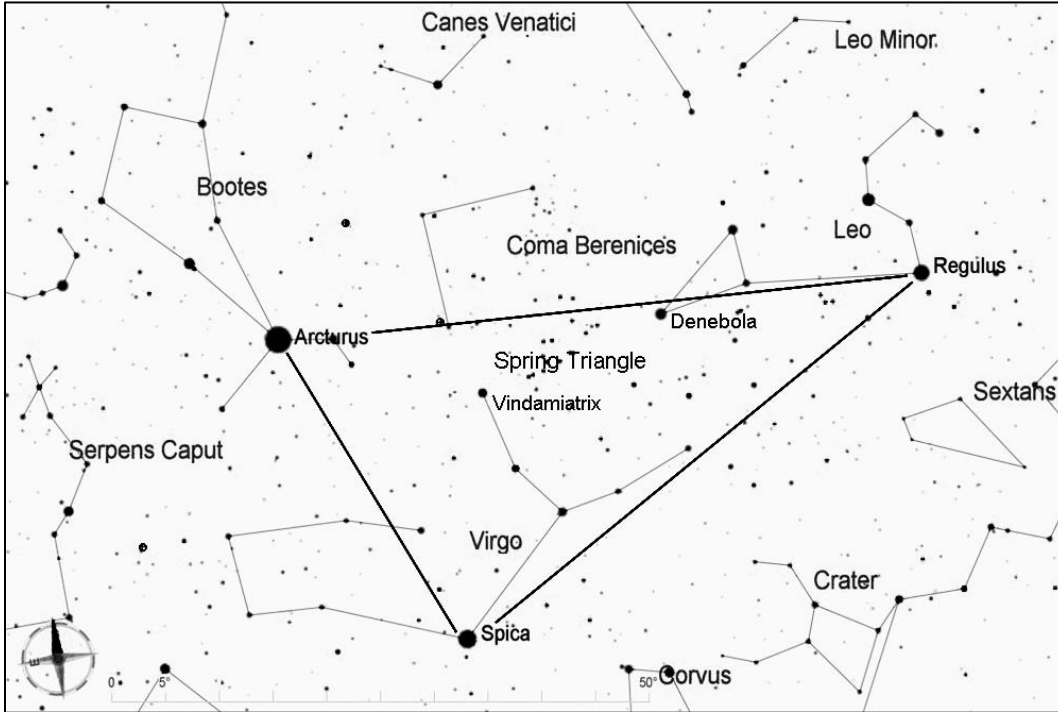


Messier 53, Globular Cluster in Coma Berenices

At an estimated 58,000 light years away, Messier 53 is a fairly distant globular cluster, but it is bright and easy to see. Through large amateur scopes, its stars are well resolved. The cluster is about 220 light years in diameter.



Start by finding the Spring Triangle, which consists of three widely-separated first magnitude stars-- Arcturus, Spica, and Regulus. The Spring Triangle is high in the southeast sky in early spring, and in the southwest sky by mid-Summer. (To get oriented, you can use the handle of the Big Dipper and "follow the arc to Arcturus").

For this star hop, begin from brilliant Arcturus (magnitude 0).

From Arcturus, look 5 degrees to the west to find 2nd magnitude Muphrid, then continue along this line twice that distance, and look for α (alpha) Coma Berenices. Although it is the brightest star in the constellation, α Coma Berenices is only magnitude 4.3, and it may be difficult to see with the naked eye under light polluted skies. Once you have located α , move just 1 degree to the northeast to find M53, which should be easy to spot in any telescope.

