

The principal spring constellations

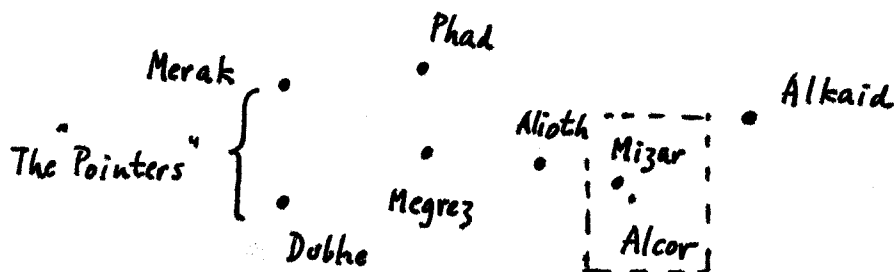
(1)

As the days lengthen, the winter constellations make way for those of spring.

Looking North

Part of Ursa Majoris

Learn all the names of the stars in the Plough — if you are keen to impress.



- Polaris, $m = 2$ Forty-ninth brightest star in the sky.

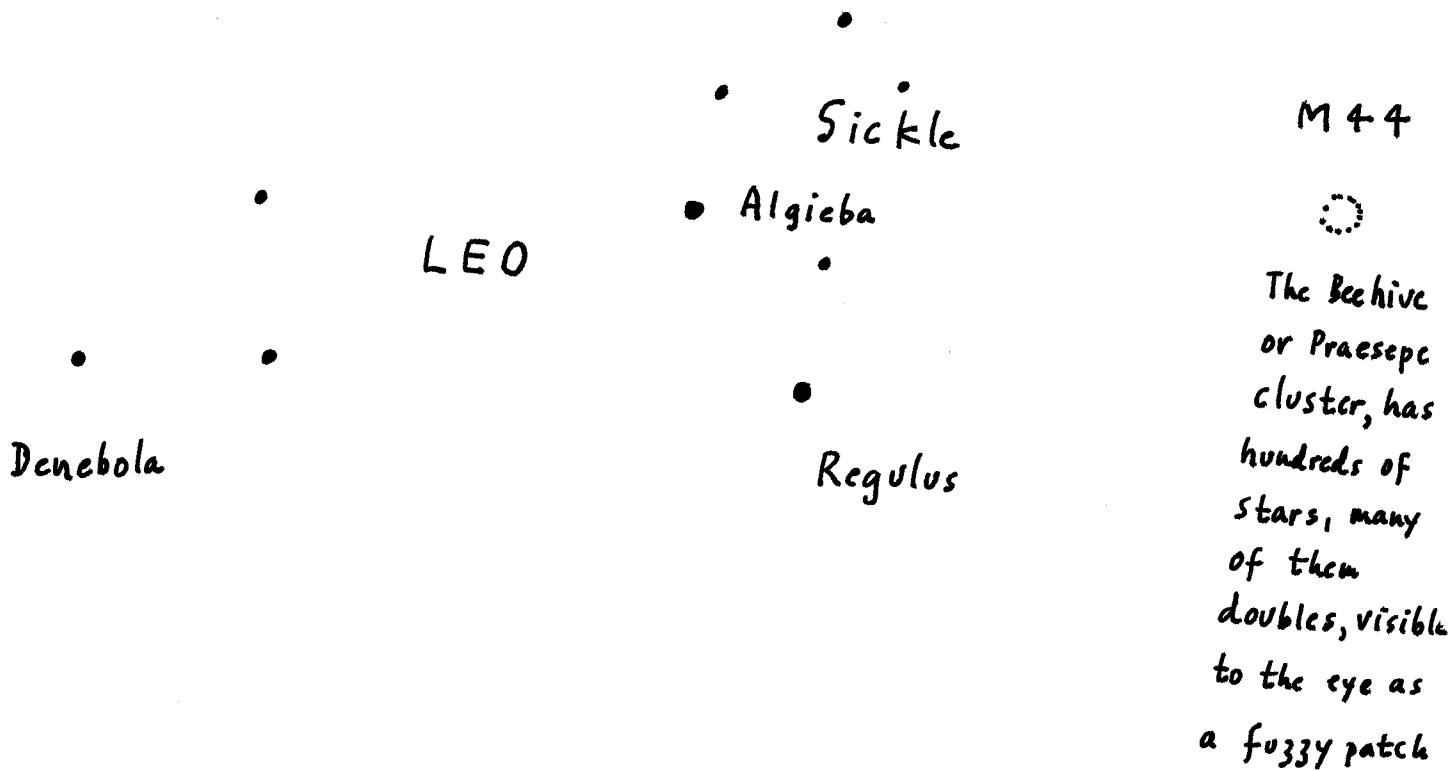
Very luminous $\sim 600 L_{\odot}$
distance ~ 250 l.y. } One star in Ursa Minoris
(\propto Ursa Minoris)

Mizar and Alcor form a famous optical double star in the bend of the handle of the Plough.

Optical aid reveals that Mizar is itself a double star, this time a true binary, with a companion $14''$ away.

JF²

Originally the beautiful maiden, Callisto, who was changed into a bear by Jupiter in order to escape the evil clutches of her boss, Juno. In Roman times, Juno was head of space, the Universe and everything, but she had a bit of a temper. So, being erudite does not necessarily make you an attractive person.

Looking South

Regulus, at the base of the head, is very close to the ecliptic and, as a result, is one of only four bright stars that can be covered by the Moon and the planets. This is termed an occultation.

The "sickle" is a group of stars arranged rather in the fashion of a question-mark reflected in a mirror.

Incidentally, it is rare for a planet to occult a star; the Moon occulting a star is a less rare phenomenon.

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2006, March 1