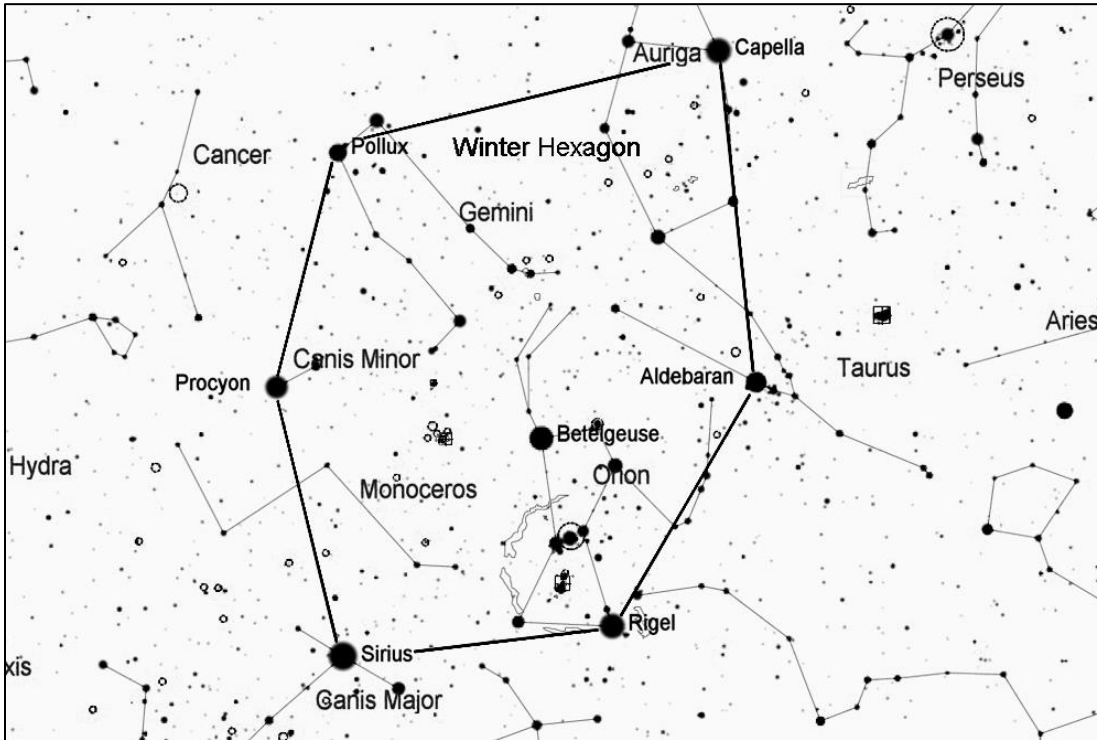


IC 405 (Caldwell 31), the Flaming Star Nebula, and Harrington 4

Harrington 4 is an asterism that is dimly visible to the naked eye and has the shape of a staircase when viewed through binoculars or a wide-field eyepiece. Less than a degree to the northwest is the 6th magnitude star AE Aurigae, which is surrounded by a large but dim nebula, IC 405. Portions of this nebula, especially those near AE, can be seen with even small telescopes, but a nebula filter can make it much easier to see.



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 Capella, the most northerly of the six stars in the Hexagon, and the brightest star in the constellation Auriga.

The brightest stars of Auriga form the shape of a slightly crooked house. Look for the two stars that form the base of this house (Elnath and ι). Use these two stars to form a triangle with the third point inside the house, as shown below. This point is the location of Harrington 4, which should appear as a hazy group of dim stars to the naked eye. Less than a degree to the northwest of this asterism is AE Aurigae and the surrounding nebula IC 405.

