

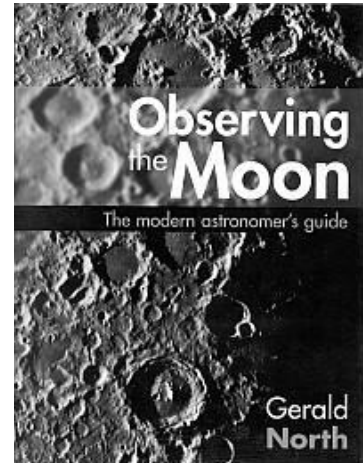
Library - Book Review

**Observing The Moon:
The Modern Astronomer's Guide**
by Gerald North
Published by Cambridge University Press, 2000

Reviewed by: Bill Oliver
(Extracted From AAQ November 2002
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In these days of post lunar exploration it is pleasing to peruse a text outlining what can be enjoyed and experienced by the amateur observer with modest equipment. Yes some of the mystique of earlier days may be missing but this book examines the task from a new perspective.

The early chapters open with an account and discussion of the familiar aspects of the phases and position of the moon with respect to the earth and sun. The moon's effect on the tides is explained along with more complicated motions such as libration. A system of describing co-ordinates on the lunar surface is given for reference. The amateur who is interested in learning about occultations and how to conduct such observations will reap valuable assistance from these pages.



After a brief account of the pioneering history of lunar cartography, the author discusses the minimum equipment needed for observing. The information is well set out and comprehensive without becoming distracted with unnecessary technical detail on finer points. While readers will vary in their inclination and natural artistic ability some useful tips are given on crater sketching to produce results reminiscent of the Indian ink sketches in earlier texts. This section then proceeds to discuss types of filters, films, their speeds and suggested exposure times for various phases of the moon. Some of this has always had an element of trial and error, but guidance is given to reduce this to a minimum. For the more adventurous, some suggestions on CCD work are provided.

In the last thirty years we have learnt a considerable amount about the structure of the so-called terrestrial planets, including the moon. This has led to revised understanding of the moon's structure and how it may have originated. Information is given on the Lunar Ephemeris and sources of other detail in this regard. This section explains the basis of calculating quantities such as the height of a central crater peak from the time of observation and the co-ordinates of the feature. Slopes of crater walls can be estimated in a similar fashion.

The latter portion of the book lists and describes local detail on particular features, mostly craters and their surroundings. Presentation is alphabetical for ease of reference. Each description includes a list of observing points and tactics for locating the more interesting details which would otherwise pass unnoticed.

The concluding part of the book deals with the controversial and elusive topic of Transient Lunar Phenomena. (TLP). While maintaining a balanced open view on the subject the author discusses the history of the early sightings and some possible causes. (The 1958 visual and spectrographical observations by Kozyrev are particularly interesting). It is an area subject to "false alarms" and the author explains how many of these arise and how they can be eliminated by experience from other genuine anomalies.

(The author occasionally refers to another of his works: "Advanced Amateur Astronomy" for readers who wish to pursue topics in greater detail)