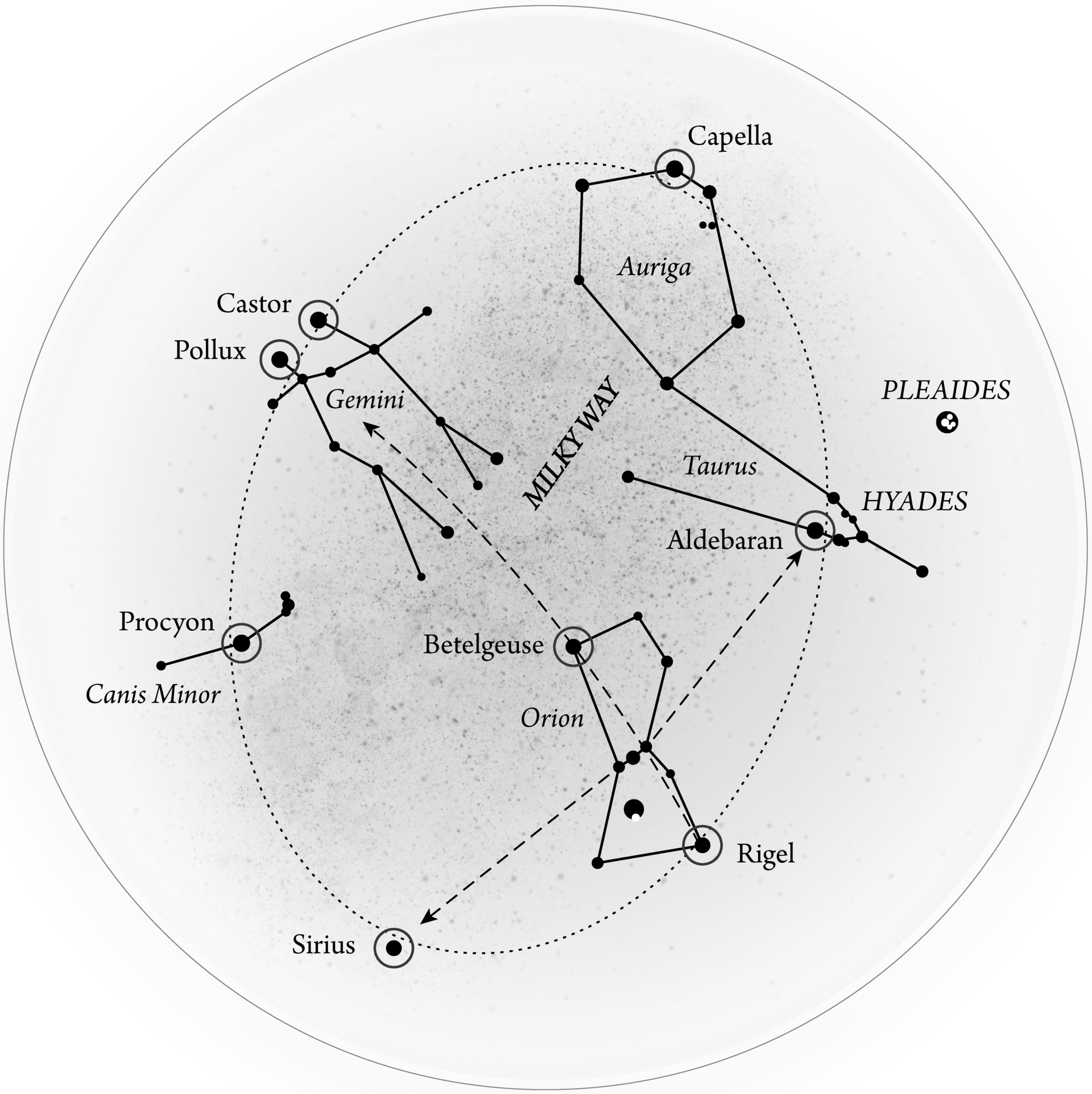
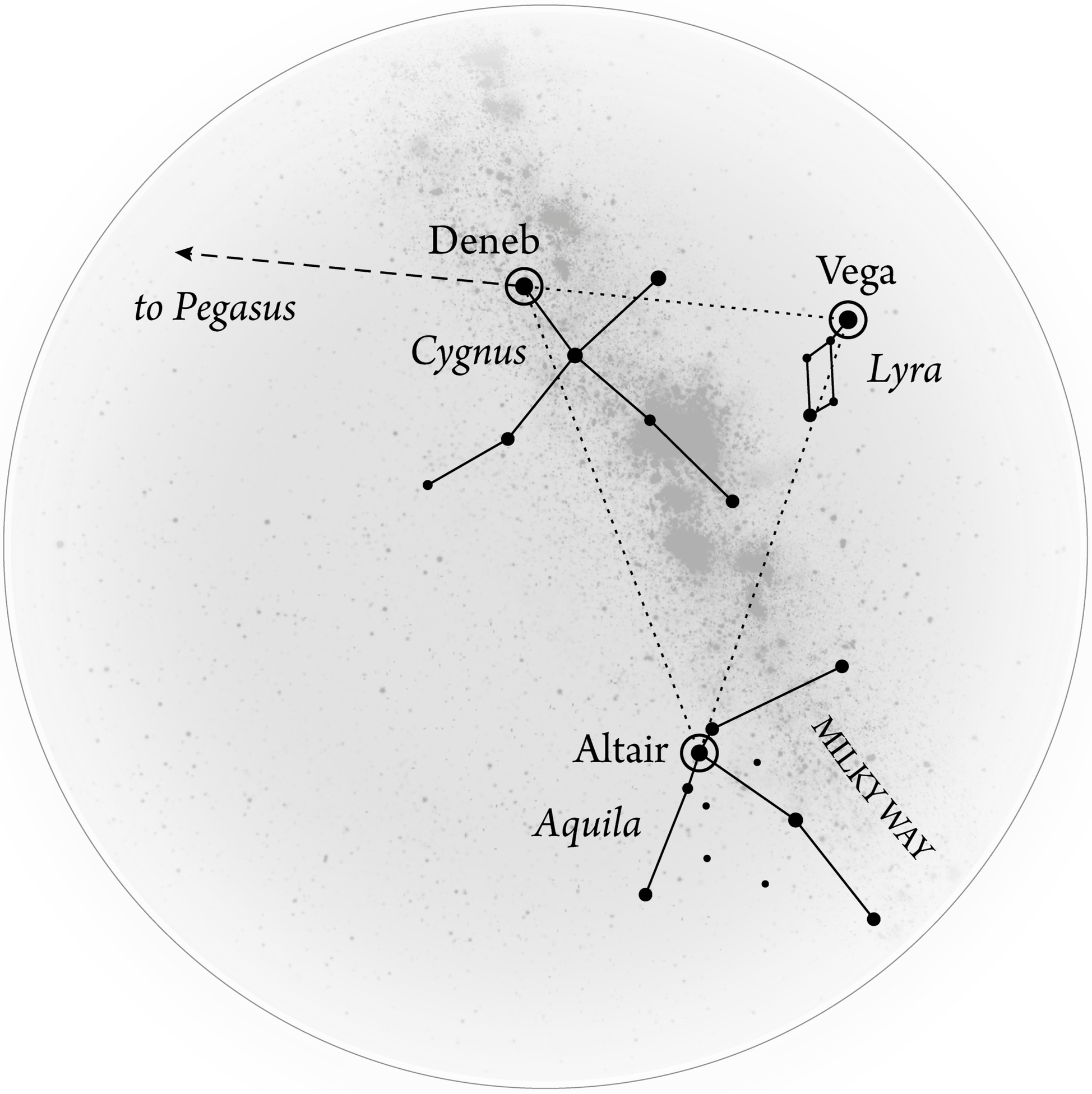


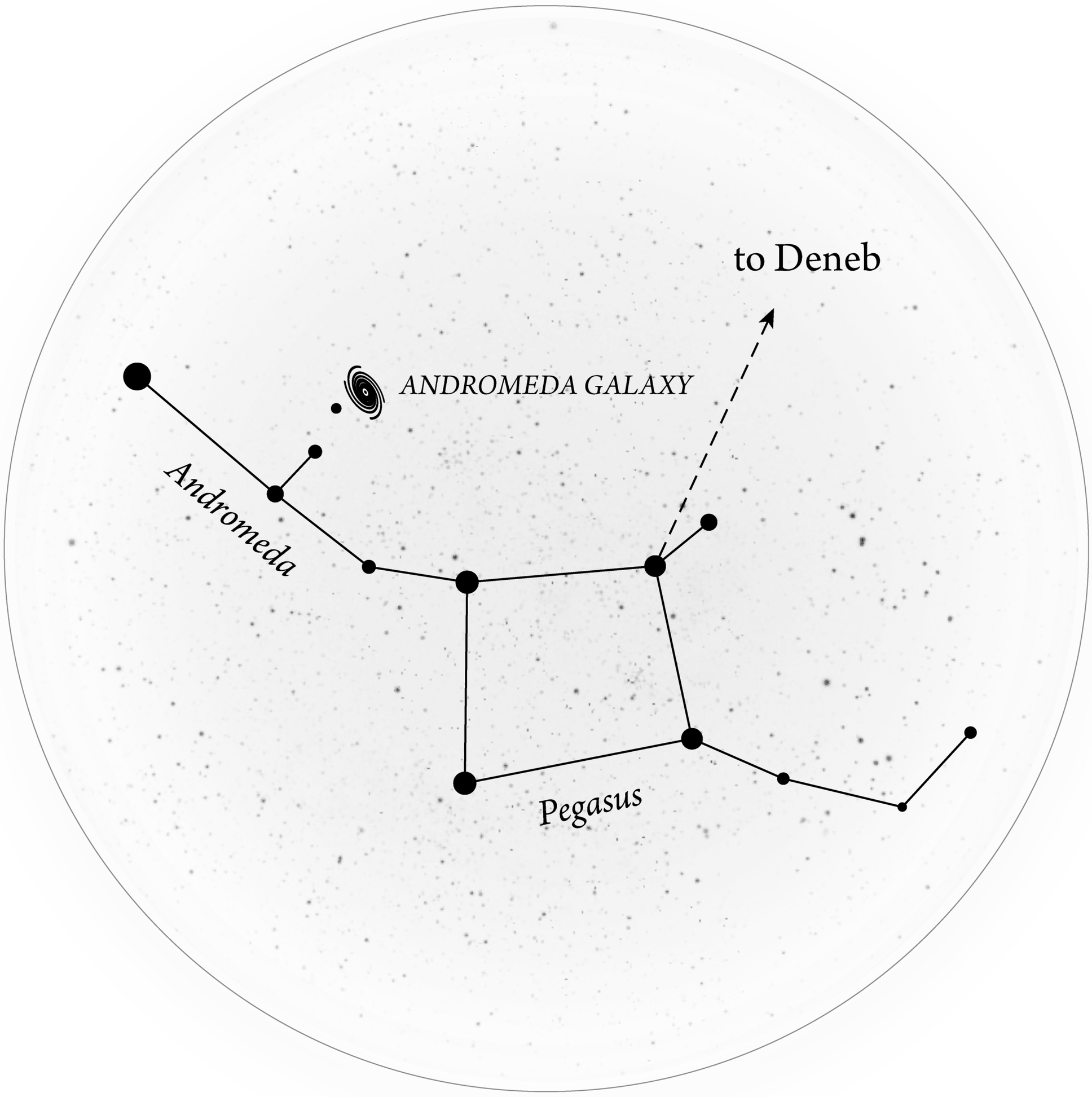
A Ring of Bright Stars Around Orion

Winter and early spring skies bring the easily recognisable constellation of ***Orion*** (the hunter). Look for the difference in colour between the red giant Betelgeuse at his shoulder and the blue-white colour of Rigel at his knee. Draw a line between the two to point upwards to the twins in ***Gemini***, Castor and Pollux. Extend the line of ***Orion's*** belt to point down and left to the brightest star in the sky, Sirius, and to point up and right to Aldebaran near the Hyades star cluster forming the face of ***Taurus*** (the bull). Just beyond the Hyades, you can easily see the small cloud of stars known as the Pleaides, or 'seven sisters' – how many of them can you count with your eye? Finally look for Capella in ***Auriga*** (the charioteer) and Procyon in ***Canis Minor*** (the lesser dog) to complete the ring of bright stars around ***Orion***. Finally look for the faint smudge in the sword hanging off ***Orion's*** belt – this is the great ***Orion*** nebula, a vast cloud of gas and dust where new stars are being formed.



The Summer Triangle

The first three stars to emerge from the evening twilight during the summer and early autumn are Deneb, Vega and Altair, which form a right-angled triangle straddling the line of the Milky Way. Each of the stars are the brightest of those making up the constellations of ***Cygnus*** (the swan), ***Lyra*** (the lyre) and *Aquila* (the eagle) respectively.



See Another Galaxy

Moving to the East across the sky from the Summer Triangle, autumn brings the great square of ***Pegasus*** (the winged horse). Hanging from the top left corner there is a long chain of stars making up the constellation of ***Andromeda*** (the princess), which contains the furthest object you can see with the unaided eye - the Andromeda Galaxy. You'll need a clear, dark night to find, and it shows up best in a pair of simple binoculars.