

The Orion Star Count

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), working alongside the British Astronomical Association's Campaign for Dark Skies (CfDS), is once again running their Star Count week from 31st January until 6th February this year. This week has been chosen as there will be no moon in the sky to interfere with the count.

If there are adverse weather conditions this week, the count will be rerun from Monday 28th February until 6th March, 2011

In West Berkshire, we shall be able to compare the 'seeing' over the Downs, to that in the more urban areas where skyglow limits vision.

People are being asked to count stars in the constellation of Orion, which can be seen in the west this time of year. The main area of the constellation is bound by four bright stars, which are highlighted in the photo below. Your star count should not include these four corner stars – only those within this rectangular boundary – but do include the three stars in the middle, known as Orion's belt.

You can choose any night of the week, one where there is no haze, so you have the best chance of seeing stars. It will get really dark from 7.00 pm.

Make a count of the number of stars you can see with the naked eye (not with binoculars or telescope), and then enter the information on the electronic form on the website www.cpre.org.uk/starcount. The results will be used to produce a Star Count map of the UK, which will illustrate how light pollution levels are affecting people's view of the night sky. For more details on the light pollution problem, click on the 'Campaign Update' on the website.

It would be fantastic, if parents in our local area would encourage their children to participate in this project and if local schools could organise an event in their area, the benefits to both pupils and the environment would be enormous.

Orion

Star count within rectangular area of four corner points

