

50 Things to See in the Sky

Sarah Barker

Maria Nilsson, Illustrator

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"The sky above us holds limitless wonder," astrophysicist and television producer Sarah Barker declares. Technology may have made it easier to spot and understand heavenly bodies, but it will never explain away their magic. Barker first experienced that thrill as a child in England when she climbed onto a shed in the backyard to watch the Hale-Bopp comet. She shares her enthusiasm in *50 Things to See in the Sky*, a richly illustrated, layperson-friendly guide to everything from constellations to quasars and how to find them.

Step-by-step instructions and helpful diagrams ensure that beginners won't get overwhelmed. The same general advice applies to every situation: find the highest and darkest vantage point that you can (away from a city if possible), pick a clear night, and give your eyes time to adjust to the darkness. Binoculars are a good tool to start off with, while a telescope is an investment for more advanced hobbyists and can initially be accessed at a local astronomy club.

Moving from the closest sights to those farthest away, the book is a tour through peculiar and breathtaking phenomena such as meteor showers, comets, eclipses, the auroras, sunspots, lunar craters, Martian ice caps and volcanoes, and spiral and elliptical galaxies. Starting with what is easiest to spy with the naked eye, Barker gradually advances to things that require a telescope or other specialized equipment to be observed, such as the "baby solar system" in the constellation Taurus. At 450 light years away, it is best seen from the ALMA Observatory in Chile's Atacama Desert.

Maria Nilsson's whimsical and accurate drawings enhance the book's tasteful blue-and-white color scheme, while a glossary and a closing section on resources such as star map apps guarantee that readers will soon be looking to the skies for themselves.

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