

## ASTRONOMY

# Bright New Comet

The comet which was spotted in the northeast sky by a Washington, D. C., business man has been named Pajdusakova-Rotbart.

➤ A BRIGHT new comet was discovered in Washington, D. C., early Thursday morning, May 30, by an amateur astronomer, David Rotbart, a Washington business man. Looking through binoculars at 2 a.m., EST, Mr. Rotbart spotted the sixth magnitude comet in the constellation of Cygnus, the swan. Just bright enough to be seen with the naked eye, the tail was less than one degree and the comet had a nucleus.

Discovery of the comet was confirmed at the U. S. Naval Observatory early Friday morning, May 31. The comet was found to be moving quite rapidly toward the northwest.

Word of discovery of this comet by an observer in Europe had just been received at Harvard College Observatory, clearing house for astronomical information in America. A cablegram from Dr. Elis Stromberg at Copenhagen reported that

it was located at 7:30 p.m., EST, Wednesday, May 29, by a European astronomer named Pajdusakova. The comet at that time was estimated to be about the eighth magnitude, too faint to be seen with the naked eye.

This new heavenly object will be called the Pajdusakova-Rotbart comet, the two men having discovered it independently. This is the first comet that Mr. Rotbart has reported. He has a wide-angle telescope and three pairs of binoculars he uses in his observations.

When found, the comet had a right ascension of 20 hours, 36.8 minutes, and a declination of 30 degrees, 4 minutes. Rough observations made twenty minutes apart at the Naval Observatory by Alfred Mikesell showed the comet moving westward about one hour per day and northward eight degrees daily.

Located in the constellation of Cygnus, the swan, the comet sped across the constellations of Lyra, Hercules and Bootes, the herdsman, toward the constellation of Coma Berenices, Berenice's hair. The rapid motion of the comet through the heavens may be accounted for by the fact that it is moving around the sun in the opposite direction from the earth, states Leland E. Cunningham of the University of California, who computed its orbit.

It was closest to the sun on May 11, when it made what astronomers call its perihelion passage. It was then about 95 trillion miles from the sun, just a little more than the average distance of the earth from the sun.

Bright enough to be picked up with binoculars when first spotted, the comet faded rapidly. The moon interfered with the comet during the week-end of June 9, and it will probably be too faint to be seen with small telescopes after full moon, June 14.

*Science News Letter, June 15, 1946*

Wood on land is attacked by decay-producing fungi and such insects as termites, and wood under water by the marine wood-boring teredo and other forms of life that seek shelter or food.

## ORNITHOLOGY

## Sparrows and Starlings Build Duplex Nest

➤ HERE'S A story of housing shortage in the bird world. Birds do share duplex apartments. A pair of English sparrows and a pair of starlings built their nests together like a double house, each having its own side, Lewis E. Potts reports to the American Museum of Natural History.

The birds fought continuously while building their nests. After a month of squabbles, peaceful neighborliness reigned.

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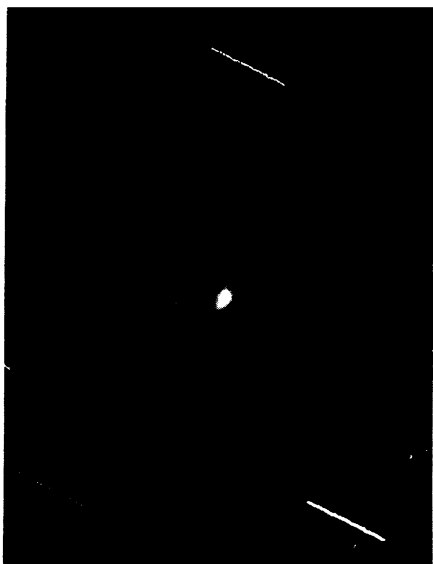
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**NEWEST COMET**—Comet Pajdusakova-Rotbart as it appeared in the northeastern sky on June 4, photographed at the U. S. Naval Observatory, Washington, D. C., with their 10-inch photographic equatorial telescope. The star trails are "wiggly" because of guiding done on the comet during exposure.