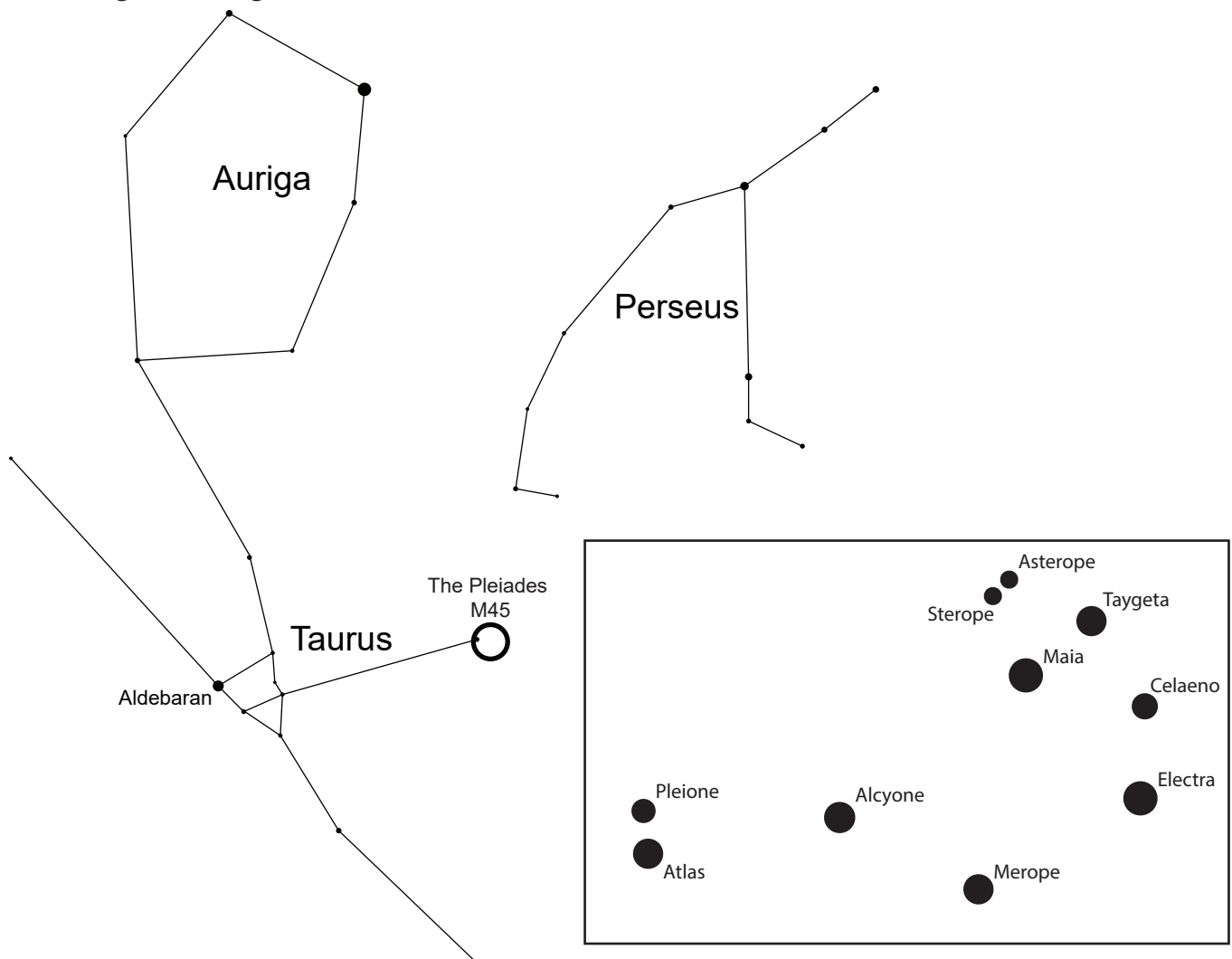


The Pleiades - M45

The Pleiades, also known as the Seven Sisters and catalogued by Charles Messier as M45 in 1771, is one of the closest star clusters to Earth at 444 light years. These super hot bright stars are relatively new at around 100 million years old - nothing when compared to our Sun's 4.5 billion year age - meaning they formed around the time the dinosaurs roamed the Earth.

Swathed in hydrogen gas, the output of the stars are not powerful enough yet to cause the latter to glow, therefore it reflects the newborn stars' early blue-white light. This Reflection Nebula is designated NGC 1432 and is passing through the region at around 18km/second.



The speed of light is the fastest thing in the Universe, but even so, the light from the cluster left 444 years ago, so we see it as it was in 1582 AD.

The Cluster lies in the constellation of Taurus, to the right of the fiery red star Aldebaran, an enormous red giant 44 times larger than our Sun.