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D. A. Jenkins

# First Light and Beyond

Making a Success of Astronomical Observing

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Amateur astronomers who have been disappointed by the results of an observing session can take comfort in the guidance of this book, which advises how to still gain useful experience in seemingly "failed" nights at the telescope. In a world with imperfect seeing conditions, incredible observing sessions are often mixed with less inspiring ones, discouraging the amateur observer. This book is designed to minimize subsequent disappointment for astronomers who encounter a few bad observing sessions, helping novice observers take something worthwhile away each and every time they go out under the night sky, regardless of the observations that were originally planned. Almost every observer remembers his first sight of ringed Saturn, hanging in the blackness of space. Practitioners agree that there is something special about visual observing. Real-time observations at the eyepiece can provide fleeting yet intense feelings that connect us with the universe in unique ways. But when expectations aren't met at the eyepiece, there are other ways to profit from the practice of astronomy. These rewards, though less showy, are well worth cultivating. This is a book that will help the reader see what constitutes a "successful" visual observing session. It explains the nature of the objects that the observer is seeing and advises how best to use their equipment. There are many hints and tips about how best to locate, recall, and record observations, including suggestions for trips to areas where there are dark skies and to public observatories. Amateur astronomy is a journey from the urban backyard all the way to dark rural skies, and with this guide the journey can be smooth.

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