

November 2011 Night Sky

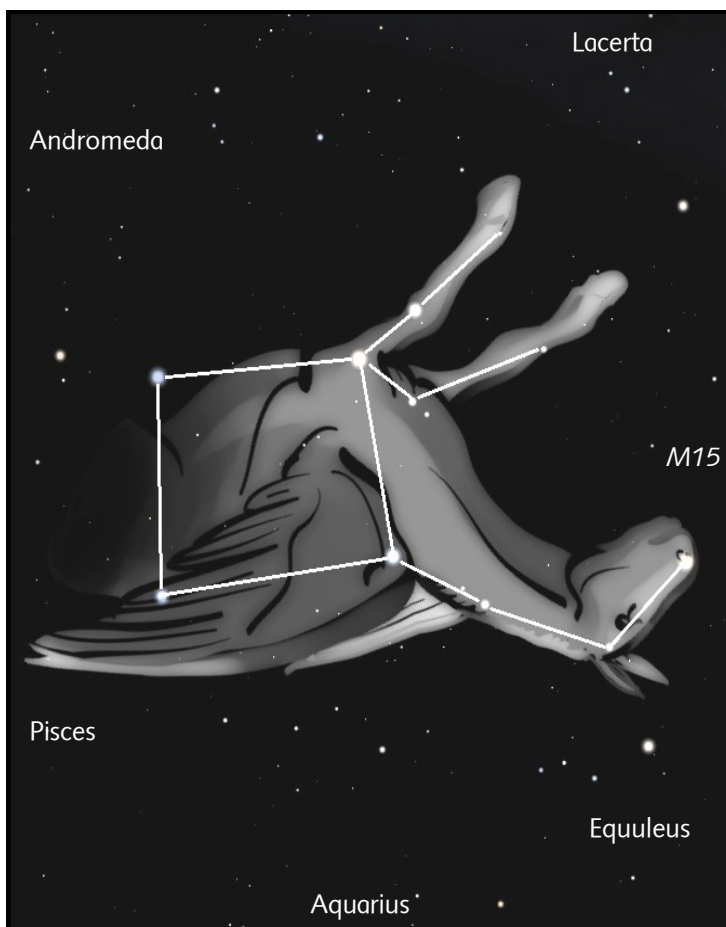


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November's long nights and crisp skies are good news for hobby stargazers. The bright Winter constellations are also making an appearance and are ideal targets for beginners. A highlight this month is the Leonid meteor shower, which should peak around 17 November. Look high in the sky as late as possible (ideally after midnight) and you may see dazzling "shooting stars".

Constellation of the month: Pegasus

Few characters from Greek mythology are as well known as Pegasus. This iconic winged horse is the centre of many ancient stories, passed down from generation to generation. According to one particularly gory legend, Pegasus sprung forth into the world from spilled blood when the hero Perseus beheaded the monster Medusa. A more pleasant story says that wherever Pegasus' hooves touched the Earth, a fresh water spring would appear. A very useful ability, you will surely agree.



Finding Pegasus

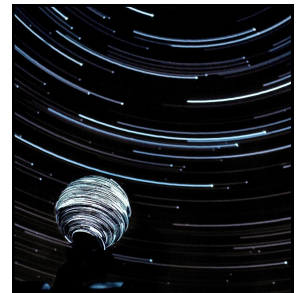
The Winged Horse is best seen in the early evening during November, starting high in the south and gradually moving lower in the west as the night draws on. Look for the four stars that make up *The Square of Pegasus*. They're not as bright as many people think, so you may need to be patient. As always, dark skies away from light pollution will help a lot. Once you've found these stars, try tracing out Pegasus' head and legs.

Look out for...

If you have binoculars, scan the sky around Pegasus' nose to see a globular cluster called M15. This is a roughly spherical collection of stars that orbits the centre of our Milky Way Galaxy. M15 is 13.2 billion years old, making it one of the most ancient globular clusters known.

News flash: At-Bristol launches two new Planetarium shows

We're now more star struck than ever, thanks to two new shows specially designed for schools. *Exploring the Solar System* is suitable for ages 8 to 13, while *Exploring the Universe* is our most advanced show, for ages 14+ and adults. They're running throughout term time and there are regular opportunities for non-schools audiences to book in and experience them too. Just ask at the Admission Desks on the Ground Floor for more details.



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The planets in November

- Mercury** is below Venus between 10 and 15 November.
Venus shines very brightly low in the west after sunset.
Mars gets brighter this month, rising around 11:30pm in the east.
Jupiter blazes all night in a south to south-westerly direction.
Saturn only rises at 4:30am, so isn't in the best position this month.

Theme of the month: Living in space

Have you ever thought it would be fun to live in space? The International Space Station is in orbit around the Earth, and there are always people working and living there. Would you like to join them?



British astronaut Michael Foale uses a treadmill on the International Space Station. Image credit: NASA.

Not having the pull of gravity makes moving around much easier, as you can "float"! It isn't all fun though, as zero gravity can cause health problems. Our muscles and bones become weak in space as they don't have to work nearly as hard. To stay in shape astronauts have strict exercise programmes, such as running on treadmills for several hours every day.

So do you still want to live in space? Maybe you will be one of the future scientists working (and working out!) on the International Space Station!

Moon calendar

02 November
First Quarter



10 November
Full Moon



18 November
Last Quarter



25 November
New Moon



Would you like to know more?

Zooniverse is a collection of projects that lets you help professional astronomers and maybe make a real discovery. Visit www.zooniverse.org to get started.

Stellarium is a planetarium program for your computer, showing a realistic 3D sky just as you would see if looking with your eyes or a telescope. Best of all, it's completely free. Download it at www.stellarium.org

Heavens Above is a website for you to create customised sky maps and see when satellites like the International Space Station and Iridium flares will be visible. Try it at www.heavens-above.com

Smartphone apps for astronomy are excellent ways to help you navigate the night sky. *Google Sky Map* for Android and *Planets* for iPhones are free apps to start you off in the right direction.

The Bristol Astronomical Society is a group of local stargazers who are always keen to help beginners. Find out more via www.bristolastrosoc.org.uk

Do you have an astronomy question for the At-Bristol Planetarium team?
 E-mail lee.pullen@at-bristol.org.uk and our devoted astronomers will be happy to help!