

Upton Heath Primary School Astronomy Club
Some things to observe in the evening skies
October - November 2020

The Moon:

To view craters (with a small telescope or binoculars) best time is around first quarter Moon which will be about the 23rd October and 21st November - look South(ish) in the early evening.

The Planets:

After a wonderful show during the summer late evenings JUPITER and SATURN remain on view throughout October and November in the early evening but are gradually drifting low to the Southwest after sunset. Perhaps the best time would be October 22nd (from about 6.30 onwards) when Jupiter is just above the first quarter Moon and (dimmer) Saturn to the left of both.

Steady binoculars will show Jupiter's moons but a small telescope would be better and would be needed to show Saturn's rings.

However a glance at the SKYMAP shows that by 10.00pm on November 1st MARS is due South and high in the sky. Throughout the October evenings it has gradually risen in the SE and will drift to the SW during the November evenings. This is a great time to observe Mars as it will not be as close to the Earth for the next 15 years! The naked eye will show why it is called 'The RED planet' but small telescopes are needed to show that it is not a star.

A few constellations to learn and recognise: (see SKYMAP)

Constellations are just patterns of stars in the sky. They have LATIN (and English) names.

Among the many some constellations you might view at this time of the year are:

High to the South is the constellation of PEGASUS (The Winged Horse) with a large square of stars at its centre .. 'The Square of Pegasus'. I use this square to find the ANDROMEDA GALAXY (our closest major galaxy nearly 2 million light-years away). The SKYMAP shows two lines of stars coming out top left of the square (actually part of the constellation of ANDROMEDA). The galaxy is marked with an 'X' just to the right of these two lines. On a clear, dark night you can spot it with the naked eye as a fuzzy patch but a pair of binoculars helps. If you have a telescope so much the better.

The next constellation to look out for is CASSIOPIEA (legendary Greek Queen). Look high overhead in the sky and see the 'W' shape of this constellation. Its just a lovely, easily recognisable star pattern.

Finally the constellation of PERSEUS (legendary Greek hero). Just to the left (East) of Cassiopeia and not the most thrilling constellation BUT midway between the tip of Perseus and Cassiopeia there is a magnificent DOUBLE CLUSTER of stars .. just about visible with the naked eye on a dark, clear night and fairly easily seen through binoculars but really needs a small telescope to see it at its best!

Clear Skies! Chris (Brankin) - UHPS Volunteer

SKYMAP

October-November 2020

Map shows sky at 10.00pm on November 1st but should be OK for most of the evening in October and November when it is dark enough!

Note that the map will drift westwards during the night and from one night to the next.

Hold the map with 'S' at the bottom when looking South and rotate with 'N' at the bottom when looking North etc.

