

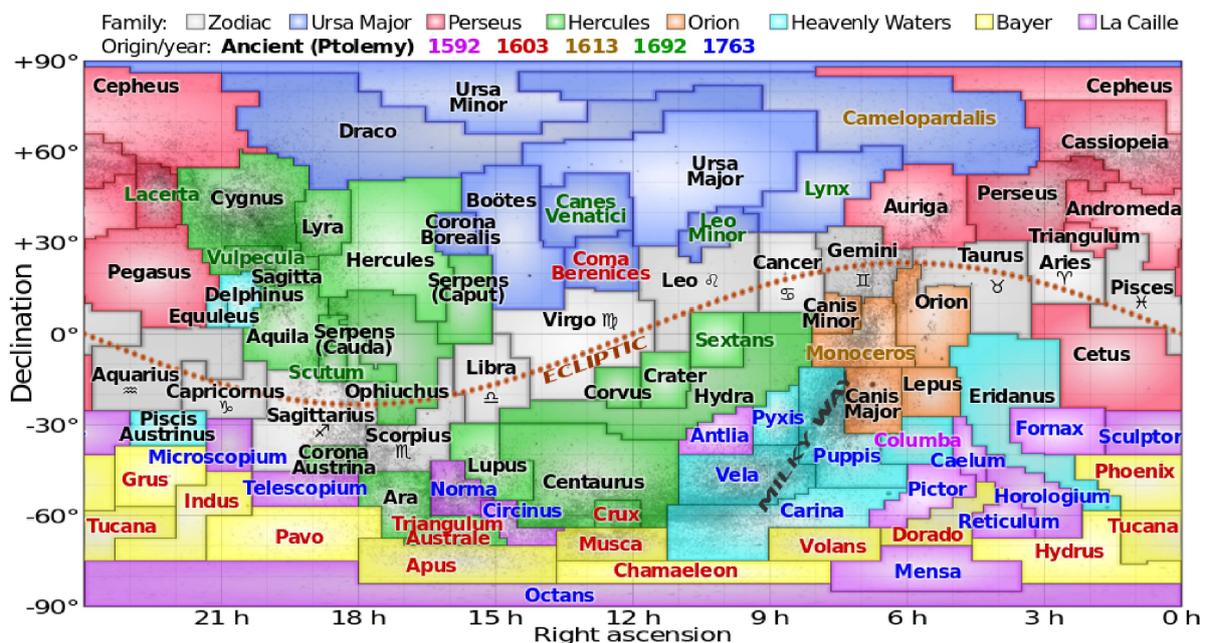
CONSTELLATION FAMILIES

Constellations are groups of stars in the sky that were at one stage named by someone as representative of a person, an object or a feature, often associated with mythology. Today there are 88 of these Constellations recognised in the modern Star Atlas, 40 of them were already listed by Claudius Ptolemy (90-168AD), 2000 years ago. Many of these constellations are either close to one another in our view of the sky or have some other relationship (such a mythology), and they have been grouped into so-called families, which helps us to recollect and place individual constellations.

The most common of these families include:

- ! **The Zodiac:** The 12 constellations that make up the Zodiac are star groupings that lie along the ecliptic (the plane in which most of our Solar System lies). Usually 12 constellations are listed in the Zodiac, but there is actually a thirteenth constellation that crosses the ecliptic, **Ophiuchus** (between Scorpio and Sagittarius). **The signs of the Zodiac are Capricornus, Aquarius, Pisces, Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpius, Sagittarius.** These are the ones used by Astrologers to determine from the particular sign you were born under, your character, your love-life and your destiny.
- ! **The Ursa Major Family:** 10 constellations circling the northern celestial pole, including **Ursa Major** (containing the Big Dipper), **Ursa Minor** (containing Polaris, the northern pole star), **Canes Venatici, Boötes, Coma Berenice, Corona Borealis, Camelopardalis, Lynx, Draco, and Leo Minor**
- ! **The Perseus Family:** 9 constellations depicting figures from the myth of Perseus, including **Cassiopeia, Cepheus, Andromeda, Perseus, Pegasus, Cetus, Auriga, Lacerta, Triangulum.**
- ! **The Hercules Family:** 19 constellations depicting figures from the myth of Heracles, including **Hercules, Sagitta, Aquila, Lyra, Cygnus, Vulpecula, Hydra, Sextans, Crater, Corvus, Ophiuchus, Serpens, Scutum, Centaurus, Lupus, Corona Australis, Ara, Triangulum Australe, Crux.**
- ! **The Orion Family:** 5 constellations, including **Orion** (the hunter), **Canis Major and Canis Minor** (Orion's two dogs), **Monoceros** (the unicorn), **Lepus** (the hare).
- ! **The Heavenly Waters** (aka the Cosmic Waters): 9 constellations whose names are related to water, including **Delphinus, Columba, Equuleus, Vela, Puppis, Eridanus, Piscis Austrinus, Carina, Pyxis**
- ! **The Bayer Group:** 11 Southern Hemisphere constellations depicting animals, named by Johann Bayer in 1603. Includes **Hydrus, Dorado, Volans, Apus, Pavo, Grus, Phoenix, Tucana, Indus, Chamaeleon, Musca.**
- ! **The La Caille Family:** 13 Southern Hemisphere constellations, named by Nicolas Louis de Lacaille in 1756. Includes **Norma, Fornax, Circinus, Telescopium, Microscopium, Sculptor, Caelum, Horologium, Antlia, Pictor, Reticulum, Octans, Mensa.**

The term **zodiac** derives from Latin *zodiacus*, which in its turn comes from the Greek (zodiakos kyklos), meaning "circle of animals". In both astrology and historical astronomy, the zodiac is a circle of twelve 30° divisions of celestial longitude that are centered upon the ecliptic: the apparent path of the Sun in the sky.



Plot of declination vs right ascension of the modern constellations with a dotted line denoting the ecliptic. Constellations are colour-coded by family and year established.