

ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA

COMET AND NOVA SECTION

SEARCHING FOR COMETS AND NOVAE:

The purpose of this section is to encourage the systematic search for new comets and novae, and to have observers prepared to observe them when they do appear.

Little or no optical aid is required to take an active part in this section. Observers who have a knowledge of the constellations may search the "dome" for new naked eye objects. A nova often reaches naked eye brilliancy before being discovered, and occasionally a naked eye comet will be discovered when it is near the sun.

Observers may select definite areas of the sky to search with binoculars. The sky is divided into areas each approximately ten degrees square, and the observer may select several areas in different parts of the sky in such a way that at least one area will be visible every clear night. Each Centre indicating an interest in this programme will receive a copy of the "Area Chart". Observers may select their own areas, but no two observers in any one Centre should have the same area. With about 400 areas visible in Canada, there are more than enough to go around.

Once he has received his areas, the observer should make charts of them, showing stars to at least sixth magnitude. This may be done with the aid of a good star atlas (i.e. "Norton's"). The, each clear night, the observer should identify each star in his area and if nothing unusual is seen, a negative report should be made on the form supplies to him. (This form is self-explanatory.)

If he wishes, the observer may make more detailed observations with a telescope by "sweeping" different parts of the sky each night. In this case, the observer picks out the region he wishes to search and carefully checks each object with a star atlas. If nothing unusual is seen, the negative report form is filled out.

Members now making nova search observations for the R.A.V.S.O. should continue to send their observations there but are asked to make copies for this Comet and Nova Section.

Centres interested in taking part in this programme are asked to appoint a chairman to take care of such activities at that Centre, and this chairman should contact the National Co-ordinator of the Comet and Nova Section. Unattached members also are invited to take part in this programme.