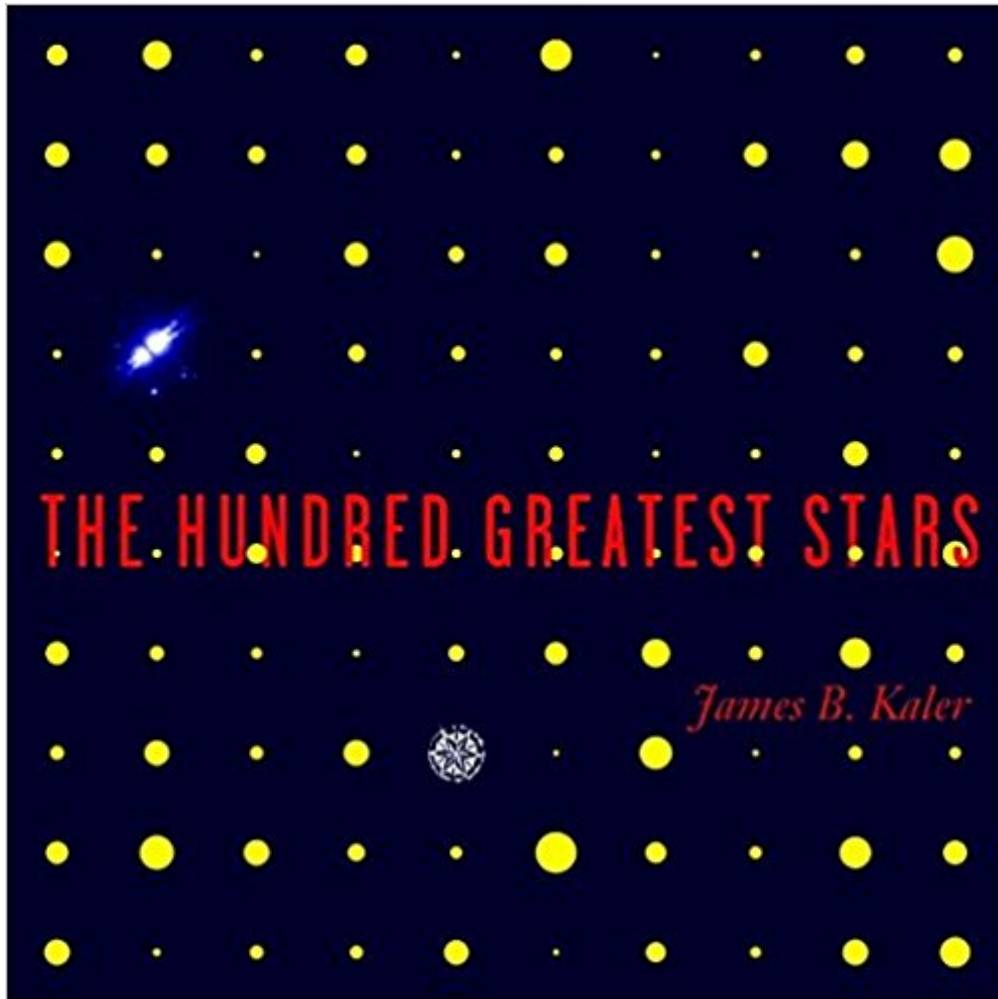




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The Hundred Greatest Stars



Synopsis

While there are guides to the visible sky, this is the first book to encompass the most important stars known in the universe at a level accessible to the layperson. The noted astronomer James Kaler takes us on a tour of the 100 most interesting stars, describing their characteristics and importance in words and vivid pictures. James B. Kaler is an internationally recognized expert on stars and their formation. A professor of astronomy at the University of Illinois, he is the author of "Stars and Their Spectra" (Cambridge), "Stars" (Freeman/Scientific American Library), "Cosmic Clouds" (Freeman/Scientific American Library), and numerous articles for popular and professional astronomy magazines.

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Customer Reviews

Stars are fantastically varied, as showcased in imagery from the Hubble Space Telescope (HST). Some stars are old, dim, quiescent cinders; others are brilliant newbies violently interacting with neighbors. This continuum of stellar evolution, graphically embodied in the venerable Hertzsprung-Russell diagram of stellar classification, actuates astronomer Kaler's selections for his top 100 list. He picks a representative of the major star types, such as the red giant, and rounds out his group with a smattering of classical naked-eye stars: his choice of the red giant Betelgeuse combines the two approaches. Geared for popularity, the book's design presents one image of the star under discussion, either a field view of its position in a constellation or an exuberant HST close-up, faced by Kaler's one-page story about the star's characteristics and inferred history. For the astronomy buff, an alluring gallery of stars mysterious or simply odd awaits, from magnetars to

pulsars to distended monsters on the verge of going supernova. Gilbert Taylor Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

From the reviews: "Most people know about Sirius, Canopus and Antares, but not everyone will be familiar with EG 129, HZ 21 and Polaris Australis, the dim star close to the south pole of the sky. Enter The Hundred Greatest Stars by James Kaler...Following a very clear general introduction to stellar astronomy, Kaler embarks on an informative tour through his hundred favourite stars, each given a page of text with an appropriate illustration on the facing page...The really clever aspect of the book is that as well as describing the hundred stars, often bringing out aspects which are unfamiliar, Kaler succeeds in giving an excellent broad survey of recent developments in stellar astronomy. As is to be expected, the text is immensely authoritative...The illustrations are beautiful..."-New Scientist "...truly an outstanding book about the sheer beauty and diversity of the stars. It's a personal treasure to me and I'm sure you'll love it to."-- Planetarian, March 2005 "In this book Kaler selects 100 of his favorite stars to illustrate the amazing varieties in which stars exist. Truly each turn of a page offers a quick view, a fabulous color photograph or illustration. Each story is self-contained, the description of one star not dependent on another, allowing the reader to enjoy a page at random. The Hundred Greatest Stars is truly an outstanding book about the sheer beauty and diversity of the stars." (Paul J. Krupinski, Planetarian, March, 2005) "The life and times of stars can be written in the language of a myriad examples. In this book, the author has chosen 100, each of which reveals an intriguing property of stellar evolution or behaviour. The well rounded narrative of each star is told with affection and enthusiasm. One of three appendices provides the ability to find objects of a particular class easily, making this enjoyable book a good reference tool too. The Hundred Greatest Stars is useful, readable and recommended." (Steve Ringwood, Astronomy Now, May, 2004) "Accessibly written by James B. Kaler The Hundred Greatest Stars is an incredible, informative, superbly illustrated, astronomical reference describing one hundred different stars ranging from Acrux to ZZ Ceti. Each individual star has a full color photograph and an accompanying page of scientific description with close attention to detail. The Hundred Greatest Stars is a strongly recommended, beautifully illustrated study for astronomy buffs." (Wisconsin Bookwatch, September, 2002) "Top 10 Reasons to Like The Hundred Greatest Stars. It starts with a fine synopsis of the properties of stars. It's a great introduction to stellar astronomy. The appendixes are useful. The text, aimed at a general audience, is well written and engaging. The science is accurate and simply explained

One of the great strengths of this book. The Hundred Greatest Stars will inspire some to pause and gaze for a while." (Paul Deans, Sky & Telescope, February, 2003) "Although stars might seem like a strange sort of thing to appear in a hundred greatest list, Kaler writes with great enthusiasm about his favorites. Kaler's clear and simple explanations of distance, magnitude, color, and luminosity provide the background needed to understand each star's entry. The imaginative and varied images, many in color, include photographs, charts, graphs, and scientific research results that enhance the text and attractive layout. Recommended." (Choice, December, 2002) "This stellar grandeur is perfectly captured in James Kaler's lavishly illustrated and expertly written volume, The Hundred Greatest Stars. Kaler's deep love and enthusiasm for the stars shines through on every page. Even though the book is dedicated to the amateur astronomy community, it will surely appeal to anyone who has ever looked at the sky with a sense of curiosity and wonder." (Andrew S. Fazekas, Astronomy.com, February, 2003) "A lovely literary companion piece to backyard stargazing is The Hundred Greatest Stars by James B. Kaler. It's an illustrated greatest hits compendium of stars, and has been praised for its clear and eloquent writing on the likes of Alpha Centauri, Betelgeuse, The Black Widow (!) and our own beloved sun. Speaking as one for whom introductory physics was one continuous anxiety attack, I can attest to its readability." (Mary Ann Gwinn, Seattletimes.com, August, 2002) "Kaler profiles an intriguing collection of some of his favorite stars. Both beginning and practiced astronomers will find much to be admired, including an excellent introduction to stellar evolution; a wide variety of lush images from the Anglo-Australian Observatory; and entries which deftly blend very technical (and current) data with descriptions that are not just accessible but also reflect a healthy amount of awe." (SciTech Book News, September, 2002) "In this lavishly illustrated book, noted University of Illinois astronomer, author, and ASP Board member James B. Kaler expounds on his 100 favorite stars, from Acrux to ZZ Ceti. The book captures the complexity and dynamism of stars, and it describes how they exemplify the extraordinary physical forces at work in the universe." (Mercury, September/October, 2002) "For this book, Professor James B. Kaler selected 100 of the most interesting stars. If you are interested in the wonderful array of stars to be found in our galaxy then you will find this book absolutely fascinating. It is also beautifully illustrated with 100 colour images. It is the wonderfully lucid Introduction that sets the scene for your journey through the cosmos. This is a book not to be missed!" (Gordon Nason, Astronomy & Space, July, 2003) "James B. Kaler presents 100 remarkable and interesting stars, all put in reference to

our Sun. The text is very comprehensive and contains a wealth of interesting information. A glossary of the most important scientific terms completes the book. The Hundred Greatest Stars is a nice read; it presents a wealth of interesting data that in this combination is otherwise hard to find." (Sterne und Weltraum, April, 2003) "This is a beautiful little book about stars, replete with wonderful color photographs and concise language. Those just getting started won't get lost, and those with a stronger background will find plenty to enjoy." (Library Journal, May, 2003) "Kaler has used both the extreme and the apparently normal in selecting his 100 greatest stars, and much to the pleasure of this antipodean, there is no overwhelming northern hemisphere bias as is common in many astronomy publications. What sets this book apart is that Kaler finds interest in apparently normal naked-eye creatures. the book provides an excellent resource for those having the joy of explaining why these pinpoints of light and fuzzy blobs are so fascinating!" (Roger Feasey, Auckland Astronomical Society Journal, May, 2003) "This is a gem of a book with guts. It is the author's celebration for the new millennium of 100 of his favourite stars. This book is written in a breezy, friendly style that is compulsive reading but will also serve as a valuable reference. It is certainly an A to Z of stars; Acrux to ZZ Ceti in fact. I thoroughly recommend it. I may never look at the night sky the same way again." (Bob Evans, Southern Stars, March, 2003) "The idea behind this book is an attractive one when written in Kaler's style. A much-experienced astronomical writer, he has the facility of describing the more exotic of the objects in this volume in terms that many can understand. a well-written and presented volume. This sort of writing got me into astronomy as it could well do the same for your favourite nephew or niece." (Robert Argyle, The Observatory, Vol. 123 (1173), 2003) "This is a truly beautiful book, the vast knowledge and passion for the author's subject transferring to the written page so well. The text is accompanied by a photograph or illustration and these illustrations certainly bring the subject to life, especially for younger readers. Experienced astronomers will find a wealth of technical information at their fingertips but the opening Introduction and Allegro provides the astronomical novice with a concise and complete background. I really, enjoyed this book." (Philip Bridle, BBC Radio, June, 2003) "James Kaler is a well-known advocate for the stars. In The Hundred Greatest Stars he expresses his enthusiasm for them in everyday language. So is this eclectic collection interesting to the community of amateur astronomers? I believe that it is. a much wider audience would learn a good deal. I'm very pleased to have this book in my library as an excellent collection of useful facts about 101 very

interesting stars." (David Malin, Physics World, Vol. 15 (10), 2002) "Kaler embarks on an informative tour through his hundred favourite stars. The really clever aspect of the book is that Kaler succeeds in giving an excellent broad survey of recent developments in stellar astronomy. The text is immensely authoritative, so well written that it will appeal as much to the beginner as to the more serious student. All in all, this is one of the most interesting and enjoyable books I have read for a long time." (Patrick Moore, New Scientist, July, 2002)

So great. Each treatment is only one page, so you might need to research specific topics via other sources to clarify the information conveyed here. Try Phil Plait's PBS Crash Course Astronomy. Dr. Kaler also publishes much useful information elsewhere, including his U of Ill website. This sample of 100 stars presents a broad survey of astronomy topics. Even with such a compact presentation of each you feel you get to know each star intimately. You'll want to run out and find as many as you can, ideally with a tripod-mounted pair of 10x50 binoculars. Don't buy a telescope unless you can't live without seeing some 16th mag object.

I was not a big fan of Kaler's until this book. I had read his "Extreme Stars" -- very difficult to follow with his writing style, but still a good book. I begged the library to order this one, which they did. Very impressive -- I was enthralled. He discusses each star with true passion and on a level the ordinary amateur astronomer can understand. If someone can get me excited looking at a boring 5th magnitude 51 Pegasii, then he's done a good job :) --- he has. Excellent illustrations to boot! Buy this book - you won't be disappointed. Update: January 2004 - after 3 times checking it out from the library -- decided it was too good of a reference book to pass up and ordered from .com at discounted price! A true gem - I will observe outside, then use this to enrich my knowledge of some of the stars I've looked at afterwards. All the "biggies" are here - Arcturus, Sirius, Capella, Vega, Betelgeuse, and some other obscure ones -- but all so well chosen that it's hard to argue with his 100 picks! I wish he'd write another on his next top 100. I am also half through his "Little Book of Stars" and recommend that too! Will write a review on that when I am finished. Bottomline: Buy this book - you won't be disappointed if you are an astronomy buff.

Jim Kaler has written a real little gem in this book. It selects 100 of the most interesting stars and gives a "biography" of each. His style is engaging and readable. The author seems to have intended the audience to be amateur astronomers, but I have found it quite useful for students in both secondary school and the university. I have always told my students that "stars are like people, if

you examine them closely, all of them are strange in some way", and this book highlights some of the more interesting ones. Along the way, a fair bit of astronomical information is also imparted, but in a way that flows naturally with the stories. The book has good production quality. This is a fairly short book, very approachable for students who might be science shy. I think this is the best one that Jim has done so far. My only quibble is that he left out RU Cam, which should have been given a place in this collection.

I never can learn enough about the universe. This book helps fill in a few of the blanks. Good format. Understandable. Actually finding these stars in the night sky is a bit more difficult than reading about them.

I have ordered several copies of this book over the last dozen years or so. I ordered perhaps my 6th copy last month as a gift for one of my graduating students. It was backordered and I just received it. I was very disappointed to find that the quality of the printing has decreased sharply. It resembles a second or third xeroxed copy of the original. It's in color but the reproduction is poor. The paper is not heavy and glossy and the images (a centerpiece of the book) are not well reproduced with lines through them. I recently decided to have my 100+ students purchase the book for an introductory astronomy course. I've put in the book order but am now reconsidering. This is a wonderful little book but it's not nearly the treasure it was.

Excellent book that covers a wide variety of stars - well-illustrated and filled with interesting facts. A must-have resource for the astronomy enthusiast.

This well-written book is a bit of information overload. Kaler presents a good variety of stars in his top 100 picks, and writes enthusiastically about each one. In addition, many of the illustrations are excellent. Though it may be difficult to remember much of the information presented (over one month after reading it, I've retained practically nothing), the overall impression that will stay with you is that there are tremendous differences between stars. This impression is not entirely accurate; the vast majority of stars are out there on the main sequence and exhibit very similar characteristics. But there are quite a few oddballs, or extremes, that have a completely different behavior. Kaler has chosen most of his hundred out of this group. This book made good lunchtime reading for me, and my interest never really flagged. But reading details about a hundred stars is a lot of information to take in, and I think my patience would have worn thin with any more. Perhaps a

better approach would have been to cover only thirty stars, but write more on each one. Kaler makes his selections based on some outstanding feature of that star: location in the sky, intrinsic brightness, size, peculiar spectral feature, etc. Recommended for astronomy buffs and for the layman with a bent to science.

There are so many stars, listed A-Z that are easy to find in the night sky, that I never knew how cool they really were. Pulsars, T Tauri stars, they even included Cygnus X-1 (a black hole). I love this book and the information in it!

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