

The Ursa Major Family

1. The constellation [Ursa Major](#) (Great Bear) is certainly one of the most famous constellations; it includes the familiar [asterism](#) *Big Dipper* (the British call it the *Plow, the Wain or the Wagon*; in German it is known as the "*Große Wagen*"). Ursa Major is an excellent starting point to explore the night sky.
 2. The group of stars, which form the [Ursa Minor](#), the Little Bear is often called Little Dipper for its form strongly reminds one on an old-fashioned cream ladle or gravy spoon.
 3. One of the very few constellations, who really resembles the figure it was named after, is [Draco](#), the dragon.
 4. The constellation of the [Canes Venatici](#), the Hunting Dogs, consists of two bright stars. A modern view is, that these two "dogs" are hunting the Great Bear.
 5. The Bear Driver [Boötes](#) is sometimes called the Herdsman. It lies south and east of the Great Bear.
 6. The constellation [Coma Berenice](#) has its name after the beautiful Egyptian Queen Berenice, i.e. after the shorn locks.
 7. A wonderful circlet is being formed by [Corona Borealis](#), lying between Boötes and Hercules.
 8. In a region where stars are few the constellation of [Camelopardalis](#) (the Giraffe) can be found.
 9. [Lynx](#) (the Lynx), likewise in a barren region, forms a sort of fence in front of the Great Bear.
 10. North of the constellation *Leo* lies the [Leo Minor](#), the Smaller Lion.
- The last three constellations are modern astronomical images providing identification for a few fainter stars unattached to the older groups.

The Zodiacal Family

11. Looking like the king of beasts is the constellation of [Leo](#), the Lion; it forms an arched mane.
12. South of *Coma Berenice* lies the group forming [Virgo](#), the Virgin.
13. The stars of [Libra](#), the Scale, remind of the claws of an old scale.
14. On the edge of the Milky Way there can be the realistic form of the [Scorpius](#), the Scorpion, be found.
15. [Sagittarius](#), the Archer, represents a Centaur holding a bow.
16. [Capricorn](#), The Goat,
17. [Aquarius](#), the Water Carrier, and
18. [Pisces](#), the Fishes, occupy a region of the sky which is largely devoted to water creatures of the sea.
19. According to Greek mythology an expedition of the Argonauts went out to get the golden fleece of the [Aries](#), the Ram.
20. With its long curved horns and its bright red eye (the star Aldebaran) the constellation of [Taurus](#), the Bull, is most impressive in the sky. The Bull moves continuously away from the advancing Hunter *Orion*.
21. The Twins [Gemini](#) are again a reference to the Greek mythology. The both leading stars are named Castor and Pollux after the twin sons of Zeus.
22. The constellation [Cancer](#), the Crab, is not only part of the Zodiacal Family but as well associated with the [Hercules Family](#).

The Perseus Family

23. The heavenly W, the constellation [Cassiopeia](#) (sometimes called "*The Lady of the Chair*") is one of those constellations which can be easily found in the northern sky. In the latitude of Central Europe it appears nearly in the zenith.
24. [Cepheus](#), the royal consort of Cassiopeia, lies to the north and west of the Lady.
25. [Andromeda](#)
26. The body of [Perseus](#) extends approximately parallel to the Milky Way.
27. Pegasus (see *Eridanus*).
28. Like the *Cancer* the Whale [Cetus](#) does not only belong to just one family. It also belongs to the family "[Heavenly Waters](#)".
29. The Charioteer [Auriga](#).
30. An inconspicuous modern group is that of the Lizard [Lacerta](#). It's lying between *Cepheus* on the north and *Pegasus* on the south.
31. Some nice star fields can be found in the constellation [Triangulum](#), the Triangle.

The Hercules Family

32. Named after the mythological figure the constellation [Hercules](#) shows the strongest man kneeling on the head of *Draco* holding a bow in the hand.
33. The Arrow [Sagitta](#) flies from this bow in the direction of *Aquila, Lyra and Cygnus*.
34. The Eagle [Aquila](#).
35. [Lyra](#), the Lyre, has a distinctive geometrical form consisting of a parallelogram and an equilateral triangle.
36. The constellation [Cygnus](#), the Swan, is also known as the "Northern Cross".
37. South of the Swan lies [Vulpecula](#), the Fox.
38. One of the largest constellations is [Hydra](#), the Sea Serpent.
39. The modern group [Sextans](#), the Sextant.
40. The Cup (of Bacchus ?) [Crater](#) and
41. the Crow [Corvus](#) are located between the Sea Serpent and the zodiacal groups *Lion* and *Virgin*.
42. The Serpent Holder [Ophiuchus](#) is busily struggling with the
43. [Serpens](#), the Serpent.
44. [Scutum](#), the Shield, together with *Sagittarius* and *Centaurus* are spectacular to view.
45. Another creature of the legends about Hercules is the [Centaurus](#).
46. The group of stars forming the [Lupus](#), the Wolf, seems to have undergone several transformations in history.
47. The Southern Crown [Corona Australis](#).

48. The Altar [Ara](#) and
49. the Southern Triangle [Triangulum Australe](#) lie on the southern fringe of the Milky Way.
50. One of the most conspicuous constellations of the southern hemisphere is built from the 4 bright Magnitude stars forming the famous Southern Cross [Crux](#).

The Orion Family

51. Followed by his two dogs the giant [Orion](#) is struggling against the Bull. Orion is certainly one of the most striking figures in the sky.
52. The Larger Dog [Canis Major](#).
53. The Smaller Dog [Canis Minor](#).
54. Behind Orion there comes the Unicorn, [Monoceros](#) galloping towards him.
55. Located beneath Orion is the small constellation of the Hare, [Lepus](#)

The Heavenly Waters

56. The Dolphin [Delphinus](#) and
57. [Equuleus](#), the Little Horse, are lying between Pegasus and Aquila.
58. Near the star *Rigel (beta Ori)* the river [Eridanus](#) is flowing toward the bright star Archenar (*alpha Eri*).
59. [Pisces Austrinus](#), the Southern Fish.
The great ship Argo has been divided into the following four constellations:
60. [Carina](#), the Keel.
61. [Puppis](#), the Stern
62. [Vela](#), the Sails
63. [Pyxis](#), the Mariner's Compass.
64. Near the stern of the ship flies the Dove [Columba](#).

The Bayer Group

The following constellations got their name from the astronomer Johann Bayer (*early 17th century*). He followed the tradition and gave them names related to sea creatures:

65. [Hydrus](#), the Water Snake.
66. [Dorado](#), the Goldfish.
67. [Volans](#), the Flying Fish.
68. [Apus](#), the Bird of Paradise.
69. [Pavo](#), the Peacock.
70. [Grus](#), the Crane, lying south of the Southern Fish.
71. [Phoenix](#), the Phoenix.
72. [Tucana](#), the Toucan.
73. [Indus](#), the Indian.
74. South of the Keel lies the [Chamaeleon](#), the Chameleon - extending its tongue to the neighboring minor constellations.
75. [Musca](#), the Fly. Originally Bayer had designed it as a bee and it was changed some when later.

The La Caille Family

In order to fill the star poor regions between the Bayer Group and the other families the astronomer La Caille conceived the following 13 constellations. He broke with the tradition and gave them scientific names (*with one exception: Mensa*):

76. [Norma](#), the Level.
77. [Circinus](#), the Compasses
78. [Telescopium](#), the Telescope.
79. [Microscope](#), the Microscope.
80. [Sculptor](#), the Sculptor's Apparatus.
81. [Fornax](#), the Furnace.
82. [Caelum](#), the Graving Tool.
83. [Horologium](#), the Clock.
84. [Octans](#), the Octant.
85. [Mensa](#), the Table Mountain (the Table Mountain at Capetown was the site of La Caille's observatory)
86. [Reticulum](#), the Net.
87. [Pictor](#), the Easel.
88. [Antlia](#), the Air Pump.