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Burnham's Celestial Handbook: An Observer's Guide To The Universe Beyond The Solar System, Vol. 3



Synopsis

Volume III of a comprehensive three-part guide to celestial objects outside our solar system concludes with listings from Pavo to Vulpecula. While there are many books on stars, there is only one *Celestial Handbook*. Now completely revised through 1977, this unique and necessary reference is available once again to guide amateur and advanced astronomers in their knowledge and enjoyment of the stars. After an extensive introduction in Volume I, which gives the beginner enough information to follow about 80 percent of the body of the material, the author gives comprehensive coverage to the thousands of celestial objects outside our solar system that are within the range of telescopes in the two- to twelve-inch range. The objects are grouped according to the constellations in which they appear. Each constellation is divided into four subject sections: list of double and multiple stars; list of variable stars; list of star clusters, nebulae and galaxies; and descriptive notes. For each object the author gives names, celestial coordinates, classification, and full physical description. These, together with a star atlas, will help you find and identify almost every object of interest. But the joy of the book is the descriptive notes that follow. They cover history, unusual movements or appearance, and currently accepted explanations of such visible phenomena as white dwarfs, novae and super novae, cepheids, mira-type variables, dark nebulae, gaseous nebulae, eclipsing binary stars, the large Magellanic cloud, the evolution of a star cluster, and hundreds of other topics, many of which are difficult to find in one place. Hundreds of charts and other visual aids are included to help in identification. Over 300 photographs capture the objects and are works of beauty that reflect the enthusiasm that star gazers have for their subject. Robert Burnham, Jr., who was on the staff of the Lowell Observatory, Flagstaff, Arizona, conceived the idea of *The Celestial Handbook* decades ago, when he began assembling a notebook of all the major facts published about each celestial object. In its former, privately printed edition, this handbook was acclaimed as one of the most helpful books for astronomers on any level.

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Customer Reviews

Being an amateur astronomer I bought this and the other two volumes recently and I have found it indispensable. Im writing this review keeping solely the tyro's in mind, since one knowledgeable in astronomy would have already had this book. If you are getting interested in astronomy, this is the book to buy - it will surely deepen your interest. Get the book and take a journey through the stars that Burnham offers you in the first few pages. There are plenty of astronomy books for amateurs with fantastic photos. And sometimes it can be intimidating to know what to buy. Burnham's book is worth every penny (and it doesn't cost much either). It does not contain colorful photos (though contains plenty of b&w photos taken from Lowell/Palomar and other observatories). All 88 constellations are dealt with in detail. First a list of double stars are given in each constellation followed by details of each bright star (including spectrum analysis for some). The book is set in "type-writer" font, so it gives a special feeling of reading some research paper. A unique feature of this book, which is probably not found in any other astronomy book I have come so far, is that, it also contains a perspective of a given constellation or star by several different cultures. Most astronomy books stop with Greek and Roman myths - giving a feeling that no other culture was knowledgeable in astronomy. Coming from Indian background, I found it very intriguing that Burnham mentions several stories and myths from Indian folklore (including those that I heard from my granny!). For eg, Varahamihira (c 100 AD?) in his "Brihat Samhita" compares Ursa Major (aka called "Seven Sages") to string of pearls. I was surprised to see Burnham mention this.

First - Research the author's history. Interesting person, and he poured a lot of himself into researching and writing these books. For me, at least, knowing his history and what he accomplished made the books much more interesting. The entire set is three volumes that list the constellations in alphabetical order. Each volume has a section of the alphabet. They don't contain any solar system objects, and even say so on the front of each book. So no one should be confused looking for solar system data while reading. These books examine the major constellations and the objects that define them. As you read the data on stars, etc., you'll also learn some of their history

through the ages. The reader will need to realize that the astronomical facts listed were current when the books were researched and written, but may not be exactly accurate all these years later. They're still pretty close in most cases. Some mythology involved in star naming history is also included. The books are written in old typewriter style and the pictures are all black and white. Some may not like this format, but I liked seeing more time put into the research and history instead of fancy graphics. In the age of Hubble it's also nice to see some old photos taken with early refractors and the 200 inch Palomar telescope when it was THE best available. Makes an interesting contrast to what we can easily find on the internet today. Those old plates are really interesting to compare to what's available today. Makes you appreciate the Hubble's fantastic photos and how easy we have it today to simply log on and get regularly updated astronomical data and photos in seconds. Plus - the books look cool sitting on your bookshelf.

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