



# Absolute magnitudes of asteroids and a revision of asteroid albedo estimates from WISE thermal observations

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## ABSTRACT

We obtained estimates of the Johnson  $V$  absolute magnitudes ( $H$ ) and slope parameters ( $G$ ) for 583 main-belt and near-Earth asteroids observed at Ondřejov and Table Mountain Observatory from 1978 to 2011. Uncertainties of the absolute magnitudes in our sample are  $<0.21$  mag, with a median value of 0.10 mag. We compared the  $H$  data with absolute magnitude values given in the MPCORB, Pisa AstDyS and JPL Horizons orbit catalogs. We found that while the catalog absolute magnitudes for large asteroids are relatively good on average, showing only little biases smaller than 0.1 mag, there is a systematic offset of the catalog values for smaller asteroids that becomes prominent in a range of  $H$  greater than  $\sim 10$  and is particularly big above  $H \sim 12$ . The mean ( $H_{\text{catalog}} - H$ ) value is negative, i.e., the catalog  $H$  values are systematically too bright. This systematic negative offset of the catalog values reaches a maximum around  $H = 14$  where the mean ( $H_{\text{catalog}} - H$ ) is  $-0.4$  to  $-0.5$ . We found also smaller correlations of the offset of the catalog  $H$  values with taxonomic types and with lightcurve amplitude, up to  $\sim 0.1$  mag or less. We discuss a few possible observational causes for the observed correlations, but the reason for the large bias of the catalog absolute magnitudes peaking around  $H = 14$  is unknown; we suspect that the problem lies in the magnitude estimates reported by asteroid surveys. With our photometric  $H$  and  $G$  data, we revised the preliminary WISE albedo estimates made by Masiero et al. (Masiero, J.R. et al. [2011], *Astrophys. J.* 741, 68–89) and Mainzer et al. (Mainzer, A. et al. [2011b], *Astrophys. J.* 743, 156–172) for asteroids in our sample. We found that the mean geometric albedo of Tholen/Bus/DeMeo C/G/B/F/P/D types with sizes of 25–300 km is  $p_V = 0.057$  with the standard deviation (dispersion) of the sample of 0.013 and the mean albedo of S/A/L types with sizes 0.6–200 km is 0.197 with the standard deviation of the sample of 0.051. The standard errors of the mean albedos are 0.002 and 0.006, respectively; systematic observational or modeling errors can predominate over the quoted formal errors. There is apparent only a small, marginally significant difference of  $0.031 \pm 0.011$  between the mean albedos of sub-samples of large and small (divided at diameter 25 km) S/A/L asteroids, with the smaller ones having a higher albedo. The difference will have to be confirmed and explained; we speculate that it may be either a real size dependence of surface properties of S type asteroids or a small size-dependent bias in the data (e.g., a bias towards higher albedos in the optically-selected sample of asteroids). A trend of the mean of the preliminary WISE albedo estimates increasing with asteroid size decreasing from  $D \sim 30$  down to  $\sim 5$  km (for S types) showed in Mainzer et al. (Mainzer, A. et al. [2011a], *Astrophys. J.* 741, 90–114) appears to be mainly due to the systematic bias in the MPCORB absolute magnitudes that progressively increases with  $H$  in the corresponding range  $H = 10$ –14.

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## 1. Introduction

Diameters and albedos of asteroids are one of their most basic physical parameters. Asteroid diameters can be estimated with several direct or indirect techniques. Direct size estimation techniques include in situ spacecraft observations, resolved imaging

with adaptive optics systems or radar observations, and asteroid occultations of stars. However, use of the direct techniques is limited mostly to large asteroids or those making close approaches to the Earth. Indirect techniques of asteroid size estimation are polarimetry, from which one determines albedo and with an absolute magnitude value can compute a diameter, and asteroid thermal modeling with observations of their thermal infrared and visual fluxes; the effective diameter and visual geometric albedo are parameters of asteroid thermal models. This latter technique has

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been applied to large samples of asteroids covering a broad range of sizes.

Ideally, both the integral thermally emitted infrared and the integral reflected optical fluxes should be measured simultaneously. In practice, however, thermal observations are normally made at a single or over a limited range of aspects, and it has become a normal practice for asteroid thermal modellers to estimate the integral optical flux from the asteroid's absolute visual magnitude  $H$  and a model of its phase function.<sup>1</sup> The absolute magnitude of a Solar System object is defined as the apparent magnitude of the object illuminated by the solar light flux at 1 AU and observed from a distance of 1 AU and at zero solar phase angle (the angle between the asteroid–observer and the asteroid–Sun lines).

Absolute magnitudes of asteroids are estimated from their photometric observations. As the observations are generally taken at non-zero solar phase angles, an estimation of  $H$  involves an estimation of the dependence of the asteroid brightness on the phase angle. The dependence is most often modeled with the  $H$ – $G$  phase relation (Bowell et al., 1989) that has conveniently only two free parameters, the absolute magnitude  $H$  and the slope parameter  $G$ . The systematic model error of the  $H$ – $G$  phase relation is on an order of a few 0.01 mag (Harris, 1989).

Thermal infrared survey observations by the *Infrared Astronomical Satellite* (IRAS), the *Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer* (WISE), AKARI and the *Spitzer Space Telescope* resulted in estimates of diameters and albedos for thousands of asteroids (e.g., Tedesco et al., 2002; Mainzer et al., 2011a,b; Masiero et al., 2011; Usui et al., 2011; Ryan and Woodward, 2011). They used the absolute magnitude values from the asteroid orbit catalogs MPCORB<sup>2</sup> or AstOrb.<sup>3</sup> Most of the absolute magnitudes in the catalogs were derived from magnitude estimates reported by visual asteroid surveys and follow-up observers with their astrometric observations. The procedures that most of the astrometric surveys, follow-up observers, and orbit calculators used for estimating the asteroid apparent magnitudes and derivation of the  $H$  values have not been comprehensively published so far.

Given the principal importance of asteroid absolute magnitude data for the estimation of their diameters and albedos and considering that the accuracy of and biases present in the  $H$  values in the orbit catalogs have not been satisfactorily characterized so far,<sup>4</sup> we investigated them by comparing the catalog  $H$  values with our absolute magnitude estimates for a sample of 583 main-belt and near-Earth asteroids that we observed photometrically within our asteroid lightcurve observations projects over the past 33 years.

## 2. Absolute magnitudes $H$ data sample

Our sample consists of absolute magnitude estimates that we derived from our photometric observations of asteroids made from Ondřejov Observatory, Czech Republic, and Table Mountain Observatory, California, from 1978 to 2011. The observations were made within our projects aimed at estimation of the spins, shapes, and binary nature of asteroids in the main belt and on inner-planet crossing orbits. About half of the  $H$  data in our sample we published in a series of papers (listed below Table 2). The rest is new data that we derived more recently. Most of the observations of

asteroids in our sample were targeted observations—the asteroids were selected and observed deliberately for particular aims of the specific photometric projects. A fraction (96 of the 583) were, however, accidental observations of asteroids that happened to be present in the imaged fields of the targeted asteroids. Our target selection procedures favored certain types of heliocentric orbits, namely near-Earth and inner main-belt (including Hungarias), but they were blind to other asteroid parameters such as visible color or discovery stations/circumstances. The accidentally observed asteroids were not selected even for heliocentric orbits of course; more than a half of them were central and outer main-belt asteroids. We outline our observational and reduction procedures in the following paragraphs.

### 2.1. Absolute calibrations in the Johnson–Cousins BVRI system

We made the observations primarily through the  $V$  or  $R$  filters and calibrated them in the Johnson–Cousins system using the Landolt standard stars (Landolt, 1973, 1983, 1992) with the all-sky photometry method on photometric nights. We observed some of the asteroids also in other than just the primary filter and in such cases we estimated their actual color indices. However, many of the asteroids were observed in only the primary filter,  $R$  in the case of the Ondřejov observations, as with CCD cameras we achieved a higher signal-to-noise ratio and a lower atmospheric extinction compared to the  $V$  band. The spectral transmission curve of the  $R$  filter was designed for a given CCD so that the resulting spectral response of the telescope + filter + CCD combination matched closely the Cousins  $R$  passband as defined in Bessell (1990); the coefficient of the color term, in which we use  $(V - I)$ , in the photometric transformation function of the telescope system was always within 0.05 of zero. With such a filter + CCD setup, we were able to calibrate the asteroid photometric observations in the Cousins  $R$  system assuming  $(V - I)$  of 0.80, which is about the average asteroidal color index, with a systematic error <0.01 mag; the most common C and S asteroid types have a mean  $(V - I)$  of 0.73 and 0.90, respectively (Shevchenko and Lupishko, 1998). With the use of several Landolt standard stars for the calibrations on each photometric night, we defined the magnitude system's zero point with accuracy of 0.01 mag.

### 2.2. Mean brightness level estimation

For derivation of the mean absolute magnitude  $H$  of an asteroid, corresponding to its mean cross-section, we need to estimate its mean reduced magnitude: the asteroid's apparent magnitude reduced to unit geo- and heliocentric distances and to a phase angle close to the mid-range of solar phases covered by the observations. In most cases, we estimated the mean reduced magnitude as the zeroth order of the 1-period (or 2-period, for tumblers) Fourier series, or two additive 1-period Fourier series in the case of a binary asteroid where lightcurves of both the primary and the secondary components were observed, fitted to the photometric observations made over one or more nearby nights that covered the rotation lightcurve sufficiently (see the references below Table 2 for details of the technique). An uncertainty of the mean reduced magnitude estimated in these cases was mostly <0.01 mag. In a small fraction of asteroids in our sample, mostly some long-period ones, we did not obtain sufficient data to get an accurate Fourier series fit. In these cases, we estimated the asteroid's mean brightness either as the mean value of a range in which the Fourier series zeroth order lie for a range of possible and plausible fits to the observations, or as an average of the observations made during one or more nearby nights in cases where even a range of possible Fourier series fits could not be obtained. Even in these cases with limited or no Fourier fits available, the resulted mean magnitude estimate had

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this paper, we use  $H$  for the absolute magnitude in Johnson  $V$  band,  $H_V$ .

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.minorplanetcenter.org/iau/MPCORB.html>.

<sup>3</sup> <ftp://ftp.lowell.edu/pub/elgb/astorb.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Actually, we had a suspicion that there is present a significant bias in the orbit catalog  $H$  data for many years already. We and other observers noticed that our photometric observations of asteroids smaller than about 20 km typically showed them being fainter than predicted using the catalog  $H$  values. Results from three earlier papers showing the offset by comparing the catalog magnitudes with data from the Sloan Digital Sky Survey are presented in Section 3.4.

an uncertainty  $<0.2$  mag for all the asteroids included in our sample. Specifically, in cases where there are cycle ambiguities, the mean magnitude level is still well determined and introduces negligible error in  $H$ . In some large amplitude cases where we do not fully define minima, the uncertainty can be as much as 0.2 mag, but usually less; minima of a high-amplitude lightcurve tend to be narrow and do not change the mean magnitude by much. Finally, for cases where we observe for a few nights and see little if any variation, an uncertainty of the mean magnitude estimated as an average of the observations is unlikely to be greater than 0.2 mag for a distribution of the maximum–mean magnitude differences in asteroid lightcurves. This procedure caused a certain bias against high amplitude asteroids in our sample; we discuss a resulting small systematic error that it could cause in the derived mean offset of catalog  $H$  values in Section 3.3.

### 2.3. Reduction to zero phase angle

The absolute magnitude  $H$  is defined as the reduced magnitude at zero phase angle. The mean magnitudes observed at non-zero phase angles were reduced to zero phase using the  $H$ – $G$  phase relation. For about one third of our observed asteroids, we got sufficient data to estimate the slope parameter  $G$  from the observations. For the rest, we assumed  $G$  based on their taxonomic classification where available and conclusive, or on their orbital group membership. The assumed default  $G$  values were taken from Tables 2 and 3 of Warner et al. (2009) in most cases.<sup>5</sup> For some  $H$  estimates that we published before (see the references in Table 2), we assumed slightly different default values of  $G$  based on earlier works, e.g.,  $0.23 \pm 0.11$  instead of the new default  $0.24 \pm 0.11$  for S types, or  $0.09 \pm 0.09$  instead of the new default  $0.12 \pm 0.08$  for C types; we kept those earlier estimates in such cases as the differences are minor and well within the uncertainties. The uncertainties of the assumed default  $G$  values were propagated to the estimated uncertainties of the resulting  $H$  values.

The uncertainties in  $G$  were the most significant source of uncertainty for the  $H$  estimates for many asteroids in our sample. As we aimed to get  $H$  values with uncertainties not greater than 0.2 mag, we limited our sample to include asteroids that were observed at solar phases not greater than  $\sim 30^\circ$ , which gave an uncertainty in resulting  $H$  of  $\pm 0.16$  and  $\pm 0.14$  for the default  $G$  of S and C types, respectively, with only a few exceptions in justified cases.

### 2.4. Derivation of $H$ from $H_R$

Most of the Ondřejov observations were taken in the Cousins  $R$ . We transformed the estimated  $H_R$  values to  $H$  by adding the mean color index ( $V - R$ ) for the known or assumed (according to its orbital group membership) taxonomic class of a given asteroid. The mean color indices for the major classes S, C and M (X) in the taxonomic system of Tholen (1984, 1989) were taken from Shevchenko and Lupishko (1998) who analysed direct measurements of the asteroid color indices in the Johnson–Cousins photometric system. For other, smaller classes Q, A, D, Xc, Xe and V in the Bus–DeMeo taxonomy, we derived the mean color index from the mean reflectance spectrum of a given class provided by DeMeo et al. (2009), assuming solar  $(V - R) = 0.367$ . The mean  $(V - R)$  values are listed in Table 1. For three asteroids with an ambiguous classification of S or A, we assumed  $(V - R) = 0.528 \pm 0.05$  which is the average of the mean color indices for the two classes. For asteroids with unknown spectral class, we used the mean  $(V - R)$  for a class predominating in their respective orbital group

**Table 1**

Mean color indices ( $V - R$ ) used for conversion of  $H_R$  to  $H$ .

Class	$(V - R)$	Reference
S	$0.49 \pm 0.05$	Shevchenko and Lupishko (1998)
Q	$0.454 \pm 0.023$	From mean Q spectrum by DeMeo et al. (2009)
A	$0.567 \pm 0.023$	From mean A spectrum by DeMeo et al. (2009)
C	$0.38 \pm 0.05$	Shevchenko and Lupishko (1998)
D	$0.455 \pm 0.033$	From mean D spectrum by DeMeo et al. (2009)
T	$0.442 \pm 0.011$	From mean T spectrum by DeMeo et al. (2009)
X	$0.42 \pm 0.04$	Shevchenko and Lupishko (1998)
Xc	$0.408 \pm 0.008$	From mean Xc spectrum by DeMeo et al. (2009)
Xe	$0.453 \pm 0.037$	From mean Xe spectrum by DeMeo et al. (2009)
V	$0.516 \pm 0.037$	From mean V spectrum by DeMeo et al. (2009)

according to Table 2 of Warner et al. (2009). We note that our  $(V - R)$  estimates derived from the mean spectra for the Bus–DeMeo classes are in agreement with the color indices for the analogous Tholen classes derived from the mean colors in the eight-color asteroid survey for their specific CCD and filter responses by Dandy et al. (2003) for all but the V class. The V-type broad-band color depends critically on the exact R passband as there is the deep pyroxene band in the far red, which may explain their different  $(V - R)$  estimate.

### 2.5. Averaging $H$ estimates from different apparitions

For 38 of the 583 asteroids in our sample, we have got more than one  $H$  estimate, mostly from observations made in different apparitions. In all but one of the cases, we computed the mean  $H$  value as a weighted mean of the individual estimates, with weights of  $\delta H^{-2}$ . The exception was (1866) Sisyphus where the two  $H$  estimates differ by 0.38 mag which we suspect is due to different cross-sections at the two different aspects of the asteroid in the two apparitions rather than due to uncertainties of the  $H$  estimates; we used a simple average of the two values, i.e., assumed equal weights.

### 2.6. Uncertainties of the $H$ estimates

We estimated the uncertainties  $\delta H$  of our absolute magnitude estimates by propagating the uncertainties resulting from the individual error sources mentioned above. The  $H$ – $G$  model error (see Harris, 1989; also in Section 1) was assumed to be 0.03 mag; this model uncertainty was quadratically added in the computation of  $\delta H$  as well. All the  $H$  estimates in our sample have  $\delta H < 0.21$  mag. We accounted for all major uncertainty sources in the  $H$  estimation, so our  $\delta H$  are realistic uncertainties for the absolute magnitudes measured at the observed aspects of the asteroids. We note, however, that an asteroid generally has different  $H$  values at different aspects. The difference depends on the asteroid's shape and its rotation pole position. Analysing the data for a sample of large asteroids by Drummond et al. (1988, 1991) who derived dependences of their  $H$  values on observing aspect, we estimated the median dispersion of the observed  $H$  values of 0.07 mag. The aspect-related uncertainty must be accounted for when the  $H$  value estimated from observations made at a specific aspect is used for other observations made at a different aspect. A simple way could be to quadratically add 0.07 mag to our  $\delta H$  to get an estimate of the absolute error in  $H$  if our values are used for a general aspect of the asteroid. A full account of the aspect-related changes of  $H$  will need photometric data from a few different aspects and a pole/shape modeling.

The estimated absolute magnitudes, their uncertainties, estimated or assumed slope parameter values and mean lightcurve amplitudes are listed in Table 2.

<sup>5</sup> In Warner et al. (2009), the asteroid groups/families were defined according to [http://www.projectpluto.com/mp\\_group.htm](http://www.projectpluto.com/mp_group.htm).









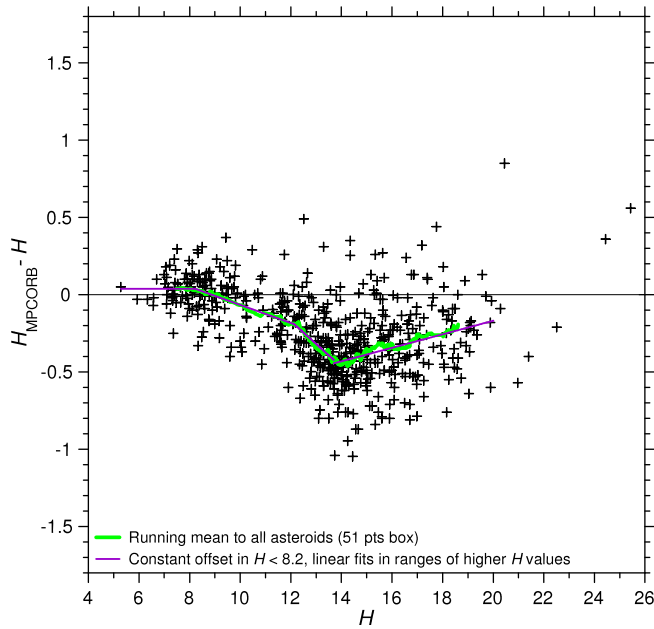




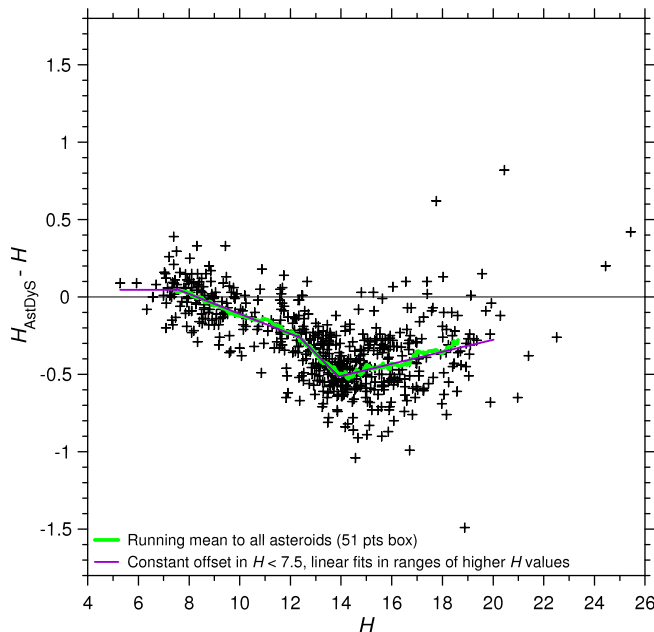








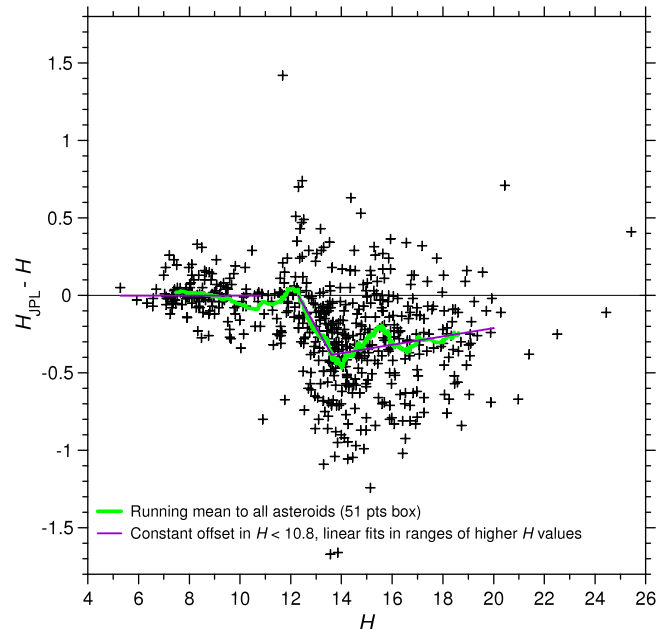
**Fig. 1.** Differences between the MPCORB catalog values and our absolute magnitude estimates are plotted. Parameters of the lines fitted to the data are given in Table 3.



**Fig. 2.** Differences between the Pisa AstDyS catalog values and our absolute magnitude estimates are plotted. Parameters of the lines fitted to the data are given in Table 3.

values for the largest asteroids are almost as good as they could be estimated without pole and shape modeling.

Going to smaller sizes (higher  $H$  values), we see a systematic offset to negative ( $H_{\text{catalog}} - H$ ) values (i.e., the catalog  $H$  data being systematically too bright on average) with similar behaviors, but differing in some details in the three catalogs. To analyse the behavior of the mean offset of the catalog  $H$  values, we plotted



**Fig. 3.** Differences between the JPL Horizons catalog values and our absolute magnitude estimates are plotted. Parameters of the lines fitted to the data are given in Table 3. We did not fit a line in the range  $H = 10.8$ – $12.3$  due to the small number of points affected by a few big outliers there.

**Table 3**

Parameters of the linear fits in Figs. 1–3, ( $H_{\text{catalog}} - H$ ) =  $aH + b$ .

Catalog	$H$ range	$N$	$a$	$b$	$\sigma$
MPCORB	<8.2	53	0	0.040	0.102
	8.2–12.1	125	−0.0585	0.520	0.162
	12.1–13.7	124	−0.1478	1.603	0.200
	13.7–20.0	274	0.0438	−1.044	0.242
AstDyS	<7.5	26	0	0.047	0.134
	7.5–12.3	160	−0.0643	0.535	0.144
	12.3–13.9	138	−0.1660	1.793	0.152
	13.9–20.0	256	0.0390	−1.056	0.218
JPL Horizons	<10.8	139	0	−0.001	0.116
	12.3–13.6	107	−0.2909	3.576	0.348
	13.6–20.0	285	0.0270	−0.750	0.322

$N$  is the number of fitted points in the given range of  $H$ ,  $\sigma$  is the standard deviation of the points from the fitted line.

the running mean curves with a box size of 51 data points in Figs. 1–3 and we approximated the dependence by fitting a constant offset to points with the smallest  $H$  and linear functions in specific ranges of  $H$ ; their parameters are given in Table 3. The “break points” separating the different fitted ranges were chosen somewhat arbitrarily at  $H$  values near points where the running mean curve changes slope substantially and where the adjacent fitted lines cross. We set the cut-off  $H = 20$  for our analysis as we have only a few points with greater  $H$ . However, we note that the number density of points in our sample decreases in the range  $H = 17$ – $20$ . Thus, even though we see no prominent change of trends in the range of fainter  $H$  (see below), we point out that the catalog  $H$  bias in the range  $H \gtrsim 17$  (where near-Earth asteroids predominate in the asteroid catalogs and our sample) will need to be studied on a larger sample in the future.

The common features of the  $H$  data in the three catalogs are the following: The mean ( $H_{\text{catalog}} - H$ ) reaches a minimum (i.e., maximum negative offset) at  $H \sim 14$ . The negative offset increases stee-

ply in the range from  $H \sim 12.2$  to  $\sim 13.7$ , but then it decreases rather slowly from 14 to 20.

Some interesting differences between the  $H$  data in the catalogs are following: The standard deviation of the MPCORB  $H$  data increases fairly gradually with increasing  $H$ , from  $\sigma = 0.102$  mag in the smallest  $H$  range, through 0.162 and 0.200 mag in the ranges centered at  $H$  around 10 and 13, to 0.242 mag in the range  $H = 14$ –20. The AstDyS data show, however, a higher consistency over a wider range of  $H$ , with  $\sigma$  increasing only slightly from 0.134 mag for the brightest asteroids to 0.152 mag for data in the range around  $H = 13$ , and their data in the highest  $H$  range of 14–20 are also internally the most consistent ones of all the three catalogs, with the smallest  $\sigma$  of 0.218 mag. The JPL Horizons data show the most diverse behavior. They are internally pretty consistent with  $\sigma = 0.116$  mag and zero mean offset up to  $H \sim 11$  where there begin to occur big outliers and their data become quite noisy above  $H = 12$ , with a standard deviation  $\sigma \sim 0.33$  mag between  $H = 12.3$  and 20.

The observed trends of the systematic offsets of the catalog  $H$  values are quite curious. We will discuss their possible causes in Section 5. First, in the following subsections we analyse certain correlations of the mean offset with taxonomic types and light-curve amplitude.

### 3.1. Correlation of the mean offset with taxonomic classes

In Figs. 4–6, there are highlighted data for asteroids with known taxonomic types that uniquely classify the asteroids as medium- or low-albedo. The former group are asteroids that have been classified as S, A or L types, while the latter are those classified as C, G, B, F, P or D types. The taxonomy data were taken from Tholen (1989), Bus and Binzel (2002), DeMeo et al. (2009), Xu et al. (1995), and Lazzaro et al. (2004) as compiled in Neese (2010).

Among asteroids with  $H$  greater than  $\sim 10$  in our sample, most of those with known taxonomic types are medium-albedo ones. This is not surprising, as among the intrinsically fainter asteroids, there are fewer with established low-albedo taxonomic classes as those concentrate in outer parts of the main belt and thus they are mostly seen at fainter apparent magnitudes and so they are more difficult to be observed spectro-photometrically. Another reason was that our photometric observational projects sampling the range  $H > 12$  concentrated on inner-main belt and near-Earth asteroids where S and similar types dominate in the visual bands (having a higher number density in the  $H$  parameter space), so these types predominate in our sample at higher  $H$  values too, though we have got some low-albedo ones among the targeted and especially the accidentally imaged asteroids as well (see Section 4). As the statistics of asteroids with known low-albedo types in the  $H > 10$  range is poor, we limit ourselves to analysing correlations of the mean offset with taxonomic classes to the range  $H < 10$  only.

Among large asteroids with  $H \lesssim 10$ , there appears to be a significant systematic difference between the medium and low-albedo mean offsets. The difference is of nearly the same magnitude of 0.09 mag in the MPCORB and the Pisa AstDyS catalogs, but it is smaller, 0.043 mag, in the JPL Horizons catalog. Specifically, for points with  $H < 9.5$ , the mean of  $(H_{\text{MPCORB}} - H)$  values for the low- and the medium-albedo type asteroids are +0.064 and  $-0.024$  mag, respectively. The mean of  $(H_{\text{AstDyS}} - H)$  values for the low- and the medium-albedo type asteroids are +0.044 and  $-0.048$  mag, respectively. The mean of  $(H_{\text{JPL}} - H)$  values for the low- and the medium-albedo type asteroids are +0.024 and  $-0.019$  mag, respectively.

We suspect that a reason for the observed “albedo dispersion”, with large low-albedo (mostly C type) asteroids having a systematically positive  $H$  offset while large medium-albedo (mostly S type) having a systematically negative  $H$  offset in the catalogs, is because the orbit computers assumed one default value

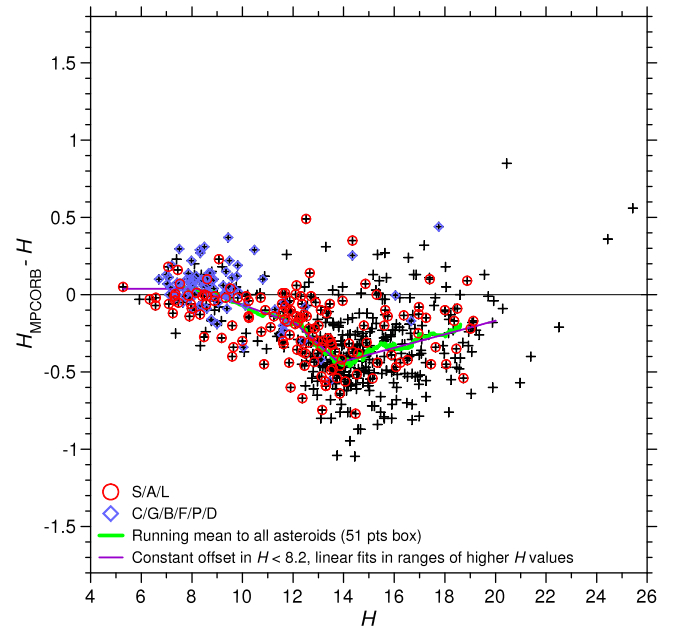


Fig. 4. Systematic offset between the MPCORB absolute magnitudes of medium (S,A,L) and low-albedo types (C,G,B,F,P,D) is apparent especially among bright asteroids with  $H < 10$ .

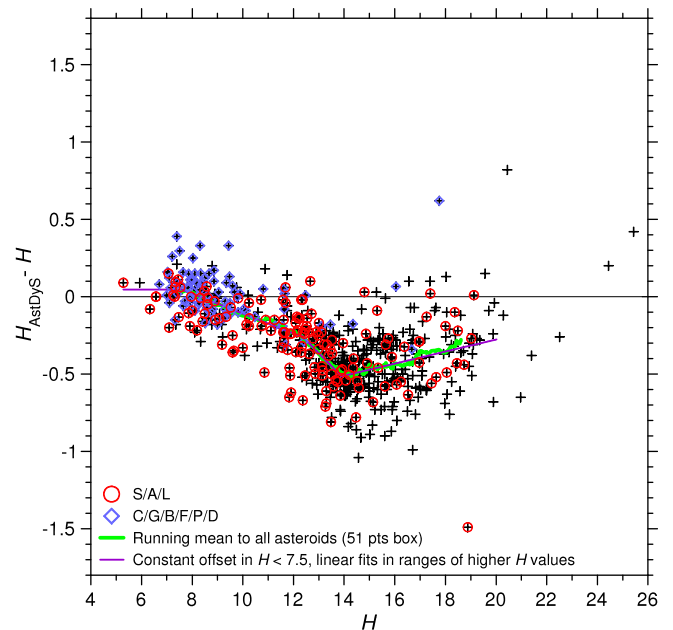


Fig. 5. As in Fig. 4, but for the AstDyS catalog absolute magnitudes.

for  $G$  of 0.15 for most asteroids in their computations of the absolute magnitudes from astrometric magnitude estimates. Another effect may be that of an assumed single value of  $(V - R) = 0.40$  they used for conversion of astrometric magnitude estimates that were made effectively in the R band where the maximum sensitivity of standard CCDs lies. As S types actually have higher mean  $G$  and  $(V - R)$ , while C types have lower mean  $G$  and  $(V - R)$  than the default values, the  $H$  values derived by the orbit computers for asteroids of the two different albedo-type groups are offset in the opposite directions.

### 3.2. Correlation of the mean offset with lightcurve amplitude

There is apparent a small correlation of the  $(H_{\text{catalog}} - H)$  values with asteroid lightcurve amplitude. In Figs. 7–9, there are highlighted 140 (of the 583) asteroids with amplitude  $\geq 0.4$  mag. The high-amplitude asteroids show a slightly greater negative mean  $H$  offset, as shown by the running mean plotted in the figures which is shifted down by a few 0.01 mag to  $\sim 0.1$  mag from the mean offset curve for all asteroids, at most  $H$  values. Except for the small increase of the mean negative catalog  $H$  offset, the  $(H_{\text{catalog}} - H)$  values of high amplitude asteroids do not show a substantially greater dispersion around the mean curve than low amplitude ones.

There are a few possible reasons for high-amplitude asteroids showing the greater negative offset of the catalog  $H$  values. The astrometric observers could have made their magnitude estimates more often from images taken when the asteroid was brighter than its mean light. It might be intentional for some follow-up observers, e.g., due to their aim to do more accurate astrometry on images with higher signal-to-noise ratio, so they might choose to measure images taken closer to the lightcurve maximum rather than minimum. But it could also be a natural consequence of the flux-limited observations, both by the surveys and follow-up stations; a high-amplitude asteroid with mean brightness close to the signal-to-noise ratio limit of a given astrometric program is positively detected more frequently close to the lightcurve maximum than minimum. Another cause might be that high-amplitude asteroid observations are more likely to be taken at asteroid aspects close to equator-on where asteroids show lower mean cross-section than at aspects of higher astero-centric latitudes. So the mean absolute magnitude estimated at times when an asteroid shows a higher amplitude is typically fainter than the mean  $H$  estimated at an average aspect, if the asteroid's pole obliquity is not close to 0 or 180°.

### 3.3. Biases in the data sample

As we analysed only a small sample of 583 asteroids, we have to be careful about possible biases present in the data set. However, our careful analysis suggested that there are not present biases in the  $H$  data sample greater than 0.1 mag. We discuss them below.

The potentially strongest bias is that our sample is predominantly S/S-like asteroids at small sizes (below  $\sim 25$  km). The mean negative offset of the catalog  $H$  values we found is thus representative for those types at small sizes, and it may be lower by  $\sim 0.1$  mag for C/C-like types if the correlation of the offset with taxonomic classes that we see among large asteroids (Section 3.2) is present at smaller sizes as well.

Another bias worth considering is that our sample is predominantly inner main belt asteroids in the range  $H = 11$ –16. If the  $H$  offset actually depends on apparent magnitude observed by the astrometric surveys rather than on  $H$  as we assumed in our analysis, the curve of mean  $(H_{\text{catalog}} - H)$  vs  $H$  will be shifted to lower  $H$  values (to the left in Figs. 1–9) for asteroids in the central and outer main belt. We estimate that the leftward shift of the mean  $(H_{\text{catalog}} - H)$  curve could be several 0.1 mag up to  $\sim 1$  mag for the more distant asteroids, i.e., the maximum of the negative offset of the catalog  $H$  values could be shifted down to  $H \sim 13$  for outer main belt asteroids. (See also the last paragraph of Section 3.4 where we discuss the result of Romanishin and Tegler (2005) who found a similar catalog  $H$  bias for Trans-Neptunian Objects and Centaurs.)

Other observational selection effects that may be present in our sample are not likely to cause a significant bias in our derived  $H$  offset. Our procedure described in Section 2 somewhat favored asteroids with moderate lightcurve amplitudes. A bias against asteroids with low amplitudes ( $\leq 0.1$  mag) was created as we did not obtain a good lightcurve solution for some. A bias against high-amplitude

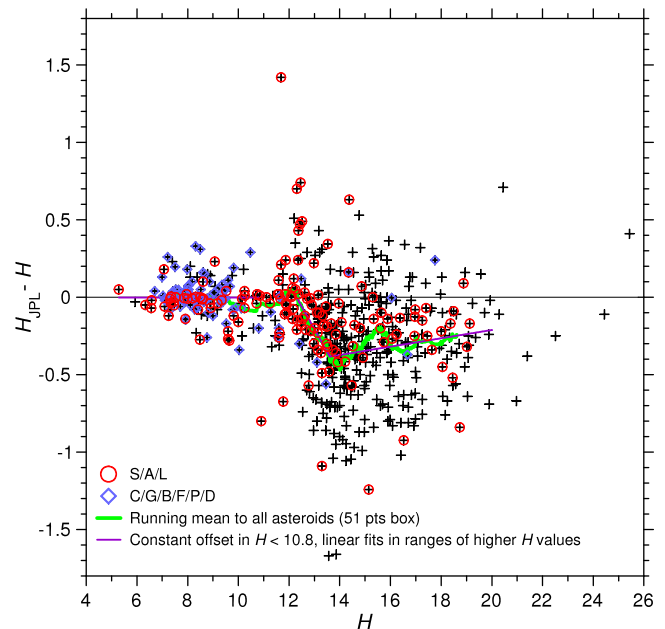


Fig. 6. As in Fig. 4, but for the JPL Horizons catalog absolute magnitudes.

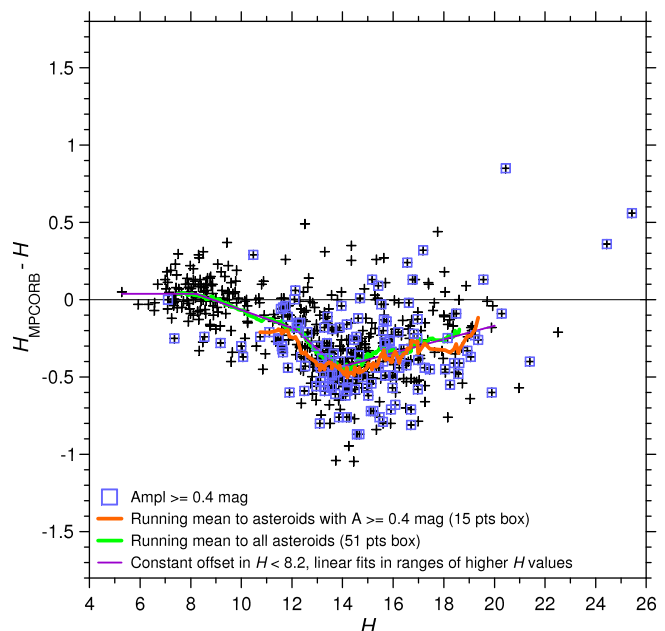


Fig. 7. A higher negative mean offset of the MPCORB absolute magnitudes for high-amplitude asteroids is shown.

asteroids is present as well as we did not obtain an estimate for the mean brightness level with the required accuracy for some of them. These two biases in our sample affect the derived mean offset of catalog  $H$  values in opposite directions so they partially cancel out one each other. A remaining residual systematic error in the derived  $H$  offset is likely not greater than a few 0.01 mag; as we showed in Section 3.2, even fairly high-amplitude asteroids with  $A > 0.4$  mag have the mean negative  $H$  offset greater by  $\sim 0.1$  mag only.

A selection effect against slow rotators, which could be moderate in our sample, is not likely to have a significant effect to the derived  $H$  offset as slow rotators have similar lightcurve amplitudes

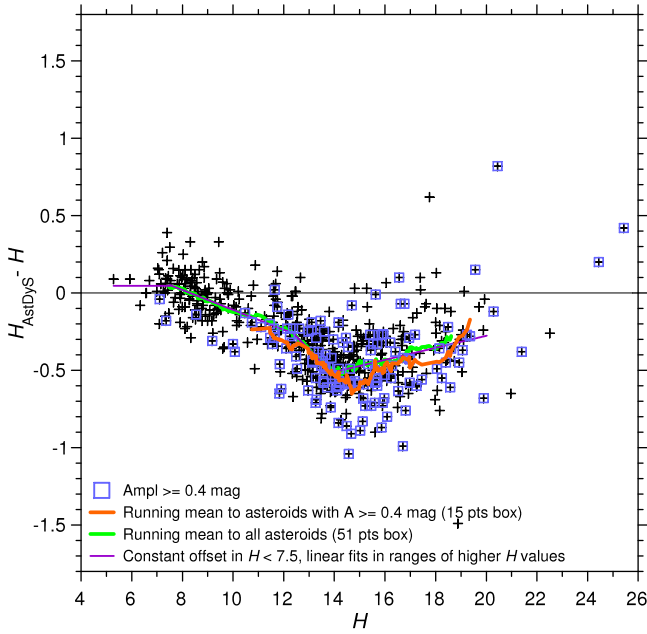


Fig. 8. As in Fig. 7, but for the AstDyS catalog absolute magnitudes.

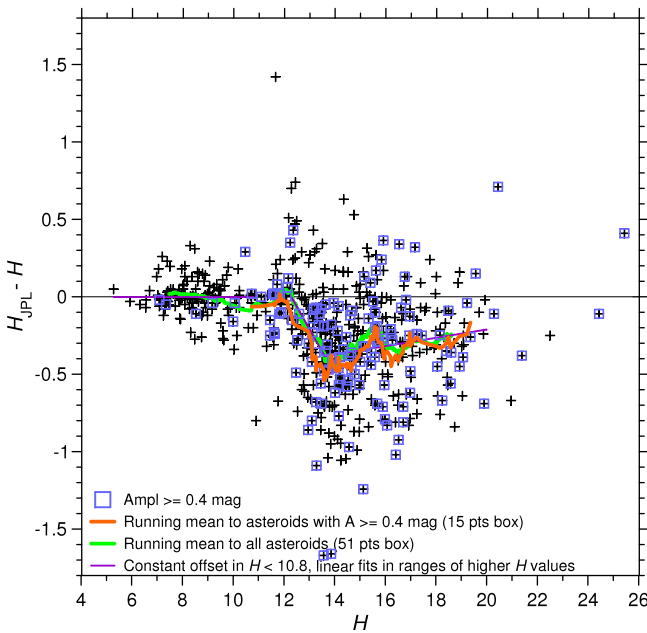


Fig. 9. As in Fig. 7, but for the JPL Horizons catalog absolute magnitudes.

as faster rotators with periods 4–20 h that predominate among asteroids of sizes we studied.

A bias introduced by assuming the mean  $(V - R)$  in converting  $H_R$  to  $H$ , according to the taxonomy class predominating in their respective orbital groups for asteroids where we had not a classification (see Section 2.4), cannot be greater than a few 0.01 mag. Even in the worst possible case of the equal visually observed ratio of S and C types in an orbital group, assuming a S (or C) type's mean  $(V - R)$  for all asteroids in the group would introduce a systematic error in the estimated mean catalog  $H$  offset of 0.055 mag (see Table 1); in existing asteroid groups with a predominating type, the resulting systematic error in the estimated mean  $H$  offset will be lower.

A small bias could be introduced also by assuming  $G$  values for some asteroids, at the mean  $G$  value for their known classification or a class predominating in their orbital group (see Section 2.3). However, we estimate that a resulting bias in the estimated mean catalog  $H$  offset is likely to be on an order of 0.01 mag only. The correlation between  $G$  and taxonomic classification is well established, so using the mean  $G$  of the known classes for some asteroids in our sample does not create a systematic error in the derived mean  $H$  offset. A systematic error can be introduced by a presence of interlopers of different taxonomic classes among cases where we assumed a class according to the asteroid's orbital group membership, analogously to what we described in the previous paragraph on the color index-related systematic effect. A difference between the mean  $G$  values of the S and C classes of 0.12 (see Section 2.3) propagates to a systematic error in the derived  $H$  for a C-type asteroid for which the S-type's mean  $G$  is assumed of 0.05 mag at solar phase of  $15^\circ$  (about the mean solar phase of the observations of our asteroid sample). So, even in the worst possible case of the equal visually observed ratio of S and C types in an orbital group, assuming the S (or C) type's mean  $G$  for asteroids in the group would introduce a systematic error in the estimated mean catalog  $H$  offset of 0.025 mag; in existing asteroid groups with a predominating type, the resulting systematic error in the estimated mean  $H$  offset will be lower. And since we had to assume  $G$  for a part of, not all asteroids in our sample, a resulting combined systematic error in the derived mean catalog  $H$  offset for the whole sample can be about 0.01 mag only.

### 3.4. Comparison with earlier works

The systematic offset of the  $H$  values in orbit catalogs was mentioned by several asteroid photometrists before. Parker et al. (2008) compared Johnson  $V$  data derived from the photometric measurements from the Sloan Digital Sky Survey (SDSS) Moving Object Catalog 4 for a sample of about 64,000 asteroids observed at solar phases between  $3^\circ$  and  $15^\circ$  to their apparent magnitudes ( $V_c$ ) predicted from the  $H$  and  $G$  values from the AstOrb catalog.<sup>7</sup> They found the mean  $(V_c - V) = -0.23$  mag. A correction of this offset to zero phase to obtain  $(H_c - H)$ , accounting for a difference between actual  $G$  values of the asteroids and the default  $G = 0.15$  assumed for most asteroids in AstOrb, is estimated to be about  $-0.02$  mag, assuming a mean solar phase of the SDSS observations of  $9^\circ$  and a mean  $G = 0.18$  for asteroids in the sample (corresponding to a 50:50 ratio between S/S-like and C/C-like asteroids in the sample). The resulting mean  $(H_{\text{AstOrb}} - H) \simeq -0.25$  mag is within the range of mean  $(H_{\text{MPCORB}} - H)$  that we found changing from  $-0.17$  to  $-0.43$  for  $H$  from 20.0 to 14.0 where most of the asteroids in the SDSS sample lie. To do an exact comparison, we will have to compute a weighted mean  $(H_{\text{MPCORB}} - H)$  for the particular distribution of the  $H$  values in the SDSS sample; this is a subject of future work.

Jurić et al. (2002) undertook an analysis similar to Parker et al. (2008), though on an earlier and smaller sample, but they compared the SDSS magnitudes to both the AstOrb and MPCORB magnitudes, and they also considered a correlation of the offset with asteroid color. Specifically, they compared Johnson  $V$  data derived from the photometric measurements in the Sloan Digital Sky Survey (SDSS) Early Data Release, a sample of 1335 asteroids, to their apparent magnitudes ( $V_c$ ) predicted from the  $H$  and  $G$  data from the AstOrb and MPCORB catalogs. They found the mean  $(V_{\text{AstOrb}} - V) = -0.41$ . They estimated the correction to zero phase to be  $-0.02 \pm 0.01$ , which gives the mean  $(H_{\text{AstOrb}} - H) = -0.43$  for their sample. They also report the mean  $(V_{\text{MPCORB}} - V) \sim -0.2$ ; we

<sup>7</sup> See footnote 6 for comments on the correspondence between the  $H$  values in the AstOrb and MPCORB catalogs.

speculate that the difference between the offsets of the two catalogs may reflect the different magnitude correction/weighting schemes the two orbit computer groups used at that time.<sup>8</sup>

The MPCORB offset they found is somewhat lower than the offset we obtained for asteroids with similar absolute magnitudes; for  $H$  in the range 12–16, we found an average ( $H_{\text{MPCORB}} - H$ ) of  $-0.36$ . A reason for the lower offset they found ten years ago is unclear. One possible cause is that the asteroid surveys predominating in the last ten years might produce more biased magnitude estimates than the (same or different) surveys did before 2002, or possibly the MPC's correction/weighting scheme for estimating  $H$  values from magnitude estimates worked better for the surveys operating before 2002 than during the last ten years. In any case, users of the  $H$  values from orbit catalogs should be aware that the offset of the catalog values can change with time due to development on the side of asteroid surveys (possible changes in photometric reduction procedures, or simply new surveys with their individual biases starting or increasing their relative contribution to the magnitude estimates data and older ones lessening or stopping their operation) or on the side of orbit computers (e.g., new correction and weighting schemes for magnitude estimates used in computing the  $H$  values).

They also found a correlation of the apparent magnitude offset with the SDSS asteroid color, with the median offsets of the AstOrb magnitudes ( $V_c - V$ ) of  $-0.34$  and  $-0.44$  for subsamples of blue and red asteroids, respectively. It is similar to the difference of  $0.09$  mag between the mean offsets for S/A/L (predominantly S) and C/G/B/F/P/D (predominantly C) types we found among large asteroids (see Section 3.1). There may be a common cause; Jurić et al. speculate similarly that it may be due to the assumed single value of  $(V - R)$  used by the orbit computers for conversion of the astrometric magnitude estimates made in the red band to  $V$  for asteroids of different colors.

Galád (2010) analysed the SDSS data for 64 asteroids with measured rotation periods, estimated their mean  $H$  values and compared them to MPCORB. For his sample covering a range of  $H = 9.2$ – $17.7$  (median  $H = 15.4$ ), he found an average of ( $H_{\text{MPCORB}} - H$ ) =  $-0.28$ , its formal error (mean error of the mean) is  $\pm 0.03$ . A correction of the offset, which he estimated assuming  $G = 0.15$  for most asteroids in his sample, for an actual estimated mean  $G = 0.19$  (for the ratio of 38:26 between S/S-like and C/C-like asteroids in his sample) is estimated to be  $-0.03$  mag. The resulting corrected mean ( $H_{\text{MPCORB}} - H$ ) =  $-0.31 \pm 0.03$  is within  $2\sigma$  of a weighted mean of the ( $H_{\text{MPCORB}} - H$ ) offset of  $-0.36$  we computed for his SDSS asteroids sample from our results given in the first part of this Section 3, so there is a reasonable agreement. Galád also discussed a small correlation between the catalog absolute magnitudes offset and lightcurve amplitude, which would be in agreement with our results in Section 3.2, but his finding was not statistically significant at a level greater than  $1\sigma$  for the small sample he analysed.

Romanishin and Tegler (2005) compared  $H$  values computed from their photometric measurements for 90 Trans-Neptunian Objects (TNOs) and Centaurs with the data from the MPC and JPL Horizons catalogs. They found an average difference of  $-0.29$  and  $-0.34$  mag, respectively. This is a similar mean offset as we found for small MBAs and NEAs. It is interesting to see that the survey and astrometric follow-up observations of outer Solar System objects were apparently affected by the same or similar photometry problem as the astrometric observations of cis-jovian asteroids. A noteworthy point is that the Romanishin and Tegler's  $H$  values cannot contain any significant error due to uncertainties in  $G$  values, as the TNOs were observed at very low solar phase angles

so any uncertainty in  $G$  propagated to a negligible error in  $H$ . The presence of the similar catalog  $H$  offset for both groups of Solar System objects, the small MBA/NEAs and the larger TNOs/Centaurs, suggests that the bias in catalog  $H$  values may be actually related to apparent observed magnitude rather than  $H$  that we assumed in our  $H$  data analysis above; see our discussion in the third paragraph of Section 3.3. Despite their different sizes/absolute magnitudes, objects of both groups were observed mostly at faint apparent magnitudes, most often not much above the magnitude limits of the surveys; this may provide a clue to identify (and correct, eventually) a common cause for the catalog  $H$  offset for both groups of Solar System bodies.

#### 4. Revised WISE albedos

We revised the estimates of asteroid albedos and diameters made by Masiero et al. (2011) and Mainzer et al. (2011b) within their NEOWISE project, using our  $H$  data and the recalculation method of Harris and Harris (1997). We outline our application of the method here.

The relationship between the effective diameter, geometric albedo, and absolute magnitude is

$$D\sqrt{p_V}10^{H/5} = K, \quad (1)$$

where

$$K \equiv 2 \text{ AU} \times 10^{V_{\text{Sun}}/5} = 1329 \pm 10 \text{ km}. \quad (2)$$

(See Pravec and Harris, 2007, for its derivation from the definition of those parameters plus the apparent magnitude of the Sun at 1 AU,  $V_{\text{Sun}}$ , which includes the definition of the  $V$  magnitude scale.) The geometric and Bond albedos are related by

$$A_V \equiv qp_V, \quad (3)$$

where  $q$  is the phase integral. On the  $H$ – $G$  system,  $q$  is derived from  $G$  via

$$q = 0.290 + 0.684G. \quad (4)$$

A basic assumption of the method is that the quantity  $(1 - A_V)D^2$  is invariant. This can be used with Eqs. (1)–(4) to compute the revised value of albedo

$$p_{V_{\text{rev}}} = \left[ q_{\text{rev}} + (1 - qp_V) \frac{D^2}{K^2} 10^{0.4H_{\text{rev}}} \right]^{-1}, \quad (5)$$

where  $H_{\text{rev}}$  is the new value of  $H$ ,  $q$  and  $q_{\text{rev}}$  are old and new values of the phase integral (Eq. (3)), corresponding to old and new values of the slope parameter,  $G$  and  $G_{\text{rev}}$ . The revised diameter  $D_{\text{rev}}$  then follows from Eq. (1). We point out that the NEOWISE diameter estimates were generally stable and our revised diameters differ from theirs by an insignificant amount; a diameter estimate resulting from the thermal modeling is almost insensitive to uncertainty in  $H$  (see Harris and Harris, 1997).

The reason for this modification of the Harris&Harris method is that most of the  $H$  values tabulated in Masiero et al. (2011) and Mainzer et al. (2011b) are “starting values” in their calculations and not their final solution values of  $H$ , which in some cases came from band 1 or 2 flux measurements by WISE itself. Their solution  $H$  value, which they do not list, that corresponds with their tabulated ( $D, p_V$ ) solutions can be recovered using Eq. (1).<sup>9</sup> We modified the Harris& Harris formulation, as given in Eq. (5), to use the tabu-

<sup>8</sup> Unlike in our work where our sample consists of numbered asteroids mostly and their AstOrb  $H$  values were taken from MPCORB (see footnote 6), the sample of Jurić et al. (2002) had a much greater fraction of (then-)junnnumbered asteroids for which there were independent  $H$  estimates in the AstOrb catalog.

<sup>9</sup> For example,  $H$ ,  $D$ , and  $p_V$  tabulated for (70) Panopaea in Masiero et al. (2011) are (8.110, 139.007 km, and 0.0397). 8.11 is the catalog value of  $H$  from MPCORB, not the self-consistent value matching  $D = 139.007$  km and  $p_V = 0.0397$ . From our Eq. (1), the solution value of  $H$  corresponding to the tabulated  $D$  and  $p_V$  can be recovered to be  $H = 8.405$ .



lated solution values of  $D$  and  $p_V$ , rather than  $H$ , according to the condition given by Eq. (1).

The original as well as the revised data are listed in Table 4. For the original values, we give uncertainties that were computed from the formal uncertainties listed in the *WISE* data files (see below Table 4) with quadratically adding the minimum systematic error of 10% and 20% of diameter and albedo, respectively.<sup>10</sup> As shown in Harris and Harris (1997), the uncertainties in  $D$  are unchanged with the application of the recalculation method; the revised diameter values have the same uncertainties as the *WISE*  $\delta D$  values listed in the third data column of the table. The uncertainties of the revised  $p_V$  were computed with Eq. (8) of Harris and Harris (1997), from  $\delta D$  and  $\delta H$  values.

The revised albedo and diameter data are plotted in Fig. 10. We highlighted points of known low-, medium- and high-albedo type asteroids; non-highlighted points are ones for which we have no or contradicting classifications. The mean  $p_V$  and the standard deviation (dispersion) of the sample are  $0.057 (\pm 0.013)$  and  $0.197 (\pm 0.051)$  for the Tholen/Bus/DeMeo C/G/B/F/P/D and the S/A/L types, respectively. The standard errors of the mean albedos are 0.002 and 0.006, respectively, but we caution that systematic observational or modeling errors may be greater than these formal errors (see below).

Mainzer et al. (2011a) showed an apparent trend of S-type asteroids having higher albedos at smaller diameters, see their Figs. 1 and 2. They suspected that it was an artifact in the data rather than a real feature of the asteroid population, and they suggested that it could be due to “selection biases against small, low albedo objects”. We confirm their suspicion that the apparent albedo trend with size they saw was an artifact. Our data reveal that it was largely due to the systematic bias of MPCORB  $H$  values for smaller asteroids in the range  $H > 10$ . From our revised  $p_V$ - $D$  dataset, there is apparent only little difference between large and small S/A/L type asteroids; the mean  $p_V$  is  $0.178 \pm 0.008$  and  $0.209 \pm 0.008$  for S/A/L type asteroids larger and smaller than  $D = 25$  km, respectively. The difference between the mean albedos of 0.031 is only marginally significant, as the formal standard error of the difference, propagated from the mean errors of the means of  $p_V$  values in the two size ranges, is 0.011. This minor difference might be a real feature with smaller S-type asteroids having slightly brighter surfaces, possibly due to being less space weathered or having different scattering properties, but it could also be a small residual artifact as we note in the following paragraphs.

There were probably present two observational selection effects that could cause a small bias towards higher albedos even within a given taxonomy group. The first effect is that spectroscopic observations from which the taxonomic classifications were derived were likely biased to asteroids with higher albedos, as they got a higher signal-to-noise ratio, S/N, for a higher than for a lower albedo asteroid with same size and observing conditions. The second effect is that our photometric observations could be somewhat biased towards higher albedo asteroids too; two asteroids of same size and albedos different by 25% (e.g., 0.25 vs 0.20, or 0.071 vs 0.057) have  $H$  different by 0.24 mag. This is not a big difference but nevertheless it could cause a small bias as we might get a good solution more likely for the higher albedo asteroid that we observed at S/N greater by 10–20% (depending on a predominating noise source in the photometric observations) than the lower albedo one of same size and in same observing conditions.

So, our sample of taxonomically classified asteroids should be indeed somewhat biased towards brighter albedos even within a given taxonomy group, and the bias may be greater for small asteroids than for large ones, as the observational selection effects may be more prominent for fainter asteroids that were observed at lower S/N typically. A future work will be needed to estimate a magnitude of the bias and whether it explains the apparent difference of 0.031 between the mean albedos of small and large S/A/L types.

Finally, we note that the dispersion of the estimated albedos in both taxonomy groups,  $\sigma(p_V)/\bar{p}_V = 0.013/0.057 \doteq 0.23$  for the C/C-like types and  $0.051/0.197 \doteq 0.26$  for the S/S-like types, is only slightly greater than the expected typical albedo error; Mainzer et al. (2011a) wrote that for estimates from *WISE* observations, “the minimum albedo error is  $\sim 20\%$  of the value of the albedo”. This means that a substantial part of the dispersion of the  $p_V$  estimates in both taxonomy groups could be actually due to errors in the albedo estimates rather than a real dispersion in albedos of members of the groups. Both taxonomy groups might be actually more tight, i.e., have a smaller dispersion in albedo than the sample dispersion of the estimated values.

## 5. Possible causes for the offset in catalog $H$ values

Most of the procedures that astrometric surveys, follow-up observers, and orbit calculators used for estimating the apparent magnitudes of asteroids and derivation of the  $H$  values have not been comprehensively published so far. Thus we cannot rigorously determine causes of the offset in the catalog  $H$  values. We present a few reasonable guesses and speculations in following.

The large offset seen for asteroids in the range of  $\pm$  a few magnitudes about  $H = 14$ , which are mostly main belt asteroids in our sample, may be related to the fact that many of their astrometric observations could not be done much above the magnitude limits of the most productive surveys, especially when observed close to aphelion or at higher solar elongation away from opposition. Results of photometric reduction of faint asteroid images are sensitive to quality of flat field, accuracy of estimation of the sky background level and quality of background objects removal.

Another possible way for how main belt asteroids with  $H > 12$  could have biased magnitude estimates is if the few surveys which took most of their observations had some flaws in their photometric reduction procedures, or in the method by which they reported the magnitude estimates to the MPC. For instance, if observations taken with a clear or no filter are reported without a filter code, the magnitude estimates are taken as B band observations—for the B band being the default for astrometric magnitude estimates, a standard inherited from the days of photographic plates—and converted to  $V$  by subtracting  $(B - V) \sim 0.8$  (about the mean asteroidal color index), resulting in extremely incorrect magnitudes. Or if observations calibrated using local standards with magnitudes in the Johnson  $R$  system are erroneously reported as  $V$ , then they are off by about  $-0.4$  or  $-0.5$  mag, depending on the  $(V - R)$  color index of a given asteroid. We do not know whether the above two, or some other errors, occurred for reported asteroid magnitude estimates frequently enough that they could cause the huge offset. A thorough check of procedures of reducing and reporting magnitude estimates used by the major surveys would be advisable.

An explanation for why the trend reverses above  $H = 14$ , with the mean offset in the MPCORB values being about half as large at  $H \sim 19$  than at  $\sim 14$  may be related to the fact that there is an increasing proportion of near-Earth asteroids (NEAs) with increasing  $H$  in the sample. A turning point is about  $H = 16$ ; while most of the asteroids in our sample in the range  $H = 15$ – $16$  are main belt asteroids (there are 17 NEAs among the 62 asteroids in this  $H$  range), most of those in  $H = 16$ – $17$  are NEAs (29 of 44). It may be

<sup>10</sup> Mainzer et al. (2011a) wrote that “the minimum diameter error that can be achieved using *WISE* observations is  $\sim 10\%$  and the minimum albedo error is  $\sim 20\%$  of the value of the albedo”. Realistic uncertainties of the *WISE* diameter and albedo estimates are computed as  $\delta D = \sqrt{(\delta D_{\text{formal}})^2 + (0.1D)^2}$  and  $\delta p_V = \sqrt{(\delta p_{V\text{formal}})^2 + (0.2p_V)^2}$ .









Table 4 (continued)

Asteroid	WISE					H	G	Revised			Taxon.							
	G	D (km)	$\delta D$ (km)	$p_V$	$\delta p_V$			D (km)	$p_V$	$\delta p_V$	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	
71200	1999 XT236	0.15	6.610	0.677	0.0584	0.0169	14.885	0.120	6.589	0.0452	0.0106	–						
74355	1998 WJ12	0.15	4.469	0.587	0.1537	0.0795	14.760	0.240	4.446	0.1115	0.0316	–						
88188	2000 XH44	0.15	1.371	0.297	0.3740	0.1894	16.530	0.350	1.354	0.2356	0.1118	–						
88850	2001 SL222	0.15	3.377	0.857	0.0676	0.0503	15.630	0.120	3.387	0.0862	0.0442	–						
99475	2002 CR118	0.15	3.397	0.694	0.2916	0.1929	15.120	0.240	3.307	0.1446	0.0653	–						
100111	1993 FA51	0.15	6.098	0.641	0.0571	0.0145	15.040	0.120	6.082	0.0460	0.0109	–						
103067	1999 XA143	0.15	1.282	0.131	0.2460	0.0723	16.990	0.240	1.270	0.1751	0.0435	–						
105612	2000 RT99	0.15	5.507	0.641	0.1604	0.0445	14.450	0.240	5.454	0.0985	0.0240	–						
113846	2002 TV239	0.15	2.761	0.788	0.0638	0.0741	16.930	0.240	2.751	0.0395	0.0229	–						
139345	2001 KA67	0.15	3.101	0.340	0.0380	0.0110	17.060	0.240	3.097	0.0276	0.0074	–						
159669	2002 GY73	0.15	5.188	0.543	0.0498	0.0174	15.530	0.120	5.176	0.0405	0.0088	–						
206079	2002 RU66	0.15	3.987	0.922	0.1218	0.0497	15.120	0.120	3.965	0.1006	0.0477	–						
206400	2003 SW52	0.15	3.257	0.839	0.0418	0.0207	17.020	0.240	3.249	0.0260	0.0137	–						
232067	2001 UR220	0.15	4.750	0.595	0.0655	0.0202	15.340	0.120	4.740	0.0575	0.0151	–						
	2005 TQ27	0.15	3.969	0.421	0.0776	0.0222	15.690	0.120	3.952	0.0599	0.0171	–						

The WISE data were taken from [http://wise2.ipac.caltech.edu/staff/bauer/NEOWISE\\_pass1/](http://wise2.ipac.caltech.edu/staff/bauer/NEOWISE_pass1/), file WISE\_MBA\_Pass1\_Table\_2011-09-16.txt, and from <http://iopscience.iop.org/0004-637X/743/2/156/fulltext/>, file apj408731t1\_mrt.txt. For some objects that were observed at multiple epochs, they present each epoch as a separate row in their table; we use weighted means for  $D$  and  $p_V$  from the multiple entries, with the weights of  $(\text{“dia\_err”})^{-2}$  and  $(\text{“pV\_err”})^{-2}$ , respectively, where “dia\_err” and “pV\_err” are their listed uncertainties for the individual entries. The uncertainties  $\delta D$  and  $\delta p_V$  given in the 3rd and 5th data columns are derived as quadratic sums of the formal uncertainties “dia\_err” and “pV\_err” (or their average for the multiple entries cases) from the WISE data files and the systematic errors of  $0.1D$  and  $0.2 p_V$ , respectively, as described in Section 4. The  $H$  and  $G$  data were taken from Table 2. The revised diameters and albedos and their uncertainties were made from the WISE estimates using the  $H$ ,  $G$  data and applying the recalculation method of Harris and Harris (1997) as described in Section 4. The taxonomy data were taken from Tholen (1989), Bus and Binzel (2002), DeMeo et al. (2009), Xu et al. (1995), and Lazzaro et al. (2004), as compiled in Neese (2010); they are given in columns Taxon. (1)–(6) in the respective order (the last two columns are the data from Lazzaro et al. (2004), in the Tholen and the Bus&Binzel system, respectively). Column Taxon. (0) gives a “summary” of the taxonomic classifications; it is the union of capital letters from columns Taxon. (1)–(4) and the S/A/L classification from columns Taxon. (5) and (6).

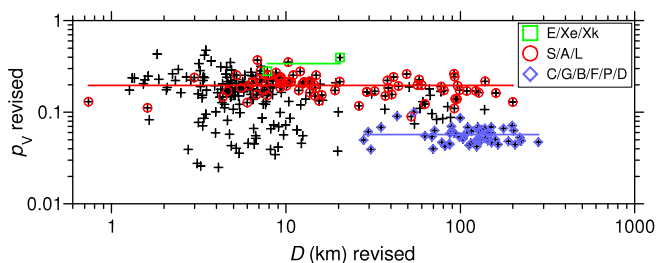


Fig. 10. The WISE albedos and diameters revised with the unbiased absolute magnitudes.

that many NEAs receive a substantial number of targeted follow-up observations, while small and faint main belt asteroids normally do not get any targeted follow-up and most or all their observations are by surveys only; targeted observations are potentially of a higher quality.

Also of interest is that the AstDyS  $H$  values are intrinsically more consistent (see their smaller scatter around the mean curves and fitted lines in Section 3), but slightly more biased than the MPCORB values. It seems that the magnitude correction/weighting scheme used at AstDyS does a good job in converting magnitude estimates by different stations to become a more homogeneous set, but it does not eliminate their overall bias.

## 6. Conclusions

We have shown that there is present a systematic offset of the orbit catalog  $H$  values in the sample of 583 objects measured carefully. We found that the apparent trend of increasing albedo with decreasing size seen for spectrally classified S type asteroids in the diameter range 5–30 km in the preliminary WISE albedos (Mainzer et al., 2011a) largely goes away when the corrected  $H$  values are used.

We mainly present this as a caution to others of the offset, and also the dispersion of wrong  $H$  values. It is beyond the scope of this

paper to propose how one might apply this to correct the catalog values to be used, e.g., in modeling of data from a thermal survey of ten or hundred thousand asteroids. One might shift catalog  $H$  values by the mean offset we find, or increase the uncertainty estimate in  $H$  to include that offset.

We point out that what is ultimately needed is better photometric survey data so that derived catalog  $H$  values are more accurate. It appears to be a necessary and urgent task to re-examine the photometric reduction routines and methods of reporting magnitude estimates used by asteroid astrometric observers. Improvements on the side of orbit computers, e.g., use of more sophisticated magnitude correction and weighting schemes for estimating the  $H$  values, corresponding magnitude estimates reported by astrometric stations to accurate observations by photometric observers, could improve the situation partially. But improvements in measurement rather than subsequent data processing are always preferred. In particular, calibration using photometric star catalogs would be superior to using magnitudes given in most astrometric star catalogs. Since  $H$  values from orbit catalogs are often used for purposes like asteroid albedo estimation and magnitude–frequency distribution determination, it is strongly desired that they be much more accurate than they are now.

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