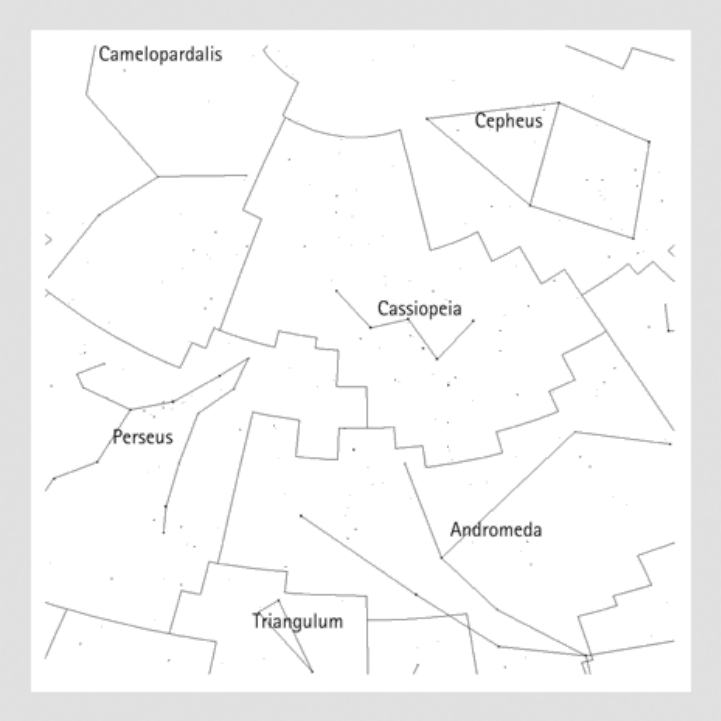
Figure 15.7.



Perseus, Andromeda, Cassiopeia, and Cepheus.

15.3.3 Practice

Spend as much time as possible studying the night sky before doing fieldwork. Twenty-minute intervals every two to three hours on clear nights is good practice for seeing how the sky changes over the night and learning constellations. The hours spent at home will make it easier to become oriented in the field. Learning how a chart in Stellarium compares to how things really look in the sky is invaluable. Learn the sky in the field in the same manner—before collecting astronomy data. In my experience, as I spent time outside at night learning the sky I attracted informants who were curious as to what I was doing and were extremely helpful later both with providing sky information and with introducing the project to others in their community. Ideally, researchers should be able to orient themselves to the night sky without having any star chart or computer before they start collecting sky information from informants.

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15.3.4 Ask an amateur

With star charts, Stellarium, and practice, it still can be difficult to learn the night sky. Amateur astronomers are the best human resource. Local amateur astronomy clubs often have ‘star parties’ and public viewing nights where they set up their telescopes to show the public the wonders of the night sky. They are experts on naked-eye astronomy—astronomy without telescopes—as well, and are used to interacting with non-experts. In addition, planetariums and university observatories may also host star parties for the public. Star parties are usually advertised on the internet as well as in community-focused weekly newspapers.