

Library - Book Review

Navigating The Night Sky – How To Identify The Stars And Constellations

by Guilherme de Almeida

Published by Springer – Patrick Moore's Practical Astronomy Series, 2004.

205 pp, 105 figures, soft cover.

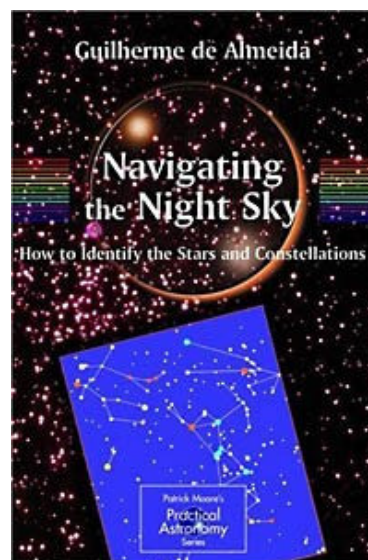
Reviewed by: Graham Crossley

(Extracted From AAQ December, 2005 Newsletter)

Navigating the Night Sky is an easy to read book that is essential for all those taking their first steps in finding their way around the night sky. Whilst the book is aimed at beginners it also provides information for the more advanced stargazer.

The book is arranged into chapters on the Constellations, Stars, Celestial Sphere, Identifying The Constellations & The Brightest Stars, The Sky Seen From The Southern Hemisphere, The Milky Way, Celestial Chart, and the Sky & The Four Seasons. The main text is followed by 12 appendices containing useful data for the budding observer.

The opening chapter deals with finding a good viewing location, dark adaptation and seasonal constellations in their basic form (northern hemisphere only, the southern hemisphere is covered later in the book).



The second chapter deals with the basic nature of and the brightness of stars. The text here, as in rest of the book, is non technical which makes for a more relaxed form of learning for beginners. The third chapter provides splendid, easy to understand diagrams that help to explain the, at first, seemingly complex motions of our celestial sphere. Zenith, altitude, celestial pole, ecliptic and other terms are introduced as is the effect of Earth's rotation on star positions and planetary orbits. Simple techniques for measuring the angular distance between stars are well illustrated.

The chapter on identifying constellations and the brightest stars gets down to the "nitty-gritty" of stellar navigation and is well illustrated with diagrams and charts. Insights on map orientation and several useful identification charts for picking out both the easy and not so easy constellations are provided here. The remaining chapters continue in the same vein making the book a joy to read. I found one typographical mistake on page 124 where the star Markeb (κ Velorum) was confused with Markab (α Pegasi).

This publication is bound to keep the art of star hopping alive, so my advice is to hop off and buy a copy.