

interstellar gas.

The coordinates given are of the star 12 Monocerotis, apparently the brightest star in the cluster but actually a foreground object.

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ε **Monocerotis**

SAO 113810

HIP 30419

NexStar Star 1483

DOUBLE STAR IN MONOCEROS

6<sup>h</sup>23.8<sup>m</sup> +4°36'

Magnitudes 4.4, 6.6

Separation 12.4"

Position angle 29°

Epsilon Monocerotis is a fine moderately close double for telescopes of all sizes, well seen at 65×, much better seen at 250×.

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**NGC 2301**

OPEN CLUSTER IN MONOCEROS

6<sup>h</sup>51.8<sup>m</sup> +0°28'

Magnitude 6.0

Diameter 6'

*Prominent object.* A cluster with “conspicuous chains of stars”

(Karkoschka) — more precisely, a chain of stars with another chain of stars perpendicular to it. The brighter chain is visible even in the 8×50 finder. Rarely observed, but well worth a look.

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**M48**

NGC 2548

OPEN CLUSTER IN HYDRA

8<sup>h</sup>13.7<sup>m</sup> −5°48'

Magnitude 5.8

Diameter 30'

*Prominent object.* This fine cluster fills the low power field. Its overall shape is triangular or heart-shaped.

It is, however, not entirely clear that this is actually the object Messier meant to list as M48, since the position he gave was 5° farther north.

You may find it interesting to explore and see if anything else in the vicinity fits Messier’s description: “a cluster of very small (faint) stars without nebulosity.” Note that he says nothing about the richness of the cluster. Precessed to epoch 2000, the position he gave is 8<sup>h</sup>13.9<sup>m</sup> −1°56'.