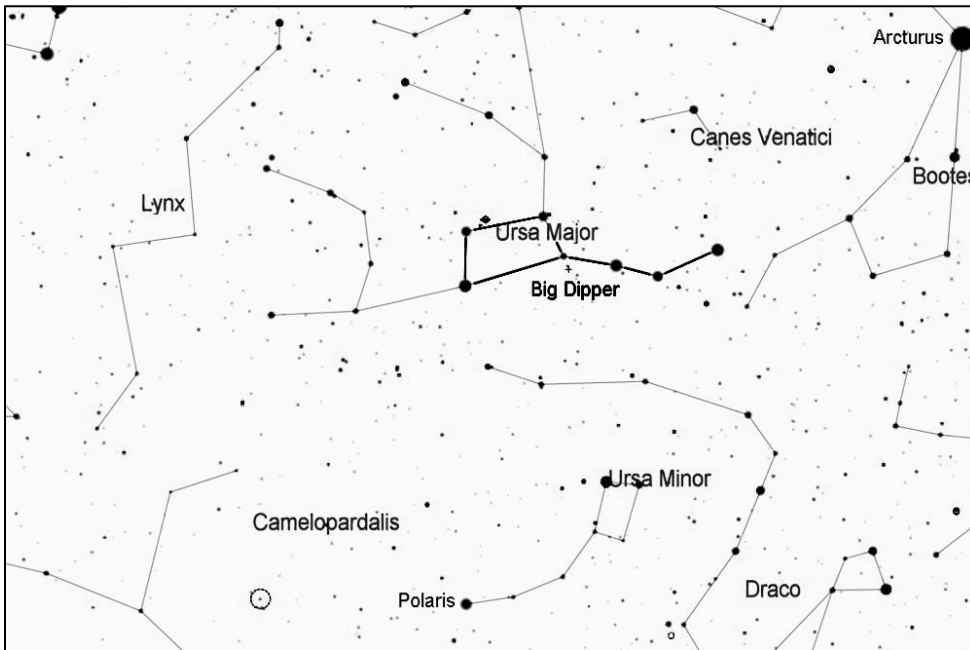


Cor Caroli, Double Star in Canes Venatici

Cor Caroli is a wide double star, with a bright white primary star (magnitude 2.9) and a dimmer companion (magnitude 5.5). The brighter star is called a "magnetic star" because it has an intense magnetic field. It also varies slightly in brightness over a period of 5.5 days. The distance between these two stars is about 680 astronomical units, and they are about 115 light years away.



Start by finding the Big Dipper, one of the most recognizable star patterns in the sky. It is part of the constellation Ursa Major, the big bear. It is shown here upside down, high in the sky above Polaris, which is where it can be found during the evenings in spring and summer. For other seasons and times of night, rotate the chart as needed to match what you see in the northern sky.

Look "beneath" the curving handle of the Big Dipper, for the brightest star in that area of the sky, which is Cor Caroli. Note that during much of the spring and summer, "beneath the handle" is actually in a direction that is higher in the sky, as shown below.

