THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE



With Glenn Dawes

This month, spend evenings lying down to soak up the sky, and mornings getting up for meteors!

When to use this chart

1 Nov 00:00 AEDT (31 Oct, 13:00 UT)
15 Nov 23:00 AEDT (12:00 UT)
30 Nov 22:00 AEDT (11:00 UT)

The chart accurately matches the sky on the dates and times shown for Sydney, Australia. The sky is different at other times as the stars crossing it set four minutes earlier each night.

NOVEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

The Leonids are one of the better-known meteor showers. Although best for Northern Hemisphere observers, good displays have been seen from down under, showing persistent, bright fireballs. Active around 6–30 November, maximum is expected on the 18th. The morning will be Moon-free, which suits the Leonids which are best seen before dawn, when their radiant in Leo is low in the northeast. Peak rates can reach 15 meteors per hour, but 5–6 might be more realistic.

STARS AND CONSTELLATIONS

November offers a unique view of the heavens. Escape light-polluted skies and head somewhere with low horizons. Whichever way you look, the Milky Way's glow sits on the horizon, forming a near-unbroken ring around you. Lie back and soak in the Southern Universe, where breathtaking nebulae and star clusters have given way to faint stars and galaxies. You can enjoy this special view at other times of year too, whenever the faint glow of the Andromeda Galaxy lies due north.

THE PLANETS

Evenings begins with Neptune and Saturn well placed, crossing the meridian. Uranus rises around sunset, culminating just after midnight. The early hours also find Jupiter and Mars rising, though best observed in the predawn.

Mars makes its closest approach to Jupiter (1.2°) on 17th. Venus returns to the morning, rising around the start of dawn mid-month. Mercury follows, reaching maximum elongation in later November, but sadly low in the eastern dawn glow.

DEEP-SKY OBJECTS

The northern constellation of Cetus, the Whale has a faint but distinctive asterism of six stars arranged in a pentagon. The brightest, in the southeast corner, is the binocular double Alpha (α) Ceti (RA 03h 02.3m, dec. –04° 05′). Its orange mag. +2.5 primary makes a wonderful colour contrast with its fainter (mag. +5.6) blue companion, 16 arcminutes north.

Speaking of contrasts, move 6° southwest to two galaxies. The mag. +10.5 edge-on spiral NGC 1055 (RA 02h 41.7m, dec. +00° 26′) appears as a faint 4-arcminute streak, forming an equilateral triangle with two nearby seventh-magnitude stars. In the same low-power field (0.5° southeast) lies the impressive ninth-magnitude elliptical M77, showing an obvious bright core.

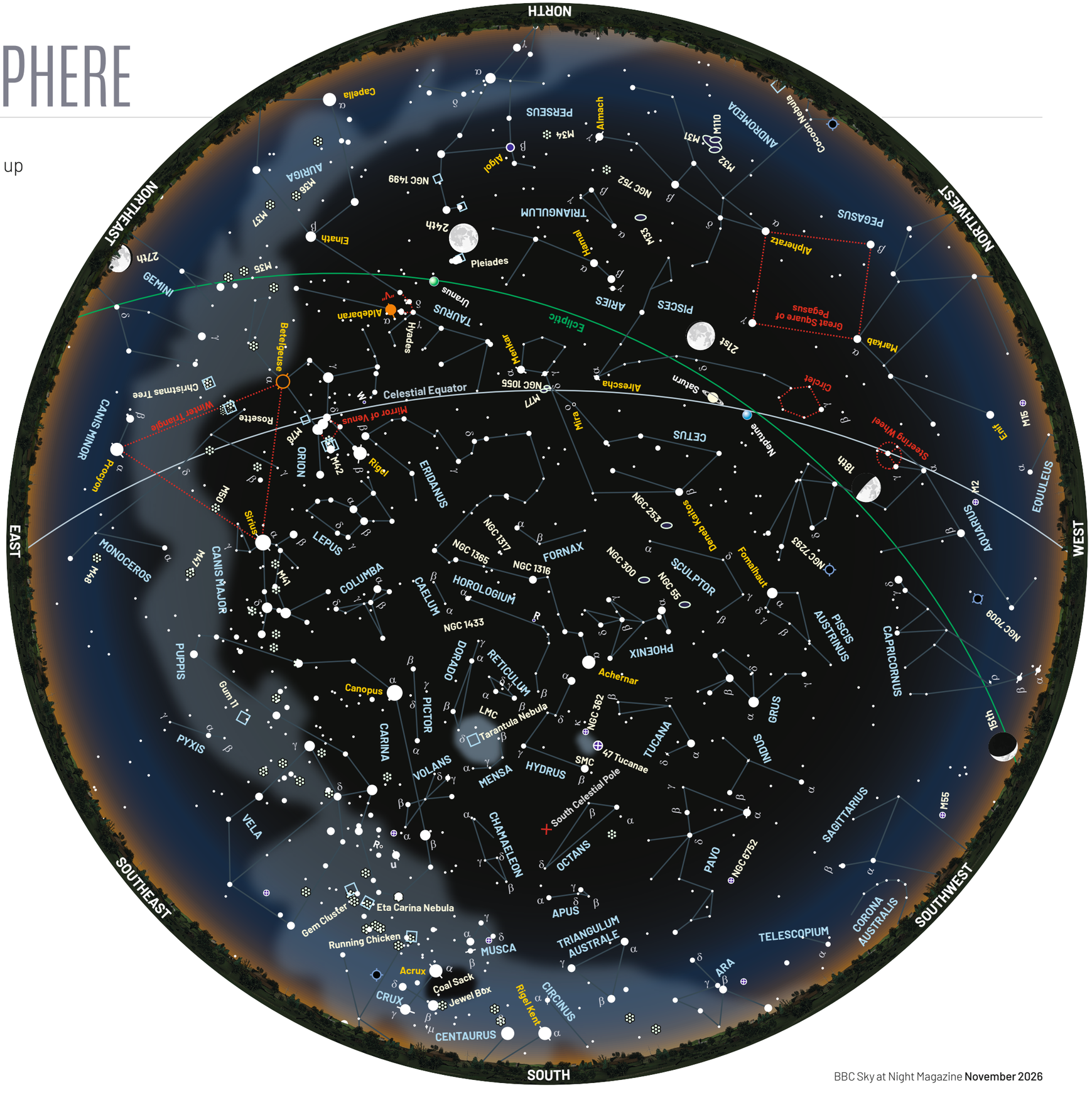


Chart key

- GALAXY
- OPEN CLUSTER
- GLOBULAR CLUSTER
- PLANETARY NEBULA
- DIFFUSE NEBULOSITY
- DOUBLE STAR
- VARIABLE STAR
- COMET TRACK
- ASTEROID TRACK
- METEOR RADIANT
- QUASAR
- PLANET

STAR BRIGHTNESS:
- MAG. 0 & BRIGHTER
- MAG. +1
- MAG. +2
- MAG. +3
- MAG. +4 & FAINTER

CHART: PETE LAWRENCE