

**Some things to observe in the early evening skies:  
during February 2021**

**The Moon:**

To view craters (with a small telescope or binoculars) the best time is around **first quarter Moon** which will be about the **19<sup>th</sup> February** (around 6.00pm and later) looking South.

**The Planets:**

After being spoilt by the lovely display of planets in 2020 all that we have left now is Mars! So at the beginning of February MARS is still visible as a reddish blob high to the Southwest and on the 19<sup>th</sup> it is very close to the first quarter Moon.

We will have to wait until Summer to catch Jupiter and Saturn in the late evening sky and late May before Venus and Mercury make an appearance after the Sun has set.

**A few constellations to learn and recognise:**  
(see the Skymap)

Constellations are just patterns of stars in the sky.  
They have LATIN (and English) names.

This session is a wonderful time for enjoying the magnificent constellation of **ORION** (The Hunter). He is supposed to be using a bow and arrow with a sword hanging from his belt. Four bright stars show his shoulders and feet. Three bright

stars also show his belt and below his belt a line of dimmer stars show his sword hanging down. See the attached image. His top left (east) shoulder is the orangey star BETELGEUSE. This is a RED-GIANT star which is expanding and nearing the end of its life (in a few million years!?).

Perhaps the best part to observe with binoculars and a small telescope is the sword. Here you can see what looks like a fuzzy cloud and this is 'The Great Nebula' in Orion where new stars are being formed.

Just to the upper right (West) of Orion is the constellation of **TAURUS** (The Bull). From the attached image you can imagine the head of a bull with its two long horns pointing away to the left (East). The brightest star in Taurus is the orange looking ALDEBARAN, it is sometimes called 'the eye of the bull'. In fact Aldebaran is another RED-GIANT star.

Circled on the Taurus image is a lovely cluster of stars known as THE **PLEIADES** (or the Seven Sisters). It may be folklore that the Seven Sisters is named as such because on a dark, clear night the unaided eye can detect seven stars? In binoculars, or a small telescope, it is an amazing sight. Attached is a telescopic view of the cluster.

Clear Skies!

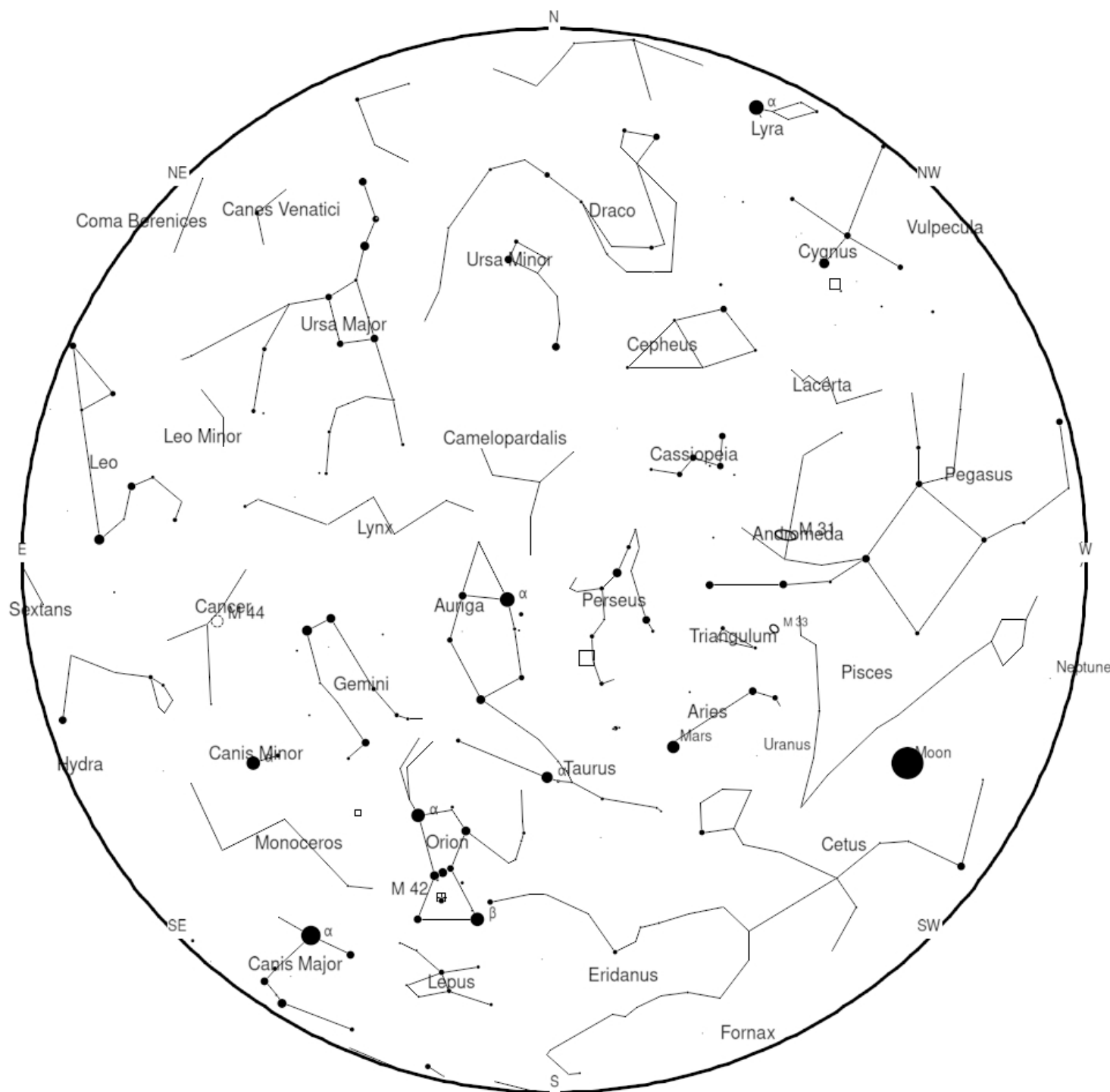
Skymap for:

February 2021

The map shows the night sky at about 7.00pm on the 15th of February, when it should be dark enough to begin observing.

Note that the map will drift westwards during the night and from one night to the next.

Hold the map with 'S' at the bottom when looking South and rotate with 'N' at the bottom when looking North etc.





ORION (The Hunter)



TAURUS (The Bull)



The PLEIADES (or Seven Sisters)