

While we don't normally look at bright stars through a telescope, here is an occasion when you should ...



## A Springtime Observing Activity



# Hats off to Picot 1!

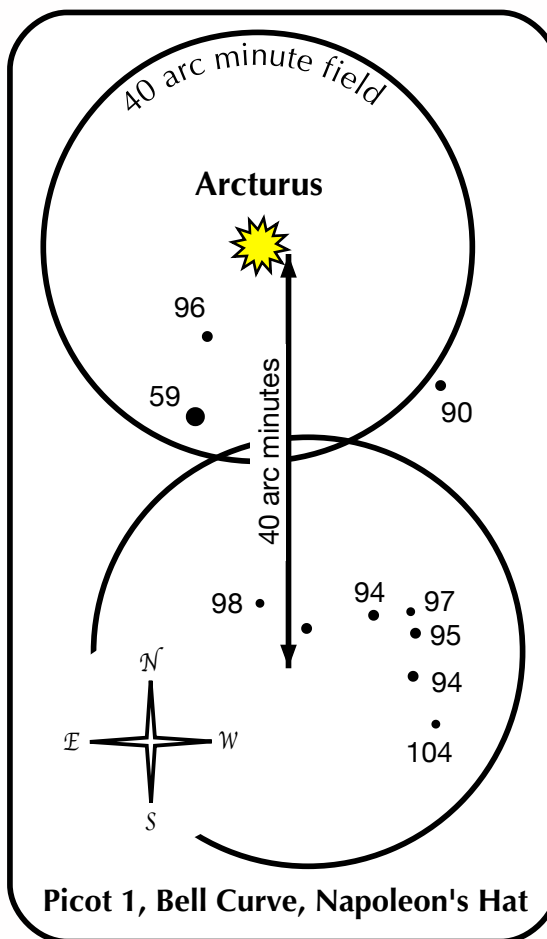
About 40 minutes south of the dazzling Arcturus lies a little asterism, first recognized by the French astronomer Fulbert Picot. Its seven 9th and 10th magnitude stars resemble the outline of a French Field Marshall's hat, "Napoleon's Hat," to some observers, while a familiar "bell curve" to others.

To find Picot 1, zero in on Arcturus with a low power eyepiece, one that gives a large field of view. Then, scan south less than two fields of view. Bingo, you have it! The unmistakable bell curve should fit nicely in the field.

This asterism is best seen through a telescope. Binocular observers may have difficulty since the stars hover around 10th magnitude, the upper range of 10 x 50 glasses. The glare from Arcturus doesn't help, either.

In the accompanying diagram, a low power eyepiece—perhaps one of 25 mm focal length—gives a conservative field of view of 40 arc minutes. The number next to each star designates its magnitude with the decimal point omitted.

This is not a true cluster of gravitationally related stars, just an interesting line-of-sight grouping. In reality, they are separated by many hundreds of light-years. The nearest lies 8 light-years away, slightly farther than Arcturus' relatively close 37 light-year distance, and the farthest is thought to be nearly 1000 light-years from our little blue world.



If you enjoy this observing activity, look for more in the Astronomical League's Asterism Observing Program!  
<https://www.astroleague.org/content/asterism-observing-program>

