NGC 2287 (M41) an Open Cluster close to Sirius

This Month's suggestion isn't very difficult but is an homage to Johan Ludwig Emil Dreyer, the man that compiled the New General Catalogue of Nebulae and Clusters of Stars (NGC), that was born in February 1852.

Located about two finger-widths south of Alpha Canis Majoris (Right Ascension: 06h46min00s; Declination: 20º46'00"), only an open cluster as bright as NGC 2287 could stand up against the light of brilliant Sirius.

M41can be found bellow Sirius on the southeastern sky at about 20h (local time).This image was made using *Stellarium*(see Astronomy News, Number 1).

From a dark-sky location, your unaided eye can even spot this magnitude 4.5 "star vault" as a hazy patch. Aristotle saw it as early as 325 BC! Officially discovered by Hodierna, we know it best by the designation Messier Object 41.

M41, an open cluster in the constellation Canis Major. Credit: NOAO.

Even from 2,300 light-years away, the cluster's brightest star, an orange giant, stands out clearly from the stellar nest. With large aperture, you'll notice other K-type stars, all very similar to Sol. Although small scopes and binoculars won't reveal too much color, you might pick up on the blue signature of young, hot stars. NGC 2287 could be anywhere from 190 to 240 million years old, but its stars shine as brightly now as they did in Aristotle's day.

Links:
Wikipedia - M41
SEDS - M42
NOAO - M41