

THE 88 CONSTELLATIONS AND THEIR BRIGHTEST STARS

Meaning/mythology
Brightest Star
First Appearance
Area of Sky
Celestial Hemisphere
Northem
Southern
Equator
Best time to see



ANDROMEDA

- Greek princess
- Alpheratz
- Ancient
- 1.8%
- September



ANTLIA

- Air pump
- α-Ant
- 1756
- 0.6%
- February



APUS

- Bird of paradise
- α-Aps
- 1598
- 0.5%



AQUARIUS

- Water-bearer and wine-weller to the gods
- Sadalsud
- Ancient
- 2.4%
- August



AQUILA

- Eagle, retriever of Zeus's thunderbolts
- Altair
- Ancient
- 1.6%
- June



ARA

- Altar used by the gods to vow allegiance before battle with the Titans
- α-Ara
- Ancient
- 0.6%
- May



ARIES

- Ram whose golden fleece was recovered by Jason
- Hamal
- Ancient
- 1.1%
- October



AURIGA

- Charioteer, son of Vulcan
- Capella
- Ancient
- 1.6%
- February



BOÖTES

- Herdsman, son of Zeus
- Arcturus
- Ancient
- 2.2%
- May



CAELUM

- Chisel
- α-Cae
- 1756
- 0.3%
- November



CAMELOPARDALIS

- Giraffe
- β-Cam
- 1672
- 1.8%



CANCER

- Crab that bit Hercules's foot
- β-Cnc
- Ancient
- 1.2%
- February



CANES VENATICI

- Hunting dogs of Boötes
- Cor-Caroll
- 1667
- 1.1%
- April



CANIS MAJOR

- Orion's greater hunting dog
- Sirius
- Ancient
- 0.6%
- January



CANIS MINOR

- Orion's lesser hunting dog
- Procyon
- Ancient
- 0.4%
- January



CAPRICORNUS

- Sea goat associated with god of the countryside
- δ -Cap
- Ancient
- 1.0%
- July



CARINA

- Keel of the Argo
- Canopus
- 1756
- 1.2%
- January



CASSIOPEIA

- Queen Cassiopeia, mother of Andromeda
- γ -Cas
- Ancient
- 1.5%
- September



CENTAURUS

- Wise centaur
- Rigel-Kentaurus
- Ancient
- 2.6%
- March



CEPHEUS

- Ethiopian King
- Alderamin
- Ancient
- 1.4%



CETUS

- Sea monster that attacked Cepheus's territory
- Diphda
- Ancient
- 3.0%
- September



CHAMAELEON

- Chameleon
- α -Cha
- 1598
- 0.3%
- February



CIRCINUS

- Drafting compass
- α -Cir
- 1796
- 0.2%
- April



COLUMBA

- Dove
- Phact
- 1502
- 0.7%
- December



COMA BERENICES

- Hair of Queen Berenice of Egypt
- β -Com
- 1536
- 0.3%
- March



CORONA AUSTRALIS

- Southern crown
- α -CrA
- Ancient
- 0.3%
- May



CORONA BOREALIS

- Northern crown
- Alphecca
- Ancient
- 0.4%
- May



CORVUS

- Crow sent by Apollo in search of water
- Glenah
- Ancient
- 0.4%
- March



CRATER

- Cup clutched by crow in search of water
- δ -Crt
- Ancient
- 0.7%
- April



CRUX

- Southern cross
- Acrux
- 1598
- 0.2%
- March



CYGNUS

- Swan, Zeus in disguise
- Deneb
- Ancient
- 1.9%
- Summer



DELPHINUS

- Dolphin, messenger of Poseidon
- Rotanev
- Ancient I
- 0.5%
- July



DORADO

- Swordfish
- α -Dor
- 1598
- 0.4%
- November



DRACO

- Dragon that guards the golden apple tree
- Eltanin
- Ancient
- 2.6%
- July



EQUULEUS

- Little horse
- Kitalpha
- Ancient
- 0.2%
- September



ERIDANUS

- Mythical river
- Achernar
- Ancient
- 2.8%
- November



FORNAX

- Furnace
- α -For
- 1756
- 1.0%
- October



GEMINI

- Mythical twins Castor and Pollux
- Pollux
- Ancient
- 1.2%
- Winter



GRUS

- Crane
- Alnair
- 1508
- 0.9%
- August



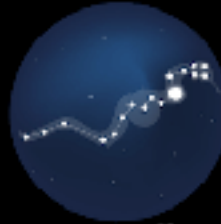
HERCULES

- Hercules, greatest hero in Greek mythology
- Komephoros
- Ancient
- 3.0%
- May



HOROLOGIUM

- Pendulum clock
- α -Hor
- 1756
- 0.5%
- November



HYDRA

- Multi-headed water snake slain by Hercules
- Alphard
- Ancient
- 3.2%
- January



HYDRUS

- Lesser water snake
- β -Hyl
- 1398
- 0.6%
- October



INDUS

- Indian
- α -Ind
- 1508
- 0.7%
- August



LACERTA

- Lizard
- α -Lac
- 1090
- 0.5%
- August



LEO

- Lion of Nemea, slain by Hercules
- Regulus
- Ancient
- 2.9%
- February



LEO MINOR

- Lion cub
- 46-LMI
- 1687
- 0.6%
- February



LEPUS

- Hare chased by Orion's dogs
- Arneb
- Ancient
- 0.7%
- December



LIBRA

- Balance
- Zubeneshamali
- Ancient
- 1.8%
- May



LUPUS

- Wolf
- α -Lup
- Ancient
- 0.8%
- May



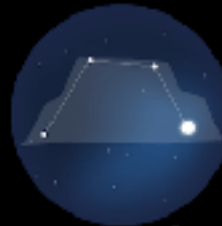
LYNX

- Lynx
- α -Lyn
- 1687
- 1.3%
- January



LYRA

- Lyre played by musician Orpheus
- Vega
- Ancient
- 0.7%
- June



MENSA

- Table Mountain, South Africa
- α -Men
- 1756
- 0.4%
- December



MICROSCOPIUM

- Microscope
- γ -Mic
- 1756
- 0.5%
- July



MONOCEROS

- Unicorn
- α -Mon
- 1612
- 1.2%
- December



MUSCA

- Fly
- α -Mus
- 1596
- 0.3%



NORMA

- Carpenter's square
- γ^2 -Nor
- 1756
- 0.4%
- May



OCTANS

- Octant, navigational instrument
- ν -Oct
- 1756
- 0.7%
- October



OPHIUCHUS

- Serpent-bearer, god of medicine
- Rasalhague
- Ancient
- 2.5%
- June



ORION

- Hunter, son of Poseidon
- Rigel
- Ancient
- 1.4%
- North: Winter
South: Summer



PAVO

- Peacock
- Peacock
- 1598
- 0.9%
- July



PEGASUS

- Winged horse
- Enif
- Ancient
- 2.7%
- September



PERSEUS

- Husband of Andromeda, slayer of Medusa
- Mirfak
- Ancient
- 1.5%
- November



PHOENIX

- Mythical bird of rebirth
- Ankaa
- 1508
- 1.1%
- October



PICTOR

- Painter's easel
- α -Pic
- 1756
- 0.5%
- December



PISCES

- Two fish swimming opposite each other
- η -Psc
- Ancient
- 2.2%
- September



PISCIS AUSTRINUS

- Southern fish
- Fomalhaut
- Ancient
- 0.6%
- August



PUPPIS

- Poop deck of Aigo
- Naos
- 1756
- 1.0%
- January



PYXIS

- Compass
- α -Pyx
- 1756
- 0.3%
- January



RETICULUM

- Net of crosshairs in a telescope
- α -Ret
- 1756
- 0.3%
- November



SAGITTA

- Arrow used by Apollo to kill Cyclops
- γ -Sag
- Ancient
- 0.2%
- June



SAGITTARIUS

- Centaur archer
- Kaus-Australis
- Ancient
- 2.1%
- July



SCORPIUS

- Scorpion, killer of Orion
- Antares
- Ancient
- 1.2%
- May



SCULPTOR

- Sculptor
- α -Scl
- 1756
- 1.2%
- September



SCUTUM

- Shield, honoring King John III Sobieski of Poland
- α -Sct
- 1684
- 0.3%
- June



SERPENS

- Serpent's head
- Unukalhai
- Ancient
- 1.5%
- June



SEXTANS

- Sextant, instrument for measuring star positions
- α -Sex
- 1687
- 0.8%
- February



TAURUS

- Bull, Zeus in disguise
- Aldebaran
- Ancient
- 1.9%
- December



TELESCOPIUM

- Telescope
- α -Tel
- 1756
- 0.6%
- July



TRIANGULUM

- Triangle
- β -Tri
- 1603
- 0.3%
- October



TRIANGULUM AUSTRALE

- Southern triangle
- Atria
- 1666
- 0.3%
- April



TUCANA

- Toucan
- α -Tuc
- 1598
- 0.7%
- September



URSA MAJOR

- Great bear or Callisto, lover of Zeus
- Alloth
- Ancient
- 3.1%
- Spring



URSA MINOR

- Lesser bear, nymph that nursed Zeus as an infant
- Polaris
- Ancient
- 0.6%
- June



VELA

- Sail of the ship Argo
- γ -Vel
- 1756
- 1.2%
- February



VIRGO

- Virgo, goddess of justice
- Spica
- Ancient
- 3.7%
- April



VOLANS

- Flying fish
- γ -Vol
- 1518
- 0.3%
- January



VULPECULA

- Fox
- α -Vul
- 1687
- 0.7%
- July

Overview

In contemporary astrology, there are 88 constellations that are recognized by the International Astronomical Union. 42 depict animals, 29 depict inanimate objects and 17 depict humans or mythological characters.

The ancient Sumerians, Babylonians, and later, the Greeks established the majority of the northern constellations that are officially recognized today. That is why many stars and constellations are connected to ancient myths and legends. For example, the Lyre constellation represents the celestial harp created by Hermes and gifted to Orpheus by Apollo. When Orpheus played love songs to his beloved bride Eurydice, both people and animals would become captivated. When Eurydice died suddenly, Orpheus' enchanting lyre music convinced the ruler of the underworld to release Eurydice under the condition that Orpheus does not look back at her as she followed him out to the surface. Unable to endure the doubt that she was not behind him, he glanced over his shoulder and witnessed Eurydice fade away back into Hades' domain. After Orpheus passed away, Zeus placed his lyre in the stars in honor of his beautiful music and forsaken love.

Egyptians and the Zodiac

The ancient Egyptians are believed to have developed the Zodiac system, which was later adopted by the Babylonians.

Early astrologers understood that it took 12 lunar cycles for the sun to return to its original position. They then identified 12 constellations that correlated with the progression of the seasons and named them after certain [animals](#) or people. These became the Zodiac signs. The Zodiac signs are divided into four groups. Fire signs include Aries, Sagittarius, and Leo. Water signs include Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces. Air signs include Libra, Aquarius, and Gemini. Earth signs include Capricorn, Taurus, and Virgo. Babylonian astrologers believed that the Sun, Moon, and five known planets (Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Saturn, and Venus) imbued distinct powers onto each Zodiac constellation.

Top 10 Constellations

The largest constellation is the Hydra, which takes up 3.2% of the Southern night sky. It is commonly depicted as a water serpent. The best time to see Hydra is in January. The top 10 largest constellations are as follows:

1. Hydra – 3.2%
2. Ursa Major – 3.1%
3. Virgo – 3.1%
4. Cetus – 3%
5. Hercules – 3%
6. Eridanus – 2.8%
7. Pegasus – 2.7%
8. Centaurus – 2.6%
9. Draco – 2.6%
10. Aquarius – 2.4%

(Excerpted from <https://sleepopolis.com/education/constellations-stars/>)

Constellation Names and Meanings – All 88 Constellations Explained

(Excerpted from <https://astronimate.com/article/constellation-names-and-meanings/>)

We've all gazed up at the night sky, admiring stars forming familiar shapes, dressed in lore of ancient cultures. But, where did all of these names come from, and what do they mean? Without further ado, Astronimate explains all 88 Constellation Names and Meanings!

A

ANDROMEDA – ROYAL SEA MONSTER BAIT

Andromeda is the daughter of Cassiopeia and Cepheus in Greek mythology. Unfortunately, appeasing the gods, she was chained and fed to sea monster, Cetus. However, Perseus finally rescued her!

ANTLIA – AIR PUMP

Originally, named *Antlia Pneumatica*, or “Pneumatic Machine,” by French astronomer Nicolas Louis de Lacaille. Actually, this unusual name honored French physicist Denis Papin’s invention of the air pump.

APUS – BIRD OF PARADISE

Greek for “no feet,” Apus is the official bird of paradise. Ironically, this name mocks western civilization’s misconception of the paradise bird not having feet. Who knew?!

AQUARIUS – WATER BEARER

Water carrier of the gods, Aquarius was the best looking boy in ancient Greece. In fact, Zeus became enthralled with Aquarius, morphed into an eagle, and abducted the boy!

AQUILA – THUNDERBOLT EAGLE

Aquila was the majestic eagle who help Zeus’ thunderbolts. However, this meaning is often associated with the legendary eagle who abducted Aquarius (see Aquarius).

ARA – ALTAR

Ara was the altar in which Greek gods formed a pact, prior to battling the Titans. Led by Zeus, the gods overpowered the Titans, winning the legendary war. Ultimately, the altar was placed in the sky by Zeus. In fact, the Milky Way represents the smoke rising from Ara.

ARIES – RAM

Aries was a legendary ram, yielding wings and golden fleece. Originally, sent by Nephele to rescue her son, Phrixus upon his father sacrificing him to ward off famine! Ultimately, both Phrixus and his sister, Helle boarded Aries, flying to safety on the Black Sea.

AURIGA – CHARIOTEER

Son of Athena, Auriga was the charioteer of the gods. Plus, created in the image of the Sun god’s chariot, Auriga invented the four-horse chariot.

B

BOÖTES – HERDSMAN

Greek for “oxen driver,” Boötes was the ploughman who corralled oxen, often represented by Ursa Major, the bear.

CAELUM – CHISEL

Also, named by French astronomer, Nicolas Lous de Lacaille, Caelum means “engraver’s chisel,” in latin.

CAMELOPARDALIS – GIRAFFE

Greek for “camel and leopard,” Camelopardalis was a Greek giraffe. Literally, ancient Greeks viewed giraffe’s long necks and spots as a combo of both animals!

CANCER – CRAB

Cancer was a crab, sent to distract Heracles while battling an ancient hydra, or snake. In fact, such a battle was one of Heracles’ 12 labors. Ultimately, he kicked cancer so hard, it flew into our skies, forming the infamous constellation we know today!

CANES VENATICI – HUNTING DOGS

Originally, named by Polish astronomer Johannes Hevelius, Canes represents the hunting dogs, led by Boötes, the herdsman. In fact, the dogs and herder both follow the great bear, Ursa Major.

C

CANIS MAJOR – BIG DOG

Canis Major is the big dog, following legendary hunter, Orion. In fact, Orion hunts the rabbit, Lepus!

CANIS MINOR – SMALL DOG

Similarly, Canis Minor, the small dog, also follows Orion whilst hunting the rabbit. Unfortunately, small dog jumped off of a cliff in despair over his owner’s death.

CAPRICORNUS – SEA GOAT

Literally, meaning “goat,” Capricornus represents a forest god, known for his horns and legs of a goat. In fact, some versions claim the goat tended to the infant god, Zeus!

CARINA – KEEL OF ARGO NAVIS

Carina was one of three pieces of a ship, used by Jason and the Argonauts to acquire the golden fleece. Accordingly, Carina represents the ship’s keel.

CASSIOPEIA – VAIN QUEEN

Queen Cassiopeia, a boatful royal, was wife of Cepheus and mother of Andromeda. Ultimately, while claiming to be more beautiful than anyone else, Poseidon sends a sea monster to kill Cassiopeia. Upon requesting help, Cepheus is told he must sacrifice his daughter to the monster. Finally, after leaving the daughter chained to a rock, Perseus saves her. Nice parenting!

CENTAURUS – CENTAUR

Half man, half horse, Centaurus was an ancient mythological creature. In fact, the beast mentored many gods, like Theseus, Jason and Heracles!

CEPHEUS – KING

Husband of Cassiopeia, king Cepheus left daughter, Andromeda chained to rocks to be eaten by a sea monster. Fortunately, Perseus saves the girl!

CETUS – WHALE

Famously, Cetus was a sea monster, sent by king and queens, Cepheus and Cassiopeia to devour their daughter, Andromeda.

CHAMAELEON – CHAMELEON

Simply put, named after the color-changing lizard, the chameleon, by Dutch explorers in the 1500s.

CIRCINUS – COMPASS

Originally, named for the drafting tool to draw circles, or measure distances.

COLUMBA – DOVE

Introduced in the 1500s, Circinus, represents the dove who informed Noah that the great biblical flood was receding!

COMA BERENICES – BERENICE'S HAIR

In ancient Egypt, queen Berenice swore to Aphrodite that she would cut off her long, beautiful blonde hair if she brought her husband, Ptolemy, home safely from dangerous battle! Finally, upon safely returning, the queen fulfilled her promise, chopping off the locks. In fact, she placed the hair in Aphrodite's temple. However, the hair went missing the following day. Ultimately, Egyptian astronomer, Conon assured him the gods so loved the hair, they left it in the sky!

CORONA AUSTRINA – SOUTHERN CROWN

Seen by Greeks as a wreath from the wise centaur, Corona is the southern crown. However, some believe it represents the crown placed in the sky by Dionysus.

CORONA BOREALIS – NORTHERN CROWN

Corona Borealis, the northern crown, represents the crown worn by Cretan princess, Ariadne during her wedding. Upon helping Theseus defeat the minotaur, Ariadne sailed to Naxos with the hero, where he eventually left her broken-hearted. However, Dionysus fell in love. Ultimately, this paved the way to her happy marriage, and the northern crown.

CORVUS – RAVEN

Representing a crow, or raven, Corvus was the sacred bird of god, Apollo. In fact, Apollo tells the raven to watch over his pregnant lover, Coronis. Ultimately, Coronis falls for another, human man, leaving Apollo. Finally, the god becomes so angry by the raven's mismanagement, he scorches his wings, leaving them blackened!

CRATER – CUP

Crater, represents the cup of god, Apollo. Typically, the cup is envisioned as a chalice, with two handles.

CRUX – SOUTHERN CROSS

Although, seen in many different lights across multiple cultures, the cross most often represents a biblical significance, depicting Jesus' crucifixion. Ultimately, the cross disappeared for many European cultures in the north. In fact, assuming the cross had disappeared, it was not rediscovered for hundreds of years.

CYGNUS – SWAN

Cygnus represents Leda, a Spartan queen who birthed two sets of twins. Eventually, in the form of a swan, Zeus seduces Leda. Finally, the two immortal twins, Castor and Pollux are fathered by Zeus, represented in Gemini.

D**DELPHINUS – DOLPHIN**

Delphinus was Poseidon's messenger, who ultimately helped him find his future wife, Amphitrite.

DORADO – FISH

Simply put, Dorado was named after a dolphin-like fish by Dutch explorers in the 1500s.

DRACO – DRAGON

Draco was named after Ladon, the hundred-headed dragon that guards the garden of Hesperides. In fact, Ladon the dragon was slayed by poison arrows in one of Heracles' 12 labors.

E**EQUULEUS – LITTLE HORSE**

Equuleus represents Hippe, daughter of the centaur, Chiron. Hippe, seduced by Aeolus, becomes pregnant. However, afraid to tell her father, Hippe hides in the mountains. Eventually, Chiron comes looking for the scared girl. Hippe prays to the gods that her father never find her. Finally, granting her wish, the girl morphs into a horse, seen in Equuleus.

ERIDANUS – RIVER

In mythology, Phaëton was son of Sun god, Helios. Phaëton begged his father to let him drive his chariot across the skies. Eventually, Helios agrees, and Phaëton mounts the chariot. However, being inexperienced, the boy loses control of the chariot, plummets toward Earth, causing catastrophic damage. Finally, to prevent further damage, Zeus strikes the boy down with a thunderbolt, plunging him into the river Eridanus.

F**FORNAX – FURNACE**

Named after the invention of the chemical furnace, or "Fornax Chemica", used in chemical experiments.

G**GEMINI – TWINS**

Named after the immortal mythological twins, ultimately fathered by Apollo, Castor and Pollux.

GRUS – CRANE

Grus, the crane is one of many constellations named after exotic animals by Dutch explorers travelling to the East Indies.

H

HERCULES – STRONG MAN

Named after Heracles, legendary strong man and hero of Greek mythology. Actually, Hercules is one of the oldest constellations in our night sky, dating back to ancient Sumerian civilization.

HOROLOGIUM – PENDULUM CLOCK

Another constellation named by French astronomer, Lacaille. Originally, named Horologium Oscillitorium, or “pendulum clock,” the constellation honors Christiaan Huygen’s invention of the pendulum clock.

HYDRA – WATER SERPENT

Officially, Hydra is the largest of the 88 recognized constellations. Lernaean Hydra was the mythological monster from Heracles’ 12 labors. Plus, Hydra is one of the ancient, original constellations, coined by Ptolemy in the 2nd century!

HYDRUS – WATER SNAKE

Actually, Hydrus has no formal connection to any mythologies. In fact, coined by Dutch explorers, the constellation represents snakes seen on the explorer’s journey to the East Indies.

I

INDUS – INDIAN

Representing the indigenous peoples met on the East Indies journeys, Indus was also coined by Dutch explorers in the 1500s. However, it remains unknown whether it represents East India, Madagascar or South Africa.

L

LACERTA – LIZARD

Also, not associated with any mythologies, Lacerta was named by Polish astronomer, Johannes Hevelius in the 1600s.

LEO – LION

Depicts the Nemean lion of greek mythology, slain by Heracles amidst his 12 labors.

LEO MINOR – LITTLE LION

Once again, named by Polish astronomer, Johannes Hevelius in the 1600s, Leo Minor, the little lion, holds no association to any mythologies.

LEPUS – HARE/RABBIT

Next, another oldie from Ptolemy in the 2nd century, Lepus depicts the hare or rabbit chased by Orion, the great hunter. Also, the hare was pursued by Orion’s two dogs, Canis Major and Minor.

LIBRA – SCALES

Literally, meaning “weighing scales,” Libra represents the scales of justice, held by Dike, the Greek goddess of justice.

LUPUS – WOLF

Lupus was named by Ptolemy in the 2nd century. However, it was not associated with a wolf until the Renaissance period. Plus, other cultures associated the constellation with beasts, wild animals and more. Often, the wolf was thought to be sacrificed by the centaur.

LYNX – LYNX

Another “newer” constellation by Polish astronomer, Hevelius. In fact, he named it after the lynx because it’s extremely faint, and requires the eyesight of a lynx to see!

LYRA – HARP

Representing the lyre, or harp of Orpheus, Lyra was a Greek poet and musician. Finally, the poet died at the hands of Bacchantes, the loyal female followers of Dionysus.

M

MENSA – TABLE MOUNTAIN

In Latin, *Mensa* means “table.” While mapping the skies in South Africa, French astronomer Lacaille named the constellation for Table Mountain in the country.

MICROSCOPIUM – MICROSCOPE

Another French-born constellation by Lacaille. The astronomer named the constellation after the early compound microscopes, used widely in science of the 1800s.

MONOCEROS – UNICORN

Latin for “unicorn,” Monoceros depicts the mythological horse with a single majestic horn. In fact, Dutch astronomer Petrus Plancius named the constellation for the unicorn appearing many times in the old testament of the Bible.

MUSCA – FLY

Simply put, Musca depicts the common fly, named by Dutch explorers of the 1500s.

N

NORMA – LEVEL

Named in the 1700s by French astronomer Lacaille, Norma represents the carpenter’s square, or level, often used by carpenters on explorer vessels.

O

OCTANS – OCTANT

Octans represents the reflecting octant, a predecessor of the modern sextant for exploration and navigation. Also, another constellation naming from French astronomer, Lacaille.

OPHIUCHUS – SERPENT HOLDER

Ophiuchus depicts the legendary Greek mythology healer, Asclepius. Actually, mythology says that Asclepius learned to bring people back from the dead while witnessing one snake bring herbs to another!

ORION – HUNTER

Son of the sea god, Poseidon, Orion was the great Greek hunter. In fact, Orion is one of the night sky’s oldest constellations, dating back to ancient Sumerian lore of Gilgamesh.

P

PAVO – PEACOCK

Introduced in the 1500s, Pavo depicts the Java green peacock, likely seen by Dutch explorers while exploring the East Indies.

PEGASUS – WINGED HORSE

Pegasus was a white, majestic, winged horse of Greek mythology. In fact, the horse was said to have sprung from the head of Medusa when she was beheaded by Perseus.

PERSEUS – GREEK HERO

Dating back to Ptolemy in the 2nd century, Perseus was a true Greek hero. Not to mention, the hero has a whopping six constellations associated with his legend!

PHOENIX – FIREBIRD

Sacred to countless cultures and mythologies, Phoenix represents the firebird. Also, it was introduced by Dutch explorers of the 1500s.

PICTOR – PAINTER’S EASE

Latin for “painter,” Pictor was named by 17th century French astronomer, Lacaille. Indeed, the constellation was named to honor the palettes and easels of great painters of the time.

PISCES – FISHES

One of the zodiac constellations, Pisces represents Aphrodite and son, Eros turning into fish to escape the monster, Typhon. Also, this constellation was coined in the 2nd century by Ptolemy.

PISCIS AUSTRINUS – SOUTHERN FISH

Piscis Austrinus dates back to Babylonian times. In fact, in Greek mythology, the fish is often depicted drinking the water of Aquarius.

PUPPIS – STERN OF ARGO NAVIS

Originally named for the Argonauts’ vessel, Argo Navis, in which they sailed aboard to retrieve the golden fleece. In fact, Argo Navis, the stern of the ship, was once represented by a single larger constellation. However, during the 1700s, the constellation broke into several smaller pieces, like the stern!

PYXIS – COMPASS

Pyxis, represents the mariner’s, or sailor’s compass. In fact, this was another 17th century constellation, named by Lacaille.

R

RETICULUM – RETICLE

Named for a reticle, or fibrous piece of a telescope or microscope’s eyepiece. French astronomer, Lacaille named the constellation to honor the reticle of his telescope, used during the 1700s to observe the South African skies.

S

SAGITTA – ARROW

Sagitta depicts the Greek mythology arrow, used by Heracles to slay the eagle gnawing on Prometheus' liver. Gross.

SAGITTARIUS – ARCHER

Sagittarius depicts a centaur, aiming an arrow at Antares, the star of the scorpion's heart (see Scorpius).

SCORPIUS – SCORPION

First named by Ptolemy, Scorpius represents the deadly scorpion that kills Orion, the hunter. In fact, it is thought that Orion still runs from the scorpion, as the two are never seen in the sky at the same time!

SCULPTOR – SCULPTOR

Representing the sculptor's studio, Sculptor was named by French astronomer, Lacaille in the 1700s.

SCUTUM – SHIELD

Named by Hevelius in the 1600s, Scutum represents the shield of Polish King Jan III, worn in the victorious battle of Vienna in 1683.

SERPENS – SERPENT

Serpens represents the snake, held by Asclepius, the great Greek healer, depicted in the constellation Ophiuchus.

SEXTANS – SEXTANT

Another constellation named by Polish astronomer, Hevelius. Named after the astronomical sextant used to measure star positions.

T

TAURUS – BULL

Taurus, the bull, is another ancient constellation, dating back to Ptolemy in the 2nd century. In Greek mythology, Zeus morphs into a bull to seduce and kidnap Europa, beautiful daughter of Phoenician King, Agenor.

TELESCOPIUM – TELESCOPE

Yet another constellation named by French astronomer, Lacaille. In fact, it's one of many constellations named after instruments and tools of the time, Telescopium depicts a type of refractor telescope.

TRIANGULUM – TRIANGLE

Another oldie from Ptolemy in the 2nd century, Triangulum simply depicts a triangle because of its geometric visual shape. Also, Greeks knew Triangulum as *Deltoton*, because it resembled their triangular letter, delta!

TRIANGULUM AUSTRALE – SOUTHERN TRIANGLE

Named by Dutch astronomer, Plancius, Triangulum Australe is not associated with any mythologies. Basically, it represents the triangular configurations observed in the skies.

TUCANA – TOUCAN

Tucana, the toucan, represents the exotic bird, likely seen during 16th century journeys of Dutch explorers.

U

URSA MAJOR – BIG BEAR

One of the oldest constellations, Ursa Major, the big bear is widely known across many cultures and mythologies. In Greek mythology, Zeus falls in love with the nymph, Callisto. However, Zeus' wife Hera turns the nymph into a bear.

URSA MINOR – SMALL BEAR

Ursa Minor represents Arcas, son of Zeus and nymph Callisto, Zeus' affection. In fact, both characters morph into bears, hidden among the sky, protected from Zeus' jealous wife, Hera.

VELA – SAILS OF ARGO NAVIS

One of three constellations that forms the Argonaut's sailing vessel, Argo Navis. Vela is the ship's sails.

V

VIRGO – YOUNG MAIDEN

Virgo represents the daughter of Zeus, Dike, who was Greek mythology's goddess of justice. Most often, Virgo is depicted with majestic wings, holding the scales of justice, seen in constellation Libra.

VOLANS – FLYING FISH

Again, introduced by Dutch explorers of the 1500s, Volans represents a type of fish, able to bound from the water and appear to sail, or fly through the air!

VULPECULA – LITTLE FOX

Named by Polish astronomer, Johannes Hevelius, Vulpecula depicts a fox holding a goose in its teeth. In fact, Hevelius named the constellation after a fox bringing a goose to Cerberus, the dog guarding the entrance to Greek mythology's underworld.