



Reviews about

## **Navigating the Night Sky** **How to Identify the Stars and Constellations**

Series: [Patrick Moore's Practical Astronomy Series](#)  
Almeida, Guilherme de

Original Portuguese edition published by Plátano Edicoes Técnicas, Lda. Lisboa, Portugal 1999 (3rd ed) 2004, XII, 205 p., 105 illus., Softcover  
ISBN: 978-1-85233-737-7

**Published reviews/ From the reviews:**

"The author, who is a well-known Portuguese amateur astronomer, methodically explains how to recognize the brighter stars and major constellations and, thus, how to find one's way around the night sky. ... This book does an effective job of doing what it sets out to do. I recommend it to anyone who wants to explore the night sky for the first time and understand how the night sky visible to us changes during the night and during the year."

(Jocelyn Tomkin, The Observatory, Vol. 125 (1186), 2005)  
( <http://www.springer.com/west/home/astronomy?SGWID=4-123-22-30414804-0&detailsPage=ppmmedia%7Creviews> )

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"The book is about how to identify the stars and constellations ... . This book comprises a nice selection of careful thought out diagrams which fit in beautifully with the text ... . I would really recommend it to someone who is new to astronomy or as a reference book for the regular observer. ... With the aid of this book ... even the newest observer will be off to a flying start. ... The language of the book is easily accessible ... ."

(Samuel George, Photopresse, Issue: 44, October, 2004)  
( <http://www.springer.com/west/home/astronomy?SGWID=4-123-22-30414804-0&detailsPage=ppmmedia%7Creviews> )

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"The book is targeted at newcomers to astronomy ... . the book is interesting and accessible, the concepts discussed are easy to understand and the content flows naturally, with chapters on identifying the constellations, stars and the celestial sphere. ... the book closes with 40 pages of appendices with lots of useful tables and data. The diagrams ... are especially clear and concise ... . This book would certainly point the newcomer in the right direction! I would recommend this practical guide ... ."

(Mark Allison, Popular Astronomy, July-September, 2006)  
( <http://www.springer.com/west/home/astronomy?SGWID=4-123-22-30414804-0&detailsPage=ppmmedia%7Creviews> )

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"This small book, just under 200 pages, originally written in the author's native Portuguese, was translated into English in 1999. Its prime purpose is naked eye constellation recognition and identification of the brightest stars for newcomers to astronomy. The book is well presented, and actually does quite a good job. But, and this is a big but, it is almost irretrievably northern hemisphere orientated in everything it says and illustrates. So unless you are a newcomer to astronomy who is about to depart for a sojourn in the north, or you wish to buy such a publication for a northern hemisphere astronomical novice, forget it, as there is very little mention of anything south of the equator."

Reviewed by: Roger Feasey, Auckland Astronomical Society  
([http://www.astronomy.org.nz/aas/BookReviews/Navigating\\_The\\_Night\\_Skies.asp](http://www.astronomy.org.nz/aas/BookReviews/Navigating_The_Night_Skies.asp) )

**Author's note:** The part of this review relative to the southern hemisphere is not fair. The book really includes 4 dedicated sections (11 pages) concerning specially the southern hemisphere, including several diagrams and maps around the south celestial pole. The Identification Maps M2 to M7 are also usable in south locations. There are further 4 maps about the sky visible in each one of the four seasons in southern hemisphere.

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"Navigating the Night Sky is an easy to read book that is essential for all those taking their first steps in finding their way around the night sky. Whilst the book is aimed at beginners it also provides information for the more advanced stargazer.

The book is arranged into chapters on the Constellations, Stars, Celestial Sphere, Identifying The Constellations & The Brightest Stars, The Sky Seen From The Southern Hemisphere, The Milky Way, Celestial Chart, and the Sky & The Four Seasons. The main text is followed by 12 appendices containing useful data for the budding observer.

The opening chapter deals with finding a good viewing location, dark adaptation and seasonal constellations in their basic form (northern hemisphere only, the southern hemisphere is covered later in the book).

The second chapter deals with the basic nature of and the brightness of stars. The text here, as in rest of the book, is non technical which makes for a more relaxed form of learning for beginners. The third chapter provides splendid, easy to understand diagrams that help to explain the, at first, seemingly complex motions of our celestial sphere. Zenith, altitude, celestial pole, ecliptic and other terms are introduced as is the effect of Earth's rotation on star positions and planetary orbits. Simple techniques for measuring the angular distance between stars are well illustrated. The chapter on identifying constellations and the brightest stars gets down to the "nitty-gritty" of stellar navigation and is well illustrated with diagrams and charts.

Insights on map orientation and several useful identification charts for picking out both the easy and not so easy constellations are provided here. The remaining chapters continue in the same vein making the book a joy to read. I found one typographical mistake on page 124 where the star Markeb ( $\kappa$  Velorum) was confused with Markab ( $\alpha$  Pegasi).

This publication is bound to keep the art of star hopping alive, so my advice is to hop off and buy a copy."

Reviewed by: Graham Crossley, Astronomical Association Of Queensland  
(Extracted From AAQ December, 2005 Newsletter)  
([http://www.aaq.org.au/PDF\\_Documents/Library/NavigatingTheNightSky.pdf](http://www.aaq.org.au/PDF_Documents/Library/NavigatingTheNightSky.pdf) )

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"When I was asked to review this book I immediately thought that I would be in for a treat. I have heard great things of Guilherme de Almeida.

Although the book is about how to identify the stars and constellations the author goes into some considerable detail about the objects that we spend our time observing. This is good as it means that you do not get bogged down in diagrams and paths to follow.

This book is definitely aimed at a beginner, but unlike so many it may even "show an old dog some new tricks" – it has me.

This book comprises a nice selection of carefully thought out diagrams which fit in beautifully with the text, thus making the identification of constellations simple. The author even points out to the reader that the objects that are associated with the constellations rarely look the same. This is a stumbling point that I have found many beginners come across – looking for a bear when in fact you are more

looking for a collection of diagonal lines. He is very clear about this and makes sure that the reader appreciates how old these constellations are and that over time their shape changes. The main emphasis of the book is not to rush learning lots of different constellations and also to take it out when you observe. The author stresses the need to do actual observations and not to just read the book. This means that the beginner will be immediately enabled to say that they have identified something new every time they observe.

I would really recommend it to someone who is new to astronomy or as a reference book for the regular observer. Yes, the author does go into some background on the mythology of constellations and some of the actual astrophysics behind the night sky but this is not enough for anyone who already knows the sky. That said this book is not aiming to give you mythology or science but to show you how to find objects in the sky and I would definitely say that it does this. With the aid of this book and some clear, dark skies then even the newest observer will be off to a flying start.

Overall I get the impression that this book would be a bit pointless for anyone who knows their way around the sky, unless they are after a good reference book, but for anyone new to the field then this would be great. The language of the book is easily accessible and so would also be appropriate for most but the youngest starters.

This book is one of the Patrick Moore's Practical Astronomy Series and is published by Springer. Price: £18.95, 205 pages, softcover. ISBN: 1-85233-737-0"

Book Review by Samuel George, Federation of Astronomical Societies journal, Autumn 2004, Issue 76. (<http://www.fedastro.org.uk/newsletter/pdf/76.pdf>)

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"Con seguridad este libro interesará a cualquiera que se maraville por la visión del cielo nocturno y desee aprender a reconocer las constelaciones e identificar las estrellas más luminosas por su nombre. El conocido astrónomo aficionado Guilherme de Almeida desmonta el mito de que la actuación de especialistas y el uso de instrumentos sofisticados son un requisito previo para toda observación astronómica. El libro pone mucho énfasis en dejar claro que el reconocimiento del cielo a ojo pelado, sin instrumentos, es la plataforma esencial para comenzar cualquier forma de observación astronómica. Gradualmente el lector aprende a reconocer las mas importantes constelaciones, identificar estrellas y planetas e interpretar los cambios en la apariencia global del cielo nocturno a lo largo del año. El texto es pues una interesante guía práctica, reforzado por el uso de buen numero de mapas e ilustraciones."

( <http://personales.ya.com/casanchi/lib/2004/astr2004.htm> ), [libros@casanchi.com](mailto:libros@casanchi.com) .

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"I found this book extremely helpful in learning the patterns of the stars and constellations. It starts with the simplest patterns, and works progressively to the more difficult. It is a book to work through slowly, moving on at one's own pace."  
[jcrossins](#)

[http://www.amazon.co.uk/Navigating-Night-Sky-Constellations-Practical/dp/customer-reviews/1852337370/ref=cm\\_cr\\_dp\\_all\\_top/026-6380197-5146002?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1&customer-reviews.start=1&qid=1192918725&sr=8-1#customerReviews](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Navigating-Night-Sky-Constellations-Practical/dp/customer-reviews/1852337370/ref=cm_cr_dp_all_top/026-6380197-5146002?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1&customer-reviews.start=1&qid=1192918725&sr=8-1#customerReviews)

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This book is the best I have seen about observation for beginners and intermediate observers. The text is very clear and really helps who needs and wants know better the above sky. It teaches how seek for all constellations. Before you get a scope YOU MUST know the sky, first! To help you in this task, NAVIGATING THE NIGHT SKY is the right book for you learn it. I recommend it! So, I advice you to buy the book and at the same time, study the wonderful universe look at the sky just with your eyes on sky and of course... in the book.  
"jorgemotalmeida"

[http://www.amazon.co.uk/Navigating-Night-Sky-Constellations-Practical/dp/customer-reviews/1852337370/ref=cm\\_cr\\_dp\\_all\\_top/026-6380197-5146002?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1&customer-reviews.start=1&qid=1192918725&sr=8-1#customerReviews](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Navigating-Night-Sky-Constellations-Practical/dp/customer-reviews/1852337370/ref=cm_cr_dp_all_top/026-6380197-5146002?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1&customer-reviews.start=1&qid=1192918725&sr=8-1#customerReviews)