

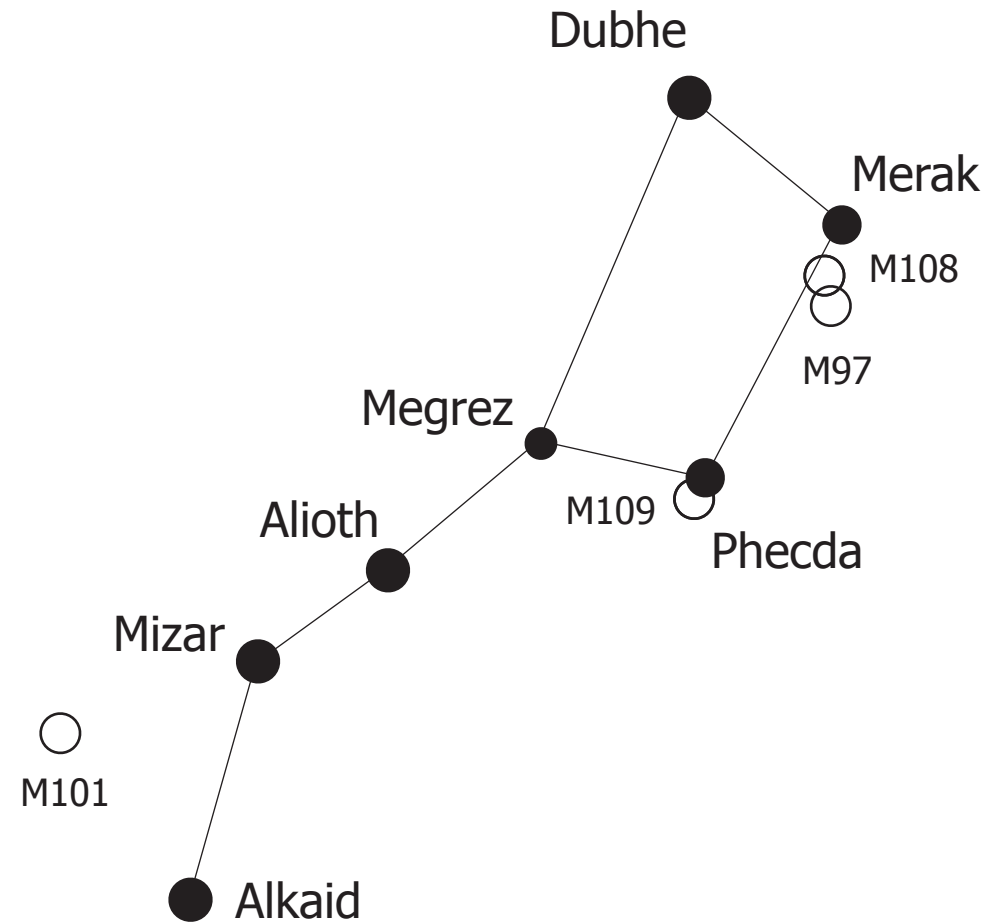


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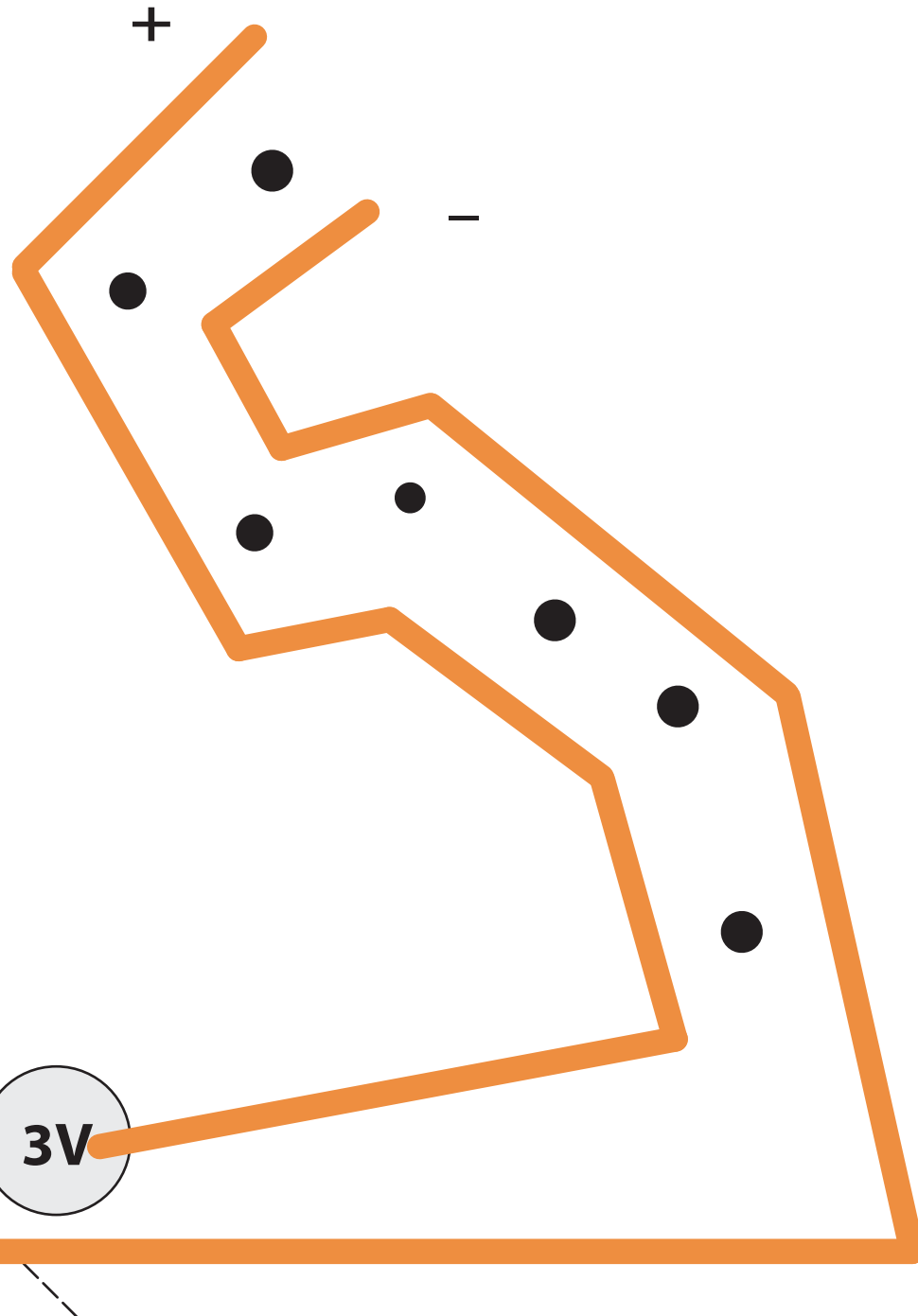
"Let's light up the constellations" by M.Sandri (INAF) - English version by G.Giobbi

# The Big Dipper



**National Institute for Astrophysics (INAF)**

Difficulty ☆★★



The **Big Dipper** is formed by the seven brightest stars of the constellation of **Ursa Major**, which constitute the typical carriage shape. Ursa Major fills up a large area of the sky, in a region near to the North celestial pole, and it is visible all the year long in the Northern Hemisphere.

## The Most Important Objects in the Sky

Apart from *Dubhe* and *Alkaid*, the other 5 stars of the Big Dipper belong to a group of stars (which are only 75 light-year far away), which move more or less in the same direction and at the same speed.



**M97** is known as the *Owl Nebula*; it is a not so bright planetary nebula, with a diametre of only 3 light-years, and a weak star in its centre.

Credits: Fryns su wikipedia.org



**M101** is a wide spiral galaxy, as big as our Milky Way, which contains over 250 millions stars; it is 25 millions light-years away from us.

Credits: Adam Block, Mt. Lemmon SkyCenter, U. Arizona



**M108** is a spiral galaxy, about 45 millions light-years away, also known as *Surboard Galaxy*, because its shape reminds us of a surfing board!

Credits: Wikimedia Commons/Hewholooks



**M109** is a barred spiral galaxy. It is the brightest galaxy of a large group of galaxies placed in the Ursa Major constellation.

Credits: WikiSky.org