rich and very pretty.

As a final small-scope challenge, look for the faint edge-on spiral galaxy NGC 2683, located five degrees west and one south of Alpha Lyncis. Use low power and look for a faint narrow streak of light. An eight inch will show some vague brightness variations across the galaxy, but otherwise the object is not much of a show stopper.

1990 Iowa Amateur & Professional Astronomy Convention

The 1990 Iowa Amateur and Professional Astronomy Convention will be held September 21 and 22, 1990 in Des Moines. Convention activeties will be divided between the Science Center of Iowa (Friday night) and Starlite Village Motel (Saturday), with excursions to Drake Observatory and the Des Moines club's observatory near Baxter, Iowa. This is the second edition of the convention that Ron Veys, Michaela Brown & Family, and Lee Thomas attended last Fall at Ames, and found to be excellent. So, this is advanced warning for those who are arranging their busy calendars now.

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THE Prairie Astronomer

The Reviewer

by Dave Knisely

Observing Handbook and Catalogue of Deep-Sky Objects
by Christian B. Luginbuhl and Brian A. Skiff
Copyright 1989, Cambridge University Press, NY
352 pages, Price: $49.50 hardbound

Recently, a new entry in the progression of observing manuals has arrived. OBSERVING HANDBOOK AND CATALOG OF DEEP-SKY OBJECTS is a real heavy weight, providing a wealth of information and a little good advice. However, it seems to be more of an observational catalog than a real "how to" handbook.

The first chapter on Amateur observing is surprisingly short (only nine pages) but is one of the better ones I have yet to see. The authors appear to be targeting the book for the average amateur, since many of the "beginner" topics found in other manuals are either missing or substantially abbreviated. The presentation on telescopes is quite good. It makes the point that even small apertures are capable of showing much if used correctly. The advantages of equatorial mounts are extolled, although I wish the authors had demonstrated with charts just how well the right-angle-sweep method of finding things works verses straight star hopping which most Dobsonian users are forced to rely on. Simplicity in instruments is emphasized, which is especially important considering the high cost of equipment these days. Eyepieces are mentioned a bit too briefly, but there is a good discussion of what focal lengths may work best. Finders are discussed, but the authors fail to mention the popular Telrad naked-eye finder, which is finding its way onto many amateur's instruments. Also, the recommended two to three degree fields for finders are a bit on the small side (I like four to five degrees myself). Star atlases and guides are mentioned, as are the "Nebular" filters, although the observations in the book were made without using any filters. The remainder of the chapter contains a very good overview of observing techniques and site selection.

The second and third chapters concern the source of the book's written data,

as well as the abbreviations used. Following that is the real meat of the book: an extensive record of observations for over 2000 Deep-Sky objects arranged in increasing numerical order for each constellation covered. Each entry consists of the object's number, dimensions, magnitude, and surface brightness, plus a written description as seen in 2.4", 6", 10", and 12" apertures. Messier objects are covered, but are not highlighted, making finding them in the catalog a bit more difficult unless you first know their NGC number. After the Observation section is a full catalog of all the objects, with positions, types, sizes, visual magnitudes, constellations, description page, and notes all included. This part made locating the descriptions for various objects easy, and is a very good quick reference.

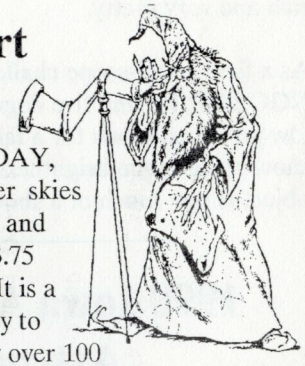
It is interesting to compare the descriptions in this book with my own observations and those of a friend of mine. Many of the descriptions seem too optimistic, while others do not mention details that I feel are fairly obvious. For example, the edge-on spiral galaxy NGC 891 I find very difficult to see in a four inch, yet the authors state that it was observed in a 2.4". In the same description, they fail to clearly mention the object's irregular dark lane down the length of the galaxy, which is visible in a ten or twelve inch. There are a number of other examples where the book differs from what I have observed, making me wonder if we are even observing the same objects! Still, most of the observations are useful in giving amateurs an idea of what can be seen with common instruments. In addition to the descriptions, several photographs, drawings, and useful charts of crowded galaxy clusters are included to help the observer find his target. I especially liked the photographic charts of interesting objects visible INSIDE the galaxies M31 and M33! To help the observer determine the faintness limit for his/her instrument, several photographs of open clusters are provided with the magnitudes of the major stars shown on each picture for comparison.

As a whole, OBSERVING HANDBOOK AND CATALOG OF DEEP-SKY OBJECTS is a well organized and fairly complete reference for the intermediate and advanced amateur. I hope they publish it in paperback soon, because its hardbound cost is a bit steep, and besides, I hate taking a hardbound book of this quality out where it might get damaged by dew, dropping, or careless friends in the dark.

The Prairie Astronomer is published monthly by the Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc., and is free to all club members. Membership status and expiration date are listed on the mailing label. Membership dues are: Junior Members and Newsletter Only Subscribers...$10/yr; Regular Members...$24/yr; Family Memberships...$27/yr; Address all new memberships, renewals, or questions to THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB, INC., P.O BOX 80553, LINCOLN, NE 68501. For other club information contact one of the following officers: Ron Debus (Pres)435-5688, Dave Knisely (V.Pres)223-3968, Kim Ellen Owen (Sec)423-7440, Lee Thomas(Tres)483-5639, Jack Dunn (2nd V. Pres)475-3013. All newsletter comments and articles should be sent to Newsletter Editor JOHN LORTZ, 9255 CADY AVE. #14, OMAHA, NE 68134 no later than 7 days before monthly club meetings.

Observing Chairman's Report

by Dave Knisely



THE NEXT SCHEDULED STAR PARTY IS FRIDAY, MARCH 23rd AT THE ATLAS SITE. Late winter skies offer an interesting combination of open star clusters and galaxies. M50 is a particularly good cluster that lies 3.75 degrees north and two east of Theta Canis Majoris. It is a moderate to large fairly rich group of stars that is easy to resolve even in small telescopes. A six inch will show over 100 stars in this group. About four degrees south and a half a degree east of Sirius lies the bright cluster M41. Under good dark skies, this object is visible to the unaided eye as a tiny fuzzy patch, and small instruments will easily show its many stars. Six or eight inch apertures will even reveal some color in the cluster's members.

In nearby Puppis is the beautiful group M93, located one degree north and one west of XI. This object is a bit tough for small instruments, but is very rich in apertures of four inches and larger, with several star chains being visible.

In Hydra is a very interesting planetary nebula, NGC 3242, sometimes know as the "EYE" nebula. Located about 1.75 degrees south and a third degree west of Mu, this object appears as a fuzzy 9th magnitude star in small telescopes, with larger apertures showing some interior detail. In a ten inch at high power, the central star is visible surrounded by an elliptical inner shell of fairly bright haze. A more circular diffuse outer shell encloses the inner one, making the whole thing look a bit like an eye.

In Sextans is the "Spindle" galaxy, NGC 3115, located 3.2 degrees east and a half north of Gamma Sextantis. Small telescopes show the galaxy as a fuzzy oval, while larger instruments show the brighter center an narrow point-like extensions off each end that give the object its name.

One of the easiest open star clusters in the spring sky is M44, the Bee Hive cluster, located just north-west of Delta Cancri. Visible to the naked eye as a hazy patch of light, this group contains a few naked-eye stars which may sometimes be seen by keen-eyed observers. Binoculars and RFTs offer the best views of M44, since the object is over a degree in diameter. Large telescope users may even see a few very faint background galaxies in the cluster. Also in users may even see a few very faint background galaxies in the cluster. Also in Cancer is the ancient open cluster M67, located two degrees west of Alpha. This group is visible in 10x50 binoculars as a faint fuzzy patch, with 60mm refractors showing some of its brighter stars. In moderate to large apertures, this cluster is