



Deep-sky companions: the Caldwell Objects

by Stephen James O'Meara

Sky Publishing, 2003. ISBN 0-933346-97-2. Pp xv + 484, \$39.95 (hbk).

Since its introduction the Caldwell catalogue has caused controversy among amateur astronomers. The list was introduced by Sir Patrick Caldwell-Moore in an article in *Sky & Telescope* in December 1995. His idea was to compile a list of deep sky objects similar to that compiled by the comet hunter Charles Messier, but consisting of objects that Messier missed. Messier observed from Paris and his observations were limited by the latitude of his observatory. The Caldwell objects have no such constraints, and cover both hemispheres.

Controversy has arisen because, while Messier's list was compiled for a good reason – to locate the many objects that could be confused with comets in small telescopes – the Caldwell list is of objects already catalogued. Some people feel that to give these objects (only four of which do not have NGC or IC designations) another name is unnecessary. Others have argued that any list which gets people out observing must be good.

However, whatever feelings you have about the list itself, this is an excellent and substantial book. O'Meara is a well-known observer who has also written a book on the Messier objects. This book if anything is more thorough, and one of its strongest features is the essays which introduce each object, describing their discovery, history and, in many instances, aspects of their physics. For example, the entry on NGC 4559 not only describes this galaxy, but also uses it to illustrate the Hubble galaxy classification system. The book is probably worth buying for these essays alone.

O'Meara lives in Hawaii and most of the observations were made there with a 4-inch (100mm) refractor. Presumably it is the clarity of his sky that allows him to observe objects such as IC 405 (Flaming Star Nebula) not only with a 4-inch telescope but in 10×50 binoculars! Objects below his local horizon were observed from New Zealand and South Africa.

The book is well illustrated with finder charts, photographs and sketches. Sketches are usually as seen through the 4-inch, but occasionally they are composite views through different telescopes.

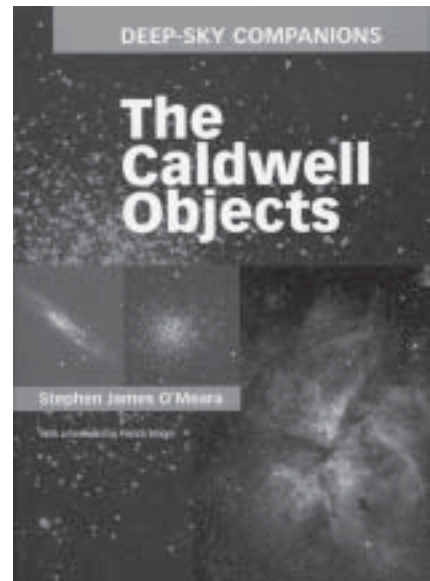
O'Meara also lists and describes 20 of his own favourite non-Messier and non-Caldwell objects and includes an appendix on why he thinks the Double Cluster in Perseus was not listed by Messier. There is also a brief biography of William Herschel (who discovered many of the objects) by

Larry Mitchell.

In summary, even if you are not a fan of the Caldwell catalogue, this is an excellent, well-written and well-produced book that can be thoroughly recommended to anyone with an interest in the deep sky.

Stewart Moore

Recently retired from the oil industry, Stewart Moore has moved to rural Essex where hopefully after a mammoth period of decorating he will be able to build an observatory and continue observing planetary nebulae.



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