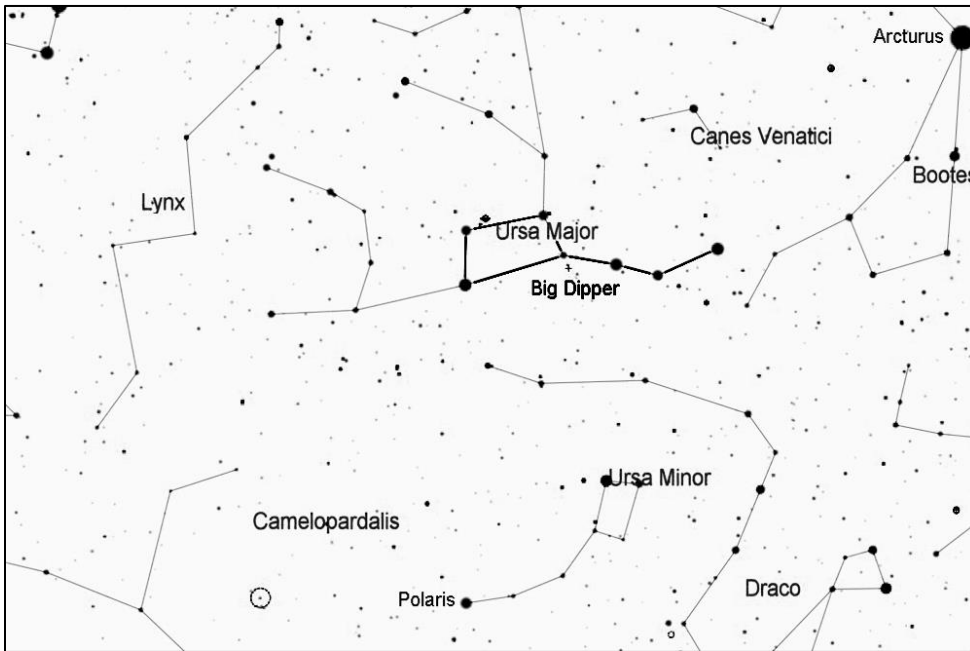


# Melotte 111, the Coma Star Cluster

The Coma Star Cluster is one of the nearest open clusters, just 288 light years away, and it is not hard to see at least a few of its stars with the naked eye on a dark night. It is a group of about 40 stars spread over a 4.5-degree area of sky, and it is a fine target for binoculars.



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.

Start from Alkaid, the star at the end of the Big Dipper's handle, and look about 15 degrees below the curve of the handle for a bright star, Cor Caroli. Follow this line about another 15 degrees and you will arrive at the Melotte 111. If you can't see it with the naked eye, it should be easy to observe with binoculars.

