

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Chapter One: The Night Sky

- What is Night?
- A brief summary of the night sky
- Celestial Coordinate Systems
- Reading a Star Chart
- Determining Sky Quality
- Light Pollution - The Enemy
- Selecting a Dark(er) Site
- How to Measure the Darkness

Chapter Two: Cameras

- Types of cameras for astrophotography
- What can be done with PnS, DSLR, Webcam, CCD
- How does a camera work?
- Manual Mode
 - ISO Speed
 - Exposure Time
 - White Balance
 - Histogram
- Modified versus Unmodified Cameras
- What do all the number associated with a lens mean?
- Lenses: Zoom versus Fixed, or Prime
- Automatic Focus versus Manual Focus
- Extras
 - Shutter Control Cable / Remote Cable Release
 - Right-Angle Finder
 - Tele-Extenders and Focal-Reducers
 - Lens Cleaning Kit
 - Dew Heaters
 - Green Laser Pointers

Chapter Three: Getting Started with a still platform

- Types of Still Platforms
- Wide-Field Constellations
 - Step-by-Step Walkthrough
- Multiple Exposures
- The Moon
 - Shooting the Moon
 - Lunar Halos
- The Sun
 - What to expect
 - How to Make a Solar Filter
 - How to Image the Sun
- Nightscape Shots
 - What Makes a Good Nightscape Image?
- The Blue Hour

- Nightscape - Other Sources of Light
 - Imaging People at Night
- Star Trails
 - Walkthrough
- Settings and What to Expect

Chapter Four: Tracking with the night sky

- What is a mount?
- Setting up the new equipment
 - Tripod/Legs/Pier
 - Body
 - Counterweight Shaft/Counterweights
 - Polar Scope
 - Control Pad
 - RS-232/Aux Ports
 - Power
- Getting polar alignment
 - Polar Scope
 - Laser Pointer
 - Balancing in Right Ascension
 - Balancing in Declination
- An Intervalometer
- Sky Glow - What it is and how to use it (or lose it)
- Mount and intervalometer on a Variety of Targets
 - Wide-Field Constellations
 - Man-Made Satellites
 - The Moon, The Sun, and Nightscape Imaging
 - Star Trails
- Deep Sky Objects
- Imaging Ideas

Chapter Five: Basic Post Processing

- Calibration Frames
 - Dark Frames
 - Bias/Offset Frames
 - Flat Frames
 - Building a Light Box
 - Alternatives to a Light Box
- What types of images need Calibration Frames
- Processing - What does it mean?
- Calibrating, Aligning, and Stacking - Is it Worth it?
- Programs to calibrate, align, and stack
 - Calibration
 - Alignment
 - Stacking
- Processing Your Astrophotos
 - Nightscape and Blue Hour
 - Star Trails
 - Moon and Sun

- Wide-Field (Sky Only) and Deep Sky Objects
 - Comets

Chapter Six: Post-Processing

- Tools for Post-Processing
- Monitor Calibration
- Post-Processing Terms and Definitions to Know
- Post-Processing Strategies
 - Auto and Undo
 - Setting the Black Point
 - Using Layers
 - Select and Work with a Large Region of the Image
 - Select a Range of Stars
 - Using Curves
 - Using Color Balance
 - Noise Reduction Techniques
 - Minor Touchups
- Notes on Astrophotography Types
 - Wide-Field and Deep Sky Objects
 - Nightscape – Blue Hour
 - Nightscape – General
 - Star Trails
 - The Moon and Sun

Appendix A: Choosing a camera

Appendix B: Choosing a camera lens (DSLR only)

Appendix C: Choosing a Tracking Mount

Appendix D: Checklist for Astrophotography from a Non-Tracking Platform

Appendix E: Checklist for Astrophotography from a Tracking Mount

Appendix F: Additional Astrophotography Resources