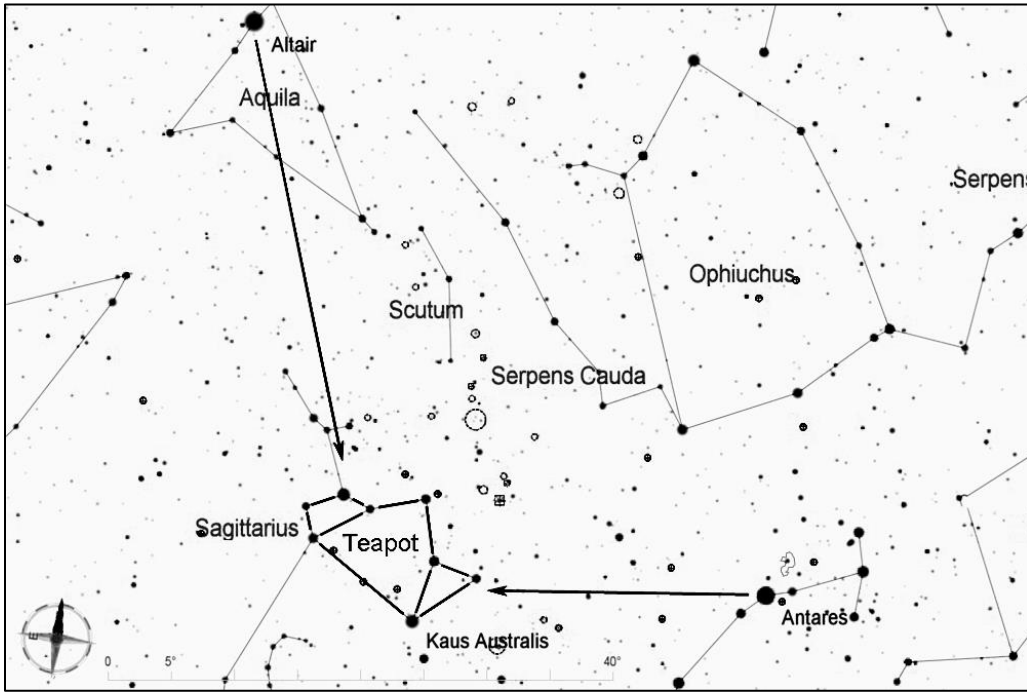


NGC 6822 (Caldwell 57), Barnard's Galaxy in Sagittarius

Barnard's Galaxy is a small irregular galaxy that is a member of the local group of galaxies to which our Milky Way belongs. It has a low surface brightness that makes it a challenge to see, but under dark skies it can be spotted with binoculars or a telescope at low power. It appears as an oval glow, elongated north to south. Its distance is estimated to be about 1.6 million light years, closer than the Andromeda Galaxy.



From mid-summer to early fall, the distinctive teapot shape of Sagittarius can be seen low in the southern sky during the evening. It is about 50 degrees south of Altair (part of the Summer Triangle) and about 30 degrees east of bright red Antares. It is well worth learning to recognize the teapot, for it can guide you to dozens of beautiful deep-sky objects.

From the Sagittarius teapot, look about 10 degrees to the northeast to find the 4-star "teaspoon" asterism, which is not hard to spot if you know where to look for it. Continue to the northeast about the length of the teaspoon to reach NGC 6822. Looking through binoculars or a telescope with a wide-field view, you can spot three 5th magnitude stars that form what I call the "mini-teaspoon"--a triangular shape that mimics the shape and orientation of the teaspoon, but about 10 times smaller. The mini-teaspoon also points in the direction of NGC 6822.

