

BOOK REVIEW

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The Supernova Search Charts and Handbook

G. D. Thompson and J. T. Bryan, Jr., 1989, 236 charts and 134 page Handbook, ISBN 0-521-26721-8, \$100.00, Sky Publishing Corporation, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

I was greatly impressed by this much-needed tool for supernovae and variable star observers. In fact, once I began reading *The Handbook* and studying the charts, I could not put them down.

The authors have done a marvelous job compiling the 236 charts. It is very obvious that much work and time went into this project. The charts are 8 1/2 x 11 3/4 inches, on thick, semi-gloss paper. The chart background is black with galaxies and stars in white. Most charts are scaled 10" = 1mm, with a few at a larger scale; e.g., NGC 598 (M33), NGC 224 (M31), and the Magellanic Clouds. The coordinates for the galaxies are for epochs 1950 and 2000.

The charts are conveniently marked to coordinate with the chart numbers of *Sky Atlas 2000* by Tirion (Sky Publishing Corporation). They should work well with *The Uranometria 2000 Atlas* by Tirion *et al.* (Willmann-Bell, Incorporated). This will make it easier for those like me who star-hop to find objects.

All the charts are marked with the galaxies NGC or IC number. If more than one galaxy is on a chart, the central one's NGC/IC number is given at the top and the others at the bottom. Messier and Herschel numbers, if the galaxy has them, are found at the bottom along with any common names they may have; e.g., NGC 224 is the Great Andromeda Galaxy.

The galaxies go down to approximately magnitude 11.5. The background stars go to magnitude < 16.0. The comparison stars are marked using the same format as the AAVSO star charts - number with decimal omitted. Most magnitudes are photoelectric or photovisual. Stars brighter than magnitude 10.0 are taken from *The Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory Star Catalog* (Washington 1966) and *The Atlas of the Heavens - 1950.0* by Becvar (Sky Publishing 1964).

It would probably be a good idea for the observer to attach the chart to a clipboard and overlay an acetate sheet on top of it to protect these charts - after all, they are fairly expensive.

The Handbook is a nice black hardbound volume, and is very readable. The authors do a good job explaining the use of the charts. I had to read the section entitled "Estimating the Magnitude of a Supernova" twice. It could have been me, but I felt this section was not very clearly worded.

There is a nice appendix at the end of *The Handbook* with articles by professional astronomers containing some good update information on supernovae. Though a bit technical, they were understandable. It is obvious that these professionals appreciate the work of amateur astronomers, which is encouraging.

These charts will be very useful when a supernova is discovered and the AAVSO sends out an *Alert Notice*, or when we are notified through the telegrams from the Central Bureau for Astronomical Telegrams. Important early estimates of the supernova's brightness can be made and AAVSO Headquarters notified immediately.

I hope more amateurs use these charts to follow the steps of Reverend Robert O. Evans, famous visual discoverer of supernovae. Both supernovae searching and estimating the brightness of supernovae are important work by the amateur.

I highly recommend this work to all variable star observers. Hopefully more supernovae will be discovered by the eye of the amateur.

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