



Comets and How to Observe Them (Astronomers' Observing Guides)

By Richard Schmude Jr.



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Comets have inspired wonder, excitement and even fear ever since they were first observed. But they are important members of the solar system, that contain material from early in the life of the system, held in deep-freeze. This makes them key in our understanding of the formation and evolution of many Solar System bodies.

Recent ground- and space-based observations have changed much in our understanding of comets. Comets, and How to Observe Them gives a summary of our current knowledge and describes how amateur astronomers can contribute to the body of scientific knowledge of comets. This book contains many practical examples of how to construct comet light-curves, measure how fast a comet's coma expands, and determine the rotation period of the nucleus. All these examples are illustrated with drawings and photographs.

Because of their unpredictable nature comets are always interesting and sometime spectacular objects to observe and image. The second part of the book therefore takes the reader through the key observing techniques that can be used with commercially available modern observing equipment, from basic observations to more scientific measurements.

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Editorial Review

Review

From the reviews:

“More comets were found between 2000 and 2008 Four well known comets are then discussed in some detail before moving on to observing with the unaided eye, binoculars, small telescopes and, finally, with large scopes. If you enjoy lots of information, good illustrations and some maths, this is for you.” (Steve Richards, *Sky at Night Magazine*, April, 2011)

“The remarkable space probes to several comets, including Halley, have rewarded observers with a deeper understanding of the nature of comets and their relationship to asteroids. ... it will surely encourage amateur astronomers to consider taking up the challenge. This book is valuable not only for those who plan to study comets, but also for anyone who simply enjoys looking at these cosmic spectaculars. Summing Up: Highly recommended. Lower-division undergraduates and general audiences.” (D. E. Hogg, *Choice*, Vol. 48 (8), April, 2011)

“Richard Schmude’s passion ... brings to the table a book that covers almost every point in the comet observer’s arsenal. ... he deftly moves into a review of the laws of orbital mechanics, without diving too deeply into the mathematics, and in a way that everyone should easily grasp. ... This book is satisfying in many ways, filling in gaps in my knowledge in a way that kept me reading, despite the plethora of equations and values A recommended read indeed” (Nick Howes, *Astronomy Now*, April, 2011)

“The book is full of useful and helpful material. The content is well organized, and covers much technical background about comets at a scientific level, including equations. The author is an experienced observer and has included lots of tips on how to make and improve observations, such as resting your elbows on your car roof when observing with larger-aperture binoculars.” (Jonathan Shanklin, *The Observatory*, Vol. 131 (1222), June, 2011)

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

Dr. Richard Willis Schmude, Jr. was born in Washington D.C. and attended public schools in Cabin John, Maryland; Los Angeles, California; and Houston, Texas. He started his college career at North Harris County College and graduated from Texas A&M University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Chemistry. Later, he obtained a Master of Science degree in Chemistry from, a Bachelor of Arts degree in Physics and a Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry. He worked at NALCO Chemical Company as a graduate co-op student and at

Los Alamos National Laboratory as a graduate research assistant. Since 1994, Dr. Schmude has taught astronomy, chemistry, and other science classes at Gordon College in Barnesville, Georgia. He is a tenured Professor at this college and continues to teach his students (and others) in these areas. He has published over 100 scientific papers in many different journals, and has given over 500 talks, telescope viewing sessions and workshops to over 20,000 people.

Users Review

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James McFarland:

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