

The chart is oriented for  
 Dec. 1 at 1 a.m. NZDT  
 Dec. 15 at midnight "  
 Jan. 1 at 11 p.m. "  
 Jan. 15 at 10 p.m. "

### Evening sky in January 2014

To use the chart, hold it up to the sky. Turn the chart so the direction you are looking is at the bottom of the chart. If you are looking to the south then have 'South horizon' at the lower edge. As the earth turns the sky appears to rotate clockwise around the south celestial pole (SCP on the chart). Stars rise in the east and set in the west, just like the sun. The sky makes a small extra clockwise or westward rotation from night to night as we orbit the sun.

Jupiter is the 'evening star', appearing in the northeast soon after sunset. Sirius, the brightest true star, is high in the east at dusk. Left of it is Orion, containing 'The Pot', with Taurus and the Pleiades/Matariki star cluster further left toward the north. Canopus, the second brightest star after Sirius, is southeast of the zenith. Crux, the Southern Cross, and the Pointers are low in the south. Venus might be seen setting in the southwest twilight at the beginning of the month. It becomes the morning star in the second half of January. Mercury is low in the southwest twilight at the end of the month.

## The Evening Sky in January 2014

**Jupiter** is the 'evening star', appearing in the northeast soon after sunset. It crosses the northern sky through the night, setting in the northwest around dawn. Its four big moons are easily seen in a telescope looking like stars lined up on either side of the planet. Jupiter is 630 million km away mid-month. At the very beginning of the month **Venus** might be seen setting in the southwest twilight, on the opposite horizon from Jupiter. Venus passes between us and the sun on the 11th and moves into the morning sky. **Mercury** makes a brief evening sky appearance in the second half of the month, setting in the southwest about 50 minutes after the sun.

**Sirius**, the brightest true star, appears high in the east at dusk. Called 'the Dog Star' it marks the head of **Canis Major** the big dog. A group of stars to the right of it make the dog's hindquarters and tail, upside down just now. Sirius is the brightest star in the sky both because it is relatively close, nine light years\* away, and 23 times brighter than the sun. **Procyon**, in the northeast below Sirius, marks the smaller of the two dogs that follow Orion the hunter across the sky.

Left of Sirius as the sky darkens are **Rigel** and **Betelgeuse** the brightest stars in **Orion** the hunter. Between them, but fainter, is a line of three stars making Orion's belt. **Rigel** is a bluish supergiant star, 70 000 times brighter than the sun and much hotter. It is 800 light years away. Orange **Betelgeuse**, below Orion's belt, is a red-giant star, cooler than the sun but hundreds of times bigger: a ball of extremely thin hot gas. To southern hemisphere star watchers, Orion's belt makes the bottom of 'The Pot' or 'The Saucepan'. A faint line of stars above and right of the belt is the pot's handle or Orion's sword. It has a glowing cloud at its centre: the Orion Nebula.

Left of Orion is the V-shaped pattern of stars making the face of **Taurus** the Bull. The V-shaped group is called the Hyades cluster. It is 150 light years away. Orange **Aldebaran**, Arabic for 'the eye of the bull', is not a member of the cluster but on the line of sight, half the cluster's distance.

Left again, toward the north and lower, is the **Pleiades/Matariki/Seven Sisters/ Subaru** star cluster. Pretty to the eye and impressive in binoculars, it is 400 light years from us. The cluster is around 70 million years old. From northern NZ the bright star **Capella** is on the north skyline.

Low in the south are **Crux**, the Southern Cross, and Beta and **Alpha Centauri**, often called 'The Pointers'. Alpha Centauri is the closest naked-eye star, 4.3 light years away. A telescope shows it is a binary star: two stars orbiting each other in 80 years. Beta Centauri, like most of the stars in Crux, is a blue-giant star hundreds of light years away. **Canopus** is also very luminous and distant: 13 000 times brighter than the sun and 300 light years away.

The **Milky Way** is in the eastern sky, brightest in the southeast toward Crux. It can be traced towards the north but becomes faint below Orion. The Milky Way is our edgewise view of the galaxy, the pancake of billions of stars of which the sun is just one. Binoculars show many star clusters and a few glowing gas clouds in the Milky Way, particularly in the Carina region.

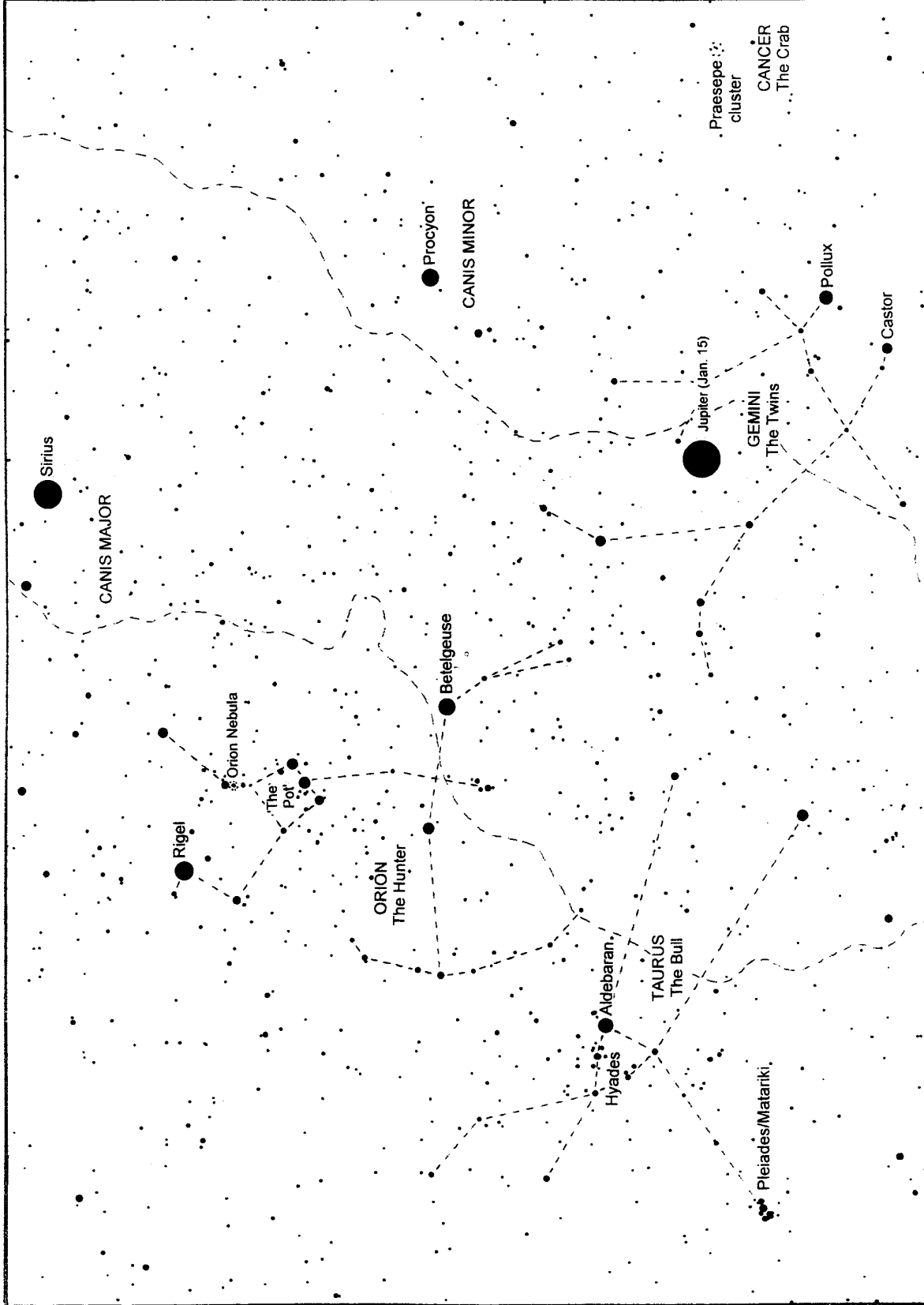
The Clouds of Magellan, **LMC** and **SMC** are high in the southern sky and easily seen by eye on a dark moonless night. They are two small galaxies about 160 000 and 200 000 light years away.

**Mars**, not shown, rises due east around 1:30 a.m. at the beginning of the month. It looks like a bright orange-red star near bluish-white Spica. By the end of the month it is up before midnight; brightening as we catch it up. At mid month it is 180 million km away and small in a telescope.

**Saturn**, not shown, rises due east about 3 a.m. at the beginning of the month; at 1 a.m. by the end. Orange Antares, the Scorpion's heart, is to its right. Saturn is 1540 million km from us mid month.

**Venus**, not shown, is the brilliant morning star in late January. At the end of the month it rises two hours before the sun. It is then 50 million km away; a tall thin crescent in a telescope.

\*A **light year** is the distance that light travels in one year: nearly 10 million million km or  $10^{13}$  km. Sunlight takes eight minutes to get here; moonlight about one second. Sunlight reaches Neptune, the outermost major planet, in four hours. It takes four years to reach the nearest star, Alpha Centauri



**Northeast Evening Sky in January 2014**

The chart shows our northern sky in the evening. The chart may need to be tilted to the left or right to match the sky, depending on the time of night. Interesting objects are described on the other side of this page.

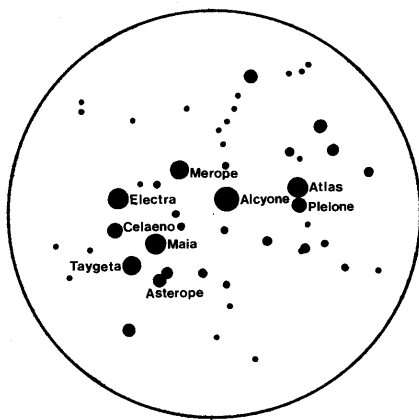
Chart produced by Guide 8 software: [www.projectpluto.com](http://www.projectpluto.com). Labels and text added by Alan Gilmore, Mt John Observatory of the University of Canterbury, P.O. Box 56, Lake Tekapo 8770, New Zealand. [www.canterbury.ac.nz](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz)

## Interesting Objects in Orion and Taurus in January 2014

**Jupiter** is the brightest 'star' in the evening sky. It is low on the northeast skyline at dusk at the beginning of January. It rises four minutes earlier every night, putting it well up the northern evening sky by the end of the month. High up the northeast sky is **Sirius**, the brightest true star.

Left of Sirius are **Taurus** the Bull and **Orion** the Hunter, constellations common to many northern hemisphere cultures. To see the northern hemisphere pictures turn the chart upside down. The face of Taurus is outlined by the V-shaped **Hyades** cluster. **Aldebaran** is the brightest star in the group. Its name is Arabic for 'the eye of the bull'. Taurus's long horns extend down our sky. The **Pleiades** cluster rides on the Bull's back.

**Orion**, in the northern hemisphere view, has a shield raised toward Taurus and a club ready for action. The line of three stars makes **Orion's Belt**. The line of faint stars above and left of the belt form **Orion's Sword** in the northern view, hanging from his belt. To most southern hemisphere sky watchers the belt and sword form **The Pot**, **The Iron Pot**, or **The Saucepan**.



The **Pleiades / Seven Sisters / Matariki / Subaru**, and many other names, is a cluster of stars well known in both hemispheres. Though often called the Seven Sisters, most modern eyes see only six stars. Dozens are visible in binoculars. The cluster is about 400 light years away. Its brightest stars are around 200 times brighter than the sun.

One **light year (l.y.)** is the distance light travels in one year: about 10 million million km or 6 million million miles. Light from the sun reaches us in 8 minutes; from the moon in 1 second. Sunlight takes 4 hours to reach Neptune, the outermost significant planet, and 4 years to reach Alpha Centauri, the nearest star.

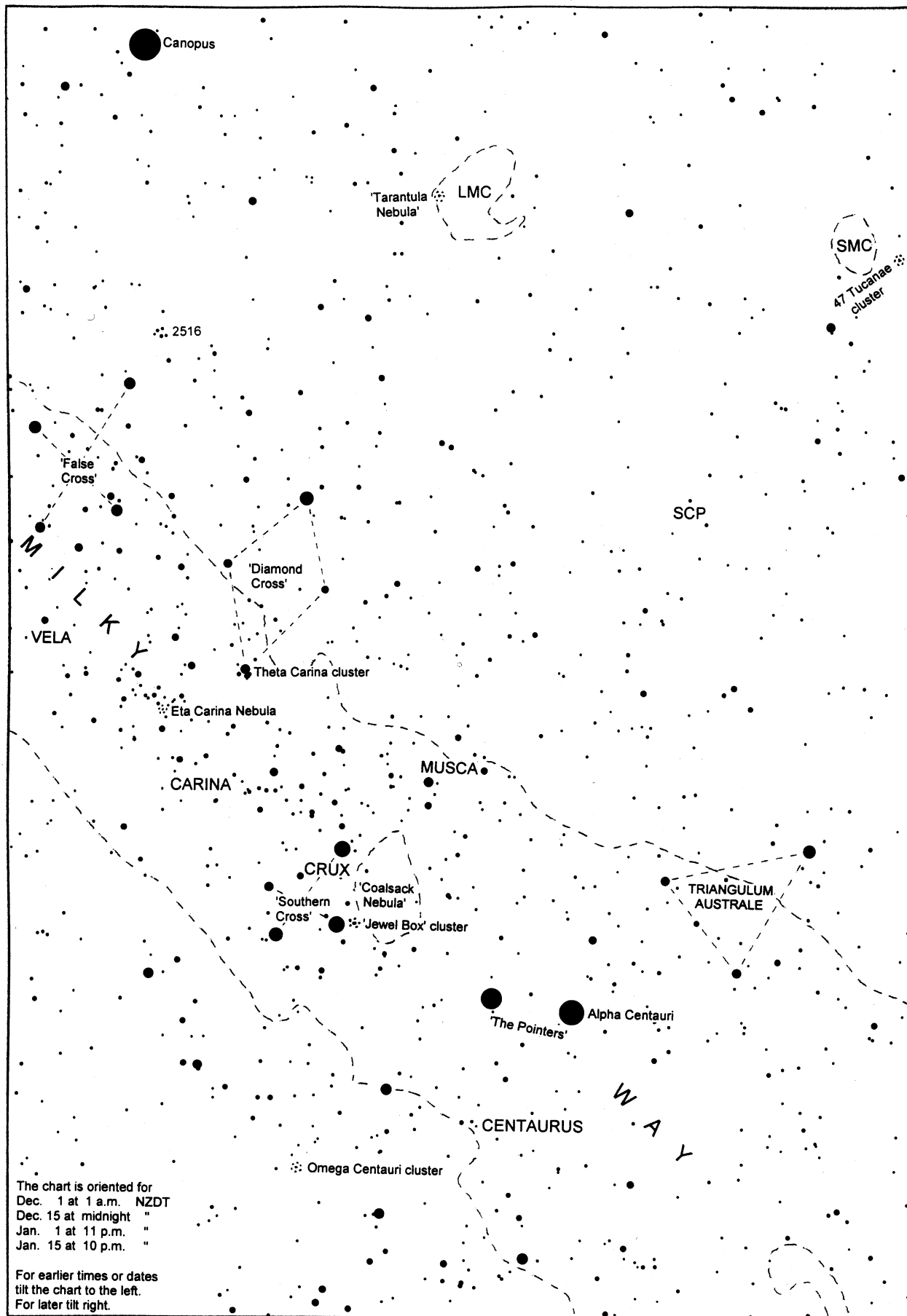
The **Hyades** cluster is 160 light years away. Its brightest stars (not Aldebaran!) are about 70 times brighter than the sun. **Aldebaran** is not a member of the cluster but simply on the line of sight. It is 65 l.y. away and 150 times brighter than the sun. Aldebaran is a giant star about 25 times bigger than the sun though only five times heavier. Its orange colour is due to its temperature, around 3500°C. The sun is 5500°C.



The **Orion Nebula** is visible in binoculars as a misty glow around the middle stars of Orion's Sword or the handle of The Pot. It is a vast cloud of dust and gas about 1300 l.y. away and more than 20 l.y. across. Ultra-violet light from a massive, extremely hot star in the cloud causes it to glow. Some stars in this region are around two million years old. The sun, by contrast, is 4.6 billion years old. Stars continue to form in a giant cloud behind the glowing nebula. There are many bright and dark nebulae in this region. The Horsehead nebula, a favourite of astronomy books, is beside the right-hand star of Orion's Belt, but too faint to be seen in small telescopes.

**Rigel** is a blue 'supergiant' star around 40 000 times brighter than the sun and 800 l.y. away. Its surface temperature is around 20 000°C, giving it a bluish colour. **Betelgeuse** is a red giant star 250 times bigger than the sun -- wider than earth's orbit! -- but only around 20 times heavier; it is mostly very thin gas. It is around 10 000 times brighter than the sun, about 400 l.y. away, and has a surface temperature around 3000°C.

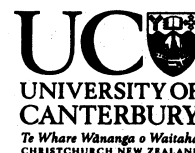
**Sirius** is the brightest star. It is bright because it is 23 times brighter than the sun and a relatively close 8.6 l.y. away. Sirius was often called 'the dog star' being the brightest star in Canis Major, one of the two dogs that follow Orion across the sky.



### Southern Evening Sky in January

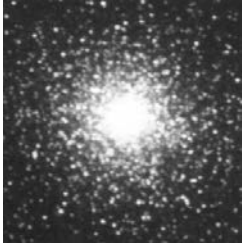
The chart shows the lower southern sky. Interesting star clusters and nebulae are indicated with asterisks. They are described on the other side of this page.

Chart produced by Guide 8 software; [www.projectpluto.com](http://www.projectpluto.com). Labels and text added by Alan Gilmore, Mt John Observatory of the University of Canterbury, P.O. Box 56, Lake Tekapo, 8770, New Zealand. [www.canterbury.ac.nz](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz)



## Interesting Objects in the Southern Sky

**Large & Small Clouds of Magellan (LMC & SMC)** appear as two luminous patches, easily seen by eye in a dark sky. They are two galaxies like the Milky Way but much smaller. Each is made of billions of stars. The Large Cloud contains many clusters of young luminous stars seen as patches of light in binoculars and telescopes. The LMC is about 160 000 light years away and the SMC 200 000 l.y away, both very close by for galaxies. (1 light year is about 10 000 billion km,  $10^{13}$  km.)



**47 Tucanae**, looks like a faint fuzzy star on the edge of the SMC. It is a globular cluster, a ball of millions of stars. A telescope is needed to see a peppering of stars around the edge of the cluster. Though it appears on the edge of the SMC it is one-tenth the distance, 15 000 light years away, and it has no connection to the Small Cloud. Globular clusters are mostly very old, 10 billion years or more; at least twice the age of the sun. **Omega Centauri**, very low in the south, is a similar cluster.



**Tarantula nebula** is a glowing gas cloud in the LMC. The gas glows in the ultra-violet light from a cluster of very hot stars at centre of the nebula. The cloud is about 800 light years across. It is easily seen in binoculars and can be seen by eye on moonless nights.

This nebula is one of the brightest known. If it was as close as the Orion nebula (in The Pot's handle) then it would be as bright as the full moon.

**Canopus** is the second brightest star. It is 14 000 times brighter than the sun and 300 light years away. Sirius, low in the east on spring evenings, is the brightest star in the sky.

**Alpha Centauri**, the brighter Pointer, is the closest naked-eye star, 4.3 light-years away. Alpha Centauri is a binary star: two stars about the same size as the sun orbiting around each other in 80 years. A telescope that magnifies 50x splits the pair. (A very faint and slightly closer star, Proxima Centauri, orbits a quarter of a light-year, or 15 000 Sun-earth distances, from the Alpha pair.)

**Coalsack nebula** is a cloud of dust and gas about 600 light years away, dimming the more distant stars in the Milky Way. Many similar 'dark nebulae' can be seen, appearing as slots and holes in the Milky Way. These clouds of dust and gas eventually coalesce into clusters of stars.

**The Jewel Box** is a compact cluster of young luminous stars about 7000 light years away. The cluster formed about 16 million years ago. To the eye it looks like a faint star.



**Eta Carinae nebula** is a glowing gas cloud about 8000 light years away. The golden star in the cloud, visible in binoculars, is Eta Carinae. (Eta is the Greek 'e'.) It is estimated to be to be 80 times heavier than the sun and four million times brighter but is dimmed by dust clouds around it. It is expected to explode as a supernova any time in the next few thousand years.

Many star clusters are found in this part of the sky.

The **Theta Carina Cluster** at one point of the 'Diamond Cross'. It is also known as the 'Five of Diamonds' cluster, the reason obvious when it is seen in a telescope. A newish name is 'Southern Pleiades', though this cluster is much fainter and smaller than the real Pleiades in Taurus. The cluster is about 500 light years away and is around 30 million years old.

NGC **2516**, above the Diamond Cross, looks like a faint comet without a tail. It is a star cluster nicely seen in binoculars. It is 1300 light years away and around 110 million years old.