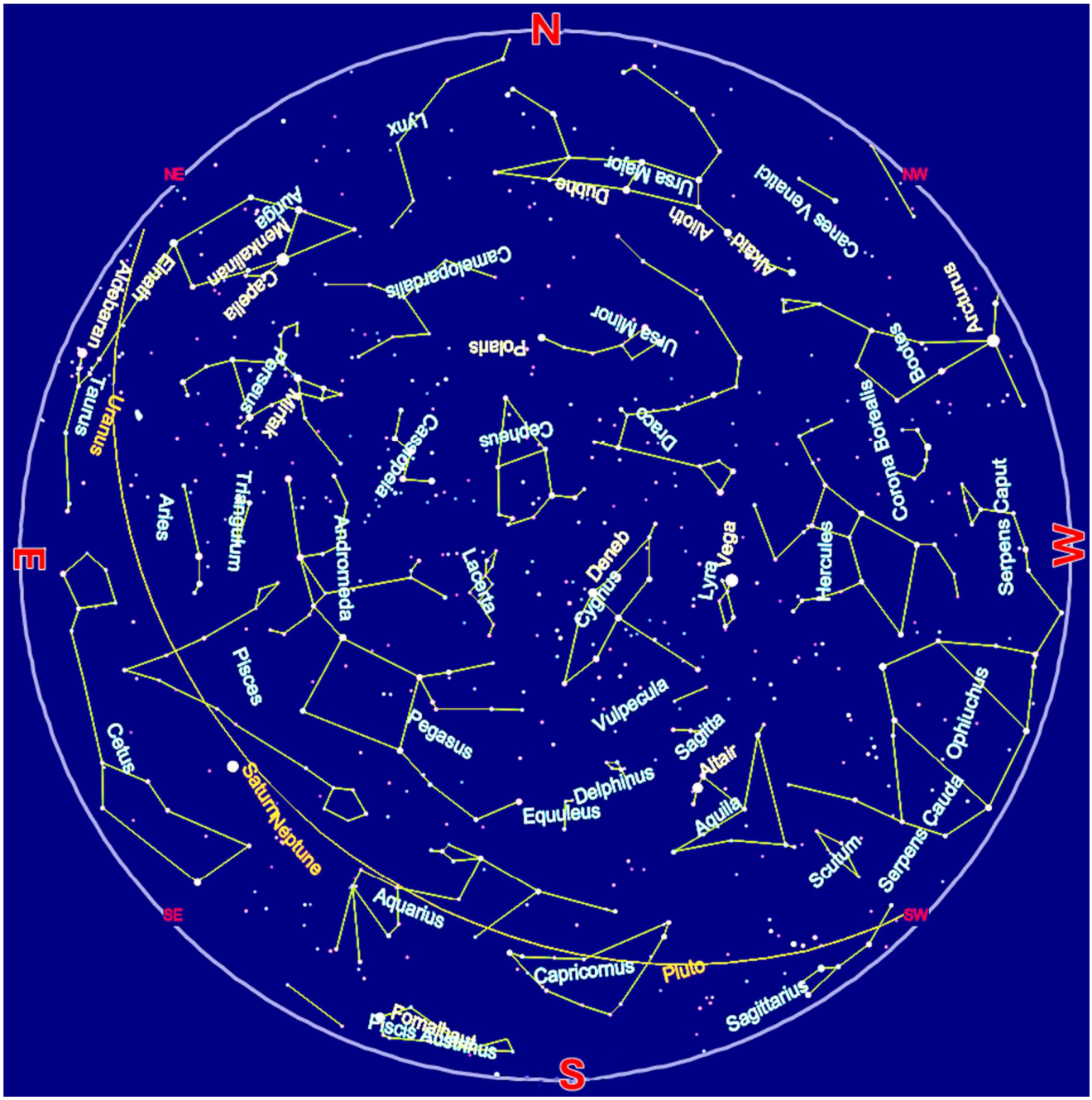
The Night Sky in October 2026

Monthly Guide

compiled by Doug Bickley



The chart is based on location 52.6° N, 2.2° W (Perton, Wolverhampton) @ 21:00 on 15/10/2026.
The orange line is the ecliptic.
We are looking SOUTH (as shown at the bottom of the chart) at the constellations Pisces, Pegasus, Sagitta and Ophiucus, with the constellations Aries, Andromeda, Cygnus, Lyra and Hercules overhead.

***TO USE THE CHART - hold it so that the direction you are facing is at the bottom** – the lower part of the chart shows the sky ahead of you and the centre of the chart shows the sky directly over your head.*

Events summary to look out for this month:

3	Moon forms triangle with Castor and Pollux
4	Saturn at opposition
5	Moon near Mars
6	Moon near Jupiter (daytime)
9	Draconid meteor shower peak
10	New Moon
10	Mars passes through M44 Beehive Cluster
15	Perton Library Astronomy Group meeting 7pm
21	Orionid meteor shower peak
24	Moon near Saturn
26	Full Moon
28	Moon passes through M45 Pleiades

The phenomena of the month : October 2026

Times are given in daylight time for PERTON (2° 11' 53" W, 52° 35' 26" N, zone Z).

	Date	Hour	Description of the phenomenon
	yyyy mm dd	hh:mm	
1	2026 10 01	02:22	Close encounter between the Moon and Uranus (topocentric dist. center to center = 4.8°)
2	2026 10 01	21:41	Moon at perigee (geocentric dist. = 369334 km)
3	2026 10 02	23:37	Close encounter between the Moon and M 35 (topocentric dist. center to center = 2.7°)
4	2026 10 03	14:25	LAST QUARTER OF THE MOON
5	2026 10 04	13:28	OPPOSITION of Saturn with the Sun
6	2026 10 05	06:19	Close encounter between the Moon and Mars (topocentric dist. center to center = 0.7°)
7	2026 10 07	00:07	Opposition of the asteroid 2 Pallas with the Sun (dist. to the Sun = 2.806 AU; magn. = 8.2)
8	2026 10 07	05:15	Close encounter between Mercury and Venus (topocentric dist. center to center = 5.1°)
9	2026 10 09	02:00	Meteor shower : Draconids (5 meteors/hour at zenith; duration = 4.0 days)
10	2026 10 10	16:50	NEW MOON
11	2026 10 11	07:33	Close encounter between Mars and M 44 (topocentric dist. center to center = 0.4°)
12	2026 10 12	04:33	Close encounter between the Moon and Venus (topocentric dist. center to center = 2.5°)
13	2026 10 12	06:00	GREATEST EASTERN ELONGATION of Mercury (25.0°)
14	2026 10 13	07:35	Opposition of the asteroid 4 Vesta with the Sun (dist. to the Sun = 2.468 AU; magn. = 6.4)
15	2026 10 16	23:56	Moon at apogee (geocentric dist. = 404643 km)
16	2026 10 18	17:12	FIRST QUARTER OF THE MOON
17	2026 10 21	01:00	Meteor shower : Orionids (20 meteors/hour at zenith; duration = 36.0 days)
18	2026 10 22	23:40	Opposition of the asteroid 505 Cava with the Sun (dist. to the Sun = 2.129 AU; magn. = 9.9)
19	2026 10 24	00:16	Close encounter between the Moon and Neptune (topocentric dist. center to center = 3.7°)
20	2026 10 24	04:44	INFERIOR CONJUNCTION of Venus with the Sun (geoc. dist. center to center = 6.5°)
21	2026 10 26	05:12	FULL MOON
22	2026 10 28	02:37	Close encounter between the Moon and the Pleiades (topocentric dist. center to center = 0.5°)
23	2026 10 28	19:01	Moon at perigee (geocentric dist. = 364407 km)

THE MOON

Lunar Phases this month



The Full Moon in October is usually called the Hunter's Moon.

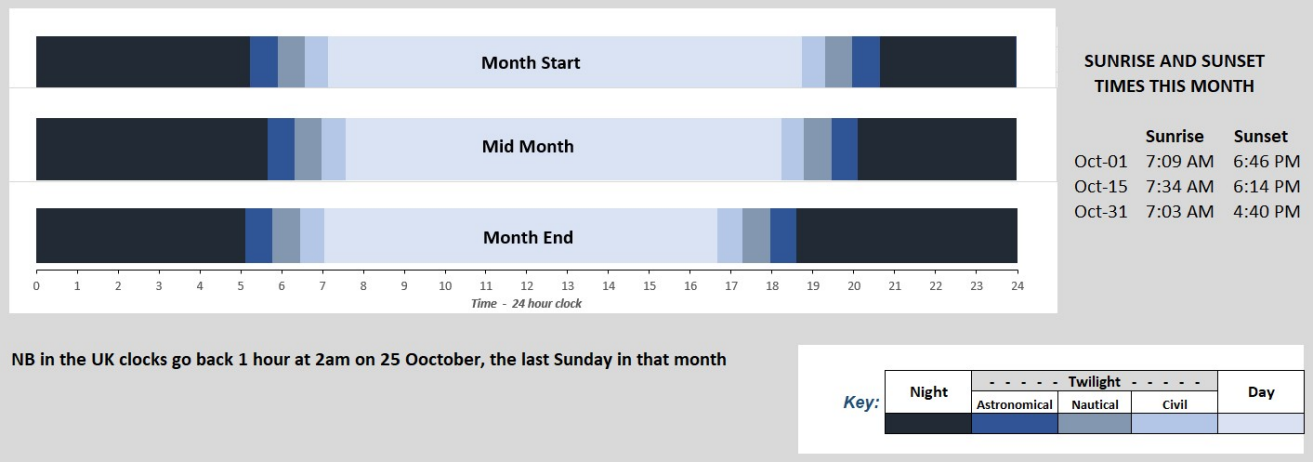


In older times this is was preferred month to hunt animals like deer which had spent the warm summer months gorging on abundant food, leaving them heavy with meat and fat reserves for the winter. Like September's Harvest Moon, the Hunter's Moon is also particularly bright and long in the sky, giving hunters the opportunity to stalk prey at night.

Other names include the Travel Moon and the Dying Grass Moon; the Native Americans also named this Full Moon after fall, including Drying Rice Moon, Falling Leaves Moon, and Freezing Moon. The Celts used Seed Fall Moon to describe this. Also, the Pagan Blood Moon or Sanguine Moon is used for this Full Moon.
Plenty of scope again here for you quizzers.

THE SUN

Graphical format showing sun rising, setting and twilight linked to an online data source (time-ok.com) to show twilight zones more clearly. Location is set at Wolverhampton UK.

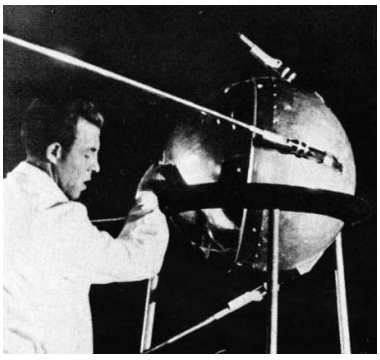


British Summer Time ends at 2am on the morning of Sunday 25 October and clocks should be put one hour back as we return to Greenwich Mean Time.

October is the second month of autumn in our hemisphere and we start preparing for winter, but in the southern half it is of course the second month of spring. The month October comes from the Latin word Octo meaning eight, because the Roman calendar started in March and so October was the eighth month. The Roman senate changed the calendar in 153 BCE and the New Year then started in January, and so October became the tenth month.

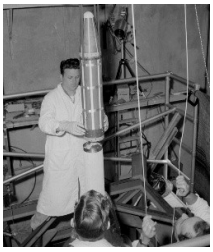
FUN FACT FOR OCTOBER

History changed and the Space Age began on 4 October 1957 when the Soviet Union launched the first satellite into orbit, from its Tyuratam launch base in the Kazakh Republic using an adapted R-7 Semyorka intercontinental ballistic missile.





Called ‘Sputnik 1’ (meaning ‘fellow traveller’) it was the size of a beach ball and took 98 minutes to orbit the Earth. It sent a beeping radio signal for 21 days until its batteries ran out. It burned up in the atmosphere on 4 January 1958 after completing about 1,440 orbits.



The USA responded by developing Explorer 1 which was launched on 31 January 1958. The Sputnik launch also led directly to the creation of National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

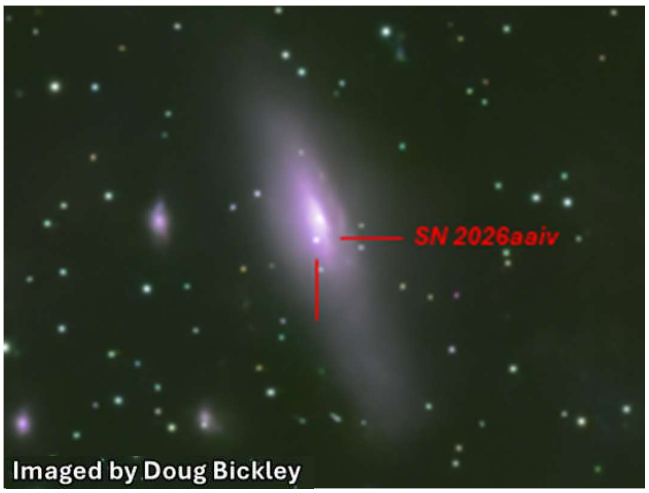
METEOR SHOWERS

Draconids
The Draconid meteor shower peaks around 8-9 October and best seeing is just after nightfall. The shower is named after the constellation Draco the Dragon, where the meteors seem to originate.

Orionids
The Orionid meteor shower peaks on 21-22 October but is active between 2 October and 7 November. The best time to see these shooting stars is just after midnight and before the Sun rises. A waxing gibbous Moon will interfere with viewing until it sets in the early hours.

SUPERNOVA

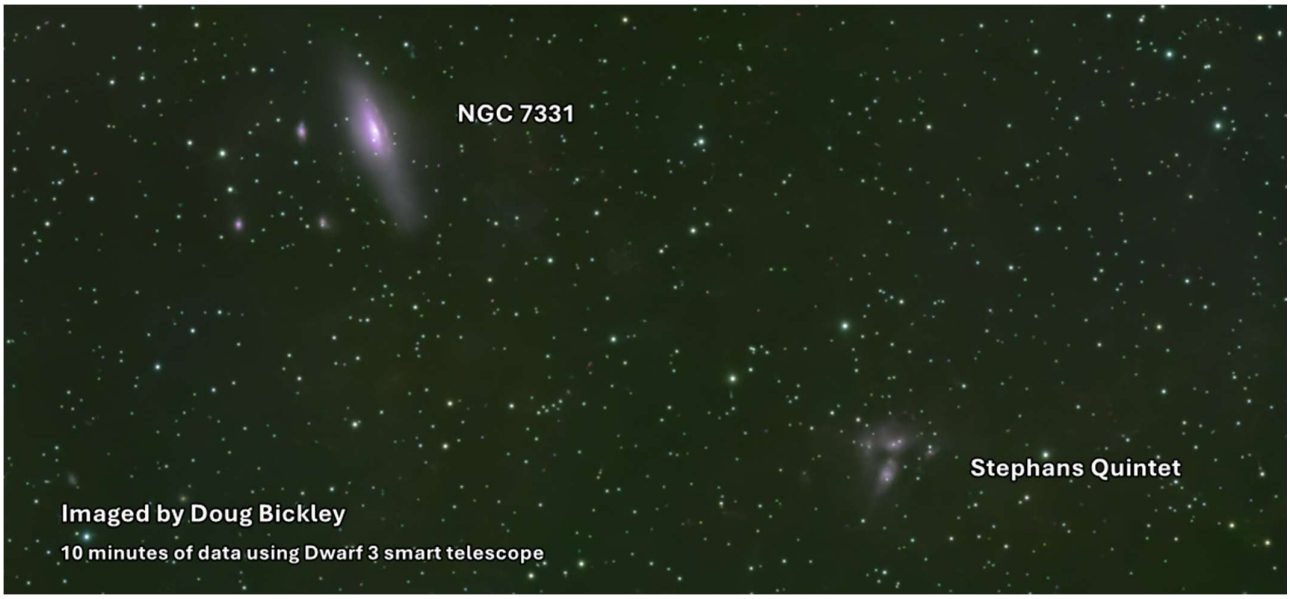
A supernova is a brilliant explosion of a star, occurring in the last stages of the evolution of a massive star which runs out of nuclear fuel and collapses in seconds and blast the outer layers into space. At its peak the brightness of a supernova can be comparable to that of an entire galaxy before it fades over several weeks or months.
They are not rare events and several thousand supernovae are typically seen in distant galaxies every year.



SN 2026aiv

Too late for me to report last month this supernova was discovered in the spiral galaxy NGC 7331 located in the constellation Pegasus.

NGC 7331 is similar in size to our Milky Way and contains between 200 – 400 billion stars, and it is 45 million light year away. As you can see the supernova outshines all the other stars in the galaxy. A good observing opportunity which can contribute to 'citizen science' and an easy target for those of you with smart telescopes.



PLANETS THIS MONTH

Here's my usual summary table showing times for planetary rising and setting, with observation opportunities based on mid-month data. As always "good visibility" doesn't necessarily mean that views will be easy.

As we prepare to put the clocks back and with the nights are becoming darker, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn are starting to be seen in the skies. For the early risers our winter constellations such as Orion are coming into view.

	Planetrise/Planetset, Thu, 15 Oct 2026			
Planet	Rise	Set	Meridian	Comment
Mercury	Thu 10:14	Thu 18:37	Thu 14:26	Difficult to see
Venus	Fri 09:20	Fri 17:37	Fri 13:29	Slightly difficult to see
Mars	Thu 00:32	Thu 16:14	Thu 08:23	Average visibility
Jupiter	Thu 01:47	Thu 16:35	Thu 09:11	Fairly good visibility
Saturn	Thu 18:01	Fri 06:24	Fri 00:13	Perfect visibility
Uranus	Thu 19:39	Fri 11:46	Fri 03:43	Average visibility
Neptune	Thu 17:40	Fri 05:42	Thu 23:41	Difficult to see

Data from timeanddate.com

Mercury is now in the SW in Libra fading to mag +1.0 as the month passes and at a very low altitude. It reaches greatest elongation on 12 October and is an evening planet but unlikely to be visible this month.

Venus is in the ESE in Virgo, shining at mag -4.1 at a slightly improved altitude of 13°, still an evening planet poorly placed for observation. It reaches inferior conjunction on 24 October.

Jupiter is still in Leo in the ESE at an improved maximum altitude of 42° shining at mag -1.9 and observing is again improving. On the morning of 6 October a 19%-lit waning crescent Moon will be close, and towards moth end Mars will move towards it.

Mars is in the SSW in Leo at a maximum altitude of 47°, shining at mag +1.1 and still a morning planet moving towards Jupiter and Saturn in the skies. On 10 and 11 October the planet will cross M44 the Beehive Cluster, this will be a lovely sight with binoculars or a small telescope.

Saturn is still in the S in Cetus at the start of the month shining at mag 0.3 with a maximum altitude of 39° and reaches opposition will be on 4 October. At this time, opposite the Sun, it will look its brightest and will be visible all night. The rings are now opening up with the planet's current tilt of 7.5° and observations are improving.

Uranus is still in the S in Taurus at a maximum altitude of 58° shining at mag +5.6 and can be seen between the Pleiades and Hyades.

Neptune is still in the S in Pisces at a maximum altitude of 37° shining at mag +7.8 and visible using binoculars or a small telescope. It will be seen close to Saturn.

International Space Station (ISS)

Forecast times for visible passes this month

You can use these apps to check for ISS passes:

 **Android:** *ISS Detector Satellite Tracker*

 **IOS:** *ISS Spotter*

Date	Mag	Transit time	Start Time	Start Alt.degs.	Start Az.	High point	End Time	End Alt.degs.	End Az.
15-Oct	-1.0	04:33	06:49	10°	S	17°	06:53	10°	E
16-Oct	-0.8	02:37	06:02	10°	SSE	12°	06:05	10°	ESE
17-Oct	-2.1	06:03	06:48	10°	SW	31°	06:54	10°	E
18-Oct	-1.7	05:16	06:01	11°	SSW	23°	06:06	10°	E
19-Oct	-1.4	02:39	05:15	16°	SSE	17°	05:18	10°	ESE
19-Oct	-3.0	06:36	06:49	10°	WSW	51°	06:55	10°	E
20-Oct	-2.7	04:49	06:02	23°	SSW	40°	06:07	10°	E
21-Oct	-2.1	02:38	05:16	29°	SE	29°	05:19	10°	E
21-Oct	-3.6	06:33	06:49	11°	WSW	71°	06:56	10°	E
22-Oct	-0.5	00:25	04:30	12°	E	12°	04:31	10°	E
22-Oct	-3.5	04:31	06:03	36°	SW	61°	06:08	10°	E
23-Oct	-2.5	02:28	05:17	39°	ESE	39°	05:20	10°	E
23-Oct	-3.7	06:18	06:50	13°	W	77°	06:56	10°	E
24-Oct	-0.5	00:27	04:31	13°	E	13°	04:32	10°	E
24-Oct	-3.8	04:19	06:04	44°	WSW	76°	06:08	10°	E
25-Oct	-2.5	02:20	04:18	40°	E	40°	04:20	10°	E
25-Oct	-3.6	06:06	05:51	14°	W	66°	05:57	10°	ESE
26-Oct	-0.4	00:22	03:32	12°	E	12°	03:32	10°	E
26-Oct	-3.8	04:09	05:05	49°	WSW	74°	05:09	10°	ESE
27-Oct	-2.3	02:10	04:19	37°	ESE	37°	04:21	10°	E
27-Oct	-3.1	05:45	05:51	15°	W	45°	05:57	10°	SE
28-Oct	-0.3	00:10	03:32	11°	E	11°	03:33	10°	E
28-Oct	-3.6	03:51	05:05	48°	WSW	56°	05:09	10°	ESE
29-Oct	-2.0	01:53	04:19	30°	ESE	30°	04:21	10°	ESE
29-Oct	-2.4	04:54	05:52	15°	W	26°	05:57	10°	SSE
30-Oct	-2.9	03:10	05:06	35°	SSW	35°	05:09	10°	SE
31-Oct	-1.4	01:14	04:20	20°	SE	20°	04:21	10°	SE
31-Oct	-1.6	03:04	05:53	12°	WSW	14°	05:56	10°	S

The visible passes this month are all in the early hours so are suitable for the morning larks among us.

Check the Heavens-Above website to see the passes that I haven't show and for the latest forecasts.
[source: https://www.heavens-above.com/]

PERTON LIBRARY ASTRONOMY GROUP



The group meets on the third Thursday of every month of the year at Perton Library from 7pm to 9pm. No subscription, no need to book, all free, just drop in at any time during the evening.
(Location WV6 7QU or on what3words ///saints.empty.stands)
The group is a relaxed and friendly gathering with the occasional talk.

We are particularly suited to beginners who very often bring their telescopes along for advice on how to set up, and we have experienced members who can help with this. If the skies are clear we do try to do some observing with library and member equipment.

WOLVERHAMPTON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

The Wolvas annual subscription is currently a bargain at £15 per annum and you can sign up now our website www.wolvas.org.uk and pay your subscription, preferably by bank transfer.

We put together a yearly 16 lecture programme and planning of the programme is well under way.

The host location for our live talks remains the University of Wolverhampton in the city centre. Access and facilities are excellent - details are available on the Wolvas website. Lectures in person or online will only be available to paid-up members of the Society. Members will receive regular emails with invitations to the Zoom sessions and reminders of the in-person lectures.
Non-members may attend the talks live for £2 on the door.

We are currently in the summer break for our lectures, but we have some excellent talks lined up for next year.

Next year's season 2026/27 begins with a short talk after our AGM on 5 October then our Presidents Lecture on 19 October.

For those interested in observations from a dark sky site the autumn WolvAS Observing Week (WOW number 16) is being held from Thursday 8 to Sunday 18 October, with the New Moon on Sunday 11 of October.
Further details are on the website.

As well as our website we will be posting details of events on social media, so keep an eye on our Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/wolvasuk) and X *[Twitter]* (https://twitter.com/wolvasuk) pages for the latest news.