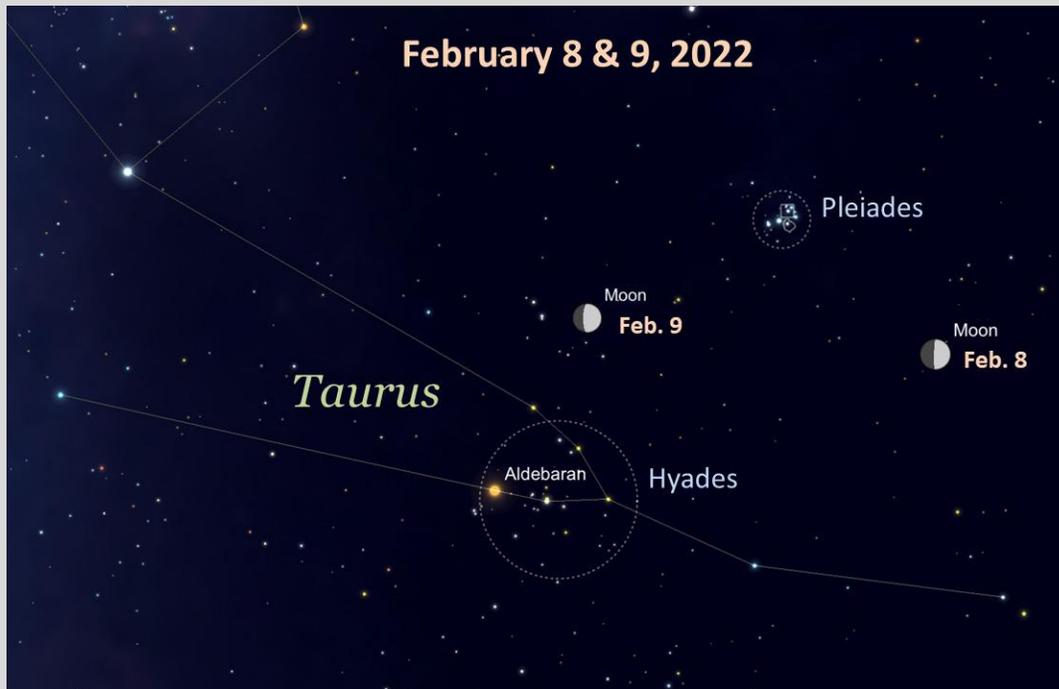


The Moon Passes Between 2 Star Clusters

- a February 2022 Sky Event from the [Astronomy Club of Asheville](#)

On the nights of **February 8 & 9**, watch the waxing gibbous Moon pass between two bright, open star clusters in the zodiac constellation Taurus. The *ecliptic* (the path the Sun, the Moon, and the planets follow across the sky) is located nearby these open (or galactic) star clusters, **the Pleiades and the Hyades**.



Use binoculars, to not only observe the Moon in more detail, but also to catch a more spectacular view of the many stars in the two clusters.

These are two of the closest open star clusters, with the Hyades at 152 light years away and the Pleiades at 440 lights years. The red giant star Aldebaran is the brightest star in the constellation Taurus, but it is not a member of the Hyades cluster. Located much closer to us at a distance of 66 light years, it is a foreground star. The Pleiades is the younger of the two clusters at an estimated age of 20 million years, while the Hyades is about 625 million years old.

In mythology the Pleiades (aka “the seven sisters”) and the Hyades are half-sisters, with a common father – the Titan Atlas (the one who supported the Earth on his shoulders).

The Pleiades, the most prominent and well-known star cluster in our skies, is often mistaken for the “little dipper”. Find out more about the Pleiades below and on the next page.

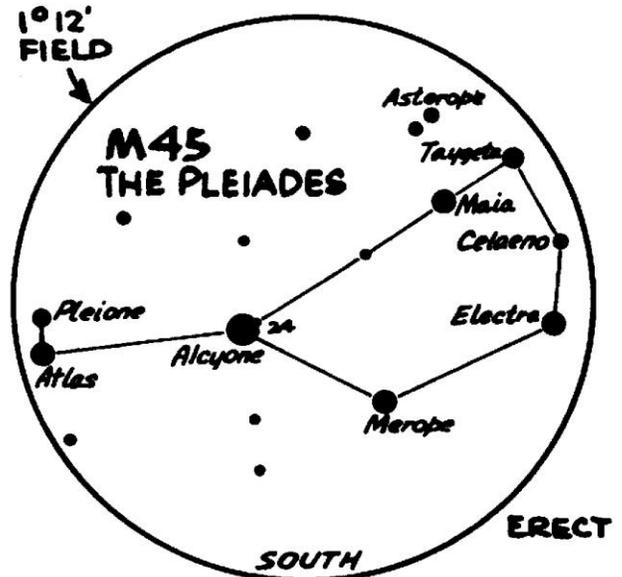


The Pleiades or Seven Sisters

The Pleiades: one of the closest open (or galactic) star clusters

- 440 light years away
- 35 light years across
- 20 million years old (very young!)
- Pleiades star Alcyone is 1,000 times more luminous than our Sun

>The numbers, to the right of the star names, represent their visual magnitudes. The lower the number, the brighter the star appears. Alcyone is the brightest Pleiad, and Asterope is the faintest.



THE PLEIADES - WELL-KNOWN OPEN CLUSTER MAKES A PRETTY PICTURE at 50x

THE PLEIADES (PLEE-uh-deez)		
SEVEN SISTERS	ALCYONE...al-SIGH-oh-nee	3.0
	ASTEROPE...as-TAIR-oh-pee	5.9
	CELAENO...seh-LEE-noe	5.4
	ELECTRA...eh-LEK-tra	3.8
	MAIA.....MY-uh	4.0
	MEROPE...MARE-oh-pee	4.3
	TAYGETA...tah-W-ah-tah	4.4
	PLEIONE...plee-OH-nee	5.1
	ATLAS.....AT-Lus	3.8
PLEIONE IS MAMA AND ATLAS IS PAPA. STAR #24 (MAG 8) MAKES A WIDE DOUBLE WITH ALCYONE AT 117 SECONDS		