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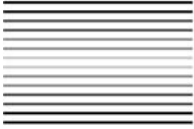
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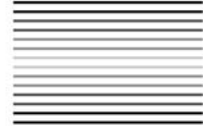
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Greg Parker
School of Electronics & Computer Science
University of Southampton
Highfield
Southampton
SO17 1BJ UK
personal: gjp@ecs.soton.ac.uk

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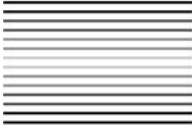
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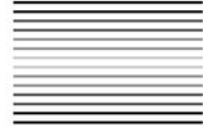
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*I dedicate this book to my wife **Helga**, who understands my obsession, and whose favourite image was M13, but is now the wide field version of the Rosette.*



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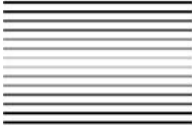
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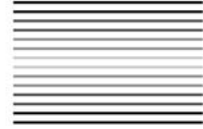
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Preface



I have recently discovered the most satisfying hobby so far, and to be frank, I have pursued quite a few hobbies in my time! This one encompasses computers, optics, precision mechanics, digital image processing and artistic appreciation, and it therefore satisfies just about every major interest I have in one go. The hobby is taking photographic images of the deep-sky.

I have not met anyone, so far, that has not been moved, sometimes to a great extent, by the images you will find within the pages of this book. Some people will actually admit to being frightened by the vastness of space that these images depict. I am not frightened by these images, but I am certainly awe-struck by them, and they do make me feel rather insignificant regarding the grand scale of things. I am also still firmly in the grip of being totally amazed that the capability to take such awe-inspiring images is now available to anyone with sufficient time and effort to dedicate to this most rewarding of hobbies.

This book has two aims. The first is to show you the richness, wonder, and beauty of deep-sky objects. The second is to show you how you can take these images for yourself, using readily available commercial equipment.

I really envy those of you who will embark on this adventure for the very first time after reading the contents of this book. Savour and record every moment, it is truly a unique life-experience!

Greg Parker
Brockenhurst, Hampshire, U.K.
2007.



Acknowledgements

Firstly, I gratefully acknowledge the outstanding image processing work of PhotoShop guru Noel Carboni! Noel created all the marvellous deep-sky images you can see in Chapter 10 of this book, from my raw data acquired at the New Forest Observatory. In creating these works of art Noel has spent at least as much time bringing the best out of the data as I spent in collecting it – thank you Noel!!!

I was greatly helped in my early days of imaging by two people in particular, and both still continue to help me now. Many thanks go to Alan Chen on the Yahoo Starlight Xpress forum for showing me the way right back at the very beginning of my imaging work. Many thanks also go to Bud Guinn who can be found on the “Our Dark Skies” forum. Bud introduced me to ODS from the SX forum and has been a great help and inspiration ever since I started imaging – he has also offered me a great deal of encouragement, especially early on when I felt I was getting nowhere. Bud’s introduction to the ODS group also led to my teaming up with Noel Carboni of course, and the rest as they say is history.

Last, but not least, many grateful thanks go to Dave Squibb of Tavistock in Devon, U.K. Dave was my “A” level Physics teacher at Tavistock Community College, and it was his dedication to the subject that subsequently led me to authoring a textbook on semiconductor device physics, and the book you now hold in your hands. Many, many thanks to you Dave!!

Greg Parker
Brockenhurst
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