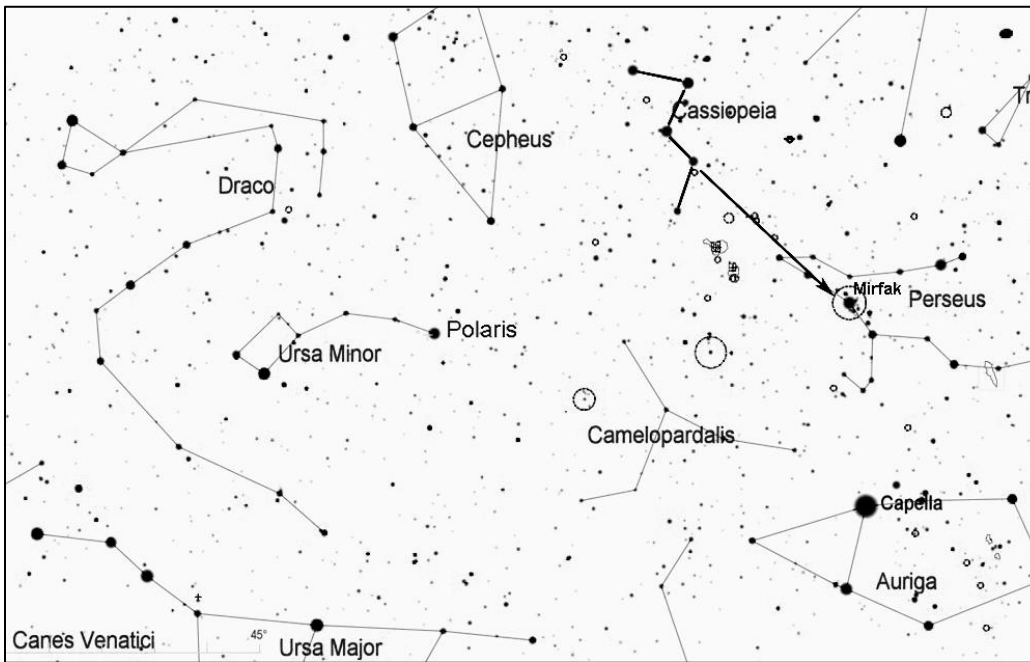


NGC 1245, Open Cluster in Perseus

This is a nice rich open cluster in the center of the constellation Perseus. It contains about 200 stars, many of which can be seen in a typical amateur telescope. It is estimated to be about 1 billion years old, which is several times older than the average open cluster.



Find the constellation Cassiopeia, which has a 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".

As shown here, use the stars of Cassiopeia to direct you to the nearby constellation Perseus, and its brightest star, Mirfak.

The stars of Perseus are fairly bright. The shape I see is some sort of animal with a curved tail. From Mirfak (magnitude 1.8) in the center of Perseus, NGC 1245 is about 3 degrees to the southwest, which is just over half the distance to the star Misam (magnitude 3.8). Aiming at a spot half-way between these two stars should bring you to about the right location.

