

THE GREAT COMET OF 1986

Yes, the title is correct. This is the prediction of the way Comet Halley will probably appear during its coming apparition. Currently in the direction of Procyon, and beyond Saturn it is making the headlong plunge towards the sun for a rendezvous on February 9, 1986.

In about 8 years from now astronomical literature will carry the announcement of the recovery of this celebrated object. At that time the comet will probably be of magnitude 20. The comet will probably be observable visually in the morning sky around August, 1985. It should be about 14th magnitude and large instruments will be required. By mid September the comet could be as bright as 12th magnitude and 10th by mid October, 1985. In mid November the comet will be in opposition in Taurus and as bright as 7th or 8th magnitude. During this time Comet Halley should show signs of a tail. Toward the end of the year the comet should increase to 6th magnitude and develop a strong tail. On January 13, 1986, the comet will be at 5th magnitude on Jupiter to the south, and a crescent moon still farther south. The comet should have a 5 degree tail and 10 degrees is not out of the question. A day or so before full moon the comet will move toward towards the sun and become lost as a fourth magnitude object in twilight.

By February 19, 1986 Comet Halley will emerge in the dawn sky 20 degrees from the sun and will be at magnitude 2 with a tail of perhaps 10 to 20 degrees in length. In March the comet will have faded to perhaps 4th magnitude and should hold until the end of the month. At that point the decreasing distance from the comet to the Earth will counteract the fading and the comet should increase to magnitude 3 and by then have a tail anywhere from 20 to 40 degrees in length.

But as things go there are drawbacks as to making observations of this sort. North American observers will not get a very good view of the comet, for on March 21st the comet will be at the southerly declination of -47 degrees, and traveling even farther south as each day progresses. By the 31st it will have dropped to -37 degrees culminating to -47 degrees on April 10th. On this date, Comet Halley will be at its closest to the earth (0.42 A.U.), and should still be at third magnitude, and will lose its tail. During June and July the comet will have faded to 11th magnitude, and becoming stationary where it will be lost in evening twilight. Very large instruments may again pick it up at the end of the year as a very faint 17th magnitude object, where they could follow it until its next opposition during 1987-88. After that we will have to wait until 2062 AD for its next return.

The Atlanta Observer's Notebook

On this report notice we have mentioned very little of the ways which will interfere with observations greatly on several occasions. Also, if the trend in building continues, light pollution will become severe. Some observers will feel hopeless on their prospects of ever seeing the comet with the naked eye. Light has the bad habit of drawing out a comet and moonlight or city lights have the same effect. Dark skies are to be chosen, and they may be hard to find when Comet Halley makes its debut.

- Jerry Krustong -

Comets,
Pirates of the Sky,
steal splendor from the sun
squandering it away
in a stream of icy nuggets,
a moment of glory
for a celestial bandit.

Gethic Jalatio

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Administrative Affairs

A private organization has been set up for the exclusive use of members of the young men's club, the Astoria Club. The members of the club are astronomy club and will receive a reward a quarter this year for the club. The latter was set up in 1977 according to Astoria club members in Astoria and now is set up in the Astoria Club.

... 1977. A remarkable day in the history of the club. The club is the first to have a club set up in the club. The club is the first to have a club set up in the club.

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* This money is only about half of what is needed