

# [Eridanus Optics CC](#)

## January 2006

### Orion

The Great Orion Nebula (M42) is the most celebrated deep sky object in the night sky. Unlike the case with other constellations, several stars of Orion are related - they are a product of a giant interstellar cloud that is still active today.

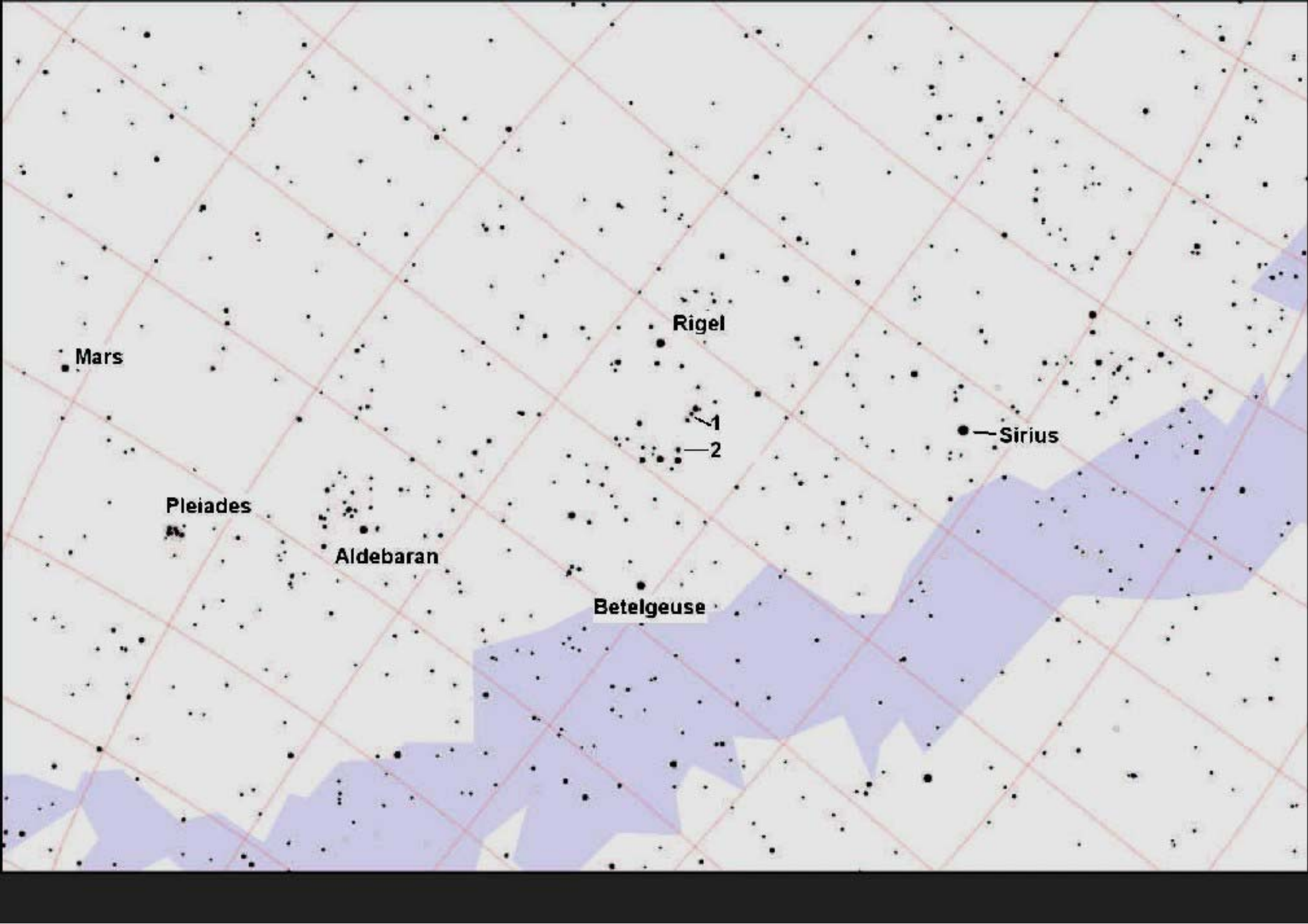
In addition to the nebula, it is also a good idea to view a second object in Orion, viz Sigma Orionis, a binary/multiple star.

Orion will be well above the Eastern horizon at dusk. Even complete novices should be able to recognise it since several stars can be seen at dusk. The attached map shows Rigel (7<sup>th</sup> brightest star in the sky) and Betelgeuse (10<sup>th</sup> brightest). About halfway between them are three bright stars (the belt of Orion). Close to them in the direction of Rigel (foot of Orion) are three more stars, the sword of Orion. The middle 'star' of the sword is the 'Great Orion Nebula'. Even my 8x21 binocular in lightpolluted skies shows it as a hazy or cloudy patch. This is a collection of gas particles, illuminated by the light from the stars in the area. Telescopes will show these as individual stars. The 'Great Orion Nebula' is marked '1' on the map attached.

Another target to look out for is Sigma Orionis. This is the star marked '2'. This is but one of several double (binary) stars of Orion. Small telescopes should split this pair, while larger telescopes (6" and up) may show four stars.

For your benefit, I've also labeled Sirius (Canis Major - brightest star in the sky), Albedaran (Taurus - 14<sup>th</sup> brightest), the Pleiades and Mars on the map. Note however that the position of Mars changes and that the given position is valid around January 16. The changing position of the planets earned them the title 'wanderers', which is the source of the name 'Planet'.

It is advisable to hunt these targets down in the early evening. Later in the evening, Orion will be overhead, making viewing difficult.



Mars

Pleiades

Aldebaran

Betelgeuse

Rigel

Sirius

1

2