

THE *COMPACT* PLATFORM

A USER'S GUIDE

SET UP

- 1) Set the Platform on a hard surface with the bubble level facing south. Then shim the Platform as needed so it is level and sits solidly on the ground. If you are on grass or soft soil, then bricks or blocks of wood should be used under the "feet" of the Platform.
- 2) Polar alignment for visual use is easy. After the Platform is leveled, make sure its center line points roughly toward Polaris. During the day a compass can be used. Also, our optional Polar Alignment Tool makes the job quick and easy.
- 3) For astro-photography and CCD imaging, more accurate polar alignment can be achieved with the standard "star-drift" method, as with any equatorial mount.
- 4) Note that, although the Platform is BUILT for a specific latitude, it can be USED at other latitudes by simply shimming up the north or south end the appropriate number of degrees. For example, a Platform built for 40 degrees latitude can be used at 43 degrees by shimming up the NORTH end 3 degrees. For 37 degrees latitude, the SOUTH end would be shimmed up 3 degrees.

TRACKING

- 1) Now set your Dobsonian telescope on the Platform, plug the hand control into the jack near the drive motor and turn on the drive, using the "off-on" switch on the hand control. Wherever you point the telescope you are now tracking!
- 2) The tracking rate of your *Compact* Platform is fine-tuned before shipping, but it can be changed if you find the tracking is too fast or too slow. Be sure you have good polar alignment before changing the tracking rate.
- 3) To adjust the tracking speed, hold down the N&S buttons (the vertical ones), turn on the drive and then release the buttons. Center a star in a high power eyepiece, briefly press the N&S buttons again, and note the slow blinking LED. Now every time either the E or the W button (the horizontal ones) is pressed the speed will slow or increase slightly. When the drift of the star is cancelled, press N&S again. The new speed will then be written into memory. The unit will resume normal operation with full functions.
- 4) The hand control gives you a two-speed slew in Right Ascension. Press one of the horizontal buttons and the tracking rate will speed up or slow down slightly as long as you hold the button down. This slow slew is ideal for fine-guiding while photographing. The fast slew is activated by pressing one of the horizontal buttons and then the opposite button, holding them both down. This slew is handy for centering an object in the eyepiece.
- 5) Your Platform runs on a 9V battery contained in the hand control. To replace this battery, slide off the battery cover on the back of the hand control and plug in a new battery. Replace the cover and you are set to go. The drive should run 30-50 hours on one battery, depending on temperature and other factors.

MAINTENANCE

- 1) Keep your Platform as clean and dry as practical.
- 2) Occasionally clean the metal surfaces of the curved "feet" that rest on the Platform bearings. Also, keep a film of oil on the black steel bearings to prevent rust.
- 3) The fine finish on the wood surfaces of the Platform can be maintained by periodically waxing or polishing the Platform. Either an auto wax or furniture polish can be used.
- 4) Periodically check all the screws and set screws on the Platform to make sure they are tightened down securely. The wood will contract and expand with temperature and humidity changes, and this can loosen the screws over time.

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