Comet NEAT and the Beehive

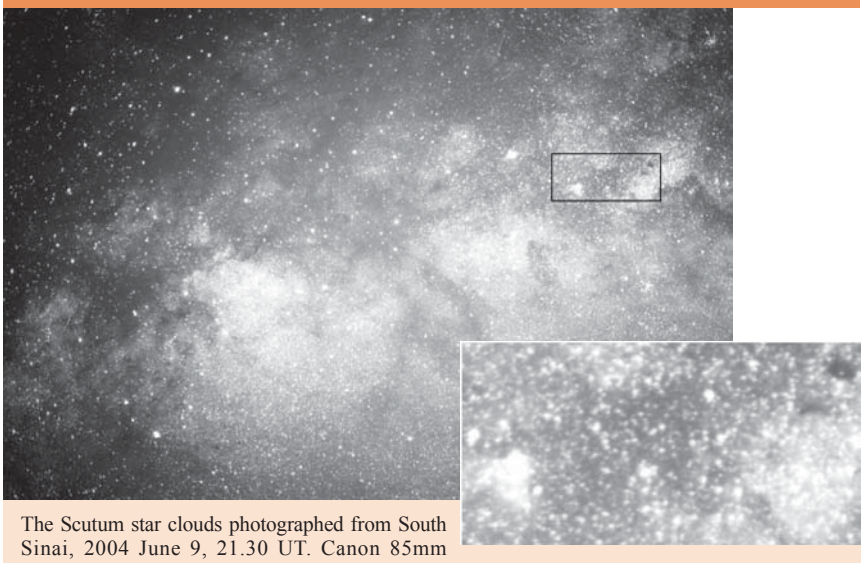
Comet C/2001 Q4 (NEAT) finally made its appearance in the sky for Northern Hemisphere observers in May. Although it was not as bright as some predictions had suggested, it was an easy third magnitude object in mid-May using small binoculars, which is fascinating given that its magnitude was only 20 when detected in 2001.

The three pictures below right show the comet's transit through M44 (the Beehive Cluster) in Cancer. A wide angle view was essential to include at least part of the cluster on all three nights. I found the use of a simple 50mm camera lens attached to the Starlight Xpress MX5 CCD gave a field of view of about five degrees and therefore allowed both the cluster and comet to be recorded.

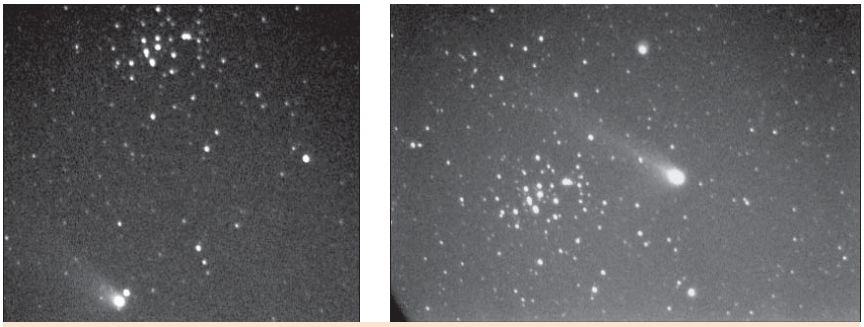
This combination of equipment can produce very useful results. I usually set the camera to full aperture at f1.8 and take 5 second exposures, which minimises star trailing, as the equipment is mounted on a camera tripod without any drive. The exposure time can be extended by co-adding a series of exposures and the usual pattern is to take 4×5 seconds. The software supplied with the camera can automatically realign the exposures given that the stars would otherwise move across the frame between the start and end of the series. This combination usually allows me to reach magnitude 11–12 and, for bright comets, also to record a reasonable portion of the tail.

Guy Hurst

Scutum star clouds



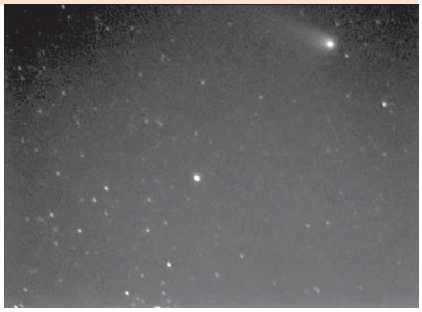
The Scutum star clouds photographed from South Sinai, 2004 June 9, 21.30 UT. Canon 85mm f/1.2 lens, 5 minute exposure on hypered TP2415 film. The inset shows the region around the Omega nebula, Bok 92 and part of the M24 star cloud at full resolution. *N. D. James.*



Comet C/2001 Q4 (NEAT) with the Beehive cluster. 50mm f/1.8 lens with MX5 CCD; see description at left. *Above left:* 2004 May 14, 21.27 UT; *right:* May 15, 21.36 UT; *below:* May 16, 21.42 UT. In this image the cluster is just visible at the bottom left of the frame. *G. M. Hurst.*

A Perseid meteor passing the Pleiades

A Perseid meteor passing the Pleiades, 00.33UT on 2004 August 13, Walmer beach, Kent. Olympus OM1N tracked on Super Polaris mount. 3 minute exposure on Kodak Elitechrome 200 uprated to 800 ISO, 50mm lens at f/2. *John Kemp.*



Not quite so near

There was a mistake in Andy Hollis' report in the last issue (*JBAA*, **114**(4), p.182) of the close approach to Earth of the asteroid 2004 FH. The quoted distance of 26,500km should in fact have been 26,500 **miles** (42,600km). Apologies, and thanks to Jean Meeus for pointing out the error.