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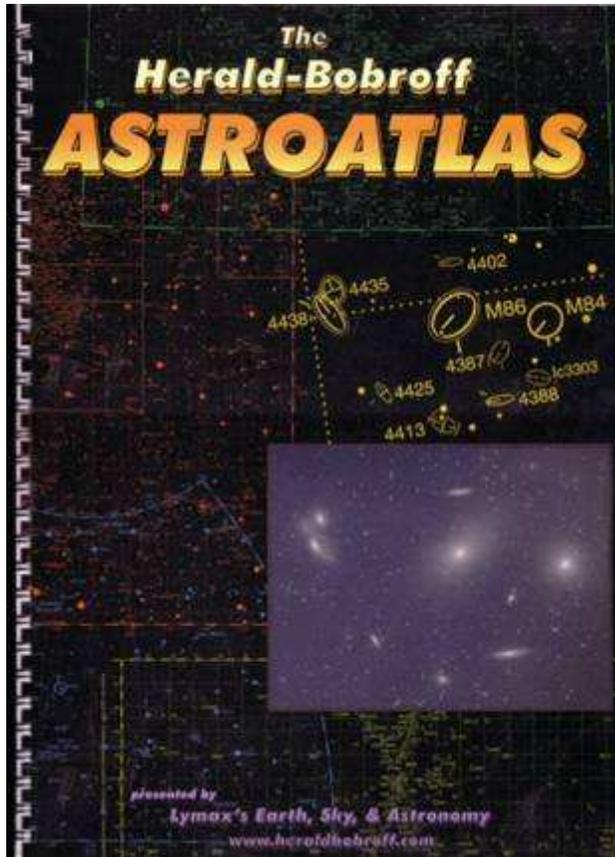
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# The Herald-Bobroff AstroAtlas

[Tom Trusock](#) – 1/2005

<b>Reviewed:</b>	Herald-Bobroff AstroAtlas
<b>Features:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 214 Charts</li><li>• Multiple Atlases in one</li><li>• Innovative Symbology</li><li>• Attractive Price</li><li>• Water and Tear resistant Paper</li><li>• \$80</li></ul>



I've had a love hate relationship with the print atlas for years.

I've owned several over the years - the Bright Star Atlas, Norton's, The Photographic Atlas of the Stars, Three different Sky Atlas 2000's, Uranometria 2000 (V2), and a couple of other less well known atlases.

It seemed like they never showed exactly what I wanted them to show. There was either so much area covered on a given chart I couldn't pick out what I needed, or there was so little sky covered, I felt lost in space. For a while I'd move between different atlases (and their associated field guides) – often taking out several at the same time to avoid the “Danger Will Robinson” feelings, but this never really fit in with my observing style. I like to go as light as possible, and a big bulky atlas was just too much to deal with.

Then I discovered Star Charting Software, and I realized it didn't have to be this way. I could make my own custom charts exactly how I wanted. What a revelation! I was free.

Yeah. I was free to stand in the field and say – “Gosh, isn't it amazing how ½ my charts are useless because of that storm front that just covered the south” or “Golly, I probably should have printed charts for another area of the sky seeing as how that light dome is \*right smack in the middle\* of my planned observing area. (And too bad I drove three hours to get here and observe through more light pollution than I've got in my driveway.)” and “Geepers – what's that? Too bad I don't have a chart for that area...” Substitute Gosh, Golly and Geepers for some not so “Leave It to Beaverish” phrases and you'll get an idea of how frustrating it can be.

After one or two (ok – three or four) of these episodes, I decided a print Atlas was an absolute must.

I bought SA 2000 – and ironically enough never used it. But I'd decided I'd better stick with it. And so, stick with it I did. This was all the while, operating under the assumption that an amateur astronomer simply had to have an atlas - even if they never really used it. Then some part of my brain (evidently without talking to the other parts) decided I never used it, and it got sold. A year later would decide I really ought to have one, and buy it back. (I did this several times.) Looking back now, the problem I had with SA2000 was twofold: It no longer went deep enough, and it was just too large for my habits.

Then I discovered Uranometria 2000 and the Herald-Bobroff AstroAtlas.

For a couple of reasons or another this article is mainly going to be about the HB AstroAtlas, but would like to take a moment and recommend that if you are shopping for an intermediate level atlas, you also consider U2k. In short, I see the pro's and cons's of U2k as follows:

<b>Uranometria 2000 (V2)</b>	
<b>Pro's</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In depth coverage</li><li>• Detailed, exacting field guide</li><li>• Beautifully done</li><li>• Slightly smaller footprint than the Astroatlas</li></ul>	<b>Con's</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Three volumes</li><li>• Sometimes too much detail – can be tough to recognize the field (Recommend the Bright Star Atlas as a supplement)</li></ul>

It's an excellent atlas, and a copy sits on my shelves for reference. The format alone is probably enough to ensure that it will never leave.

### **Herald-Bobroff AstroAtlas**

Now, with that out of the way, lets get to the meat of the article and take a look at the Herald-Bobroff AstroAtlas.

The Herald-Bobroff Astroatlas is to my knowledge unique in it's design and execution. The brain child of two Australian Amateurs David Herald, and Peter Bobroff, it had been out of print for the last few years, but thankfully, Lymax Earth Sea and Sky have brought it back to the US, and it's better than ever.

## Herald-Bobroff AstroAtlas

### Pro's

- Innovative Approach to a field guide
- Several Atlases in One
- Single Volume
- Resistant to elements, accidents and stupidity
- Low cost

### Cons

- Large size may require an observing table (16"x12")
- Symbols can sometimes be difficult to read / understand
- Spiral binding kept coming undone on review copy

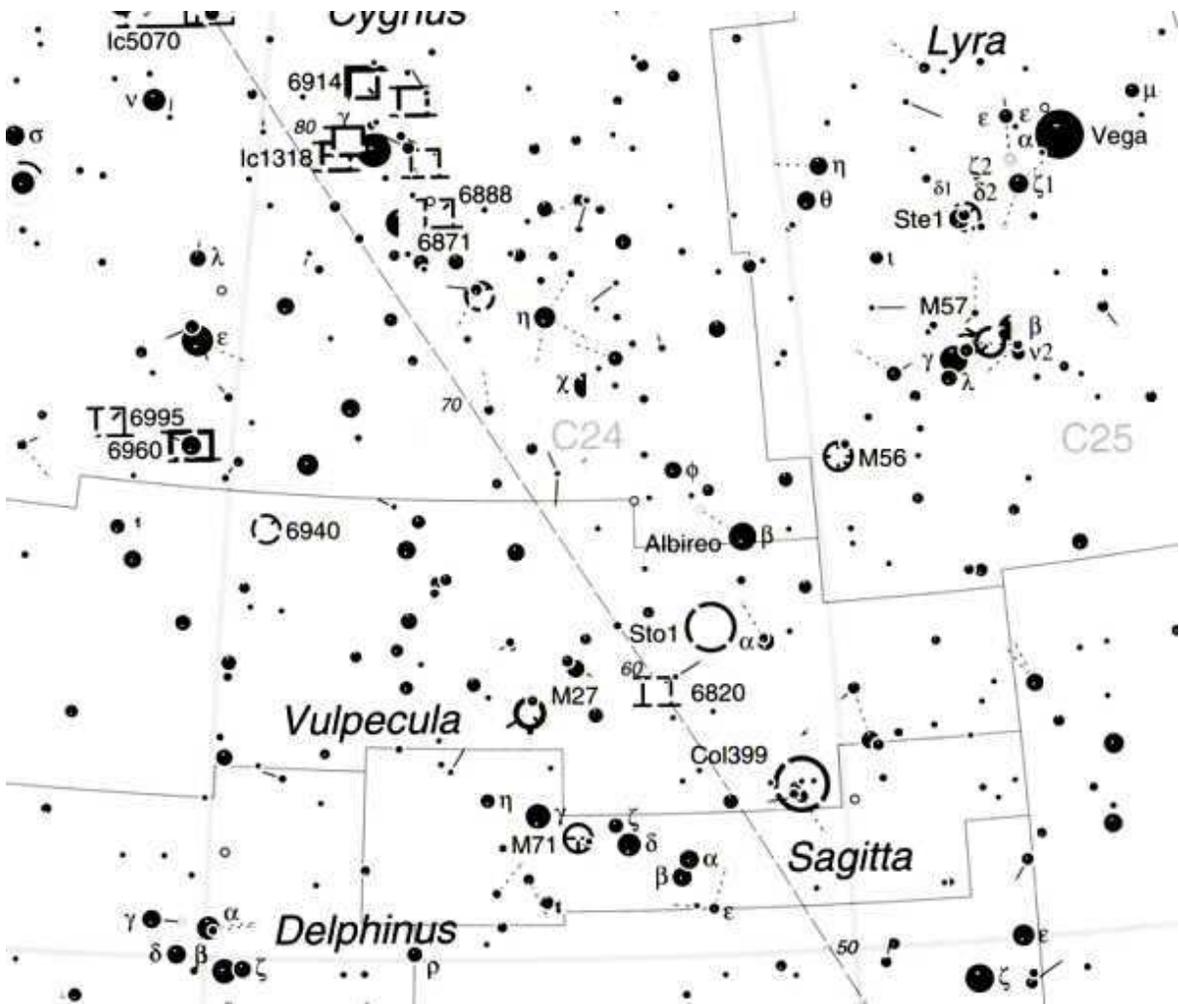
There are two key items that make it very different from any other atlas on the market: The fact the field guide information is encoded on the atlas itself, and the fact that you are actually buying a series of atlases which covers the sky at different scales.

Let's take a closer look.

### The Charts

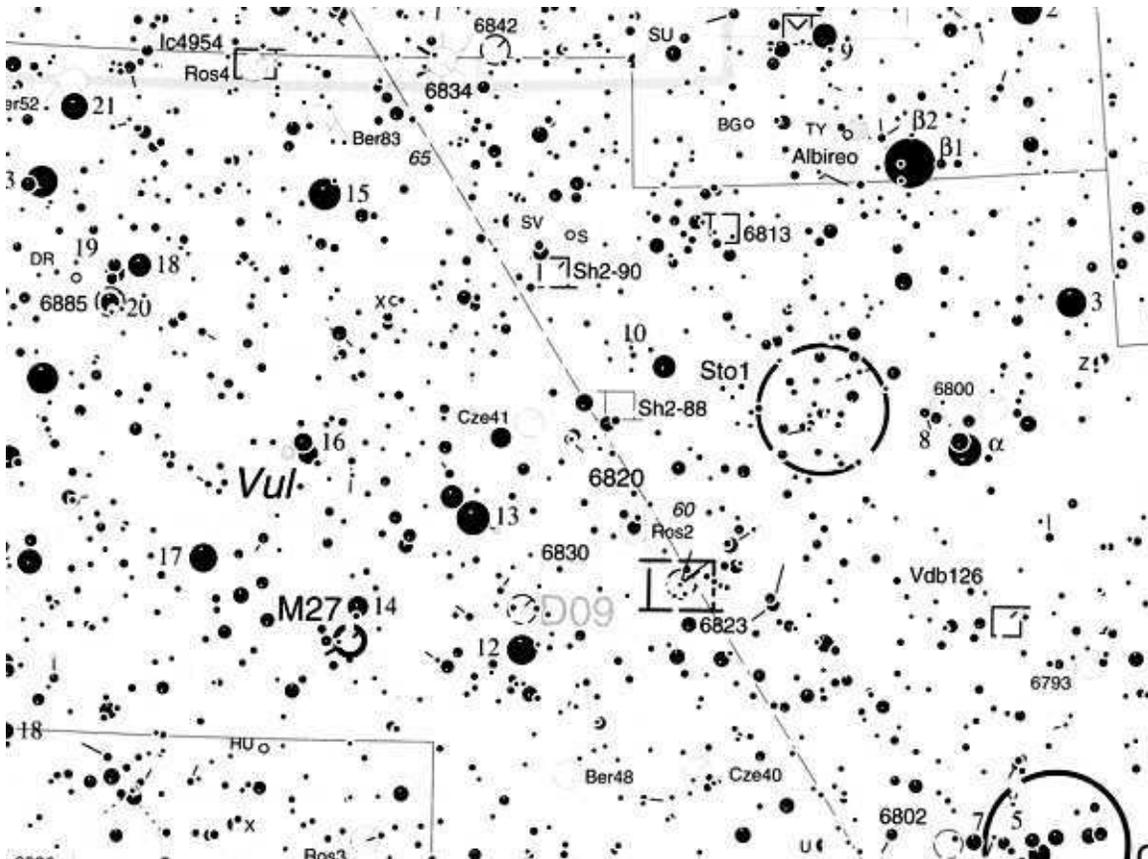
There are a total of 214 different charts, in six major sets, each set representing sky at a different scale. This is an amazing feature and it has several implications. First off, the atlas will easily grow with you. As you need more detail to penetrate into the night, you can find it simply by turning a page. This also eliminates the need to carry multiple atlases with you into the field and makes it much tougher to "get lost". Finally, it ensures that you have significant coverage to get you through those crowded star fields - like the Virgo Galaxy cluster.

There are the A series charts which show distributions of various objects (Stars, constellations, chart boundaries (it was to these two that I referred most) galaxies, clusters, nebulae, etc..) over the entire sky - very useful if you are initially planning your session, not as useful at the scope. But I suspect they weren't intended to be. At the bottom of the A series charts is an index which gives the time and month each constellation is best placed (in reference to the meridian) for observing. I found that to be quite handy.



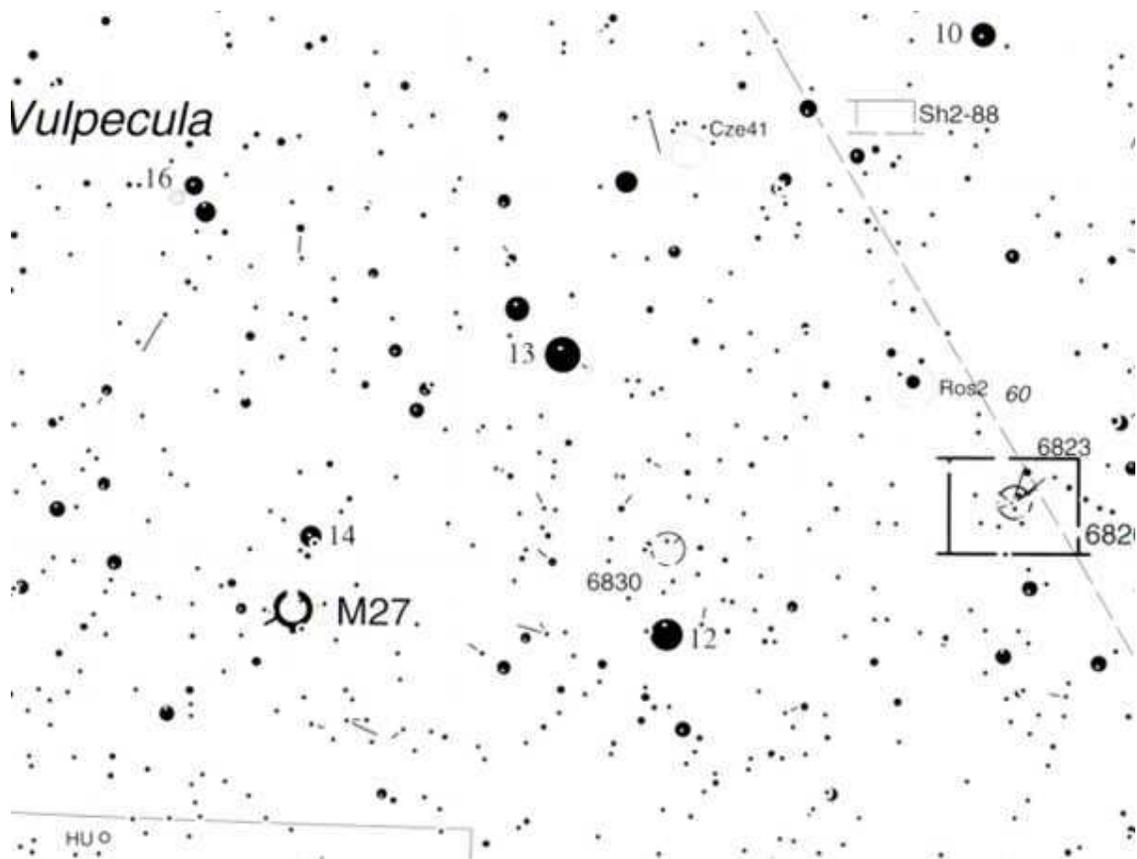
*A portion of a B Series Chart – Note the C designations refer to the zoom in charts (next in series)*

Next up are the B series charts. These are similar in scope or coverage to Norton's or the Bright Star Atlas. These are perfect for smaller scopes, naked eye, a set of binoculars or smaller finders. There are three different versions of the B series - B, BS and BM. The B charts are the standard ones, the BS charts are the B series - but inverted (south up), while the BM charts show stars, but lack DSO's. There are 16 charts for each version of the B series, that show the sky in huge swaths – perfect for identifying constellations or finding those easy to locate DSO's. The B series charts show stars from the Yale Bright Star catalog and thus go down to magnitude 6.5 – slightly deeper in some areas.



*A portion of a C Series Chart – Note: D09 on chart refers to next chart in zoom sequence*

Follow this with 94 C series charts. These are comparable in scope and coverage to U2k, plotting objects down to 14th magnitude and stars to 9th. These comprise the bulk of the atlas and for most amateurs are what they will spend much of their time looking at. Because the pages are oversized, these are still easy to use, but if you start to get that old “Lost in Space” feeling again, all you have to do is drop back to the B series to find your spot in the universe.



*D Series Chart Sample*

As in-depth as the C series charts are, there are still regions that benefit from an even larger scale - hence the D series. The D series does not cover the entire sky - only those locations too crowded to show well in the C series. While the A, B and C charts are plotted at a uniform scale, the D series are not. In the case of the D series charts, the scale has been chosen to best fit the region plotted. There are 42 regions plotted in the D series. Generally, the stellar limiting magnitude on the D series charts is 10.0 in galactic regions, and 11.5 in galaxy fields. DSO's are plotted to 15<sup>th</sup> magnitude.

And yet, they felt that the D series of charts still did not provide proper coverage, and thus they cover the Large Magellanic Cloud in 8 charts, the Virgo Cluster in 4 (with stars to magnitude 13 and DSO's to magnitude 15), the Small Magellanic Cloud and the area around Eta Carina in the E series. Last but not least, come the F series chart. While of limited use to northern observers, the F series plots the central region of the Large Magellanic cloud in even more detail than the E series.

For an even better example of "Zooming In" see their website at:  
<http://www.heraldbobroff.com/>

## The Symbology

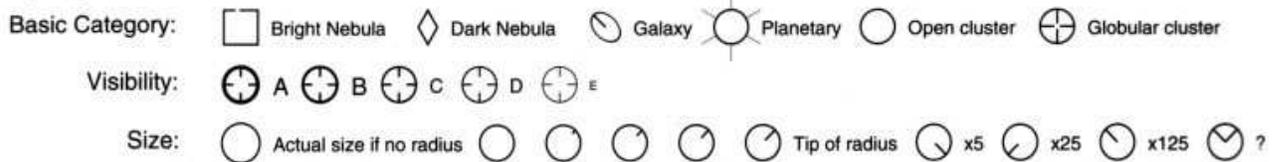
As I mentioned above, unlike SA2000 and all of the other atlases on the market, the HB AstroAtlas is its own Deep Sky Field guide. An amazing amount of information is encoded directly on the charts. Rather than use a stylistic and aesthetic approach common to the Tirion atlases (which are works of art in their own right), Herald and Bobroff developed their own unique symbology. Simply from a glance at the key to the charts you can see there's a lot of information available to you. The key, is both bound into the atlas and supplied as a laminated sheet (two sided).

So, how's this work?

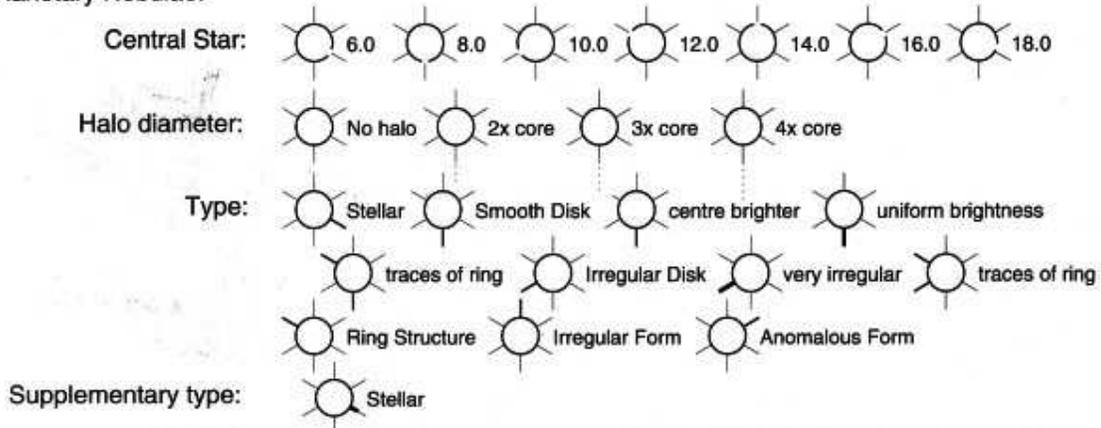
Let me show ya.

I'm a planetary Nebulae nut so we'll take a look at the following keys for Generic DSO's and Planetary Nebulae in order to get an idea of how this atlas really works.

### Deep Sky Objects:



### Planetary Nebulae:



As you can see, right from the map (we never have to haul out a field guide), not only can we get an idea of the size and visibility of the object, we can determine the approximate magnitude of the central star, the size of the halo, and additional information about the object.

Take a look at the samples I've presented above, and you can begin to get a handle on just how useful this way of representing data can be. For example in the charts above, I zoom in on the M27 region. We can immediately see from the chart and key that: it's

greater than 2' in size, the central star is mag 14, it's not listed as having an outer halo, it's very irregular and has a uniform brightness. No need to take the time to consult another volume or haul one out into the field.

The following types of data are encoded on the charts themselves:

**Stars**

Magnitude  
Spectral Class  
Bayer  
Flamsteed

**Double Stars**

Separation  
Position Angle  
Companion Magnitude/ Orbit

**Variable Stars**

Minimum and maximum magnitude  
Period (days)

**Generic DSO's (Applies to all)**

Visibility  
Size

**Open Clusters**

Concentration  
Range in Brightness  
Richness  
Nebulosity

**Bright Nebulae**

Emission / Reflection  
Brightness  
Red Sensitivity  
Colour  
Shape  
Structure

**Galaxies**

Position angle  
Inclination  
Morphology (compact, Elliptical,  
Lenticular, Spiral, etc...)

**Dark Nebulae**

Opacity  
Shape

**Globular Clusters**

Milky Way / Extra Galactic  
Central Concentration

And additional data for LMC and SMC Nebulae and clusters.

While you will be referring to the reference card often, there are certain symbols that eventually lodge in your head as too useful to forget. Personally, while it's not as exact as what you would have in a regular field guide, I appreciate what they've done here. For the most part, it's quick and easy to get at. Over all I find it extremely useful.

## **Durability**

I've always had a few issues with charts that I print off the computer 1) they tend to get soaked, and back when I was using an inkjet, this meant the ink ran and 2) if I tried to keep them around any length of time, I'd invariably rip them.

Lymax has addressed this concern by moving to a synthetic that looks and acts like paper – at least until you try to tear it or get it wet.

The paper is amazingly strong. I could tear it only with difficulty, and my wife couldn't tear it at all. She did manage to deform it, and I must say it behaved a little more like plastic than I've ever seen any paper do before. When I tore it, it did not tear like paper at all – again, it was more like a sheet of very thin plastic. I should note, that once torn, it did not show a large propensity to continue tearing like you would expect with certain plastics.

I was also unable to get the ink to run or to “soak” the material, no matter how much water I poured on it. I'm not exactly sure what this material is, but it's very well suited for an astronomical atlas.

About the only problem I've had with it, is that its wire binding has come undone at times. While this is irritating, it's hardly fatal as it's rather obvious and tends to get caught long before it gets serious.

As a side note, it's been rescued from oblivion once already and Lymax warns their probably won't be another printing.

## **Summary**

The Herald-Bobroff AstroAtlas is multiple atlases in one, suited for amateurs of all experience levels, and capable of growing with you as you mature in the hobby. While some may find the charts not as aesthetically pleasing as U2K, I found them functional and informative. It's unique symbology means that it's an excellent alternative to carrying an additional field guide out with the scope by allowing for easy reference at the telescope.

In short, it's an excellent concept, nigh unto indestructible, very useable, fairly inexpensive and finally, highly recommended.

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