

ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE FOR OBSERVATIONAL ACTIVITIES

COMET AND NOVA SECTION

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT.
For 1963.

1. HISTORY.

The Comet and Nova Section was introduced to the members of the Society on November 15, 1961 when "Bulletin No. E" was issued. At that time, only the Montreal Centre had a programme for the systematic search for new objects, but by the end of the year several other Centres informed the National Coordinator of this section indicated interest in this work.

By the time "Bulletin #2" was issued on March 1, 1962, the National Coordinator had received replies from ten of the sixteen Centres. Members from Montreal, Niagara Falls, and Hamilton soon began reporting searches, and these Centres are still active at the end of 1963.

Bulletin #3 was issued on June 18, 1963 summarizing the work done to date. On March 19, 1963, Bulletin #4 was issued which introduced a new programme (searching the dome with the naked eye), and summarized the work done during 1962.

The following announcements were mailed to all Centres:

- Announcement #1. December 1961. Comet Seki.
- Announcement #2. March 1962. Comet Seki-Lines, 1962-c.
- Announcement #3. March 23, 1962. Comet Seki-Lines, 1962-c (continued).
- Announcement #4. June 18, 1962. Comet Humason, 1961-e.
- Announcement #5. Feb. 19, 1963. Comet Ikeya, 1963-a.
- Announcement #6. Feb. 26, 1963. Nova Herculis, 1963.
- Announcement #7. Apr. 7, 1963. Comet Alcock, 1963-b.

2. SEARCHES FOR COMETS AND NOVAE.

During 1963, 2299 searches were made by 21 observers. They observed about 60 of the 400 areas visible from Canada. During 1962, 1953 searches were made by 27 observers, so that although there were fewer observers, the actual number of searches increased. It was discovered that many observers would be enthusiastic in starting this programme, but would drop out after a few months. However, those who remain are active and reliable observers. Most observers used binoculars and checked stars in their $10^{\circ} \times 10^{\circ}$ areas to approximately sixth magnitude. Several observers made naked eye searches of the dome.

3. OBSERVATIONS OF COMET AND NOVAE.

Many reports were received on Comets Ikeya (1963a) and Alcock (1963b), but many were only summaries or statements that it was seen. Not enough information was received to analyse these comets. The National Coordinator understands that many more observations were made but never reported. Many members and Centres like to keep copies of observations for their own records, and making copies is either time consuming or expensive. At the moment there seems to be no solution

for this problem. No standard report forms have been made for the reporting of observations, although instruction forms have been prepared. Perhaps, however, if report forms were made, it would encourage observers to send in their observations. This matter should be given much thought and the National Coordinator would like advise from the Chairman and Committee before going ahead with any plans on such a project.

Observations of Nova Herculis, 1963 numbered 153 from 8 observers. From observations received, it was determined that a secondary maximum occurred about March 1 (magnitude 4.9 to 5.1) and by the end of 1963 it was down to magnitude 10.

4. DISCOVERYS.

Mr. Matte of the Quebec Centre made independent discoveries of the separation of Comet Alcock, and of the sudden brightening of Comet Ikeya. Mr. A. J. Morehouse, an unattached member, also made an independent discovery of the brightening of comet Ikeya.

5. BULLETINS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

One bulletin and three announcements were mailed during 1963. Copies were sent to all Centres, the other National Coordinators, the Standing Committee, the President of the R.A.S.C., and others who indicated an interest in this section. There are about 40 names on the mailing list of the Comet and Nova Section.

6. CORRESPONDENCE.

During 1963, the National Coordinator of this section received 60 letters and notices, and wrote 56 letters (not including acknowledgements). The coordinator heard from the following eight Centres during the year: Hamilton, London, Montreal, Niagara Falls, Quebec, Toronto, Victoria, and Winnipeg. In addition, several unattached members wrote regarding the programme.

7. SUMMARY.

The activity in this section has changed little during the year, and only a few new members started taking an active part in the programme while several became inactive. Although it is known that many members of the Society observe Comets and Novae when they appear, only a small part of the observations are reported. The national coordinator would like to see much more interest in this programme.

Respectfully submitted,

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