

8 Constellation Bootes (the Herdsman)

The constellation Bootes (which translates as the Herdsman and is also known as the Bear Driver) is a striking constellation near the Big Dipper (also called the Plough). If you extend the arc of the stars forming the Big Dipper's handle, you will find that the line leads directly to Arcturus, the brightest star in the constellation. Bootes is a prominent spring and summer constellation positioned between Hercules and Virgo. Its brightest stars form a shape resembling a child's kite. If you use binoculars or a small telescope, you will be able to spot a number of binary stars in Bootes. Bootes is depicted as a male figure.

There are several myths about the constellation. We will limit ourselves to one such version here:

Icarus received a grapevine as a gift from Dionysius (Greek god of wine). He then became the first winemaker. Icarus filled his wine into a wineskin and travelled across the country with it. Along the way, he gave some wine to a group of herdsman. After drinking the wine, they were so intoxicated that they feared Icarus was trying to poison them. They beat him to death because of this. His daughter, Erigone, found his grave with the help of her dog Maira. Erigone hanged herself as a result of her deep grief. Zeus consequently decided to place all three in the night sky: Icarus as Bootes, pushing a winemaker's cart, Erigone as the constellation Virgo and Maira as Canis Minor.