

<<天文学/Astronomy>>

图书基本信息

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内容概要

The night skies and astronomical bodies have been a source of wonder and speculation since the development of the earliest civilizations. The Sun, with its life-giving energy, was deified, its daily journey across the skies imbued with religious significance. The Ancient Egyptians were the first to calculate the length of the solar year, adding five days to their original 360-day calendar, a margin of error of just six hours. Where myth and mysticism led, scientific discovery quickly followed. Five thousand years on, our knowledge of the solar system and what lies beyond may be considerable, yet the sense of awe is hardly less than that experienced by the earliest observers. This book takes us on a journey of discovery, from a detailed study of the planets in our solar system to the far-distant galaxies and outermost reaches of the universe. All the spectacular cosmic phenomena are featured, including comets, asteroids, meteors, and nebulae. Some may be less familiar, such as quasars, remote galaxies whose extraordinary luminosity and energy make our Sun appear like a 40-watt bulb in an unlit cathedral; dark matter, which forms some 90 percent of the universe even though it cannot be detected directly; and black holes, superdense matter with a gravitational pull so strong that not even light can escape. The canvas of space and time is vast: 15 billion years since the Big Bang, when the entire universe occupied the space of a sub-atomic particle; 4.5 billion years since a cloud of gas and dust collapsed to form the star which sustains life on Earth. To study an object in deep space is to see hundreds of millions of years into the past, such are the mind-boggling distances that light has to travel. Whether you're an inveterate star-gazer or a new student of astronomy, this vividly illustrated book will enhance your knowledge and understanding of the universe. It includes the most recent images from the Hubble telescope and Cassini probe, and thus provides an authoritative but accessible overview of the latest exciting developments in space research.

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