

ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA

COMET AND NOVA SECTION

OBSERVATIONS OF COMETS AND NOVAE:

A. Observation of a Comet.

1. Make a chart of the stars in the region of the comet, and identify several stars. Mark the comet's position. Note the date, time, and seeing conditions.
2. Make a detailed drawing of the comet, and comment on colour and unusual details. Estimate the magnitude by comparing it with stars out of focus.
3. Estimate or measure the angular diameter of the comet. If you know the diameter of the field of view of your telescope, the size of the object may be estimated in terms of the field of view. A more accurate method is to place the comet in the centre of the field and let it drift. By noting the difference in time between first contact with the edge of the field and when it is last seen leaving the field, the diameter can be found. Send this timing to the National Co-ordinator who will convert it to angular diameter.
4. Note any change in position during the observation.
5. Give details about the instruments used for the observation.

B. Observation of a Nova.

1. Estimate the magnitude and colour.
2. Note the date, time, and seeing conditions.
3. Make several observations a night during the first week or more after discovery, if possible.

For more details on Nova Observations, observers should contact the National Co-ordinator of the Variable Star Section. After discovery, a nova is classified as a variable star, and as a result, these two programmes are cooperating with each other.

The above outline is only a suggestion on how to observe Comets and Novae and need not be followed exactly. The National Co-ordinator will be happy to receive any reports of observations.