Variable Star of the Year
R Scuti

R Scuti is the brightest of the RV Tauri variables, a small class of yellow supergiants which characteristically show semi-regular pulsations with alternating deep and shallow minima. It is an easy binocular object, spending most of the time varying between magnitudes 5 and 7, but occasionally approaching the recorded extremes of 4.2 and 8.6. The mean period, that is the time between consecutive deep minima, is 146.5 days. In spite of it's Southerly declination, the star can be followed almost all year round from the UK, disappearing into evening twilight in mid-December and reappearing in the morning sky in mid-January. Although it is well observed during the second half of the year, more observations are needed during the first half, when it is visible in the mornings only.

The other two variables listed on the chart, V Aquilae and S Scuti, are both very red semi-regular pulsating carbon stars. V has a range of 6.6-8.4 and a period of 353 days and S, a range of about 7 to 8 and a period of 148 days. Recent observations of carbon monoxide emission from S seem to indicate that it is surrounded by a circumstellar shell that was ejected in a phase of very high mass loss about 10,000 years ago.