# Comets Galore!

A rarely seen burst in comet discoveries occurred between September 1 and October 11, 1978. The final score Amateurs vrs. Professionals must have strengthened the morale of the former: 5 to 1!

It started on September 1, when J. da Silva Campos in South Africa and T. Haneda in Japan independently discovered the same comet, now named Haneda-Campos (1978 j). The comet moves in an elliptical orbit with a period of only 6 years, possibly because it came near Jupiter in 1957 and 1969 and was "captured". Searching the plate archives in Pasadena and Geneva brought to light two prediscovery images of 1978 j from early August, the first with the Palomar 46 cm Schmidt telescope, the second with the ESO Schmidt (see the photo). Blame to the professionals!

Fig. 1: *Prediscovery image of Comet Haneda-Campos on August 9, 1978. ESO 1 m Schmidt telescope. IIa-O + GG 385, 60 min. Magnitude about 12.*

After Comet Giclas (1978 k) found at Lowell Observatory in Arizona, USA, on September 8, followed Comet Machholz (1978 l) on the 13th. It was discovered just before full moon by a California amateur, Don E. Machholz. The ESO plate shown here was the first confirmation from an observatory and was made under difficult conditions.

Then followed Comet Seargent (1978 m) (D.A.J. Seargent, Australia), Comet Fujikawa (1978 n) (S. Fujikawa, Japan) and Comet Bradfield (1978 o) (W.A. Bradfield, Australia) on October 2, 10 and 11, respectively. All three were caught when they were relatively near their perihelia and are now fading.

At La Silla, observations are being planned of Comet Meier (1978 f) when it reaches perihelion on November 11. At that date it will be very low in the morning sky, just above the eastern horizon. The observations will be made at the request of radio astronomers in Europe and USA, who have been tracking Comet Meier during the summer when it was too near to the Sun to be observed optically (see also the article about Comet 1978 c in the *Messenger* No. 13, p. 8).

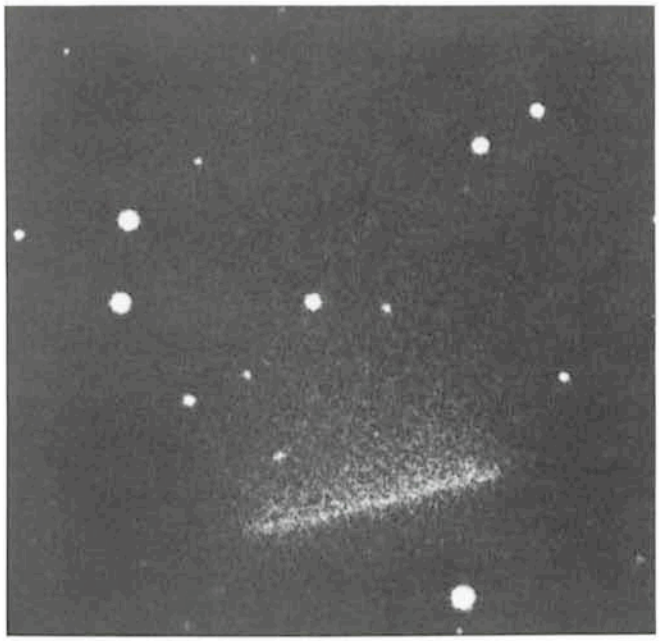

Fig. 2: *Comet Haneda-Campos photographed on September 29, 1978 with the ESO Schmidt telescope when it was just over 24 million kilometres from the Earth.*

Fig. 3: *Comet Machholz on September 14, 1978, photographed with the ESO Schmidt telescope on a 098-04 (red) plate behind a RG 630 filter. Exposure time 10 min in moonlight. Observer: H.-E. Schuster. The horizontal "bars" connected to the brighter stars were caused by a shutter failure.*

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### UP THERE AND DOWN HERE

WHO used pure hydrogen to hypersensitize the plates?

. . . à partir du sol et c'est pourquoi un colloque organisé par l'ESO (European Space Organisation) . . .
Editorial, *l'Astronomie*, **92**, p. 339 (September 1978).