THE NIGHT SKY IN NOVEMBER 2021

We have finally arrived at the end of British Summer Time for the year 2021.
In the early hours of Sunday morning 31st October, the clocks will be put back one hour, reverting to Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) or Universal Standard Time (UT) which ever you prefer. I will stick to GMT.

The Sun

On the 1st November the Sun will rise around 6.54 and will set around 16.33 GMT giving a day length of around 9 hours 40 minutes. On the 30th November the Sun will rise around 7.42 and will set around 15.55 GMT giving a day length of around 8 hours and 15 minutes.

The Moon

The Moon will be new on November 4th and will reach first quarter on the 11th. It will be full on the 19th and will be at last quarter on the 27th.

The Planets

The planets put on a good show this month with only Mars hiding in the Sun's pre-dawn glow.

Mercury continues last month's apparition for the first week of the month.
Initially it will be shining brightly at magnitude -0.8 in the pre-dawn sky but will fade and loose altitude as it closes in on the Sun.

Venus, on the other hand, will be in the post sunset sky and increasing in both altitude and brightness. It will be found in the early evening in the southwest at an altitude of only about 6º but shining with a magnitude of around a brilliant -4.6.

Jupiter continues to shine brightly low in the south but setting before midnight.

Saturn lies ahead of Jupiter on the ecliptic and sets correspondingly earlier. It will be lost in the sunset's glow by the end of the month.

Uranus is at opposition on November 4th. It shines at magnitude +5.7 from among the stars of Aries. It lies just north of the circlet of stars that marks the tail of Cetus the Whale.
It is an easy binocular target shining with a distinctive greeny blue hue, helping to make it stand out from the neighbouring stars. It is about 2 ½ light hours from us.

Neptune shines with a magnitude of +7.8 from within the stars of Aquarius, just south of the circlet of stars that marks the end of the constellation of Pisces. It is another binocular target and shines with a blue light. It is currently some 4 light hours from us.

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Comets

The newly discovered comet 2021 A1 Leonard is the first to be discovered in 2021. Hence it is titled A1. It was discovered by Greg Leonard hence the second part of its title.
It is expected to be at its closest to the Sun on 3rd January 2022 and it is hoped that it will reach a magnitude of +7. During November, it will pass from right to left above the constellation of Coma Berenices, heading towards the constellation of Bootes and accelerating as it goes. I will give a progress report in December's podcast.

Stars

November marks the change from the summer sky to the winter sky.
At the beginning of November, in the mid evening, the whole of the summer asterism known as the summer triangle is still visible in the western sky. You will remember this is made up of three bright stars, Altair from the constellation of Aquila the Eagle, Vega from the constellation of Lyra the Lyre and Deneb from the constellation of Cygnus the Swan. By the end of the month, by mid evening, Altair is below the horizon so the whole triangle cannot be seen.

The winter sky features the asterism known as the Winter Triangle and this shines from the opposite side of the sky to the Summer Triangle.
It is made up of the bright stars Sirius, in the constellation of Canis Major (the Large Dog), Procyon in Canis Minor (the Small Dog) and Betelgeuse, the red giant star in Orion the Hunter.
Only Betelgeuse and Procyon have cleared the horizon by mid evening at the beginning of November so the whole triangle cannot be seen until the end of the month when Sirius rises. Then you will be able to see the whole of the winter triangle shining in all its glory by mid evening.

Time moves on and the winter sky with Orion and his retinue and all the celestial gems they contain will soon be with us.

Until next month wishing you clear skies.

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