

## The "WOW" Hobby

Some people sometimes view hobbies as sometimes silly or frivolous pastimes. And it's true some hobbies are like that. But it is healthy to have a hobby because it diversifies our interests and keeps us active and fun to be with. But many hobbies are for the few that really get into that area of study. Stamp collecting or rock climbing are valid hobbies. But to be sure, these are not hobbies that just anybody will get into.

Astronomy, by contract, that you could say everybody gets into at some point or another. It is safe to say that everybody at some point has looked up at a magnificent night sky and said "WOW." At that moment, even if was only for that moment, that person became an amateur astronomy hobbyist. They had that "Wow" moment in what can only be described as the "WOW" hobby.

That common experience is what makes astronomy one of the most exciting and popular hobbies of them all. Any hobby has to have a few "wow" moments. Whether it's hitting that strike in bowling or finding that perfect stamp, there has to be a moment when the bell rings. Well astronomy has many "wow" moments that occur virtually any clear night in the stars. From the coming of an asteroid shower to just figuring out another constellation, there is so much to do and play with in astronomy that you can be a hobbyist your whole life and never get bored.

Besides the excitement of astronomy, another reason it makes a great hobby is that it is easy and cheap to get started. Unlike skiing for example, to just start enjoying astronomy, all you need is the night sky. But there is no end to the levels of complexity and sophistication you can get to as you move along in astronomy as well. So like any good hobby, astronomy is endlessly fascinating and tremendously addictive because there is always more you want to learn and more you can do to make your knowledge and experiences more interesting and fun.

A great side benefit of how many people are into astronomy is that it is a tremendously social hobby as well. This is unusual for a hobby that is associated with a science, that is executed by staring up in the sky by yourself and that is not competitive. But in any town or city, there are at least a few and probably dozens of astronomy clubs and associations that meet regularly to discuss astronomy.

This is the perfect way to introduce a new recruit to the hobby of astronomy. These clubs thrive on sharing their love of astronomy with new members, kids and those just learning how to explore the stars. Most astronomy clubs schedule regular "safaris" to go out away from the lights of the city and get a good

night of sky watching done. Going on such an outing with a big group of enthusiasts is the type of experience that will take a passive interest into astronomy and change it into a healthy obsession.

By going out with a group, you can rub elbows with people who know the night sky, can help you learn how to spot the great constellations and how to train your eyes to see the really cool stuff going on over our heads virtually every night. Astronomy is a passion that is shared equally by everyone from children, to college students to serious scholars in the field to even professional astronomers who work at exploring the universe full time. On any given night, you or your child may be sitting next to an award winning professional astronomer who will happily provide a private lesson looking up at the cosmos just for the sheer fun of shared learning.

The great thing is that everything we have talked about here costs virtually nothing. You can get started with your love of astronomy and learn as you go so when you are ready to make some investment in equipment, you have learned from others what is just the right thing for you. Sure, eventually you will want some astronomy magazine subscriptions, a star map or two and binoculars or a telescope. But those things come as your love of the hobby matures. Meanwhile, get out there, meet others who share your excitement about star gazing and get to know a hobby that never stops making you say "WOW".