



## The Cambridge Double Star Atlas

by James Mullaney & Wil Tirion

Cambridge University Press, 2009.  
ISBN 978-0-521-49343-7. Pp 148,  
£27.50 (pbk, spiralbound).

James Mullaney and Wil Tirion will be well known to the majority of amateur astronomers. For many years James Mullaney has been encouraging people to experience the joy of observing the night sky and his role as Assistant Editor for *Sky & Telescope* and his involvement with both the Buhl and DuPont Planetaria have given him a wealth of experience in the field. His co-author Wil Tirion is probably the best-known celestial cartographer in the world with his most famous work being *Sky Atlas 2000.0*.

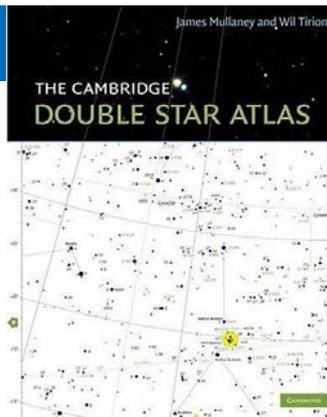
*The Cambridge Double Star Atlas* is, to quote the authors, '...the first major modern star atlas devoted primarily to the observation of visual double and multiple stars.'

The atlas starts with a short general introduction and this clearly identifies the main audience for the book as observers with a telescope rather than binoculars or

the unaided eye. Observers new to the field will certainly welcome the inclusion of a list of 133 double and multiple star showpieces. The arrangement of this section in constellation order and the inclusion of comments on each showpiece make this perhaps the most useful section of the book.

Unfortunately much of the rest of the material is disappointing. As an all-purpose star atlas, particularly for people without a go-to telescope or access to planetarium software, this is an adequate resource but as an atlas primarily intended for observers of visual double stars it is less successful. In subdued light many observers will struggle to read the chosen colour and font size of the text used to depict the double stars.

Three appendices make up about 40% of the ring-bound book. Of these the target list of double stars, identifying all such objects plotted on the maps, is by far the largest.



The list has been arranged in order by right ascension rather than by constellation and this greatly restricts its value, since objects close together in the sky are scattered throughout many different pages of the targets list. I would have much preferred to have the list in constellation order as was done for the earlier 'showpieces' section.

If used in combination with appropriate software the atlas will be of some value to the less experienced observer but I suspect that many will find it difficult and frustrating to use, and as such I cannot recommend it to members.

**Martin Nicholson**

*Martin Nicholson specialises in the remote observing of asteroids, comets, double stars and variable stars. His particular interest in double stars, both eclipsing and optical, lies in the study of the many neglected and misidentified systems listed in the standard catalogues.*

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