

THE GOLDEN BOOK OF ASTRONOMY

Although astronomy is said to be the oldest science, it still retains its excitement and mystery for amateurs. However vast our knowledge of the universe may seem, the subject always seems greater still. And there remain conspicuous gaps in what we know about objects in the sky, even those relatively close to Earth.

The range of objects that can be seen with even a modest telescope or binocular is simply staggering. It encompasses stars in different arrangements and striking colors, galaxies of curious shapes and sizes, glowing nebulae and dark dust clouds. It includes the wandering planets that come and go, describing loops or curves in the sky in a way that perplexed the ancient astronomers. You can track man-made satellites, sometimes steady and occasionally tumbling in their orbits. And there are rare visitors such as the aurorae, and the eagerly awaited eclipses of the Sun and Moon.

This book describes the equipment that the beginner in astronomy will need to make the most of this celestial display. Then it introduces other ways in which observing may be actively enjoyed—keeping records and notes, making drawings, taking photographs and participating in group activities such as meteor watches and comet and nova searches.

But this book is not restricted to the practical side of astronomy. It contains generous chapters on the most up-to-date knowledge obtained by giant radio telescopes and the latest generation of sophisticated observing instruments. There are many spectacular computer-enhanced color images, numerous line drawings to clarify technical matters and a selection of the dramatic photographs of the solar system taken by the Mariner, Viking, Pioneer and Voyager spacecraft.