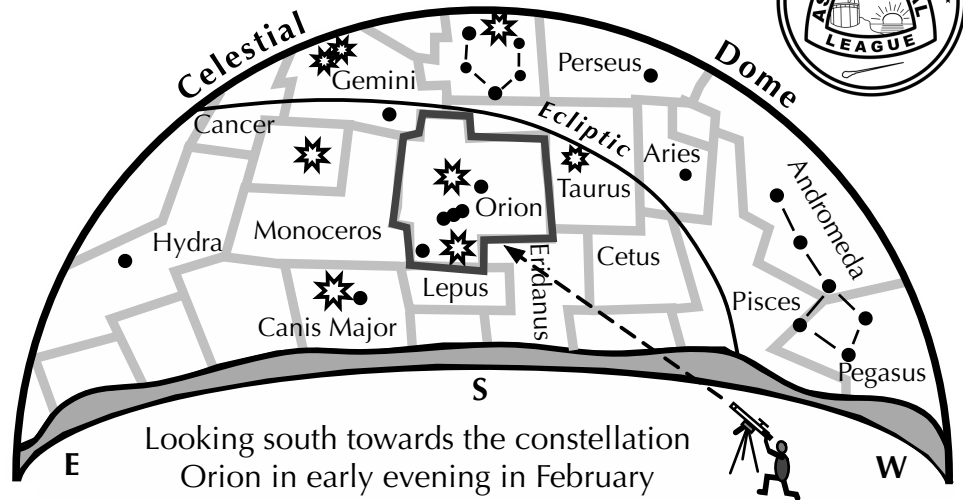


Constellations & Asterisms

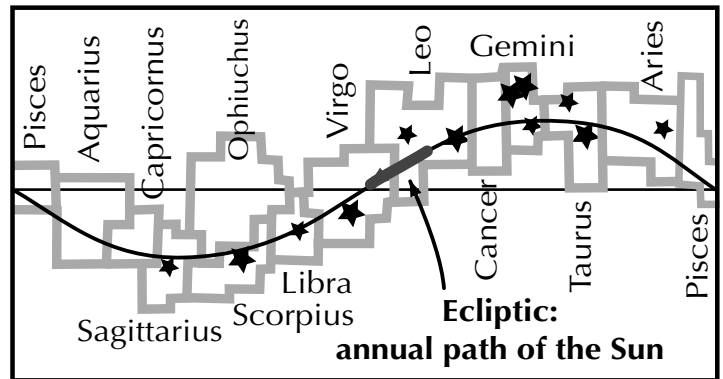


A constellation is an officially recognized section of the celestial sphere that has established boundaries, containing stars, planets, and other astrophysical objects. It is much like a state of the United States which contains many cities of different sizes, rivers, and mountains.

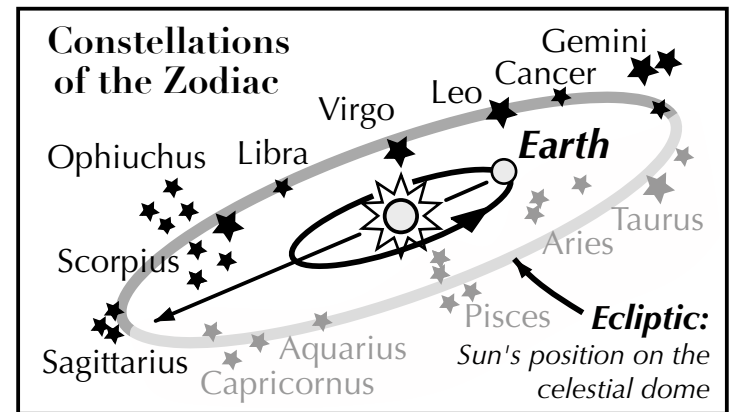


- 88 constellations are officially recognized.
- The Sun appears to travel throughout the year among 13 constellations along the ecliptic.
- Stick figures of most constellations do not closely resemble what they are said to represent.
- Some, but not all constellations contain bright stars. They all contain many dim stars visible to the unaided eye.
- The Moon and planets are found in or near the constellations of the Zodiac.

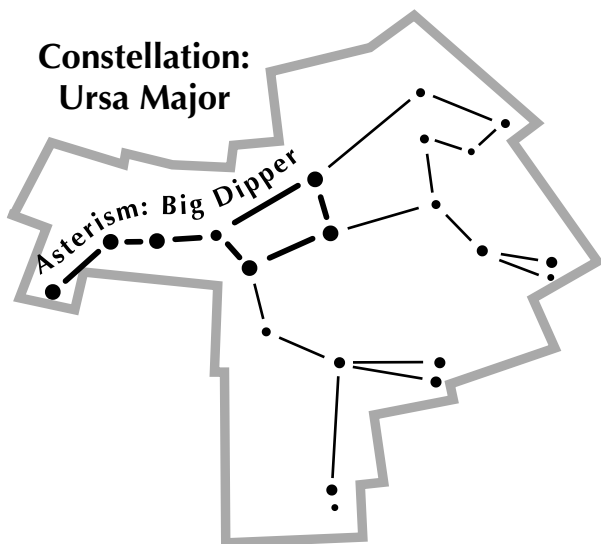
Constellations of the Zodiac



An asterism is an unofficial group of stars contained within one or more constellations. Asterisms range in size from being seen only through a telescope to stretching across appreciable portions of the sky. The Big Dipper, for instance, is an asterism. It lies within Ursa Major, a constellation.



Constellation:
Ursa Major



Asterisms can cover more than a single constellation. The **Summer Triangle** contains stars from Lyra (Vega), Aquila (Altair), and Cygnus (Deneb). Portions of Cygnus form another asterism called the **Northern Cross**.

