

STAR WARE

THIRD EDITION

The amateur astronomer's ultimate guide to choosing, buying, and using telescopes and accessories



PHILIP S. HARRINGTON

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The Amateur Astronomer's
Ultimate Guide to
Choosing, Buying, and Using
Telescopes and Accessories

THIRD EDITION

Philip S. Harrington



John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

For my daughter, Helen, the star of my life

This book is printed on acid-free paper. ☺

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Preface to the Third Edition

If the pure and elevated pleasure to be derived from the possession and use of a good telescope . . . were generally known, I am certain that no instrument of science would be more commonly found in the homes of intelligent people. There is only one way in which you can be sure of getting a good telescope. First, decide how large a glass you are to have, then go to a maker of established reputation, fix upon the price you are willing to pay—remembering that good work is never cheap—and finally see that the instrument furnished to you answers the proper tests for telescopes of its size. There are telescopes and there are telescopes . . .

With these words of advice, Garrett Serviss opened his classic work *Pleasures of the Telescope*. Upon its publication in 1901, this book inspired many an arm-chair astronomer to change from merely a spectator to a participant, actively observing the universe instead of just reading about it. In many ways, that book was an inspiration for the volume you hold before you.

The telescope market is radically different than it was in the days of Serviss. Back then, amateur astronomy was an activity of the wealthy. The selection of commercially made telescopes was restricted to only one type of instrument—the refractor—and sold for many times what their modern descendants cost today (after correcting for inflation).

By contrast, we live in an age that thrives on choice. Amateur astronomers must now wade through an ocean of literature and propaganda before being able to select a telescope intelligently. For many a budding astronomer, this chore appears overwhelming.

That is where this book comes in. You and I are going hunting for telescopes. After opening chapters that explain telescope jargon and history, today's astronomical marketplace is dissected and explored. Where is the best place to buy a telescope? Is there one telescope that does everything well? How should a telescope be cared for? What accessories are needed? The list of questions goes on and on.

Happily, so do the answers. Although there is no single set of answers that are right for everybody, all of the available options will be explored so that you can make an educated decision. All of the chapters that detail telescopes, binoculars, eyepieces, and accessories have been fully updated in this third edition to include dozens of new products. Reviews have also been expanded, based on my own experiences from testing equipment for *Astronomy* magazine as well as from hundreds of comments that I have received from readers around the world!

Not all of the best astronomical equipment is available for sale, however; some of it has to be made at home. Eleven new homemade projects are outlined further in the book. The book concludes with a discussion of how to care for and use a telescope.

Yes, the telescope marketplace has certainly changed in the past century (even in the four years since the second edition of *Star Ware* was released), and so has the universe. The amateur astronomer has grown with these changes to explore the depths of space in ways that our ancestors could not have even imagined.