

THE MINOR PLANET BULLETIN

BULLETIN OF THE MINOR PLANETS SECTION OF THE
ASSOCIATION OF LUNAR AND PLANETARY OBSERVERS

VOLUME 49, NUMBER 2, A.D. 2022 APRIL-JUNE

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SECTION NEWS: ROBERT STEPHENS NAMED ASSOCIATE COORDINATOR OF THE MINOR PLANETS SECTION

Frederick Pilcher, Coordinator
ALPO Minor Planets Section

I am pleased to announce that Robert Stephens has accepted an invitation to the position of Associate Coordinator of the Minor Planets Section of the ALPO. As Associate Coordinator, Bob will assist and advise Coordinator Frederick Pilcher on the affairs of the Minor Planets Section. Pilcher anticipates retiring as Section Coordinator at an undetermined date a few years hence. At that time Stephens will advance to Section Coordinator.

Bob started observing asteroid lightcurves in 1999 and in the more than 20 subsequent years he has authored or co-authored over 300 research papers, including almost 1100 asteroid lightcurves, and 18 binary asteroid discoveries. He is a Full Member of the American Astronomical Society and a member of its Division for Planetary Sciences. Stephens is Treasurer of both the American Association of Variable Star Observers and the Society for Astronomical Sciences. He is also past President and past Treasurer of the Riverside Astronomical Society. Asteroid (39890) Bobstephens was named in his honor by the International Astronomical Union.

Please join me in welcoming Bob to this new role and in offering thanks for agreeing to this service.

CALL FOR OBSERVATIONS

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Observers who have made visual, photographic, or CCD measurements of positions of minor planets in calendar year 2021 are encouraged to report them to this author on or before 2022 April 1. This will be the deadline for receipt of reports, for which results can be included in the "General Report of Position Observations for 2021," to be published in *MPB* Vol. 49, No. 3.

CALL FOR MINOR PLANET OBSERVERS TO JOIN THE ALPO EXOPLANET SECTION

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This is a call for interested minor planet observers to join in the effort to observe exoplanets as a member of the Exoplanet Section of the Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers (ALPO). Minor planet observers already possess a large part of the requisite skills and knowledge to perform effective observations and provide high-quality data.

In November 2020, the ALPO Board of Directors approved the formation of the Exoplanet Section and appointed this author as the Acting Coordinator. The initial mission of the Exoplanet Section is to train members in the current techniques used to obtain high quality data and perform the high-precision measurements needed to not only detect exoplanets using the transit method, but also to model the measured exoplanet orbit. This modeling will help to refine the ephemerides of the exoplanet and contribute valuable data needed to fully understand these new celestial bodies.

The Exoplanet Section was originally formed with the following groups:

1. Instrumentation Group
2. Observing Program Group
3. Analysis & Modeling Group
4. Exoplanet Data Reporting Group
5. Exoplanet Observation Training Group

The primary goal of the Instrumentation Group is to define and demonstrate valid instrument configurations and components including the selection of off-the-shelf instruments, the determination of configuration settings and parameters, and researching the use and application of new instrument systems, subsystems, and components. Additional work is needed to understand and measure the different sources of error due to the instruments used for the observation of exoplanet transits.

The primary goal of the Observing Program Group is to provide the needed resources for members to be able to easily identify exoplanets to observe and develop the information needed to acquire the observations and do the analysis of the observations for specific exoplanets. Processes and procedures will also be developed to coordinate observations of specific exoplanet transit events between our members.

The Analysis and Modeling group members are interested in learning how to process the data acquired during their own observation runs or may be interested in processing and analyzing other member's data. It is expected that the group members will develop and improve data processing and analysis techniques and perhaps develop new and improved exoplanet transit modeling tools. A large part of this group's members may be dedicated to computer-based analysis and modeling automation tools in the future.

The primary role of the Exoplanet Data Reporting Group is to coordinate the transfer of data and analysis results to those external professional and other organizations that want and need the exoplanet observation data our members create. The reporting group will also manage and archive all member data and analysis results in a standard format suitable for searching and for the development of papers based on the exoplanet members' observations. Finally, the Reporting Group will coordinate the work of our members with professional exoplanet observing programs to provide pro/am opportunities, to contribute to real research, and to realize the opportunity to get published in professional papers.

The Exoplanet Observation Training Group will provide members with documents, procedures, presentations, and other training material developed by the section needed to learn how to observe and analyze transit data and report exoplanet transit observations. The Training Group members will also maintain contact with the larger exoplanet observing community to bring "best practices" and relevant information back to the exoplanet section for implementation as desired.

The purpose of this "Call for Observers" brief is to solicit interested minor planet observers to join the Observing Program Group and provide observations of exoplanet transits using the techniques and procedures developed by the Exoplanet Section. Your contributions in reviewing procedures and further developing and refining techniques are also welcome.

Here are a few resources to get you started in finding targets to start your planning. The resources here are used by the TESS Follow-up Observation Program (TFOP) members. The astronomers at the MSRO are on the TFOP team as part of the SG1 group (Seeing-limited Observing group) managed by Dr. Karen Collins, Harvard & Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics.

The ExoFOP-TESS for the TESS TOI and KELT-FP observations:

<https://exofop.ipac.caltech.edu/tess>

You must apply for your own ExoFOP-TESS account:

<https://exofop.ipac.caltech.edu/account.html>

The TESS Transit Finder (TTF) is used to find events for your location on the night(s) of interest:

http://astro.swarthmore.edu/telescope/tess/find_tess_transits.cgi

TESS Observations Coordinator (TOC) is used to list your planned observations to let other SG1 team members know what you are planning to observe:

<http://www.astro.louisville.edu/tessplanner>

Your inquiries are welcome! Please contact Jerry Hubbell at jerry.hubbell@alpo-astronomy.org if you are interested in joining the ALPO Exoplanet Section, or if you would like more information.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: It is with great enthusiasm that the Minor Planets Section Coordinator and *Minor Planet Bulletin* Editor endorse this invitation for experienced minor planet observers to also consider contributing their expertise and efforts toward the exciting and emerging science of exoplanet photometry.]