

A life-long friend in the sky ...

Hop below Orion and meet Lepus

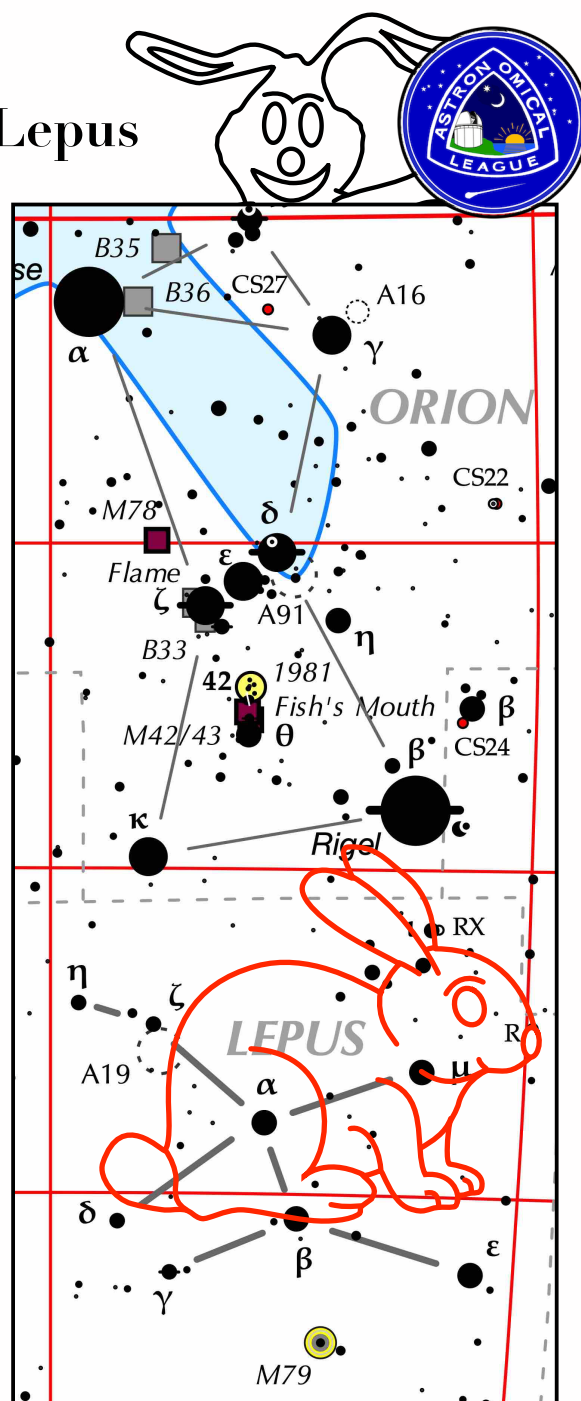
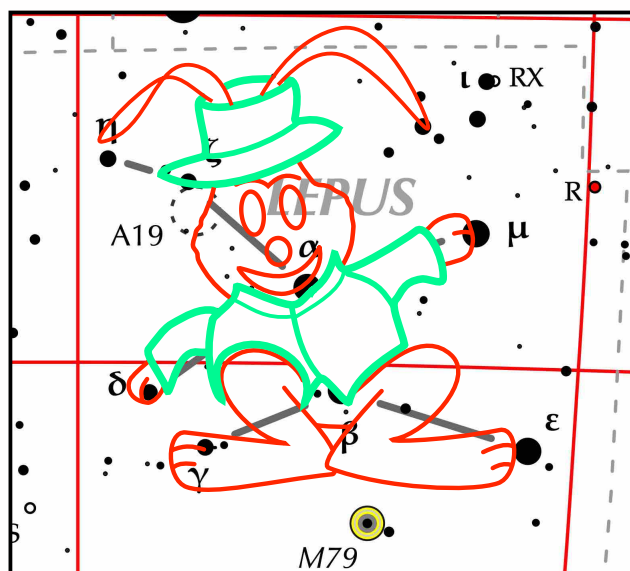
Looking in the south-southwest in the early evening in the second half of March, Orion dominates the area with its bright stars of Rigel and Betelgeuse, its three Belt Stars, and its two corner stars. Plus, it packs the great M42 nebula.

If you want a new constellation friend, one worthy of attention, but has been given little fame, meet ...

Lepus, the Hare.

Its eight primary stars, all of similar brightness, lie directly below mighty Orion. While they don't hop right out at you, they are visible from a dark location on a moonless night.

For telescope users, its two central stars, point south to M79, one of the late winter's globular clusters. Also, Lepus is the home of two interesting variable stars, viewable through binoculars: RX Leporis, and R Leporis (also known as Hind's Crimson Star). But be aware, when R Lep drops to its minimum brightness, it will have disappeared in binoculars.



The traditional representation of the constellation is that of rabbit, which, admittedly, can be hard to discern. Other observers this time of year are more inclined to spot "St Pat's Bunny." Whatever your preference, make time to meet Lepus. Like a true friend, it will be there for you, every year.

