

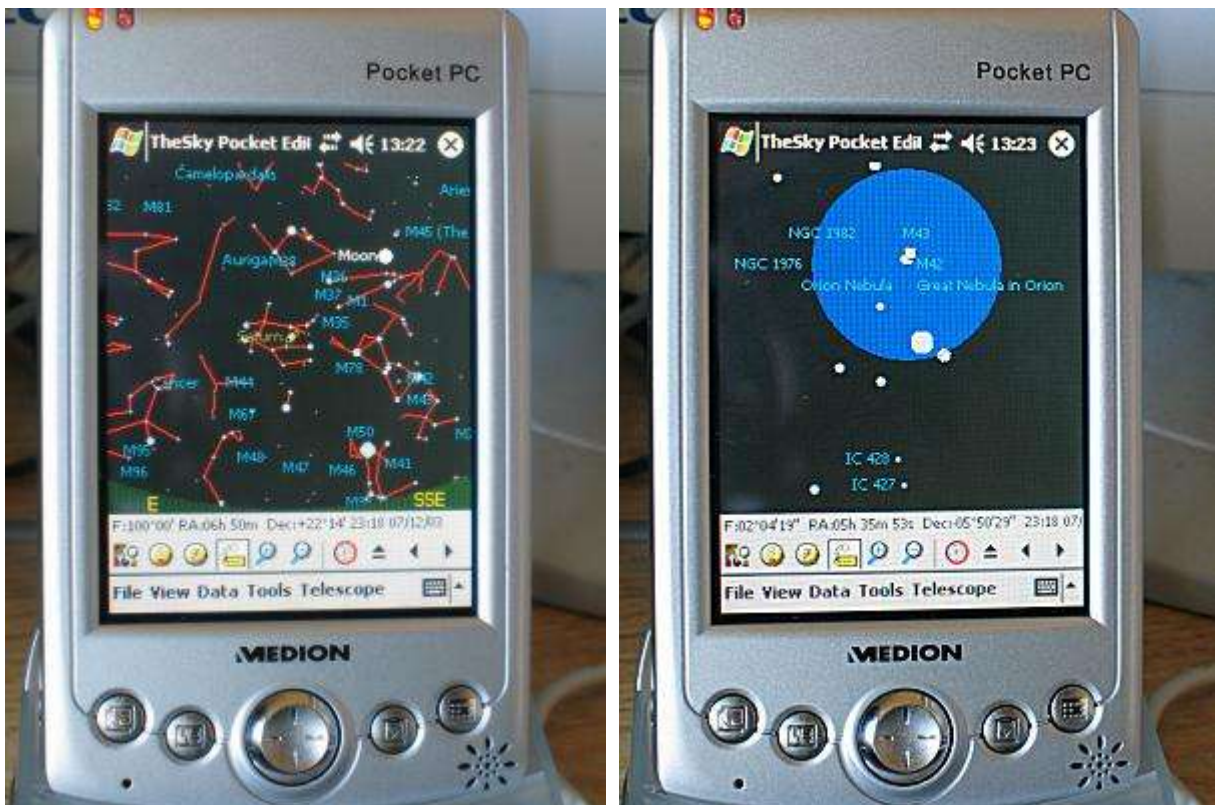
# TheSky Pocket Edition (non TPoint version)

## Introduction

Some months ago I had the loan of a Palm hand held computer, one of the first programs I downloaded and tried was a "planetarium". Having been used to, at the very least, Skyglobe for DOS and later Skyglobe for Windows, I was very disappointed with the software available for the Palm. Seeing little use for such a hand held device I more or less dismissed them as toys. Recently one of the local supermarkets had a Medion Pocket PC on special offer complete with car navigation kit (spoken directions including GPS), I bought it more or less on impulse, especially as they had a "no questions asked" full refund for 12 months policy!

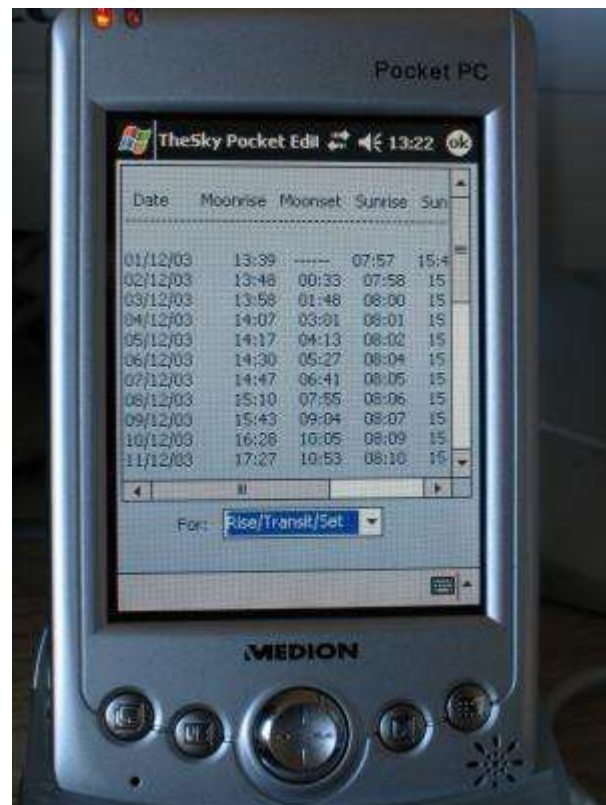
Having seen the adverts for the Pocket PC version of TheSky, naturally it was one first programs I looked at. The earlier Palm program was not in the same league as "TheSky". There doesn't seem to be a comparable Pocket PC program from the other PC star map vendors.

The program is only available by download from the Software Bisque web site. A demo version is also available. Cost at December 2003 is \$49



## Installation

Installation of TheSky was pretty simple, however, there was an error message saying the installation was not compatible with my operating system. On first installation I lost the ability to synchronise my Pocket PC with my desktop PC via the USB docking station. Eventually, I managed to load the program and keep everything else working... one good facility of the Pocket PC is the resilience of the operating system as a "hard reset" refreshes everything and re-loading the software for the handful of programs I use only took a few minutes. I also downloaded the 252,000 "SAO" star database, although it wasn't installed at the time the accompanying images were taken. Copying the SAO database is simply a matter of cutting and pasting it from your desktop PC to the Pocket PC.



## Use

Anyone used to using a star mapping program will soon find their way around TheSky, there are a few tricky issues which you get used to after a few minutes use. The first is the need to save the configuration as the program doesn't prompt you on exit. The second is scrolling left/right and up/down, by sliding the stylus from the edge of the screen you can move the view. The more often encountered method of moving the view, as per mapping software, is to place the stylus anywhere on the screen and slide it around... this doesn't work on TheSky.

Zooming in on an object is very easy, "dragging" a box with the stylus and tapping within the box zooms in to that view. Positional accuracy seems to be as good as any other similar program and compares favourably with SkyMap Pro when looking at the position of the planets. Saturn, for example, is shown below.

SkyMap Pro ver 6	TheSky for Pocket PC
Right ascension: 6h 50m 26.183s	Right ascension: 6h 50m 25.4s
Declination: +22° 13' 32.75"	Declination: +22° 13' 33"

The difference between the programs probably has as much to do with the difficulty of setting TheSky to an exact time, it is easy to move forward in increments of minutes, seconds, hours, days, etc. but there doesn't seem to be a means of specifying a time other than your current Pocket PC time. This is only a minor irritation. There is a facility to see views with the field of view of several eyepiece/CCD camera combinations, however this doesn't seem to be editable

Two of the main uses for any pocket sized star map program is to see when an object will be well placed in the sky or check sunset/rise, moon rise/set as well as check the apparent sizes of planets, etc. TheSky does all of this extremely well, in addition, it can drive most "goto" telescopes. The current interface list is: Astro-Physics GTO, Autostar, BBox, Deep Space Navigator, LX200, Losmandy Gemini, NexStar 5/8/GPS, NGC SkyVector, NGC-Max, Paramount ME or GT-1100S, Sky Commander, Sky Wizard and Ultima 2000. Not

having a suitable lead for my Pocket PC, I haven't tried using it with my Losmandy Gemini. I would like to be able to import comet data, however, without a PC version of TheSky, this currently isn't possible (I understand future editions may include this feature). For a low cost PC star map program TheSky is very good. There was a review of the Pocket version of TheSky in Sky and Telescope for March 2001.