

How to identify – Night Sky

by Storm Dunlop & Wil Tirion

Collins, 2002. ISBN 0-00-710361-1202. Pp 256, £12.99 (pbk).

This latest addition to the Collins' *How to Identify* series provides a comprehensive guide to the night sky. Designed for the beginner and for those who want to find out more, the book covers everything that can be seen with the naked eye and binoculars, as well as what is visible using a small telescope.

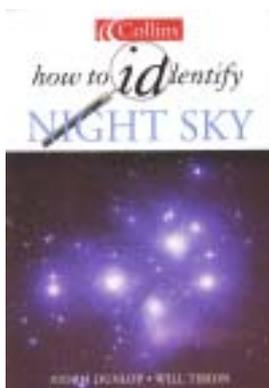
The book opens with a basic review of observing equipment followed by a guide to finding your way around the sky, with a helpful explanation of astronomical measurements and notation. A description of the celestial sphere and the movements of the stars and planets throughout the year follow. There are comprehensive monthly charts for the northern hemisphere. There is a guide to observing the moon and the planets. The authors then move on to describe observing the other objects in the sky such as aurora, satellites, meteors, stars and deep sky objects.

The final section of the book is a comprehensive description of the constellations. For each one there is a chart, a photograph, a description of its features and history, the best dates and times of visibility, the mythological representation and a list of interesting objects. The final pages include a glossary, a guide to further reading, contact

details for a number of astronomical societies, a list of some familiar astronomical software and a very helpful directory of Internet sites.

As many astronomers will vouch, the bookshelves of beginners' guides to the night sky are heavily stocked and dominated by familiar authors. However, I believe Collins, with text by well-regarded astronomer Storm Dunlop and maps by celestial cartographer Wil Tirion, has contributed a useful addition to this stock. I found the text well written, logically set out and with sufficient scientific detail to be interesting without being off-

putting for the beginner. The objects selected for observation were well chosen, varied and well described. The star maps were uncluttered and easy to understand. My few quibbles would be that the photographs of the constellations could have been a little clearer and the text size could have benefited from being a few points larger for my aging eyes. Overall, I consider that those new to observing should not be disappointed with this book.



Stephen Brooks

Stephen Brooks is a binocular observing member of the Crayford Manor House Astronomical Society, unfortunately based in light polluted South-East London.

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