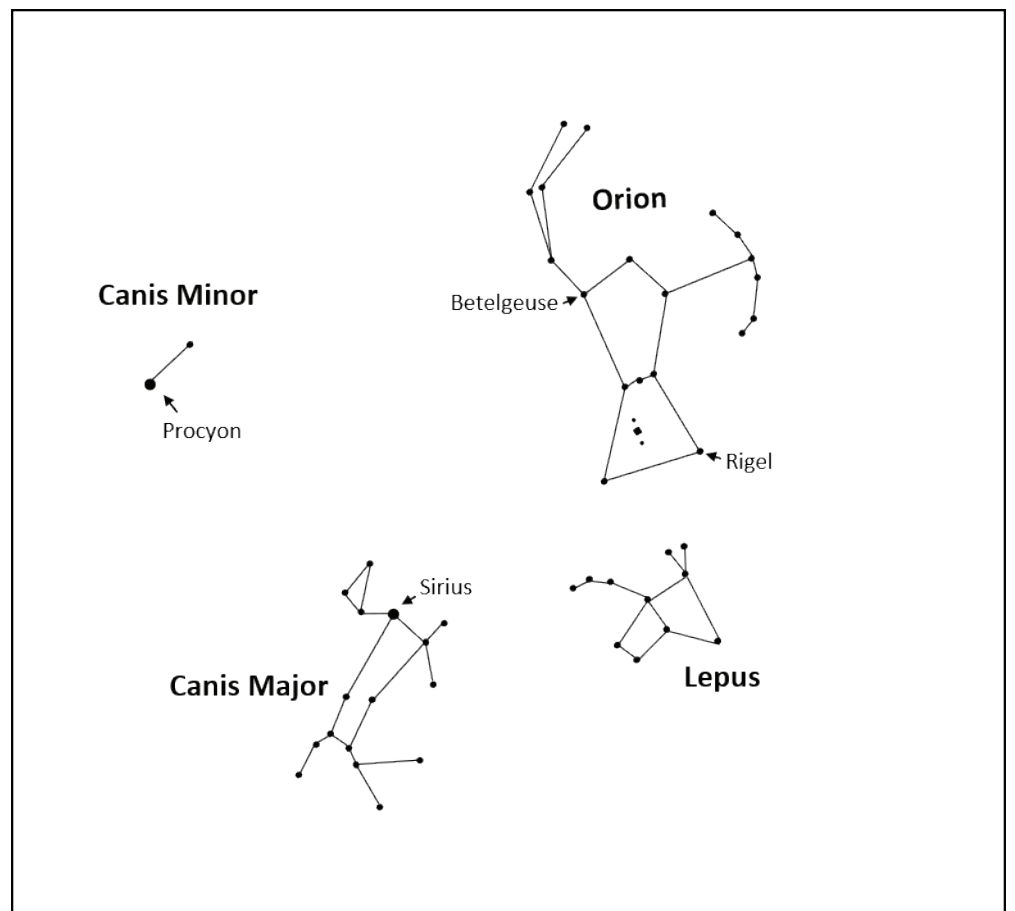


WHAT'S UP?

Hello. Moving ahead with our tour of the constellations, in this installment we'll look at three of Orion's companions in the sky. Our friend, Brendan Smith, again contributed some of the sky lore you'll read here. But before we leave Orion, I have a couple of other things to share with you about this group of stars. Last time, we told you of some of the Greek mythology about Orion. The fact is, that this pattern of stars is recognized and grouped together by other cultures as well. The Aztecs envisioned the stars of Orion's belt and sword as *Mamalhuaztli*, the New Fire. It represented wood sticks used to light a ceremonial fire every 52 years. The Lakota people of what is now north-central United States and Canada, see a hand among these stars. Starting from Betelgeuse, five lines run towards the south and end at different stars representing the fingertips. In Inuit star lore, the three stars of the belt are seen as *The Runners* and Betelgeuse and Bellatrix are the *Two Placed Far Apart*. Sky lore in China divided the sky into 31 regions. There are three enclosures and twenty-eight mansions. Together, they comprise close to three hundred *asterisms*. Asterisms are groupings of stars. In our mapping of the sky using constellations, all constellations are asterism, but not all asterisms are constellations. Two asterisms we've talked about in these pages are the Big Dipper (in the constellation Ursa Major) and the Summer Triangle (composed of stars from three different constellations). In one legend, the stars we call Orion's Belt, are *Shen* or *Shichen* (Three Stars). Shichen was the son of an emperor. Always fighting with his older brother, *Ebo*, the two were moved into different parts of the sky. The result was that Ebo was moved to the Heart Mansion where the Shang star is located. Shang is none other than the star that we call Antares! If you remember from last time, Antares is in Scorpius, which represents the scorpion that killed Orion! I would love to spend more time (and I will!) learning these stories and asterisms from Chinese culture.

At Orion's side and feet are his trusted hunting dogs. Below and to the east of the stars of Orion, we can find *Canis Major* (the Great Dog). The brightest star in our sky, *Sirius*, is found here. Sirius is called The Dog Star, and now you know why! Also, ever heard of the Dog Days of Summer? They are called that because in the summer, Sirius rises just before the Sun, starting our days. In Greek mythology, the constellation represented the dog Laelaps, a gift from Zeus to Europa. The dog was famous for being the fastest in the world. To Orion's left as we look in the sky, is *Canis Minor* (the Lesser Dog). The bright star *Procyon* marks this constellation. *Canis Minor* was sometimes associated with the Teumessian Fox, the beast that could not be outrun. Zeus turned the fox to stone along with its hunter, the dog Laelaps. *Canis Minor* is usually depicted on charts as a small dog standing on the back of *Monoceros*, the unicorn. Rounding out this menagerie is the prey of the Hunter and his dogs – *Lepus*, the Hare. *Lepus* is found under Orion's feet, hotly pursued by *Canis Major*.



You can reach me at astroblog@comcast.net with any questions and comments you have. This is *What's Up?* Installment #38.

Until next time, Keep looking up!

Barry