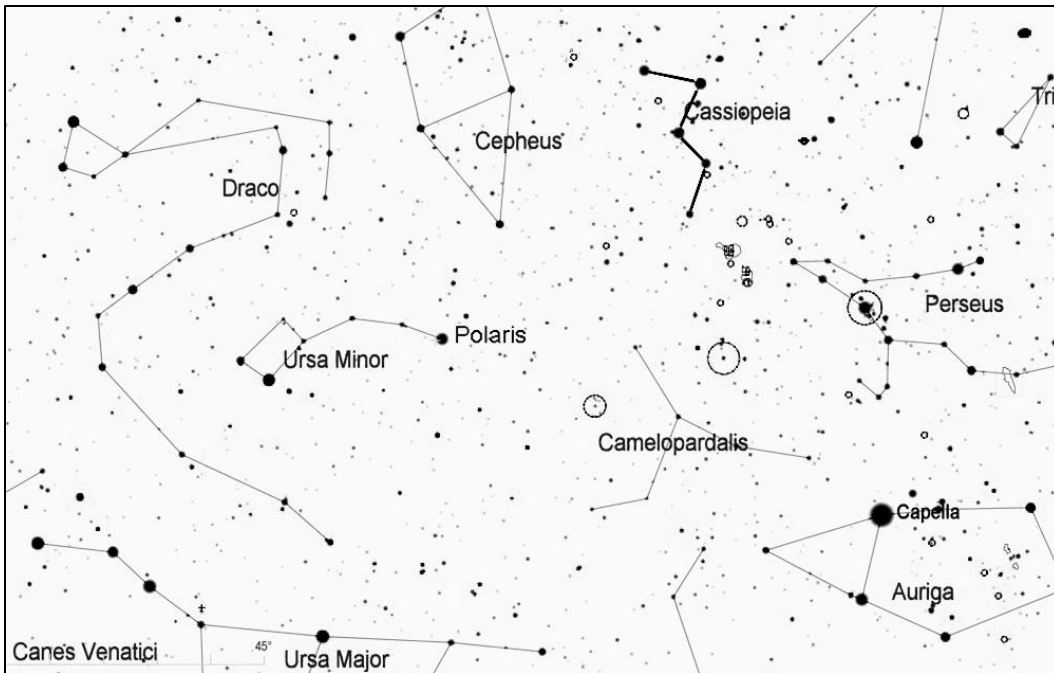


WZ Cassiopeiae, Variable Double Star

WZ Cas is a striking double star with contrasting colors. One component is a red carbon star that varies in magnitude from 6.3 to 8.8 over a period of 373 days. The second component is a blue star of magnitude 8.3. This pair is an optical double--although they look close together from our viewpoint, they are far apart and are not gravitationally connected. Still, they make a beautiful sight and can be resolved in even the smallest telescope.



Find the constellation Cassiopeia, which can be recognized by its 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".

Once you have located Cassiopeia, look at the two stars that form the last line of the W shape (Caph and Schedar). Visualize a line from Schedar to Caph, and then extend this line past Caph by 1.5 degrees with a slight turn to the left (to the northwest) and aim your telescope there. Or you can center your scope on Caph with a low power eyepiece and slowly sweep to the northwest until this colorful pair of stars enters the field.

