

THE ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA



J. J. Howell
185 Fairview Drive S.E.
Calgary, Alta.

Fri. Oct 27th '67.

Dear Jim,

It is a long time since I last wrote you - hope I thanked you for the forms (C & N) you forwarded last February. A lot has happened since then and I will give you more details in a later letter when I forward my own Negative Report on Nova search - along with several brightness estimates of Nova Alcock.

Now the real reason for this letter. I generated a fair amount of excitement in Calgary last night about 10³⁰ pm M.S.T. as by then our other member of our Centre - Kees Bais saw "the object" close to a Auriga - otherwise known as Capella. Sky conditions deteriorated gradually - haze developing as the moisture condensed as temperatures fell well below freezing - but I observed the suspected comet until 11³⁰ pm M.S.T. or 06.30 hrs U.T. a period of 2 ³/₄ hours and feel relatively certain of slight Eastward motion, altho this again could be due to altering the orientation of my 10" Newtonian - I changed the position to get better eyepiece position and this reversed the "field" as Capella climbed higher to the zenith. I checked with our Planetarium staff who receive I.A.U. announcements and have a good reference file of Star Maps & catalogues and draw "a blank" for any known "nebulae or extra galactic objects" etc. altho one item (external galaxy) is listed at ^{R.A.} 5 hours 20. Dec. plus 46.5°. At 11.35 M.S.T. (6.35 U.T. 27th Oct.) I called "Satellites New York as per ^{Your} C & N Form #3, the following.

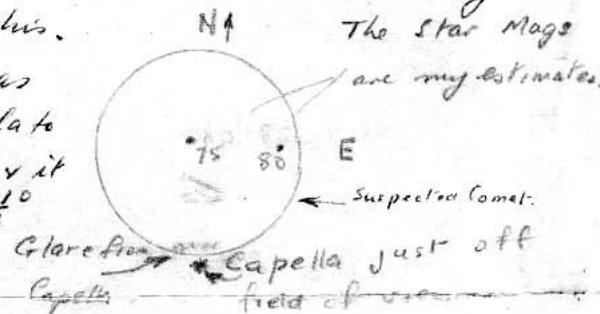
| | | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|----------|
| New Object Oct. 27 | 0345 U.T. | R.A. 5 hrs 13' | Dec Plus 46° 15' | Mag 6. |
| Motion East | One Minute per hour. | J. Howell | 185 Fairview Dr. S.E. Calgary | Alberta. |

When I first saw it at 0345 hrs U.T. (8.45^{p.m.} M.S.T.) I was using Capella to set my hour circle in preparation for "searching" my Nova Search area for (I must apologise) only the 3rd time since last April. This is near Cassiopeia: Needless to say it was not searched. The glare from Capella (over)

P.S. I sincerely hope I have not been "seeing things" Jim, but I came on & phoned 3 times and so 4 times I went out to my observatory and swung up to Capella and as my eyes improved so the new object showed up - star brightness was a good indication of deteriorating sky and nearby faint stars were fading out at different times as haze thickened & then would lift slightly - the 2 nearby stars once faded and the possible comet was just visible. I suspected the nucleus was to the East - but did not definitely identify it. John.

(cont) is surprising in a small "field". I ~~was~~ was using a 10.5 m.m. eyepiece on my F 8.1 - 10" reflector - about 200 power - this was left in from my last Lunar Occultation observation, a program I have become very active in. As I started to move Capella out of the field I think my "averted" vision saw the object and I swung the telescope slightly a couple of times and then steadied it and rechecked and there was no doubt of the filamentary or nebulous appearance, which I first thought may be a Messier object I was unaware of - I have not seen all the M objects - maybe some 20 or so of them at odd times - generally by accident. A check of The Handbook (R.A.S.C.) and Notous showed nothing near Capella - so I phoned Kes. to check his Skalnate, and ask him to check the area with his 6 inch Newtonian. He said he used about 200 power to cut down a Aur. glass and definitely saw the "new object," and described it as making a right angled triangle with 2 fainter stars, which is how I had mentally placed it. A rough eyepiece view is like this.

Dropping Capella off the field the object was just below the centre of the field. I allowed Capella to trail right across the field to check the width & it to 80 seconds which is approx. $1'20''$ of arc or $\frac{1}{3}^\circ$



my original magnitude estimate was that it was possibly 4 or 5 allowing for Capella's glare but I revised it later, it is a hard thing to estimate under the conditions, and with haze developing as the hours passed. Three of the Planetarium staff & I drove East of Calgary with the Planetarium's 6" Minusius Cassagrain scope, but with the large secondary mirror in this instrument - considerable light grasp is lost - it is equivalent to about a 4" Newtonian in that respect & with my 3" Newtonian we failed to definitely see it - Bob Nelson - Technical Supt. at the Planetarium & long time 6" Newtonian observer was uncertain (as I was) that we glimpsed it a couple of times - seeing was variable & the moon had risen with a large (20° or more) halo. We stayed out till 2.45 a.m. (M.S.T.) & I hoped my 10" would show it when I get home - also 10 cloud cover by 3.15 a.m. no moon even - isn't it always there. I plotted the R.A. and Dec. from my Atlas Borealis and feel they are reasonably close ($\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ degree or so) actually with 5' arc probably or better. Today is fairly cloudy - we are all hoping for it to clear.

Yours truly, John Howell.