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The Transits of Venus

THE BOOK

Author William Sheehan and John Westfall

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> *...A WELL RESEARCHED BOOK AND QUITE ENTERTAINING ...The book explains the intricacies of the transit in a simple way to a layman and also churns out a wealth of information for an astronomer... The book is a must read for all the enthusiasts for astronomy...*

The Transits of Venus *by* William Sheehan and John Westfall. Illustrations, Hard Cover, 6" x 9". Prometheus Books, 59 John Glenn Drive, Amherst, New York 14228-2197, USA. or . Publication Date March 30, 2004. 407 pages, ISBN 1-59102-175-8. Price $28.00

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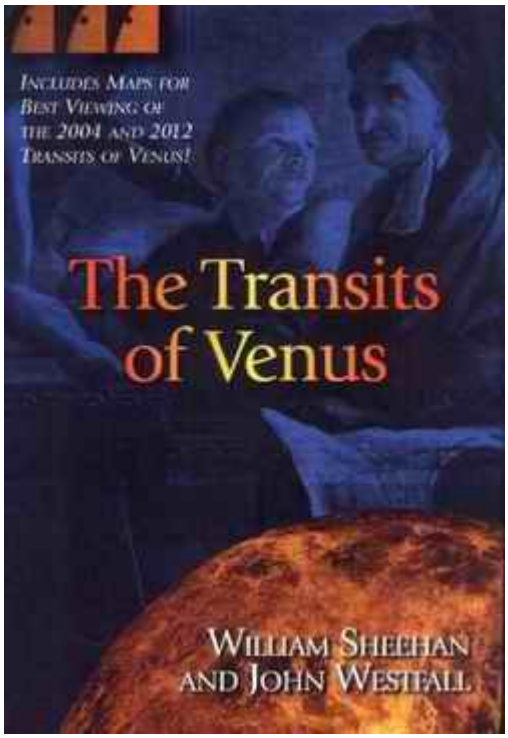

Authors have rightly pointed about the rarity of the event akin to the "kotaku" a rare white heron in New Zealand. It's a bird of single flight and if you are lucky you might see it once or twice in your life time as one would see a Venus transit.

As bulk of the population on the Earth will see the rare phenomenon of Venus Transit in June 2004, they have little idea as how would it look like. They have only seen it in the books and no living human being on earth has ever seen this rare event. So many publications have flooded the market with explanations and predictions for this event. "The transits of Venus" presents both side of the coins by putting the historical perspective and the present predictions of the event.

The history part of the transit is well written with especially the "Homage to Horrokes and about "Cook's tour". Students of astronomy would find these references to the events very useful and interesting. The details about the expeditions to view the transit are a definitive and well researched documentation about the event itself.

Scientific aspect of Venus transit about determination of Earth-Sun distance with the help of the transit is also explained in details in the book. As modern techniques make the Earth-sun distance measurement through this event and method obsolete but it will still be fun doing the thing with old methods described in the book which actually explains the reader as how one can do science with basic instruments. Predictions for the event and the readings taken by people in the last event gives enough material to a budding astronomer to do his own calculations.

Bibliography of the book presents a vast treasure of references for the event that one does not have to look for other sources for the complete information on the subject.

The book explains the intricacies of the transit in a simple way to a layman and also churns out a wealth of information for an astronomer. Except for few spelling mistakes the book is a must read for all the enthusiasts for astronomy.

-Chander Bhushan



Devgun

Devgun, 43, has been trained as a Mechanical Engineer, but now works mainly as an Amateur Astronomer. He has more than 20 years of experience in astronomy, and runs an NGO call SPACE (Science Popularisation Association of Communicators & Educators) for school children for past 3 years. He is also a telescope maker and an astrophotographer. Mr. Devgun may be contacted via Email by clicking here.

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-Editor-in-Chief