

## Upton Heath Primary School Astronomy Club

### Some things to observe in the evening skies December 2019 – January 2020

#### The Moon:

To view craters (with a small telescope or binoculars) best time is around first quarter Moon which will be about the 4th December and 3rd January (around 6.00pm and later) looking South.

#### The Planets:

Unfortunately Jupiter and Saturn have now disappeared until next year!

However from the middle of December and throughout January bright VENUS will be visible higher and higher in the early evening sky to the Southwest. Like the Moon, Venus can show phases which can be seen in steady binoculars and more easily in a small telescope. No surface detail is seen as Venus is covered in cloud.

Throughout this period URANUS and NEPTUNE are to the South and SouthWest but being so far away they will appear like small stars - even in a small telescope. They are not easily spotted among the surrounding stars. If you want a detailed starmap get in touch!

However towards the end of January (best on 27<sup>th</sup> about 5.30), in the early evening and low to the Southwest there is a chance to see a close encounter (a conjunction) between VENUS, NEPTUNE and a Crescent MOON! The naked eye will spot Venus close to the Moon but a telescope and starmap will be needed to spot Neptune.

#### A few constellations to learn and recognise: (see the Skymap)

This session is a wonderful time for enjoying the magnificent constellation of ORION (The Hunter). He is supposed to be using a bow and arrow with a sword hanging from his belt. Four bright stars show his shoulders and feet. Three bright stars also show his belt and below his belt a line of dimmer stars show his sword hanging down.

His top left (east) shoulder is the orangy star BETELGEUSE. This is a RED-GIANT star which is expanding and nearing the end of its life (in a few million years!?).

Perhaps the best part to observe with binoculars and a small telescope is the sword. Here you can see what looks like a fuzzy cloud and this is 'The Great Nebula' in Orion where new stars are being formed.

Just to the upper right (west) of Orion constellation of TAURUS (The Bull). From the skymap you can imagine (?) the head of a bull with its two long horns pointing away to the left (East). The brightest star in Taurus is the orange looking ALDEBARAN, it is sometimes called 'the eye of the bull'. In fact Aldebaran is another RED-GIANT star.

The dot above the word Taurus on the skymap represents a lovely cluster of stars known as THE PLEIADES (or the Seven Sisters). Good eyesight should enable you to count at least 5 stars but light pollution sometimes makes this difficult. In binoculars, or a small telescope, it is an amazing sight.

Clear Skies! Chris (Brankin) – UHPS Volunteer