

Messier 21 Open Cluster, also known as NGC 6531

Observation data (J2000.0 epoch)

Right ascension 18h 04.6m

Declination $-22^{\circ} 30'$

Distance 4.25 kly (1.3 kPc)

Apparent magnitude (V) 6.5

Apparent dimensions (V) 13.0'

Estimated age 4.6 million years

Messier 21 or M21 (also designated NGC 6531) is an open cluster of stars in the constellation of Sagittarius next to M20, the Trifid Nebula. It was discovered and catalogued by Charles Messier on June 5, 1764.

It is a relatively young cluster of a mere 4.6 million years of age. It is tightly packed and contains about 57 stars. A few blue giant stars have been identified in the cluster, but Messier 21 is composed mainly of small dim stars. With a magnitude of 6.5, M21 is not visible to the naked eye; however, with the smallest binoculars it can be easily spotted on a dark night.

Admiral William Henry Smyth observed M21 in July 1835 and noted the following:

A coarse cluster of telescopic stars, in a rich gathering galaxy region, near the upper part of the Archer's bow; and about the middle is the conspicuous pair above registered, – A being 9, yellowish, and B 10, ash coloured. This was discovered by Messier in 1764, who seems to have included some bright outliers in his description, and what he mentions as nebosity, must have been the grouping of the minute stars in view. Though this was in the power of the meridian instruments, its mean apparent place was obtained by differentiation from Mu Sagittarii, the bright star about 2deg 1/4 to the north-east of it.

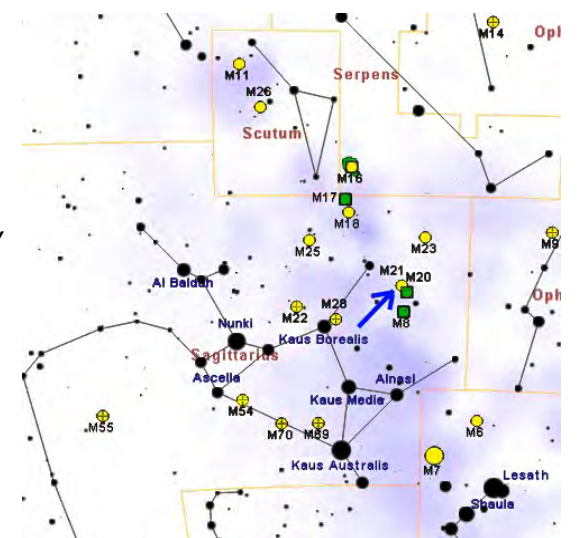
LIST OF ALL MESSIER OBJECTS

**M1 M2 M3 M4 M5 M6 M7 M8 M9 M10 M11 M12 M13 M14 M15
M16 M17 M18 M19 M20 M21 M22 M23 M24 M25 M26 M27
M28 M29 M30 M31 M32 M33 M34 M35 M36 M37 M38 M39
M40 M41 M42 M43 M44 M45 M46 M47 M48 M49 M50 M51
M52 M53 M54 M55 M56 M57 M58 M59 M60 M61 M62 M63
M64 M65 M66 M67 M68 M69 M70 M71 M72 M73 M74 M75
M76 M77 M78 M79 M80 M81 M82 M83 M84 M85 M86 M87
M88 M89 M90 M91 M92 M93 M94 M95 M96 M97 M98 M99
M100 M101 M102 M103 M104 M105 M106 M107 M108 M109
M110**

In 1764 Messier was made a fellow of the Royal Society, in 1769 he was elected a foreign member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, and on 30 June 1770 he was elected to the French Academy of Sciences.

Messier discovered 13 comets: C/1760 B1; C/1763 S1; C/1764 A1; C/1766 E1; C/1769 P1; D/1770 L1; C/1771 G1; C/1773 T1; C/1780 U2; C/1788 W1; C/1793 S2. C/1798 G1; C/1785 A1.

Near the end of his life, Messier self-published a booklet connecting the great comet of 1769 to the birth of Napoleon, who was in power at that time. AK, with Wikipedia Notes



Charles Messier (26 June 1730 – 12 April 1817) was a French astronomer most notable for publishing an astronomical catalogue consisting of nebulae and star clusters that came to be known as the 110 "Messier objects". The purpose of the catalogue was to help astronomical observers, in particular comet hunters such as himself, distinguish between permanent and transient visually diffuse objects in the sky.