

## **Our Night Sky for October 21st, 2024**

**The next couple of weeks may offer our best opportunity to see comet Atlas A3. Comet A3 rounded the sun (Perihelion) just a couple of weeks ago and is now speeding off to the outer reaches of our solar system. Look above the western horizon after sunset.**

**I say our best opportunity because it is fading quickly. One chart put it right at the limit of naked eye visibility, so bring binoculars. Comets that pass close to the sun are liable to lose a lot of material during this passage. The details of the comets orbit are still coming in and being refined but there is no doubt that it did originate in the most distant part of our solar system, the Oort cloud, an enormous cloud of leftover material from the original formation of our solar system. Science has not really been able to give us the true dimensions of this cloud because it is made up of all sizes of rock gravel and ice. The true nature and size may never be completely understood. It is probably the size of our entire solar system and probably has more material than what we can currently see and measure now.**

**The comets that visit the inner solar system from time to time are probably showing us how in a much more chaotic time our planets were assembled and supplied with a variety of additional material including water. So if you are lucky enough to catch a glimpse of comet ATLAS A3 imagine a few billion years ago the chaos of our night sky.**