COMETS

The date of perihelion (T), period (P), perihelion distance (q) and the magnitude parameters H and G are given for each comet which comes to perihelion in 2026 and which becomes brighter than magnitude 18 and for other comets which are expected to be brighter than 14th magnitude during the year. The table also gives the date that the comet is expected to be at its brightest, its declination, elongation and expected peak magnitude. A negative elongation indicates that the comet is best in the morning sky.

The magnitude parameters are taken from determinations by the Comet Section or the comet observation website (COBS) (as indicated by '*' in the H column) or from elements downloaded from the MPC. The predicted total magnitude is given by:

$$m_1 = H + 2.5\ G\ (\log_{10} r) + 5\ (\log_{10} \Delta)$$

where Δ is the distance of the comet from Earth and r is its distance from the Sun, both in astronomical units. It is important to remember that comet magnitude predictions are often very uncertain and can be misleading, particularly for non–periodic comets with small perihelion distances. In particular, comets which show apparently bright magnitudes at very small elongations are unlikely to be observable. The table is derived from orbital elements downloaded from the Minor Planet Center (MPC) on 2025 August 20 and it is sorted in order of the date at which the comet reaches its brightest magnitude. A digital version containing more information is available from the Comet Section website at ***britastro.org/comet***. This website contains links to many other resources useful to the comet observer, such as the Comet Section observing guide which is available for download as a PDF.

There are no bright comets expected in 2026 although a few are expected to brighten to binocular range and there are many faint comets to keep imagers busy.

Periodic comet **24P/Schaumasse** starts the year at around 8th magnitude and it should remain brighter than 10th magnitude until March. At its brightest, in early January, it will be on the Coma/Virgo border heading eastwards towards Serpens. A finder chart is on page 97.

C/2024 E1 (Wierzchos) comes to perihelion on 2026 January 20 and it may get brighter than 7th magnitude as it emerges from conjunction in early February. Unfortunately, it is then a southerly object in Grus. Through February and March, it moves rapidly northwards and away from the Sun into the morning sky but it will also fade. See the chart on page 98.

10P/Tempel comes to perihelion in August and it may reach 7th magnitude at a large elongation but it is again in the far south moving through Piscis Austrinus.

Towards the end of the year **2P/Encke** will be brightening as it approaches perihelion which occurs in 2027 February. In late December it should reach 10th magnitude as it moves through Pegasus into Aquarius. See the chart on page 99.

Interstellar comet **3I/ATLAS** should remain brighter than magnitude 20 for the first four months of the year and it is very well–placed moving from Leo through to Gemini as it heads out of the Solar System. Given the nature of this object, observations are particularly important.

Charts produced using Megastar 4

COMETS

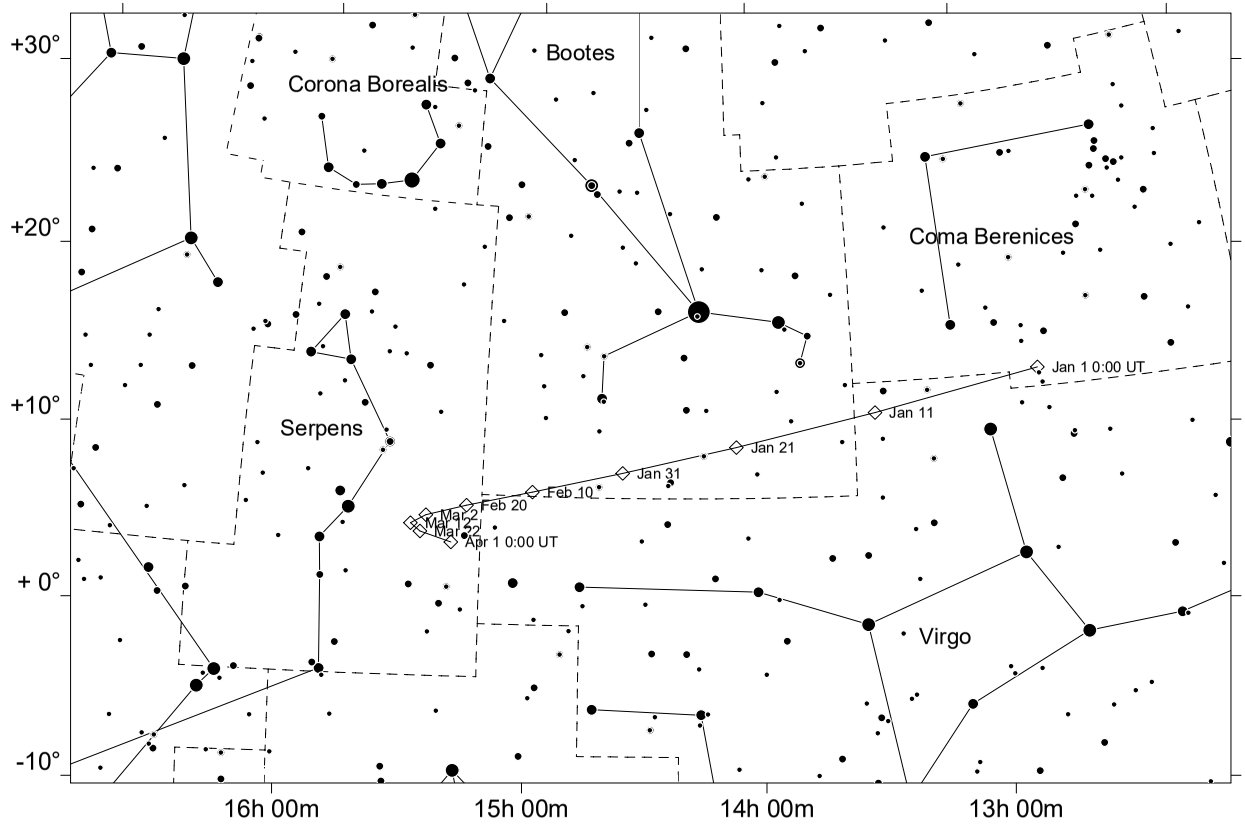
Name	T	q	P	H	G	Date of peak		Dec. at peak	Elong. at peak	Peak Magnitude
	yyyy–mm–dd	au	years			mm	dd	°	°	
131P/Mueller	2026–02–15	2.41	7.04	11.0	4.0	Jan	1	+0.3	76	16.8
145P/Shoemaker–Levy	2026–01–31	1.89	8.39	13.5	4.0	Jan	1	–3.4	73	17.8
210P/Christensen	2025–11–22	0.52	5.62	12.9*	2.1	Jan	1	–8.5	–54	12.9
233P/La Sagra	2026–01–08	1.78	5.27	15.0	4.0	Jan	1	+33.3	169	17.0
240P/NEAT	2025–12–19	2.12	7.59	5.4*	6.4	Jan	1	+16.1	131	11.3
493P/LONEOS	2026–01–14	3.82	19.2	12.0	2.0	Jan	1	+53.0	141	17.3
P/2007 C2 (Catalina)	2026–03–20	3.69	18.64	10.0	4.0	Jan	1	+25.3	156	17.9
74P/Smirnova–Chernykh	2026–05–24	4.83	11.42	6.8*	4.0	Jan	4	+28.7	174	16.6
24P/Schaumasse	2026–01–08	1.18	8.17	7.9*	8.8	Jan	7	+13.2	–94	8.4
C/2024 E1 (Wierzchos)	2026–01–20	0.57		7.0	4.0	Jan	25	–41.9	26	5.1
C/2025 J1 (Borisov)	2026–06–11	3.58		9.1	4.0	Feb	3	+70.0	116	17.4
218P/LINEAR	2026–03–03	1.13	5.35	13.9*	4.0	Mar	2	–20.8	–59	14.9
C/2025 L1 (ATLAS)	2026–01–12	1.68		11.4	4.0	Mar	15	+9.5	–122	14.4
124P/Mrkos	2026–06–23	1.73	6.21	14.1*	2.6	Mar	20	+50.7	110	16.6
88P/Howell	2026–03–18	1.36	5.48	5.4*	7.3	Mar	23	–16.2	–39	9.3
76P/West–Kohoutek–Ikemura	2026–04–13	1.60	6.46	11.4*	8.4	Mar	31	+15.4	42	17.4
141P/Machholz	2026–04–22	0.81	5.34	11.9*	8.9	Apr	23	+15.5	3	11.1
63P/Wild	2026–07–06	1.97	13.44	8.1*	4.0	Apr	28	+34.4	73	13.0
93P/Lovas	2026–05–02	1.69	9.15	8.7*	7.4	Apr	30	+24.1	11	15.0
C/2024 G6 (ATLAS)	2026–02–20	6.43		5.5	4.0	May	10	+10.1	–149	17.3
P/2009 WX51 (Catalina)	2026–04–15	0.80	5.41	19.0	2.0	May	13	+24.9	64	17.7
162P/SidingSpring	2026–05–17	1.29	5.44	14.1*	4.0	May	20	+15.4	–16	16.9
P/2010 H3 (SOHO)	2026–05–25	0.04	5.29	20.0	2.0	May	25	+20.7	0	13.5
168P/Hergenrother	2026–05–26	1.36	6.79	10.3*	2.7	June	2	+18.8	–33	12.8
320P/McNaught	2026–06–27	0.98	5.45	20.5	4.0	June	3	–16.8	–89	17.6
C/2023 R1 (PANSTARRS)	2026–04–13	3.57		6.0	4.0	June	9	–6.8	–162	13.7
P/2010 H2 (Vales)	2025–03–09	3.08	7.51	6.0	4.0	June	12	–32.9	–160	13.6
P/2021 N1 (ZTF)	2026–07–27	0.97	5.14	19.0	4.0	July	2	–9.1	–91	15.4
398P/Boattini	2026–07–07	1.30	5.52	11.7*	8.0	July	8	+28.3	–11	15.8
259P/Garradd	2026–08–12	1.80	4.51	15.5	4.0	July	24	–52.0	148	17.8
10P/Tempel	2026–08–02	1.42	5.36	6.8*	6.6	Aug	3	–25.0	–164	7.4
220P/McNaught	2026–06–14	1.56	5.51	15.0	4.0	Aug	9	+9.5	–94	17.6
78P/Gehrels	2026–06–25	2.00	7.21	4.6*	6.8	Aug	10	+20.7	–52	11.9
169P/NEAT	2026–09–21	0.60	4.2	16.0	2.0	Aug	15	+39.6	50	12.0
C/2024 J3 (ATLAS)	2026–11–25	3.87		5.0	4.0	Aug	15	+43.4	112	13.7
260P/McNaught	2026–08–05	1.42	6.9	11.3*	4.0	Aug	25	+31.8	–85	13.1
295P/LINEAR	2026–07–22	2.03	12.2	12.0	4.0	Aug	28	+36.7	–42	17.3
114P/Wiseman–Skiff	2026–09–14	1.57	6.66	8.9*	11.6	Sept	27	+19.1	–59	15.9
161P/Hartley–IRAS	2026–11–27	1.27	21.44	9.0*	4.0	Oct	6	–2.6	147	9.2
112P/Urata–Niijima	2026–09–21	1.44	6.61	14.0	6.0	Oct	9	+39.5	–87	16.6
P/1996 R2 (Lagerkvist)	2026–06–15	2.59	7.33	11.5	4.0	Nov	1	+20.0	–162	17.1
11P/Tempel–Swift–LINEAR	2026–11–09	1.39	5.95	13.3*	8.0	Nov	11	+26.3	170	14.2
123P/West–Hartley	2026–09–22	2.16	7.66	6.8*	6.6	Nov	15	+5.5	–44	14.7
188P/LINEAR–Mueller	2026–04–13	2.55	9.12	11.5	4.0	Nov	21	+38.0	–141	17.8
332P–G/Ikeya–Murakami	2026–11–14	1.55	5.33	12.4*	6.0	Dec	5	–6.5	–52	16.8
P/2009 Y2 (Kowalski)	2026–12–01	2.37	16.71	13.0	4.0	Dec	9	+27.4	–175	17.5
128P/Shoemaker–Holt	2026–07–16	3.04	9.49	6.3*	6.0	Dec	15	+17.4	–160	15.5
163P/NEAT	2026–11–23	2.06	7.29	14.5	4.0	Dec	31	+23.3	–166	17.9
2P/Encke	2027–02–10	0.34	3.3	10.2*	3.8	Dec	31	+3.6	63	9.9
342P/SOHO	2027–02–07	0.05	5.3	9.0	4.0	Dec	31	–26.6	14	11.2
69P/Taylor	2026–11–12	2.27	7.64	8.1*	3.0	Dec	31	+22.1	–170	11.4
84P/Giclas	2027–02–12	1.72	6.69	7.3*	7.4	Dec	31	–14.5	59	13.4

* – magnitude parameters taken from *https://people.ast.cam.ac.uk/~jds/magpars.htm*

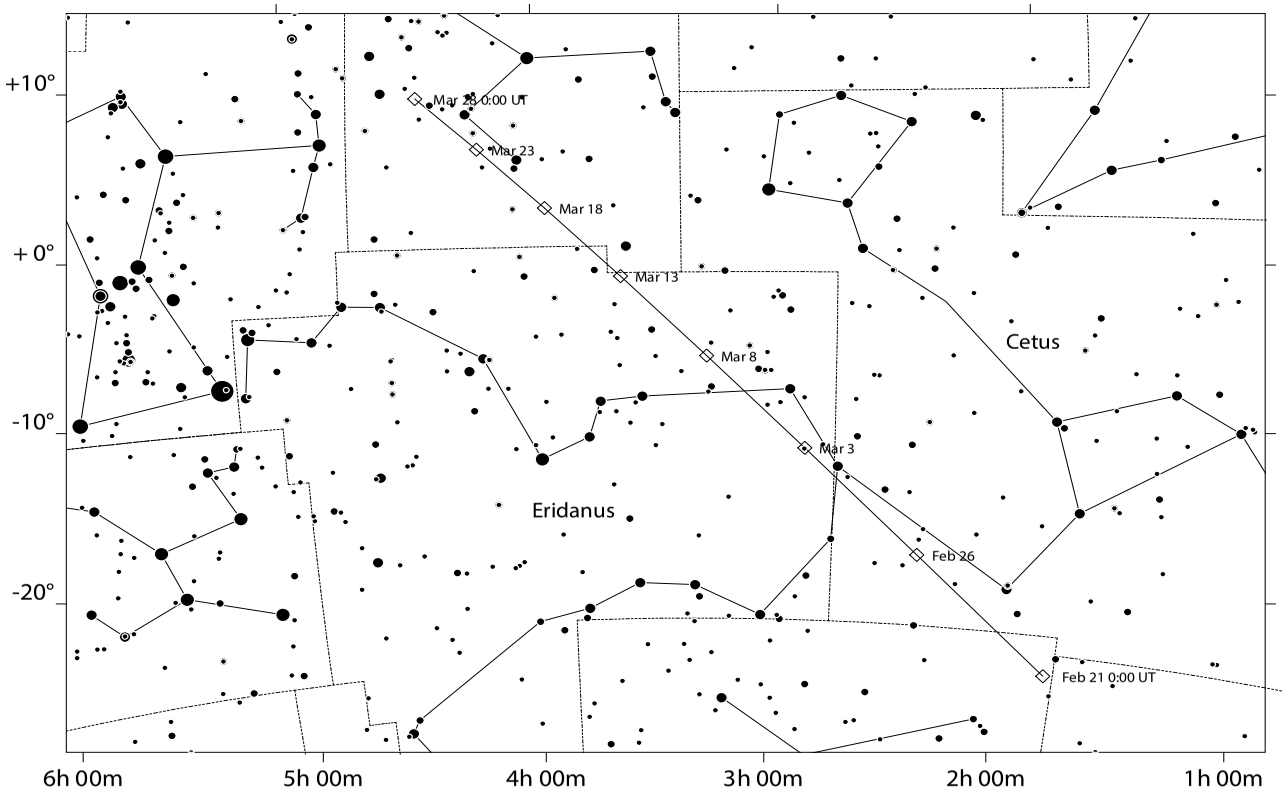
Negative elongations are morning, positive are evening

COMETS

24P/SCHAUMASSE



C/2024 E1 (WIERZCHOS)



COMETS

2P/ENCKE