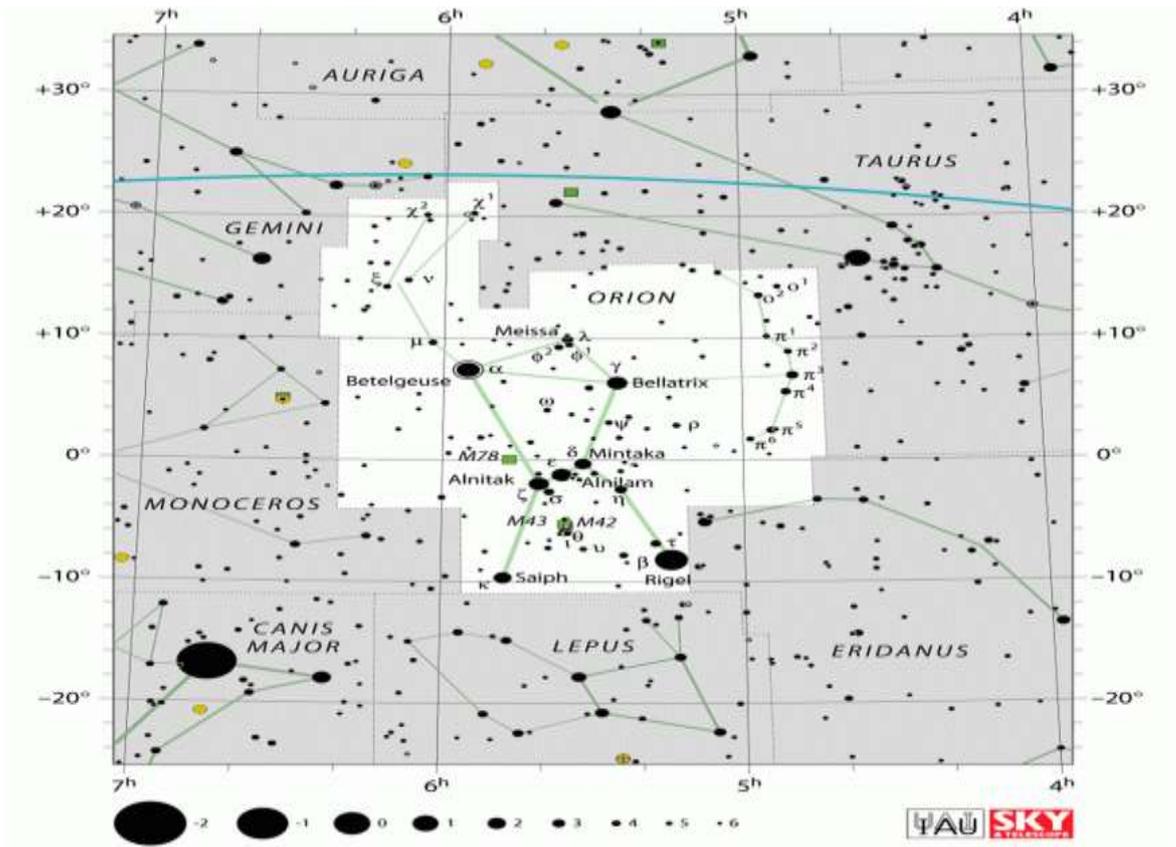


Binocular Observing January 2021 by Andrew Lohfink.



The Night Sky  
January 2021.

# Orion Constellation.



# The Lambda Orionis Cluster.

The famous Orion Constellation is easily visible in the south skies and well placed for binocular observing. Lambda Orionis at The Hunter's Head is actually a double star within a small open cluster. Also known as Collinder 69, the cluster is about 5 million years old and approximately 1,300 light years away. Lambda Orionis (also known as Meissa) is a double star easily split. The cluster is a triangular shape and contains stars of differing colours which make a beautiful sight.



# Betelgeuse and Rigel.

Betelgeuse (Alpha Orionis) and Rigel (Beta Orionis) are two of the most famous stars of the sky and can be found at the shoulder and foot of The Hunter. Betelgeuse is a red supergiant and is lovely deep orange in binoculars. About 10 million years old it is one of the largest stars known. It is a semi regular variable and recently went through a dim period. Rigel, by contrast is a blue supergiant which looks icy blue in binoculars – the contrast with Betelgeuse is obvious. It lies 772 light year distant and is 85,000 times more luminous than The Sun. Binoculars highlight the different colours beautifully.



## Orion's Belt.

The three stars which make The Orion's Belt asterism are easy naked eye objects. The most westerly is Mintaka which lies approximately 900 light years away. The middle star is Alnilam and is a bright blue supergiant about 1,300 light year distant. The most easterly is Alnitak which lies about 700 light year away and is another hot blue supergiant. The whole belt can be seen in low power wide field binoculars.



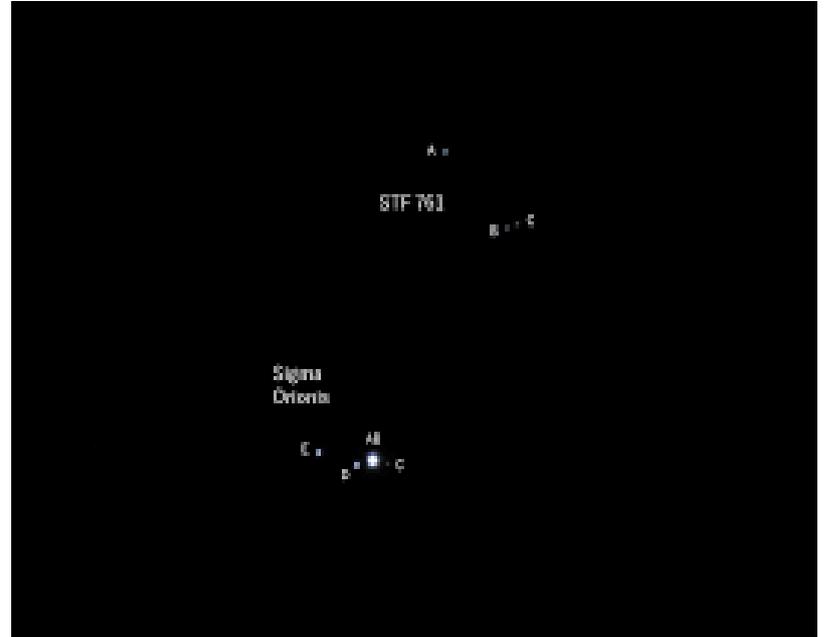
## Mintaka Double Star.

Mintaka, the western most star in The Belt is actually a double star easily split at x15-16 binoculars. Notice the difference in brightness and colours between the primary and secondary.



## Sigma Orionis – A Multiple Star System.

Sigma Orionis can be seen with the naked eye and lies just south of Alnitak. It is actually a multiple star system consisting of 5 stars about 1,150 light years away. You will not be able to resolve all of the stars in binoculars but see how many you can spot. Just to the west of Sigma Orionis lies another star system Struve 761 which may also be split especially in higher power binoculars.



## The Orion Nebula – Messier 42.

The Orion Nebula is a naked eye object in the centre of Orion's Sword. Binoculars of all sizes reveal the blue glow of the nebula surrounding the central brightness of the Trapezium Cluster. Dark Skies and higher magnification up to x25 will show more detailed nebulosity and you may be able to resolve some of the super hot blue stars in The Trapezium. It lies 1344 light years distant. If you have very dark skies you may be able to see another small nebulous patch – The Running Man Nebula

