## NGC 2362 (Caldwell 64), Tau Canis Majoris Cluster

NGC 2362 is a unique open cluster because in its center is the 4th magnitude Tau Canis Majoris, a star visible to the naked eye and much brighter than any other member of the cluster. Through binoculars, the cluster may look like a haze surrounding Tau. The cluster is about 4800 light years away.



Find the Winter Hexagon, which is composed of six of the brightest stars in the sky---Sirius, Procyon, Pollux, Capella, Aldebaran, and Rigel. On midwinter 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 Sirius, the brightest star in the sky.

Sirius is known as the "dog star," and it forms the neck region of the constellation Canis Major, the big dog. From Sirius, look to the southeast to find  $\delta$  (delta) Canis Majoris, one of the three bright stars that form the back leg and tail of the dog. From  $\delta$ , look about 3 degrees northeast to find 4th magnitude Tau, the bright star in the center of NGC 2362.



Star hop from www.skyledge.net by Jim Mazur. Star charts created with Cartes du Ciel.