



Evening sky in FEBRUARY 2014

The two brightest stars in the night sky are almost directly overhead. Sirius, in the constellation of Canis Major (Big Dog), appears almost twice as bright as Canopus, in Carina (Keel). Sirius is one of the nearest stars to the Sun at a distance of 8.6 light years. It is gradually moving closer to the Solar System, so it will slightly increase in brightness over the next 60 000 years. It will remain the brightest star in the night sky for the next 210 000 years. In isiXhosa Sirius is known as *iQhawe*, the Champion. Below Canis Major is Canis Minor (Little Dog) with its bright star, Procyon. Still further down are Castor and Pollux in Gemini (Twins). The dogs follow Orion (Hunter), who is fighting with Taurus (Bull). The bright star in the southwest is Achernar, the southern end of Eridanus (River). In the southeast is Crux (Southern Cross) lying on its side with the Pointers below.

Planet Jupiter shines brightly in Gemini in the north-east. With planet Venus now shining as the Morning Star, Jupiter replaces it as the Evening Star.

The Moon is in the evening sky from 3 February until 18 February.