



At Mag -1.5, almost everyone knows that **Sirius** is the brightest star in the night sky. You may notice it driving home from work: visible from early dusk, it sparkles brilliantly above the southern horizon. What many people don't realize is that Sirius is actually a double star. **Sirius B** is a challenging target, just 5" from Sirius and quite dim at Mag 8.5. It requires excellent optics but, if you can nail it, it's surely a feather in your cap. A little to the west of Sirius is a three star asterism, with the central star, **V1**, being an easy, pretty double separated by 17". Mag 1.5 **Adhara** has a Mag 7.5 double just 7.5" due south. Adhara is a main sequence star that shines 9,000 times as brightly as our own sun. Good thing it's 432 lightyears away.

M41 (also known as the Little Beehive) is a fine open cluster lying about 2,000 lightyears from the back of your eyeball. It has about 25 bright stars spattered across a field about the size of a full moon; in reality, they're spread over an area 20 lightyears in width. Bright enough to be sometimes visible to the naked eye (Aristotle is said to have noticed it around 325 B.C.) M41 is a good target for binos or low magnification in your scope. **M46** and **M47** are two open clusters just over 1° apart, making comparison very easy. Both are about 20 million years old but they're not connected in any way: M46 hangs in space about 5,000 lightyears distant, while M47 is closer at 1,700 lightyears. Of special interest is the planetary nebula that seems to be embedded near M46's center. Although the nebula is probably not actually part of the cluster (it simply lies along the same line of sight), it makes for a good opportunity to see two different types of deep sky object at the same time. In larger scopes, **NGC 2360** (a.k.a. Caldwell 58) is a pleasing open cluster almost half way between M46 and Sirius. **M93**, the winter Butterfly Cluster, is a rich 6th Mag open cluster with about 80 visible stars. Its core resembles an arrowhead. While you're in the area take a look at **k Puppis**, a nice bright double. **NGC 2362**, the Mexican Jumping Star (a.k.a. Caldwell 64), and **NGC 2354** are another pair of closely placed open clusters worth comparing.