



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED—Troops board a glider ready for the pick up.

ASTRONOMY

Comet Is Approaching

Orbit computed by discoverer of new Whipple Comet shows that it will pass within 50,000,000 miles of the earth in January. Can't be seen without aid.

► THE NEWLY discovered Whipple comet will pass within 50,000,000 miles of the earth some time in January.

An orbit computation by its discoverer, Dr. Fred L. Whipple of Harvard College Observatory, showed also that the comet, despite its nearness, will not achieve practical visibility with the naked eye.

The comet is currently traveling along with the earth in its orbit around the sun. The comet will be nearest the sun and pass the perihelion point in its orbit on Feb. 6, at which time its distance from the sun will be 1.35 astronomical units. Since an astronomical unit is the distance from the earth to the sun or 93,000,000 miles, the comet's distance from the sun will then be about 125,000,000 miles.

The comet's orbit is inclined only 20 degrees to the plane of the earth's orbit, which is a relatively small inclination as comets go. It is traveling in the same direction as the earth, from west to east around the sun, whereas many comets are found which move in the opposite direction.

Inasmuch as the orbit computed is parabolic rather than elliptical, it can not be told at present how much time is required for the comet to go completely around its orbit. Nor can the eccentricity or ovalness of the orbit be stated, even though it is practically certain that the finally determined orbit of this comet will be an ellipse. It is customary for astronomers to consider orbits of comets parabolic, as the portion of the orbit of a comet on which it is usually seen is practically the same as a parabola even if the orbit is actually an eccentric ellipse.

Science News Letter, January 2, 1943

ASTRONOMY

Periodic Comet Wolf I Rediscovered at Mt. Wilson

► FIRST SIGHT of periodic Comet Wolf I, expected to become visible in large telescopes early in September, 1942, was obtained by Dr. Walter Baade on Nov. 5 with the 100 inch reflector of the Mt. Wilson Observatory.

Previous attempts to locate this faint

object had evidently failed owing to the fact that its observed position as determined from measurements on Dr. Baade's photographs differed from that predicted in the Handbook of the British Astronomical Association by as much as 13 diameters of the full moon. On the other hand, the positions predicted by M. Kamienski of Warsaw which Dr. Baade used in his search for the comet required only a small correction.

The photographs show the comet with a starlike head and small tail. Its magnitude on Nov. 5 was 18.6—far too faint to be caught except with the most powerful instruments.

Comet Wolf I was discovered on Sept. 17, 1884, by Max Wolf of Heidelberg. Its period at present is 8.3 years but its motion may be greatly altered by the disturbing influence of Jupiter and Saturn. It was a close approach to Jupiter in 1875 that changed the comet's path to such an extent that it could later be seen from the earth.

Science News Letter, January 2, 1943

AERONAUTICS

Glider Pickup May Be Tried in 1943 Combat

See Front Cover

► THE ARMY's new method of pick-up for troop-carrying gliders may be tried out in combat effectively during the coming year.

The official Army Air Forces photograph on the front cover of this week's SCIENCE NEWS LETTER shows troops leaping from the glider in position ready to charge in attack.

The accompanying photograph on this page shows how the men are loaded onto the engine-less craft.

Science News Letter, January 2, 1943

● RADIO

Saturday, January 9, 1:30 p.m., EWT.

"Adventures in Science," with Watson Davis, director of Science Service, over Columbia Broadcasting System.

Dr. Charles W. Bray, of the National Research Council, will tell "How To Use Your Eyes at Night."

Monday, January 4, 9:15 a.m., EWT; 2:30 p.m., CWT; 9:30 a.m., MWT; and 1:30 p.m., PWT

Science at Work, School of the Air of the Americas over the Columbia Broadcasting System, presented in cooperation with the National Education Association, Science Service and Science Clubs of America.

"Worlds Begin" will be the subject of the program.