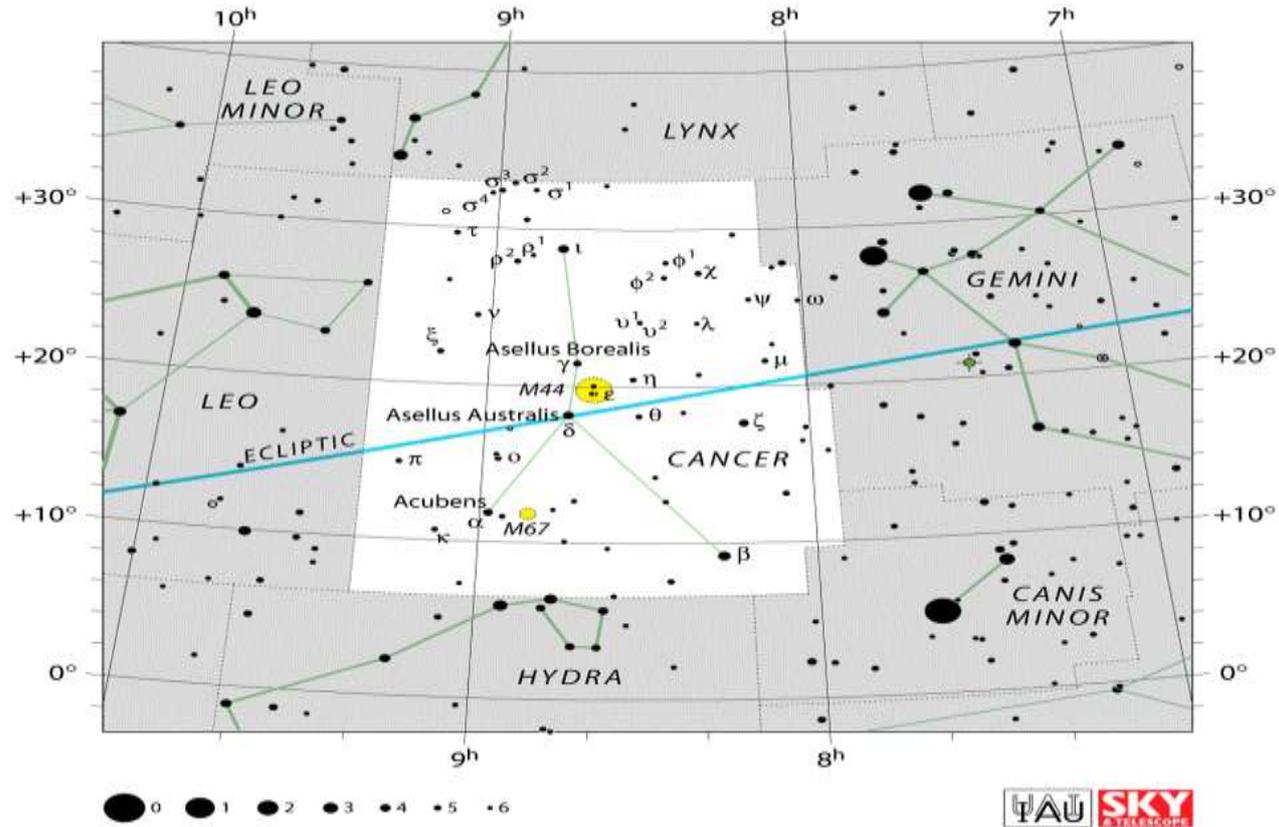


Binocular Observing March 2020 by Andrew Lohfink.



The Night Sky
March 2020.

Cancer Constellation.



Cancer Constellation.

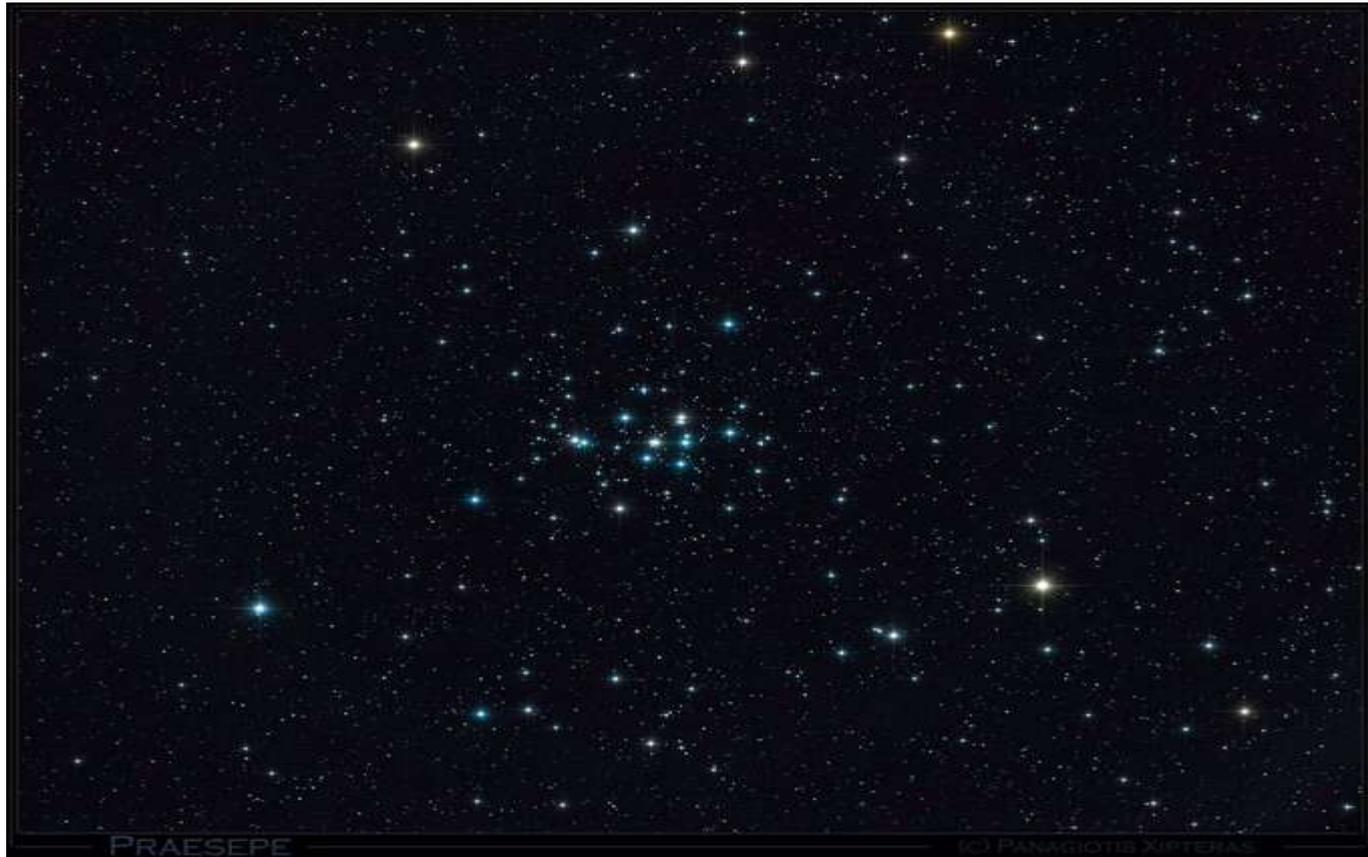
.Cancer is difficult to pick out especially in light polluted skies. It has no really bright stars but a recognisable inverted “Y” shape is formed by Alpha, Beta, Delta and Iota Cancri if you look east of Gemini.

.It is worth taking time to seek it out as it contains some excellent binocular targets – open clusters M44 and M67, Iota Cancri - a beautiful double star and the red carbon star X Cancri.

Messier 44 – The Beehive Cluster or Praesepe.

- M44 is a binocular show piece open cluster best viewed in 8x40 or 6x30 binoculars with a large wide field of view of 8 degrees or more.
- It lies midway between Delta Cancri (Asellus Australis) and Gamma Cancri (Asellus Borealis) slightly west of a line between the two stars.
- It is 577 light years distant and is approximately 600 million years old.
- The Beehive cluster is also called the Praesepe which is “the manger” in Latin.
- As well as the cluster look out for the manger stars which form a square around the cluster of differing colours and make a glorious sight if your binoculars have a wide field of view.

M44 – The Praesepe.



Messier 67 – An Open Cluster.

This cluster is easy to find lying just west of Alpha Cancri. It is one of the oldest known open clusters with an estimated aged of 3.2 and 5 billion years. It contains about 100 stars similar to our Sun and a number of red giants. It can be seen as a milky patch with 10x50 binoculars but higher magnifications and larger apertures resolve stars which appear like diamonds on cotton wool and appear / disappear with averted vision.



Iota Cancri – A Double Star.

Iota Cancri marks the top of the inverted “Y” asterism in Cancer. In binoculars of x20 and above it can be resolved into its two components. With good eyesight and seeing conditions with mounted binoculars it may be possible to split at x 10 – the pair have a separation of 30 arcseconds. The brighter star is a yellow G type giant while the fainter star is white. The two together make a striking colour contrast and some say there is a green tinge to one of the stars.

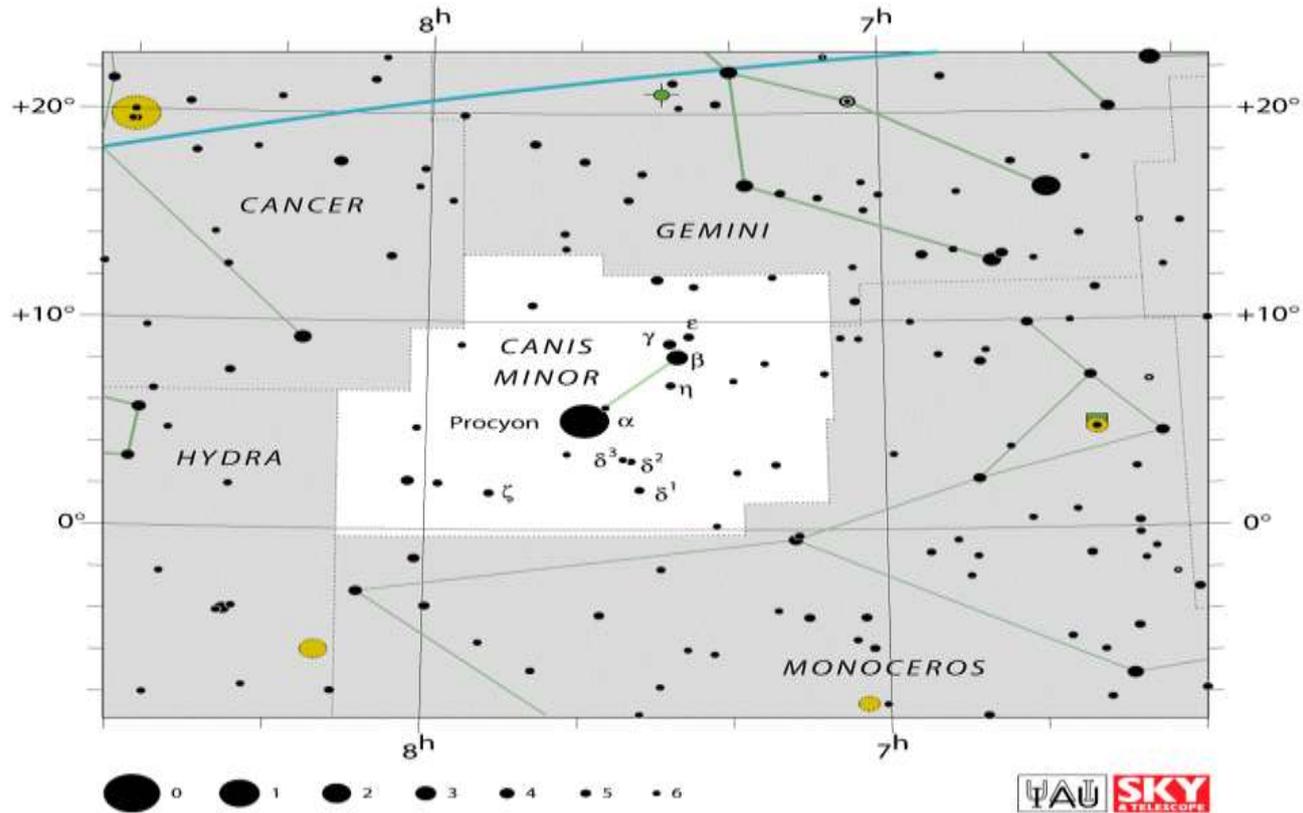


X Cancri – A Variable Carbon Star.

.X Cancri is a pulsating carbon star. It can be seen with the naked eye and lies 2 degrees east of Delta Cancri. Its carbon red colour is well seen in binoculars of all sizes and it lies between two white stars in the same field of view making an attractive sight with the colour difference. It is approximately 1117 light years distant.



Canis Minor Constellation.



14 Canis Minoris – A triple Star.

Canis Minor is a small uninspiring constellation easily found as it contains the bright star Procyon which forms part of the Winter Triangle asterism. 14 Canis Minoris can be found just over 5 degrees south east of Procyon and with x 15 binoculars and above it can be split into three components seen in the bottom image in the lower right corner. Note the orange colour of one of the stars.



Messier 48 – An Open Cluster

M48 is an open cluster in Monoceros but is easier to find by extending a line from Beta Canis Minoris through Procyon about three times the distance. This cluster is known as the missing messier as Charles Messier originally incorrectly catalogued its position. Caroline Herschel “rediscovered” the cluster in 1783 and 150 years later it was realised the object Messier originally described had been “found”. Some stars can be resolved in 10x50 binoculars against a background glow of fainter stars.



Some Binocular Highlights involving the Moon and planets In March 2020.

- .On March 18th a waning crescent Moon sits near Mars and Jupiter.
- .On March 19th a waning crescent Moon lies 4 degrees south east of Saturn.
- .On March 21st the Moon lies 7.7 degrees south west of Mercury.
- .On March 28th the Moon lies south of The Pleiades and Venus.