

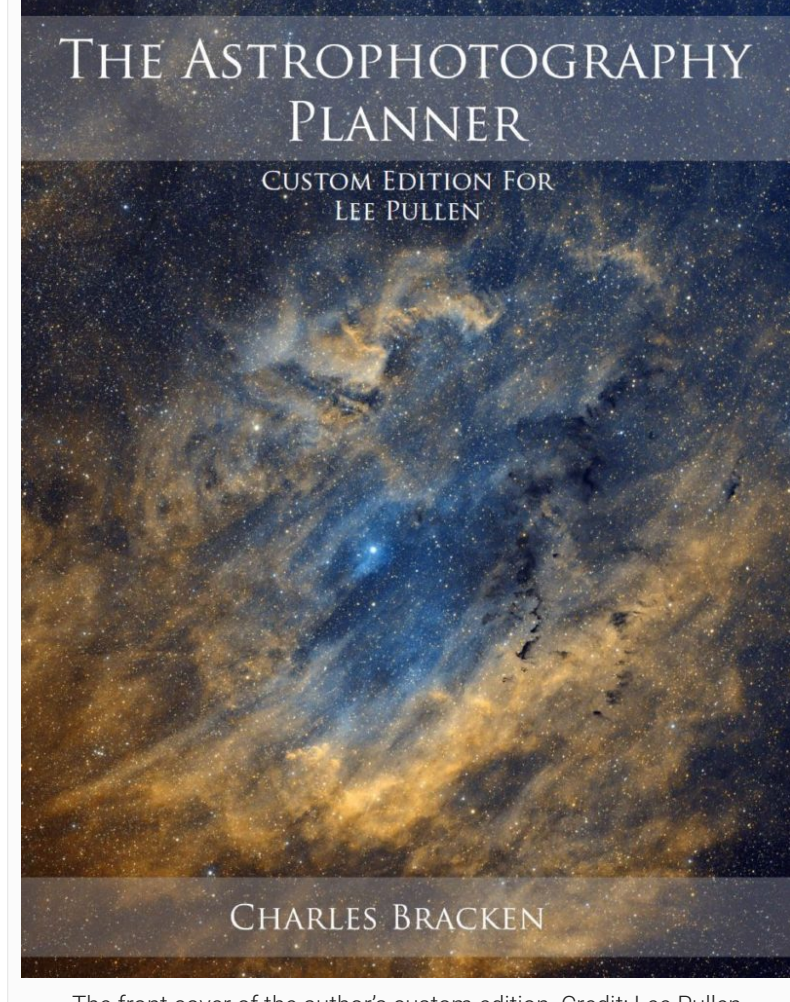
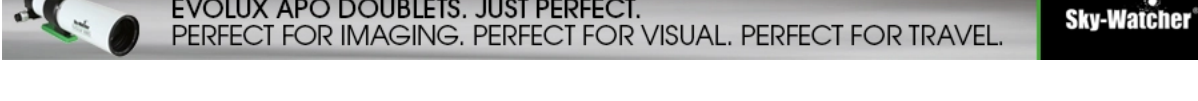


Personalized Preparation: The Astrophotography Planner Custom Edition Reviewed

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By: Lee PullenPublished: Jan 14, 2023

Planning astroimaging sessions is important to make the most of your time under the stars. Charles Bracken's The Astrophotography Planner is a useful tool, available as a paperback book or, as reviewed here, a custom PDF customized for your location.

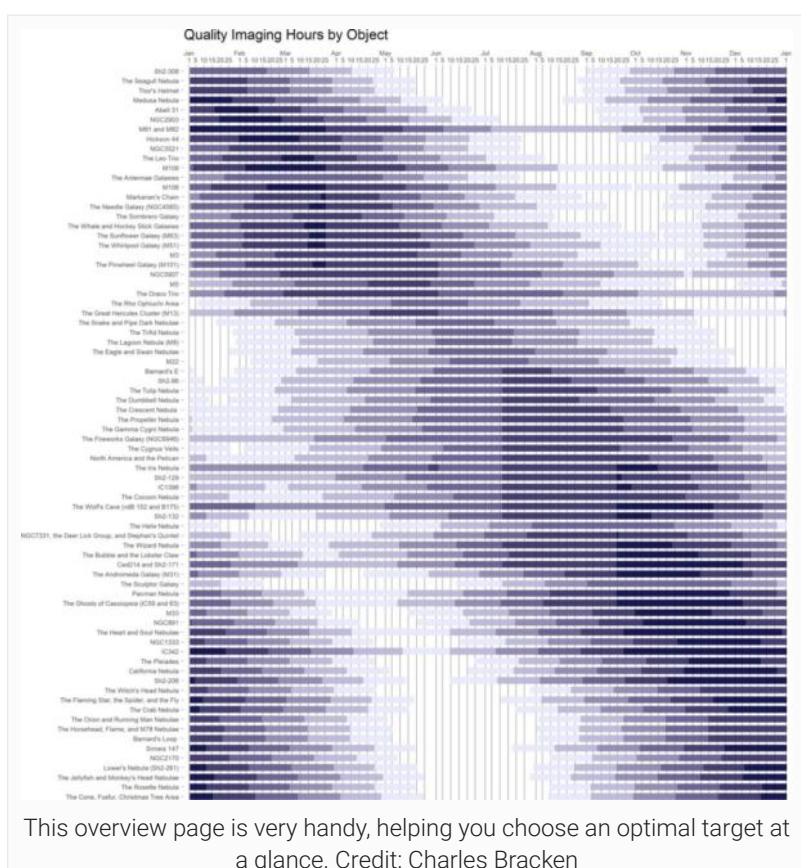


The front cover of the author's custom edition. Credit: Lee Pullen

Which target to image next? It's a question astrophotographers often have to tackle, working out the optimal deep sky objects to collect photons from, potentially over many weeks. There are various tools to help, such as the website [Telescopius](#), but if you want a more traditional approach then it's worth considering The Astrophotography Planner.

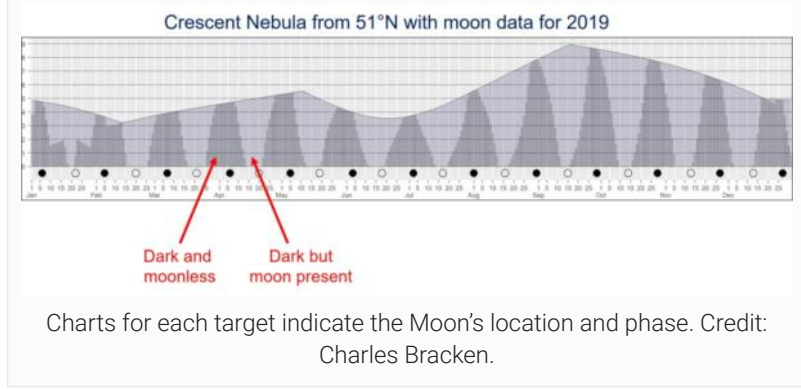
It's available as a paperback from [Amazon](#) for \$23.99, but for just \$19.99 you can order a Custom Digital Edition directly from the author. This PDF document contains bespoke charts for your specific observing location, plus extras such as Moon data. To receive the Custom Digital Edition, you need to follow a few simple instructions to give the author some information. The turnaround time is given as one to four days but mine arrived in my email inbox exactly four hours after making payment. Impressive!

The Planner includes 166 pages of useful information and charts covering 87 key areas of the sky in the northern hemisphere. If you're in the southern hemisphere then unfortunately this isn't the book for you. Content is designed for astrophotographers rather than visual observers, as the title suggests. I found the overview page to be particularly well-designed, allowing you to see at a glance which targets are in the best locations, i.e., have the most hours of darkness, at any given time of the year.



This overview page is very handy, helping you choose an optimal target at a glance. Credit: Charles Bracken

Each target has its own dedicated two-page section, with charts showing how many hours of quality imaging time you can expect on any given date; the rise, set, and transit time; and a map of the object's location. It doesn't take into account your own skyline though, so that big tree or neighbor's house still need to be factored in. I find that making a custom landscape in Stellarium ([instructions here](#)) helps.



Charts for each target indicate the Moon's location and phase. Credit: Charles Bracken.

The author has also included brief notes for each target to help astrophotographers. These are insightful and well worth reading. For example, The Dark Shark includes the advice "Starless processing is the best way to stretch the nebulosity enough without blowing out the stars. The contrast of blue reflection nebula and blue and orange stars with the drab shark can be very pretty if you can keep the chrominance noise down." The Cave Nebula has the tip, "For narrowband imaging, the SII and OIII signals are particularly weak, so allocate at least double the integration time to them vs. H-alpha." I wish these sections were expanded as they can really help steer an astroimager in the right direction.

As good as The Astrophotography Planner is, there's a distinct lack of actual astrophotos. The wonderful front cover is as far as astroimages go. The rest of the Planner is text and diagrams, and while these are understandably the focus, I'd have liked to see some example images for each target, perhaps using different equipment.

As it stands, The Astrophotography Planner Custom Digital Edition is a very useful starting point to choose your next imaging project, but it is best used in conjunction with additional research. Note that data is given for the current year, plus the next two years. This makes a purchase in January the best option!

Plus:

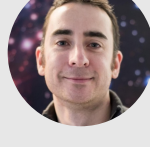
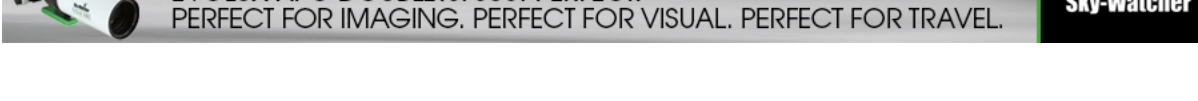
- * Helpful for planning astroimaging sessions
- * Useful additional information for every target

Minus:

- * No example astrophotos
- * Not suitable for observers in the southern hemisphere

MSRP: \$19.99

Website: <https://digitalstars.wordpress.com/2019/05/05/custom-digital-editions-of-the-astrophotography-planner-now-available/>



About Lee Pullen

<http://urbanastrophotography.com>

Lee Pullen is a science writer and communicator from the city of Bristol, UK. He has a degree in Astronomy and a master's in Science Communication. He began his career writing for organisations including the Hubble European Space Agency Information Centre and the European Southern Observatory, as well as becoming Staff Writer for the International Year of Astronomy 2009, the world's largest ever science outreach initiative. Lee runs the website UrbanAstrophotography.com

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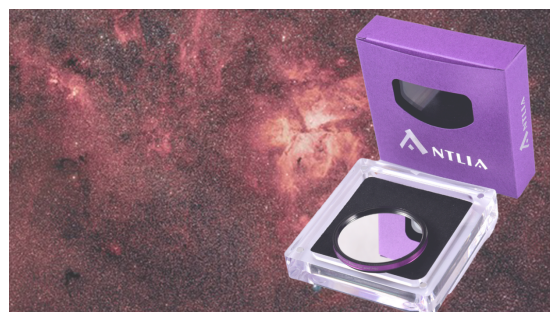
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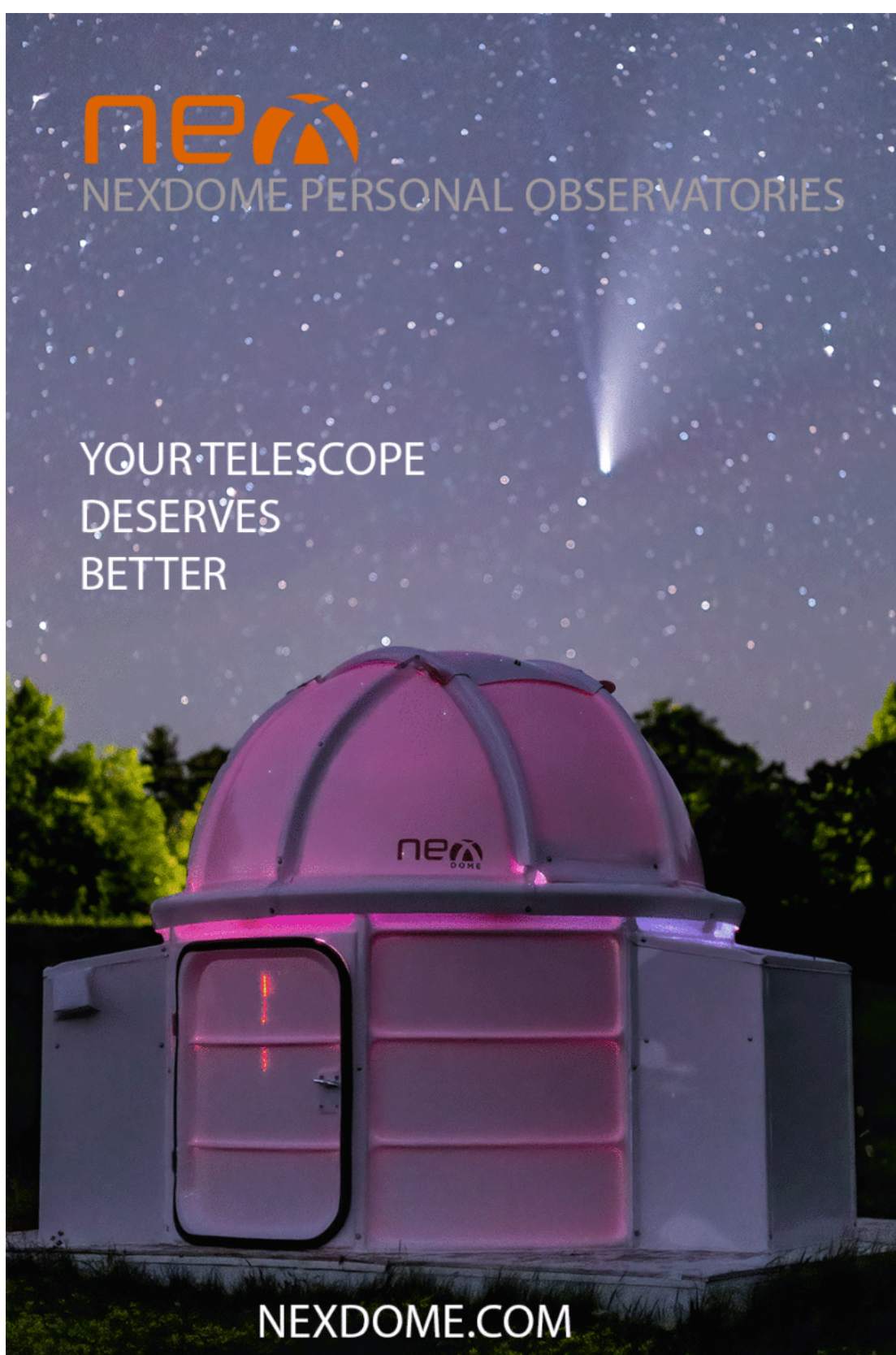
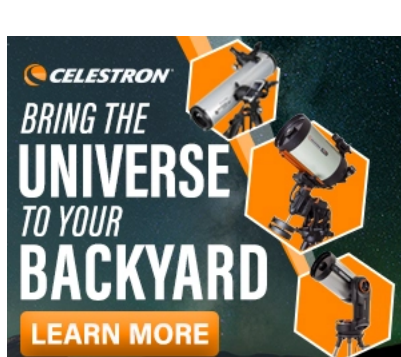
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