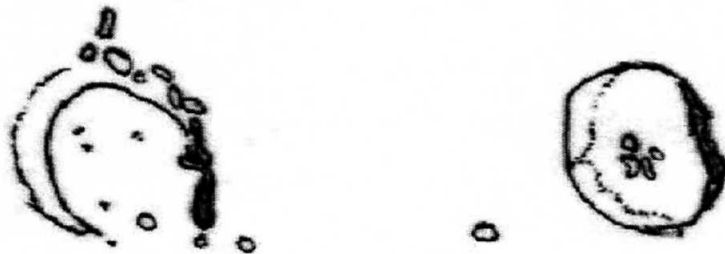
Robert H. Hays, Jr. - Worth, Illinois - Sketch of Arago

Patrick Thibault - Willmar, MN. - Sketch of Agatharchides & Hippalus

Lunar Calendar for March 1998 (UT)

1.....09:00.....Moon 1.0 Degrees South of Saturn
5.....00:45.....Moon Occults Aldebaran
5.....08:42.....First Quarter
11.....07:00.....Moon 1.5 Degrees South of Regulus
13.....04:34.....Full Moon
15.....01:00.....Moon at Apogee (406,178 km)
21.....07:39.....Last Quarter
24.....09:00.....Moon 3.2 Degrees North of Uranus
28.....03:14.....New Moon (Start of Lunation 931)
28.....07:00.....Moon at Perigee (357,015 km)

Topographical Studies:



FRACASTORIUS

THEOPHILUS

Sketches by Gus Johnson - Swanton, Maryland

2" f/12 Jaegers Refractor - 100X

August 24, 1986