

Thaxted Astronomical Society

News

Features

NF0068

Comet Neowise Can Be
Seen With The Naked Eye

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-8505475/Stunning-video-taken-ISS-shows-comet-Neowise-Earth.html>

Comet Neowise can be seen with the naked eye from Earth throughout July

Daily Mail 9th July 2020 >

- **The comet was first discovered by the NEOWISE space telescope on March 27**
- **Called C/2020 F3 NEOWISE - it made its closest approach to the Sun on July 3**
- **During its closest approach to Earth on July 23 it will be 64 million miles away**
- **It is visible just above the horizon in the north-east sky when viewed from the UK**

Formally named C/2020 F3, the comet was discovered in late March by the NEOWISE space telescope and will be visible with the naked eye throughout July.

Neowise is a visitor from the most distant parts of the solar system and as it comes closer to Earth it is a 'once-in-a-lifetime' chance to see it in the night sky.

To view the comet in the UK you'll need to stay up late as it is best viewed at about 02.30 BST in the north-east sky anywhere in the country - just above the horizon.

The comet is currently millions of miles away from Earth and during its **closest approach on July 23** will still be 64 million miles from the planet.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-8505475/Stunning-video-taken-ISS-shows-comet-Neowise-Earth.html>

Comet Neowise can be seen with the naked eye from Earth throughout July

Daily Mail 9th July 2020 >

The Neowise comet seen above noctilucent clouds taken from the Hochfeiler mountain in the South Tyrol alps in Italy. The comet will be visible with the naked eye throughout July

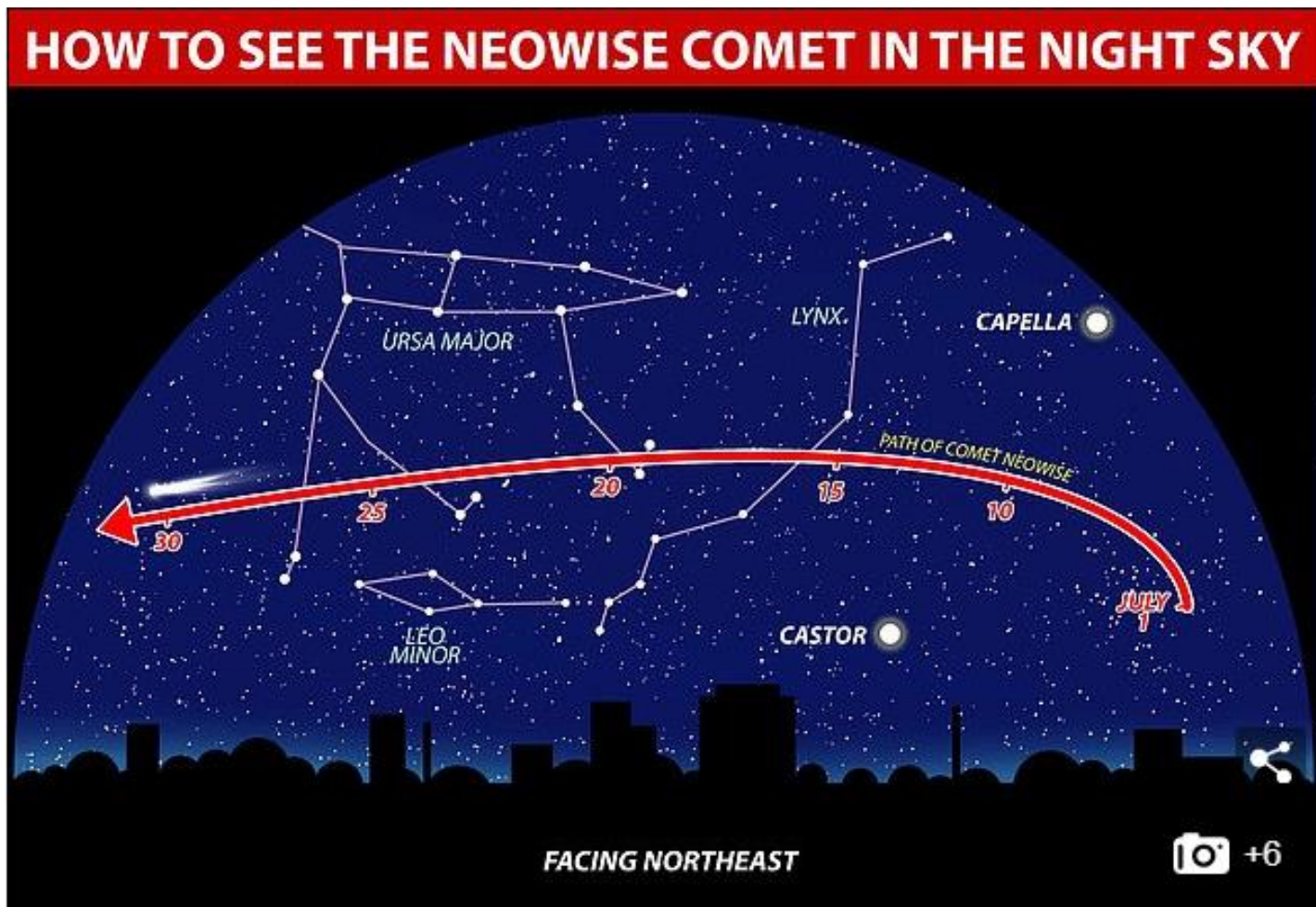


<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-8505475/Stunning-video-taken-ISS-shows-comet-Neowise-Earth.html>

Comet Neowise can be seen with the naked eye from Earth throughout July

Daily Mail 9th July 2020 >

To view the comet in the UK you'll need to stay up late as it is best viewed at about 02.30 BST in the north-east sky anywhere in the country - just above the horizon - and is near the stars Capella and Castor



<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-8505475/Stunning-video-taken-ISS-shows-comet-Neowise-Earth.html>

Comet Neowise can be seen with the naked eye from Earth throughout July

Daily Mail 9th July 2020 >

It won't be a particularly bright comet compared to the likes of Hale-Bopp, widely seen in 1997, but it will look 'spectacular' with binoculars, astronomers claim.

Neowise reached its closest point to the Sun on July 3, when it was a similar distance to the star as Mercury and will become clearer from Earth as it gets closer.

Observers all over the world are racing to see the natural fireworks display before the comet speeds away into the depths of space.

Even the astronauts aboard the International Space Station spotted the comet from their vantage point high above Earth's atmosphere.

During its closest approach to Earth the comet will be about 64 million miles away - or about 400 times further away than the Moon.

NASA said: 'The interplanetary iceberg survived solar heating, so far, and is now becoming closer to Earth as it starts its long trek back to the outer solar system.'

As it gets closer to Earth over the next few weeks it will hopefully become more visible, with its tail appearing longer and brighter and making it easier to spot.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-8505475/Stunning-video-taken-ISS-shows-comet-Neowise-Earth.html>

Comet Neowise can be seen with the naked eye from Earth throughout July

Daily Mail 9th July 2020 >

The comet is already visible over most of the northern hemisphere during the night but it is very low - just above the horizon.

People wishing to catch a glimpse of the glowing comet can spot it as it swings through the inner solar system, but its position could make it difficult.

'For the next few days it will be visible about an hour before sunrise, close to the horizon in the northeastern sky in the United States,' said NASA.

It can be viewed at a similar time from the UK, but astronomers say it is best seen in the middle of the night - at about 02:30 BST.

'Observers might be able to see the comet's central core, or nucleus, with the naked eye in dark skies; using binoculars will give viewers a good look at the fuzzy comet and its long, streaky tail,' NASA explained.

'As it speeds away from the Sun, Comet NEOWISE will begin to make its appearance in the evening sky shortly after sunset on July 11.'

For the best chance of seeing it you should find a relatively clear area with low light pollution and few buildings or trees blocking the view.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-8505475/Stunning-video-taken-ISS-shows-comet-Neowise-Earth.html>

Comet Neowise can be seen with the naked eye from Earth throughout July

Daily Mail 9th July 2020 >

It is currently showing just below and to the lower left of the bright star Capella in the constellation of Auriga - moving westwards.

'Comet NEOWISE has brightened to magnitude 1 taking it easily in to the realms of naked eye visibility,' according to CometWatch.

'C/2020 F3 is now certainly one to watch as it slowly heads north out of twilight through the constellations of Auriga, Lynx and Ursa Major through July; ideally placed for northern hemisphere observation.'

NASA's Near-Earth Object Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer (NEOWISE) mission discovered the icy visitor on March 27, 2020, using its two infrared channels.

These channels are sensitive to the heat signatures given off by the object as the Sun started to turn up the heat, the space agency explained.

'In its discovery images, Comet NEOWISE appeared as a glowing, fuzzy dot moving across the sky even when it was still pretty far away,' said Amy Mainzer, NEOWISE principal investigator at the University of Arizona.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-8505475/Stunning-video-taken-ISS-shows-comet-Neowise-Earth.html>

Comet Neowise can be seen with the naked eye from Earth throughout July

Daily Mail 9th July 2020 >

'As soon as we saw how close it would come to the Sun, we had hopes that it would put on a good show.'

By the end of the month the comet will move into Ursa Major and if it remains as bright as it is now then you should see its tail pointing into the Big Dipper.

The tail is a main distinguishing features of a comet - it is caused by ice turning to gas as it reaches the inner solar system from the reaches of the Kuiper belt.

Comets are made of ice, gas and rock - often described as giant space icebergs - that tend to originate in the outer solar system and move in on a long orbit.

The other major type of space rock, the asteroid, tend to be made of metal or rock and can come from anywhere in the system - including a large grouping of asteroids situated between Mars and Jupiter.

'Comets are essentially asteroids that are heavy on the ice,' a Nasa expert said.

According to astronomers this is the brightest and first real 'naked eye' comet visible in the northern hemisphere in about seven years.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-8505475/Stunning-video-taken-ISS-shows-comet-Neowise-Earth.html>

Comet Neowise can be seen with the naked eye from Earth throughout July

Daily Mail 9th July 2020 >



<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-8505475/Stunning-video-taken-ISS-shows-comet-Neowise-Earth.html>

Comet Neowise can be seen with the naked eye from Earth throughout July

Daily Mail 9th July 2020 >

Explained: The difference between an asteroid, meteorite and other space rocks

An asteroid is a large chunk of rock left over from collisions or the early solar system. Most are located between Mars and Jupiter in the Main Belt.

A comet is a rock covered in ice, methane and other compounds. Their orbits take them much further out of the solar system.

A meteor is what astronomers call a flash of light in the atmosphere when debris burns up.

This debris itself is known as a meteoroid. Most are so small they are vapourised in the atmosphere.

If any of this meteoroid makes it to Earth, it is called a meteorite.

Meteors, meteoroids and meteorites normally originate from asteroids and comets.

For example, if Earth passes through the tail of a comet, much of the debris burns up in the atmosphere, forming a meteor shower.