

INFORMATION:

PRODUCTION:

0604 811030

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The Astronomer

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PERIODIC COMET WILD 2 (1978b)

Marsden reports that Paul Wild, Astronomical Institute, Berne University has discovered a comet on exposures with the 40cm Schmidt telescope at Zimmerwald. He described the object as diffuse with a marked condensation:

	1978 UT	R.A.	DEC	INTC	m ₁
Jan.	6.82847	5 ^h 34 ^m 38 ^s .11	+19°23'33".7 (1950)		13½-14
	6.85833	5 34 36.03	+19 23 38.0		

In response to a telephone alert by the Editor, Robert McNaught and H Clough (Scotland) successfully photographed this comet with the 24" reflector and the position below was measured by Peter Birtwhistle:

Feb	2.93646	5 ^h 16 ^m 09 ^s .84	+20°12'09".0
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This exposure, together with a further result by Brian Manning (in course of measurement) suggested that the comet was perhaps brighter than suggested by the discovery magnitude and subsequent ephemeris on a recent IAUC.

A visual observation by G Hurst with the 26cm spec on 1978 Feb 9 at 20.31UT, showed this comet to be quite bright and within the range of amateur instruments; the magnitude estimated was 11.3.

An ephemeris is provided below based on preliminary elements by Brian Marsden. The magnitudes, assuming the above visual observation as a base, would be expected to show a very gradual increase to approx mag 11.0 on the last date:

	1978 ET	RA	1950	DEC
Feb. 11		5 ^h 16 ^m .2		+20°34'
21		5 20.2		+21 05
Mar. 3		5 28.4		+21 38
13		5 40.4		+22 11

Although moonlight could interfere with early observations, the comet is strongly condensed and, in such circumstances, high magnification could be used to detect the central region, with movement to confirm the identification. Results in writing please to the Editor by next TA deadline.

MARS

S O'Meara, Cambridge, Massachusetts, reports that observations on Jan 17.07UT with the Harvard Observatory's 23cm refractor showed a duststorm bordering on Mare Acidalium and Mare Boreum, extending into Tempe. Nilokeras and Tanais were obscured.

R.L. Bishop, Acadia University also reports independently that he detected an abnormally light area in the Tempe area of Mars on Jan 25.17UT. Reports in writing to Richard Bowen.

GUY HURST.