

Double Star Measures Using the Video Drift Method - IV

Richard L. Nugent
 International Occultation Timing Association
 Houston, Texas
 RNugent@wt.net

Ernest W. Iverson
 International Occultation Timing Association
 Lufkin, Texas
 ewiverson@consolidated.net

Abstract: Position angles and separations for 240 multiple star systems are presented using the video drift method. The drift method generates a Cartesian (x,y) coordinate pair for the primary and companion star for each video frame during the drift. Position angle and separation are calculated from these coordinates. Most doubles had multiple drifts observed over several nights resulting in 1,000's of (x,y) pairs analyzed per system. Several systems lacked measurements since the early 1900's or had less than 10 measurements since their discovery. The video drift method provides high systematic accuracy.

Introduction

In our first paper, Nugent and Iverson 2011, and subsequent papers, Nugent and Iverson 2012 and Nugent and Iverson 2013, (hereinafter called Papers I, II, and III) we described a new video method that computes both the position angle and separation for a double star. A short video clip of the multiple star system drifting across the field of view is used by the freeware program *Limovie* (Miyashita, 2006) to capture 100's to 1,000's of (x,y) positions for each component. Although *Limovie* was originally written to measure the change in light levels during an occultation, it also produces a table of Cartesian (x,y) coordinates for both components along with the brightness levels for each video frame. *VidPro*, an Excel program written by co-author RLN, reads the (x,y) coordinate data and computes a simultaneous solution for the position angle, separation and other statistical quantities for each double star system.

Paper I outlined the theory behind the video drift method and compared the results to several doubles that had no change in PA and separation for 120+ years. A

significant advantage of this method is that data collection and subsequent data analysis is almost completely automated with little human interaction. Since the method does not rely on visual measurements, it is not plagued by personal bias/personal error, or optical axis problems with eyepieces. This includes aberrations and distortions from the edge to the center of the field of view found in some eyepieces and the misalignment of eyepieces with the optical axis of the telescope.

Unlike other video/CCD methods, no calibration doubles are needed to determine plate scale, no line is drawn to determine the east-west direction, no star catalog is needed since no "plate adjustment" is performed, and no video frames are discarded. Each double star drift is self calibrating (see discussion below on pre-calibration). The *VidPro* program computes a unique scale factor, an offset from the east-west direction compared to the camera's pixel array, and standard deviations for both position angle and separation for each drift. The offset of the pixel array alignment of the video camera's chip from the true east-west direction (drift angle) is calculated using the method of least squares to

Double Star Measures Using the Video Drift Method - IV

an accuracy of better than 0.02° . Paper II provided the formulas for determining a unique PA and separation from a simultaneous solution of all the (x,y) pairs obtained from all the video drift runs made for a particular double star system.

Methodology

Preference was given to multiple star systems where the WDS lacked measurements for at least the past 10 years and had less than 10 previous measurements. This criterion applies to many of the multiple star systems measured at the epoch of their measurement. In some cases, where one component of a complex system meets this requirement, all of the other components were also measured for completeness even though they had been well measured in the past. Eleven systems lacked measurement since 1899-1933. The faintest system measured had primary/secondary magnitudes of +13.2, +14.4.

Calibration

During the preparation of our previous papers (Papers I, II, and III) we noticed that the measured values of some widely separated doubles often had noticeable deviations from the WDS catalog value. If the deviation seemed unusual we held back that measurement pending further investigation and additional measurements. These differences were typically not noticeable for double stars with separations less than 100 arc seconds.

This issue lies largely with the recording system's storage/compression method into a memory card or to a computer's hard drive. The telescope camera system also introduces small optical effects (aberrations, distortions, gnomonic projection) into the field of view recorded. However, for determining relative positions between two stars and the small field of view associated with double stars these optical effects can generally be ignored.

Author Nugent uses a digital video recorder (DVR) that stores videos onto a memory card. Author Iverson uses an analog 8mm video tape recorder that exports the video via a fire wire port into a computer. The re-

cording methods used by the authors (all recording methods will have these issues) skew the video format slightly as part of the compression scheme before copying the video into the storage medium. As a result, the field of view (image aspect ratio) is not a perfect match of the sky but slightly distorted.

To compensate for this we calibrated each recording system by adjusting the image aspect ratio until it matched the real sky. This was done forcing Limovie to open each video using an Avisynth video editor script (Rudiak-Gould, 2008) containing the filter "LanczosResize". Several long term stable WDS doubles (as verified by requesting the full observational catalog entry from the USNO) and from PA/Sep determined directly from RA, DEC coordinates in recent star catalogs from the VisieR database were used to determine the correct aspect ratio.

To do this we picked a convenient, standard video aspect ratio size of 640x480 pixels. Holding the horizontal scale (640 pixels) constant, we then varied the vertical scale to match the sky. Once determined, the aspect ratio was adjusted slightly by trial and error to give the best average data reduction performance. For our 14" SCT's the size that closely matched the sky was 640x510 for Nugent's system and 640x465 for Iverson's system. This calibration procedure only needs to be done once, and is valid until the hardware in the video path changes.

A common practice is to check the accuracy of new measurements by comparing them to the WDS summary catalog value. Unfortunately this is not a valid test of accuracy. The published WDS value is just the most recent value entered into the catalog. Although these measurements are typically very good, it should be pointed out that the last entry can have a significant error associated with it. False assumptions about the accuracy of a new measurement can also occur when the last catalog entry is several years old or the double star is undergoing rapid change.

The telescope equipment used and scale factors are summarized in Table 1. Results of the measurements made using the video drift method are given in Table 2.

(Continued on page 222)

Table 1. Telescopes used in this research. Scale factors vary slightly due to the declination of the doubles.

Telescope	Aperture	Focal Length	Scale Factor
Meade LX-200	14" (35 cm)	3350mm f/10	0.6"/pixel
Questar	3.5" (9 cm)	1299mm f/14.4	1.6"/pixel
Celestron Refractor	6" (15.2 cm)	1220mm f/8	1.4"/pixel (barlow)

Double Star Measures Using the Video Drift Method - IV

Table 2 (conclusion). Results of 240 double stars using the video drift method.

WDS	Discoverer	PA°	σ-PA	Sep"	σ-Sep	Date	# x-y pairs	Mag Pri	Mag Sec	Drifts	Nights
21218+0202	STF2787AB	20.2	0.3	22.4	0.1	2012.688	4099	7.49	8.64	6	2
21218+0202	STF2787AC	94.1	0.1	70.7	0.2	2012.751	3366	7.49	11.41	6	2
21376+0643	STT 443AB	348.5	0.9	8.0	0.1	2012.751	4245	9.47	9.67	6	2
21377+0637	STFA 56AB	348.6	0.2	38.6	0.1	2012.751	4208	6.18	7.50	6	2
21420+1856	STF2818AB	24.6	0.3	26.3	0.1	2012.745	4295	7.38	10.24	6	2
21434+3817	S 799AB	60.2	0.3	149.7	0.6	2012.685	2066	5.69	7.00	1	1
21441+0709	STTA222	257.5	0.1	87.6	0.1	2012.712	3229	7.49	8.47	6	2
21543+1943	STF2841A, BC	109.6	0.3	22.4	0.1	2012.745	4165	6.45	7.99	6	2
21560+1948	ALL 4	208.7	0.4	19.0	0.1	2012.745	4347	9.31	9.77	6	2
22207+2457	STF2895AB	47.9	0.6	13.7	0.1	2012.753	4499	8.49	9.95	6	2
22269+4943	BU 380AB	323.6	1.0	24.1	0.3	2012.688	2980	8.15	11.29	3	1
22269+4943	STTA234AC	133.7	0.2	36.1	0.1	2012.688	6078	8.15	8.49	6	2
22301+4921	FRK 11	90.5	0.1	67.4	0.1	2012.688	5178	6.55	10.74	6	2
22586+1203	STTA241	160.6	0.1	84.0	0.1	2012.751	3971	8.28	8.37	6	2
23075+3250	STF2978	145.4	5.6	8.0	0.8	2010.767	2436	6.35	7.46	1	1
23100+1426	STF2986	269.3	0.2	31.1	0.1	2012.751	3970	6.61	8.88	6	2
23134+1104	STF2991	358.7	0.3	32.5	0.2	2012.745	2810	5.96	10.16	5	2
23283+0604	H 5 48	1.5	0.1	90.1	0.2	2012.712	2052	7.43	9.54	3	1
23283+2556	BUP 237AB	282.6	0.3	54.6	0.3	2013.882	1429	8.80	13.0	2	1
23283+2556	BUP 237AC	261.4	0.3	66.6	0.4	2013.882	1364	8.80	13.1	2	1
23307+0515	STF3019	184.4	0.9	10.7	0.2	2012.712	2115	7.77	8.37	3	1
23412+0616	STF3031	309.9	0.5	14.0	0.1	2012.712	4107	7.80	8.58	6	2
23549+2929	STTA252	144.3	0.2	110.8	0.4	2012.847	6030	6.77	8.37	3	1

Table 2 Notes

All magnitudes were taken from the WDS catalog. All position angle/separation measurements are of the Equator and Equinox of date.

Column titled “# x-y pairs” is the total combined no. of (x,y) pairs (video frames) from all drift runs. All video frames were used, none were discarded.

The column “drifts” is the number of separate drifts made. “Nights” is the number of successive nights drift runs were made for that system.

WDS 04368-1736 ARA 154 – Corrected RA, DEC coordinates are (J2000)
4h 36m 44.3s, -17° 35' 20.3"

WDS 05404-2151 ARA 1278 – Corrected RA, DEC coordinates are (J2000)
5h 40m 22.6s, -21° 51' 05.7"

WDS 17418-2032 ARA 1129 – Corrected RA, DEC coordinates are (J2000)

17h 41m 43.18sec, -20° 32' 21.4", which is 1.8' different from the WDS catalog values.

This updated coordinate information was submitted to the USNO prior to publication.

Double Star Measures Using the Video Drift Method - IV

(Continued from page 215)

Consistency of the Method

The video drift method maintains consistent results over multiple drifts and over several nights. The video drift method is ideally suited for high school and college students that are proficient with computers.

Acknowledgements

This research makes use of the Washington Double Star Catalog maintained at the US Naval Observatory. We also thank Dave Herald and Chris Peterson for helpful comments on video error sources and calibration procedures.

References

- Miyashita, K. 2006, *LiMovie, Light Measurement Tool for Occultation Observation Using Video Recorder*, http://www005.upp.so-net.ne.jp/k_miyash/occ02/limovie_en.html
- Nugent, R. and Iverson, E. 2011, *Journal of Double Star Observations*, 7, No. 3, 185-194 (Paper I)
- Nugent, R. and Iverson, E. 2012, *Journal of Double Star Observations*, 8, No. 3, 213-222 (Paper II)
- Nugent, R. and Iverson, E. 2013, *Journal of Double Star Observations*, 9, No. 2, 113-121 (Paper III)
- Rudiak-Gould, Ben, 2008 <http://neuron2.net/www.math.berkeley.edu/benrg/avisynth.html>

