



The Star Book: how to understand astronomy

by Peter Grego

David & Charles, 2012. ISBN 978-1-4463-0239-2. Pp 160, £12.99 (pbk).

Peter Grego is well known to many as a great populariser of astronomy and an entertainingly informative steersman to those seeking to find out more about the heavens.

The Star Book lives up to expectations. The innovative perforated cover and

the colour-coded pages immediately suggest that this is not just another picture-book, though illustrations abound. Many of them are Peter's own photographs and sketches, together with wonderful space-telescope and ground-based images, and clear, colourful diagrams.

This is a book that can be used anywhere in the world. The northern and southern hemispheres of the night sky receive equal treatment, and city-dwellers are not neglected: they too will find material here that will tempt them outside to observe (light pollution is of course discussed). The author does not assume that the reader will own a telescope, and there is plenty here that will be of value to the binocular user and to those with no optical aid at all: indeed, the wide-angle sky charts that accompany the seasonal constellation notes are well suited to the naked-eye observer. There are no highly detailed single-constellation charts.



The book consists of a descriptive and historical section, discussing the charting of the skies, telescopic astronomy, deep-sky objects (with the welcome inclusion of exoplanets:

their nature and discovery) and the celestial sphere; an observing section, with attractive colour-coded circumpolar and seasonal charts for the whole world; and a solar system section, full of up-to-date facts about atmospheric effects (including high-altitude phe-

nomena such as aurorae, meteors and noctilucent clouds), the Moon, planets and other bodies of the Sun's family.

Usefully, the book warns readers early on that what they will see through any telescope will definitely not match the colourful depictions of deep-sky objects and planets shown.

This reviewer agrees with Sir Arnold Wolfendale, the fourteenth Astronomer Royal, who writes in the Introduction: 'If you can see it in the sky, then there's something in this book to tell you more'. A glossary and index complete the book. It should be on (and frequently off!) the shelves of all those who wish to keep up with the latest developments in astronomy. Peter Grego has produced a book that is well worth reading.

Bob Mizon

Bob Mizon operates a travelling planetarium, and coordinates the BAA Campaign for Dark Skies.

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