

David Levy's Guide to Observing and Discovering Comets

David Levy has held a lifelong passion for comets, and is one of the most successful comet discoverers in history. In this book he describes the observing techniques that have been developed over the years – from visual observations and searching, to photography, to electronic charge-coupled devices (CCDs). He combines a history of comet hunting with accounts of the latest techniques, showing how our understanding of comets has evolved over time. The book is suitable as a practical handbook for amateur astronomers, from those who are casually interested in comets and how to observe them, to those who want to begin and expand an observing program of their own. David Levy draws widely from his own experiences of a lifetime of observing comets, describing how enthusiastic amateurs can observe comets and try to make new discoveries themselves.

David Levy has discovered 21 comets, eight of them using his own backyard telescopes. In collaboration with Eugene and Carolyn Shoemaker, he discovered Shoemaker–Levy 9, the comet that collided with Jupiter in 1994, producing one of the most spectacular explosions ever witnessed in the solar system. He is a contributing editor for *Sky & Telescope* magazine, Science Editor for *Parade* magazine, and is the author or editor of twenty-nine books. He won an Emmy in 1998 as part of the writing team for the Discovery Channel documentary, *Three Minutes to Impact*. He is currently involved with the Shoemaker–Levy Double Cometograph comet search program, based at the Jarnac Observatory in Arizona.

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David H. Levy

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)

To Wendee, my wife, I love you –
and to our grandchildren
Summer and Matthew
May your comets always be bright
and beautiful

Contents

Acknowledgments page ix

Introduction 1

Part I Why observe comets?

- 1 **Of history, superstition, magic, and science** 9
- 2 **Comet science progresses** 17

Part II Discovering comets

- 3 **Comet searching begins** 25
- 4 **Tails and trails** 35
- 5 **Comet searching in the twentieth century** 43
- 6 **How I search for comets** 51
- 7 **Searching for comets photographically** 61
- 8 **Searching for comets with CCDs** 71
- 9 **Comet hunting on paper** 77
- 10 **Hunting for sungrazers over the Internet** 81
- 11 **What to do when you think you have found a comet** 87

viii Contents

Part III **A new way of looking at comets**

12 **When comets hit planets** 95

13 **The future of visual comet hunting** 105

Part IV **How to observe comets**

14 **An introduction to comet origins and characteristics** 111

15 **Visual observing of comets** 119

16 **Estimating the magnitude of a comet** 131

17 **Taking a picture of a comet** 139

18 **Measuring where a comet is in the sky** 145

Part V **Closing notes**

19 **My passion for comets** 153

Appendix 159

Index 173

Color plates will be found between pages 86 and 87.

Acknowledgments

When Simon Mitton of Cambridge University Press suggested that I write a guide to observing and discovering comets based on my personal experience, I was immediately interested in the idea. It is not that I needed to write a book on comets (this one is my sixth), but the possibility of writing something based on the passion I have had for so long was tremendously exciting. Thank you Simon, for this good suggestion. Thanks also to Wendee, my wife, who immediately encouraged me to follow Simon's suggestion, and who has been extremely helpful throughout this book's formative process. Wendee also prepared the index.

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