

Soon after the first visit to Shekinah Camp, approximately 50 km west of Bela Bela, many members expressed the wish to visit the venue again.

The Centre's second visit to Shekinah during the weekend of 7 to 9 September 2012, was attended by some 13 members and visitors, who thoroughly enjoyed the weekend.

The Friday morning was totally overcast in Pretoria and many people probably thought the weekend would be wasted, but as we drove north during the afternoon the sky started clearing. The evening's viewing started under partly cloudy skies, but the clouds quickly disappeared and great viewing was possible until around 11:30 when dew settled on finder scopes and eyepieces of the two telescopes that were set up, making viewing impossible. That put an end to the evening's activities and everyone retired for a warm drink and bed. Compared to the first visit, this was a warm weekend and no one really complained as a result of the cold.

The Saturday evening's viewing was much easier, since there was no cloud by the time the sun had set. Percy Jacobs and Johann Moolman continued their quest for the ASSA 100, while some other people tackled the very difficult task of finding and measuring W Sagitarii, a variable star in Sagitarius. Much time was also spent teaching the four young visitors about the sky and astronomy. In the end Percy had trained one of them to be his navigator through the dark skies!

A highlight of the evening was the handing over of an eight inch Orion reflector to the manager of the Shikinah, Piet Bennet. This 'scope was donated to the Centre by Johann Moolman and it was decided to present it to Piet, due to his more than average knowledge of astronomy.

His parting words on Sunday morning was that our members must remember that they can come visit any time and there is a telescope available with which to view the Shekinah skies.

This visit was arranged by Michelle Ferreira, a new committee member, who unfortunately could not attend the event. We all thank her for her hard work, making the arrangements for an enjoyable weekend. And those were doubtful of the weather, you missed a great weekend of star gazing and camaraderie.

Shekinah has excellent facilities for star gazers, with clear views of the northern, western and southern horizons and very little reflected light from human settlements. During new moon the sky is really dark, with the Milky Way bright and clear above. This makes for great viewing of all the faint and fuzzies in the sky. A well planned viewing programme should enable the star gazer to reach the target of the 100 ASSA list easily.

The accommodation is varied, consisting amongst others, of 13 dormitory style rooms each sleeping up to 18 people, with communal ablution blocks. The resort also has four small flatlets with two beds each and private bathrooms. There are also more luxurious houses, each sleeping 12 people in various configurations. More information is available on their web site <http://www.shekinahkamp.co.za>.

The camp is situated in the greater Mabula nature reserve and game drives are also provided by the staff at the camp.