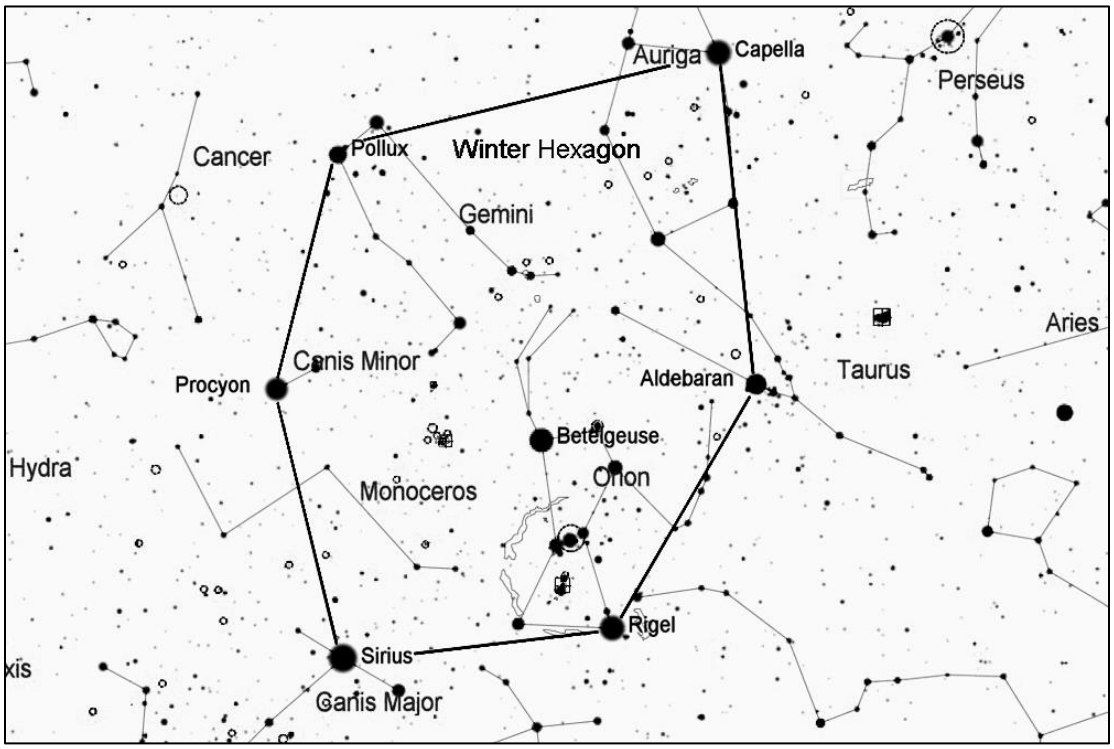
Beta (β) Monoceros, Triple Star

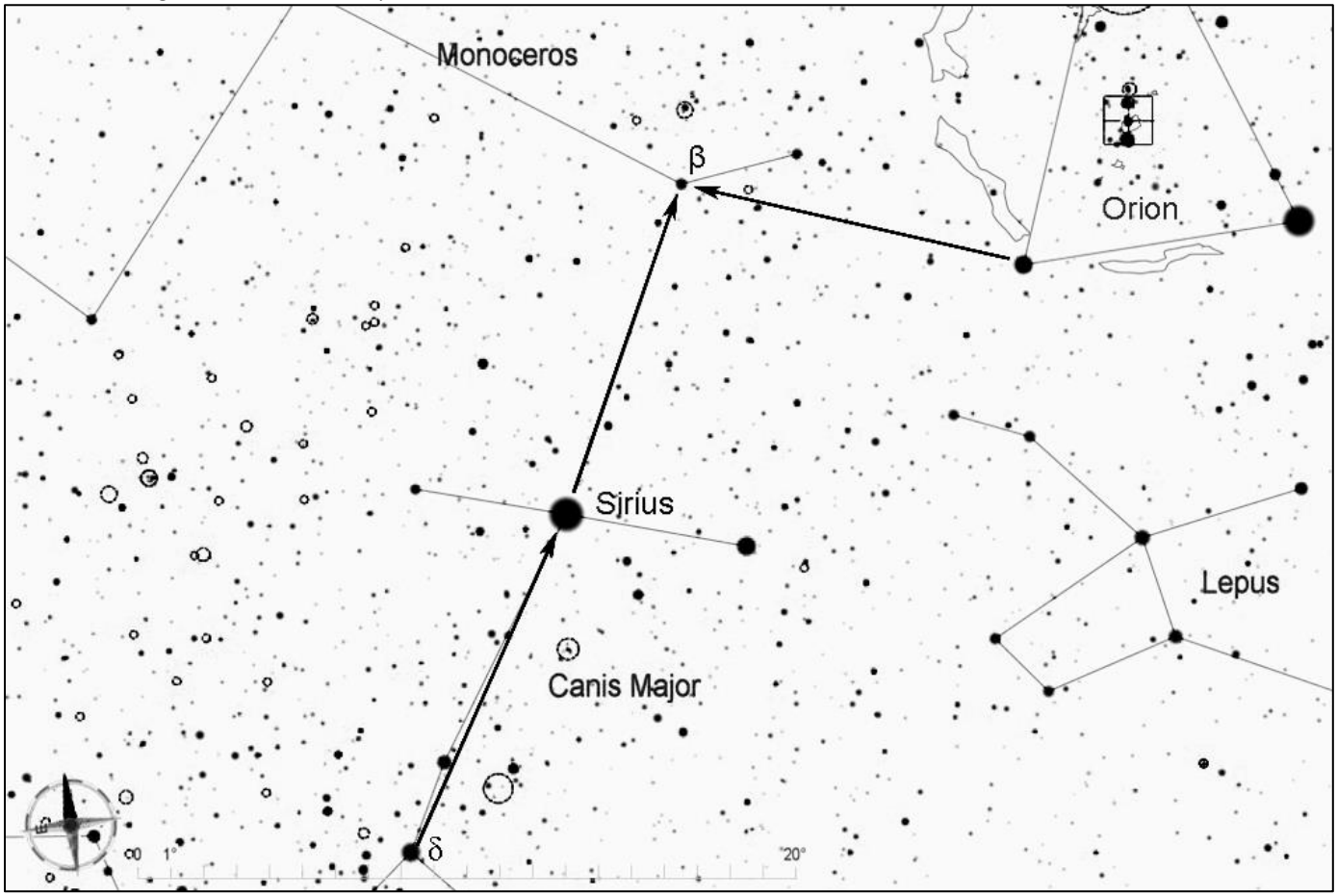
This is a nice trio of stars, approximately equal in brightness. The separation between the A and B components is 7.4 arcseconds, and the separation between the B and C components is only 2.8 arcseconds. This closer pair will require a magnification of at least 100x and possibly more to separate the two. All three are hot blue-white stars that are well over 1000 times more luminous than our Sun. The group is about 680 light years away.



Find the Winter Hexagon, which is composed of six of the brightest stars in the sky--Sirius, Procyon, Pollux, Capella, Aldebaran, and Rigel. On mid-winter evenings, these stars form a large oval stretching from low in the south to nearly overhead. As spring begins, the Winter Hexagon sinks toward the west. The constellation Orion and its bright red star Betelgeuse are inside the Hexagon.

For this star hop, find Sirius, the brightest star in the sky.

At a combined magnitude of about 3.8, β Monoceros should be easy to see even in a light-polluted sky. To locate it, use the stars that represent the backbone of Canis Major (δ and Sirius) as a pointer, and extend this line the same distance (about 10 degrees) to reach β Monoceros. Note that β is also about 10 degrees east of the lower part of Orion.



Star hop from www.skyledge.net by Jim Mazur. Star charts created with *Cartes du Ciel.*