

SPECIAL REPORT

COUNT THE STARS

Cain Scrimgeour

IF you're out in the evening in February, don't forget to look up. This is the month when you might see a mighty hunter, a queen, a dragon or a giraffe after dark! These are, of course, patterns formed by the stars, known as constellations.

COUNTING STARS IN FEBRUARY

CPRE, the countryside charity, is running a Star Count this month, and it's easy to take part. Don't worry, you don't have to count all the stars in the sky – just the ones in the constellation of Orion!

LOOK FOR ORION (pictured, right)

Orion, the hunter, is a gigantic figure in the sky. He wears a belt with a sword, and he holds a club and a shield.

To find him, look for the three bright stars in a row that make up his belt. Then find the four stars that form a rectangle around them: these include an orange star called Betelgeuse on the top left and a blue one called Rigel on the bottom right. All you need to do now is count all the stars inside that rectangle, not including the four 'corner' stars.



Bob Mizon

WHEN TO SEARCH FOR STARS

The best nights for the CPRE Star Count are between Friday 21 and Friday 28 February. During this time the moon is less bright, so it's easier to see the stars. But CPRE will accept your counts from any night in the last two weeks of February.



Mackenzie NNP



of streetlamps and other electric lights makes it hard to see the stars.

WHY IS LIGHT POLLUTION BAD FOR US?

Light pollution is bad for us as it can stop us sleeping properly, making us ill. It's also bad for birds, insects and other animals, as it confuses them when they are trying to find food or move around. But there are ways to stop it, and by showing on a map where it's most serious, CPRE can help people who work in local councils decide what to do about it.

SHARE YOUR RESULTS

You can then send your results to CPRE using the website address below. They'll make a map to show where the best places are to see a wonderful, starry sky. This will also show those places that are poor for stargazing because of light pollution: that means the glow



WHAT ELSE CAN YOU SEE?

SOME other constellations to look out for...

Cassiopeia is another easy constellation to recognise, as it is shaped like a W. It's named after a mythical Ethiopian queen, who is usually pictured sitting on her throne.

Draco is linked with many myths about dragons, including one of the monsters that Hercules met during his 12 tasks or 'labours'.

Camelopardalis is a giraffe. The long-necked animal was once known as a Camelopard, as it looked a bit like a camel with the spots of a leopard.

Find out more at cpre.org.uk/starcount.

Make sure you take a responsible adult with you if you are out after dark.

GLOSSARY

CPRE — The countryside charity. The charity aims to make the countryside a better place for everyone to live, work and enjoy

Orion — A hunter in Greek mythology

Hercules — One of the best known heroes in Greek and Roman mythology. He is renowned for his courage and immense physical strength. However, he killed his beloved wife and children while under a spell that made him temporarily insane. Even though he wasn't to blame for the crime, Hercules completed 12 tasks to make amends and achieve immortality



Questions on Special Report: 'Count the stars'

Part A: Find and explain the facts

A1. Fill the gaps in order to complete the sentences.

CPRE, the countryside charity, is running a _____ Count this month. To take part, you have to count the stars in the _____ of _____. You don't need a _____: it is all about what you can see with just your eyes. Find out more at _____.

A2. Describe Orion.

A3. Number the sentences 1-4 in order to show how you find Orion in the sky.

Count all the stars inside the rectangle, not including the four 'corner' stars.	
Look for the three bright stars in a row that make up his belt.	
Find the four stars that form a rectangle around them.	
These include an orange star called Betelgeuse on the top left and a blue one called Rigel on the bottom right.	

A4. Some other constellations to look out for are: Cassiopeia, Draco and Camelopardalis. Answer the following questions about them.

What is Cassiopeia shaped like?	
What is Cassiopeia named after?	
What is Draco linked with?	
What is Camelopardalis?	

A5. What is light pollution?

Part B: Deduce and infer information

B1. Why do you think that CPRE is running a Star Count?

B2. Why is light pollution bad for us?

B3. When are the best nights for the CPRE Star Count?

B4. Suggest why the charity is accepting counts from any night in the last two weeks of February.

B5. Look at the information at the bottom. Why do you think it tells readers to: "Make sure you take a responsible adult with you if you are out after dark"?

Part C: Analyse the writing and presentation

C1. Analyse the CPRE logo.

C2. How is language used to reassure readers that it is easy to take part in the Star Count? Give evidence to support your answer.

Part D: Writing task

Imagine that you are a representative from CPRE. Write a speech for a school assembly in which you try to persuade students to take part in the Star Count.