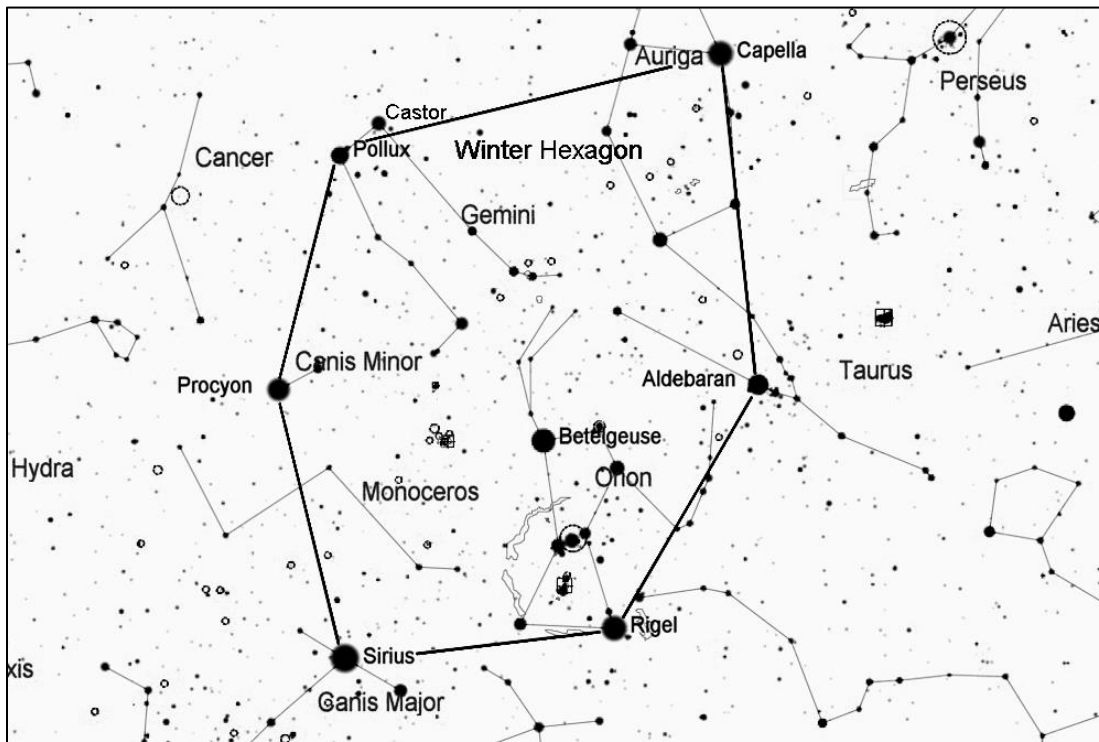


NGC 2392 (Caldwell 39), the Clown Face Nebula in Gemini

At magnitude 9.2, the Clown Face Nebula is a small but bright planetary nebula that resembles a human face surrounded by a round ruffy collar. With telescopes of medium or large aperture, the nebula has a distinct greenish color, and its central star of magnitude 10.5 is easy to see. The nebula is estimated to be nearly 1 light year in diameter and about 4,200 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 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 Pollux in the constellation Gemini.

From Pollux, move about 8 degrees to the southwest to δ (delta) Geminorum, magnitude 3.5. Then look 2 degrees to the east-southeast of δ , as shown below, and with binoculars or a finderscope you should see a small triangle of stars (of magnitudes 5, 6, and 7). Get this triangle centered in the telescope using a low-power eyepiece, then move the scope 2/3 degree to the south and the Clown Face Nebula should come into view.

