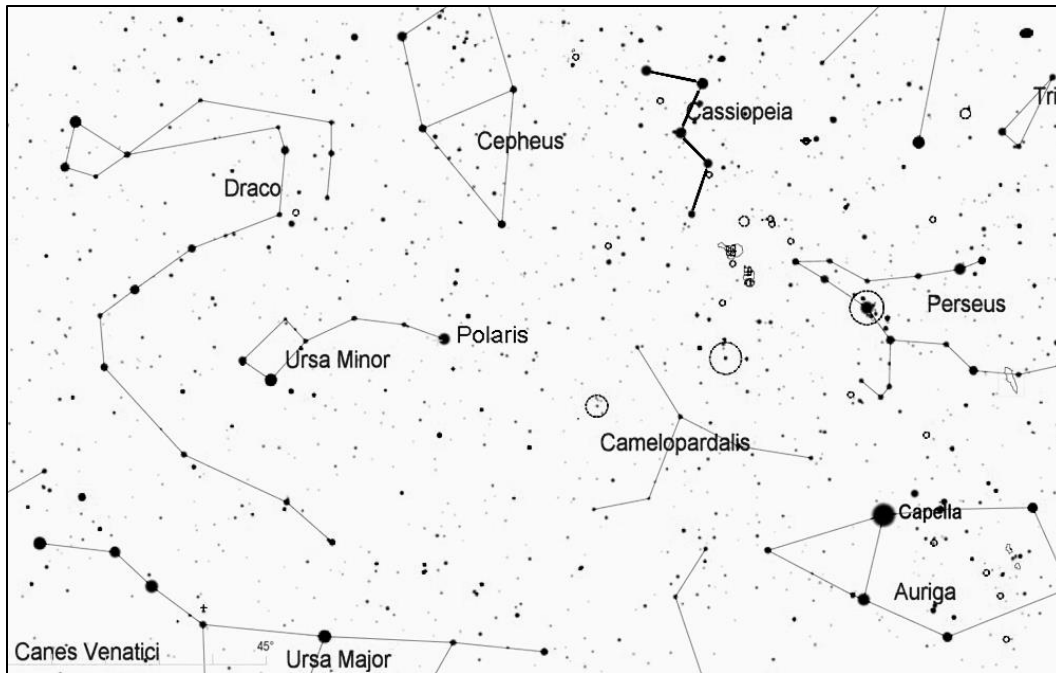


Iota Cassiopeiae (Triple Star) and IC 342 (Caldwell 5) in Camelopardalis

Iota Cassiopeia is a beautiful triple star with components of different colors. The two closest stars are only 2.7" apart, so high magnification is needed to separate them. Across the constellation border in Camelopardalis, IC 342 is a large but dim face-on spiral. The galaxy's central core appears fairly bright, but its tenuous spiral arms have a low surface brightness and are difficult to discern. For a galaxy, it is relatively close at 11 million light years, but the view is obscured by dust from our own galaxy.



Find the constellation Cassiopeia, which can be recognized by its distinctive "W" shape (although its orientation changes at different times of year as it circles the north celestial pole). On fall evenings, look for Cassiopeia in the northeast, where its tilt makes it look like a "3", and in the winter look high in the north above Polaris, where it is oriented like an "M".

Once you have located Cassiopeia, extend the line made by the two stars of the first segment of the "W" about an equal distance away from them and you will arrive at 4th magnitude iota (*i*) Cassiopeiae. Use high magnification to separate the components of this impressive triple star. Then extend the line again, about 1.5 times as far, and you will reach gamma (*γ*) Camelopardalis, a 4th magnitude star with a 5th magnitude star about 1/2 degree to its south. As shown below, make a sharp left turn (toward the 5th magnitude star) and move about 3 degrees south to reach IC 342. Use low power to try to spot the core of this dim galaxy.

