

AN ASTRO COMIC

© MICHEL DECONINCK

The golden comet secrets

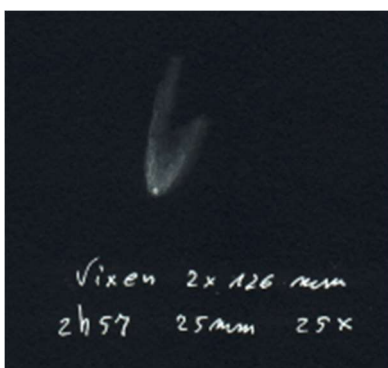
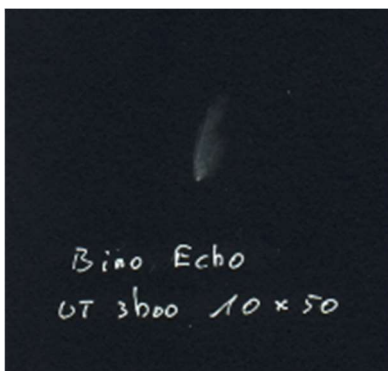
July 2020

Up the "Verdon Natural Park"

Visual observation of the passage of the comet C/2020 F3 (NEOWISE)

July 3rd, 4h in the morning

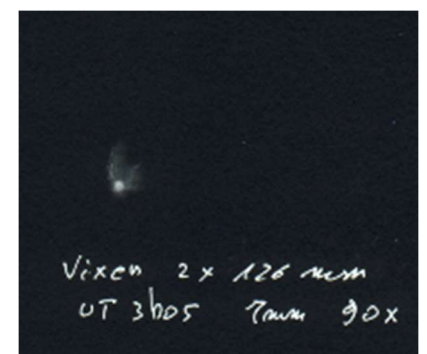
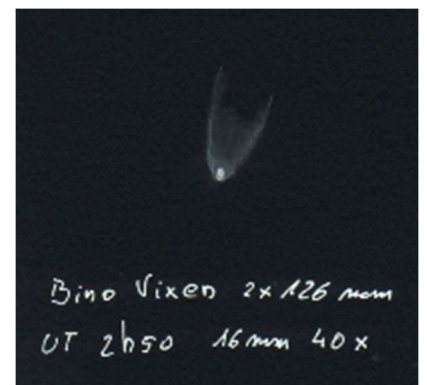
I go to a superb and very dark site, on the banks of the Verdon in the Alpes de Haute Provence South France. Finally, I can see the comet near the horizon. She's still in the mists.



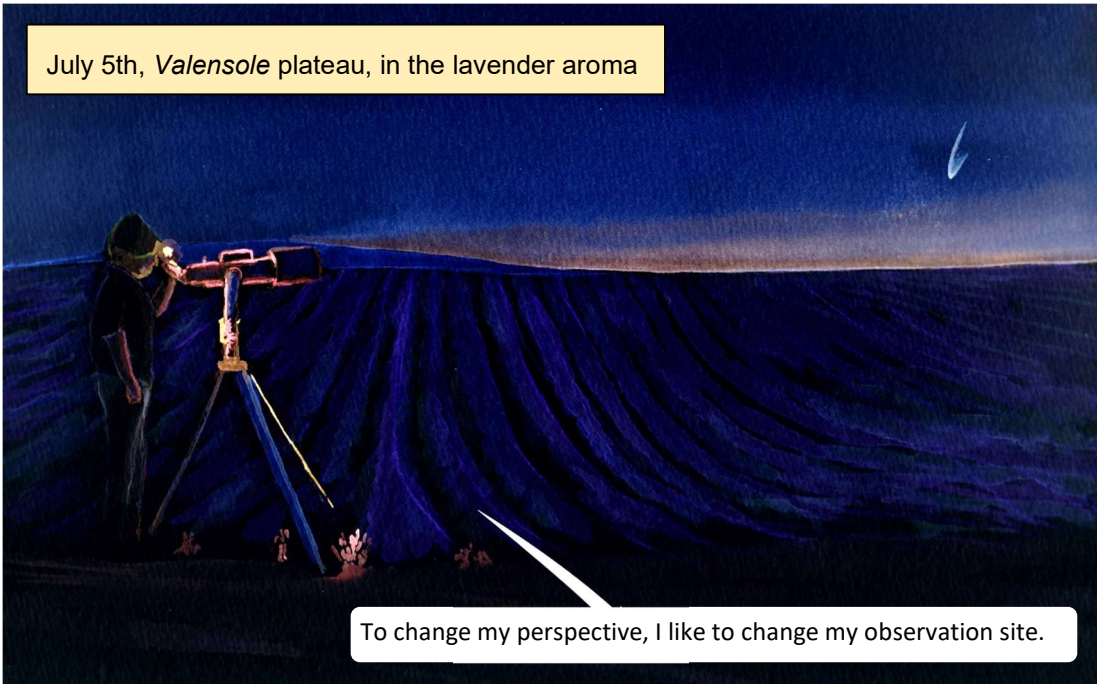
The next day on the same site, but here I am to play more scientific, a little less artist. I spot some details in the pseudo-nucleus as in the tail. With a regular binocular and my lovely 5 inch bino Vixen, I use multiple magnifications. I also focus on the information expected by the ICQ database (*) in which I actively participate: estimates of the magnitude, the degree of condensation, the dimension of the coma, the length of the tail as well as its direction.

(*) ICQ International Comet Quarterly

The « V » shape of the tail is probably the indication of a massive dust production.



July 5th, Valensole plateau, in the lavender aroma



To change my perspective, I like to change my observation site.



As a gift, the tail sets-up before the coma



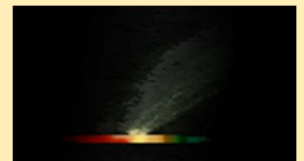
July 7, on the shores of Lake Sainte-Croix.



On July 9 at 4 am, I have the feeling of being alone in front of the cosmos.



That day, a Star Analyzer network filter allowed me to observe the yellow emission of the sodium atom.



The particularly rare and brilliant yellow, gives this pretty golden color to the comet.

On the morning of July 11, just before the appearance of a nasty bundle of clouds, NEOWISE passed over the hopelessly illuminated village!



16/07



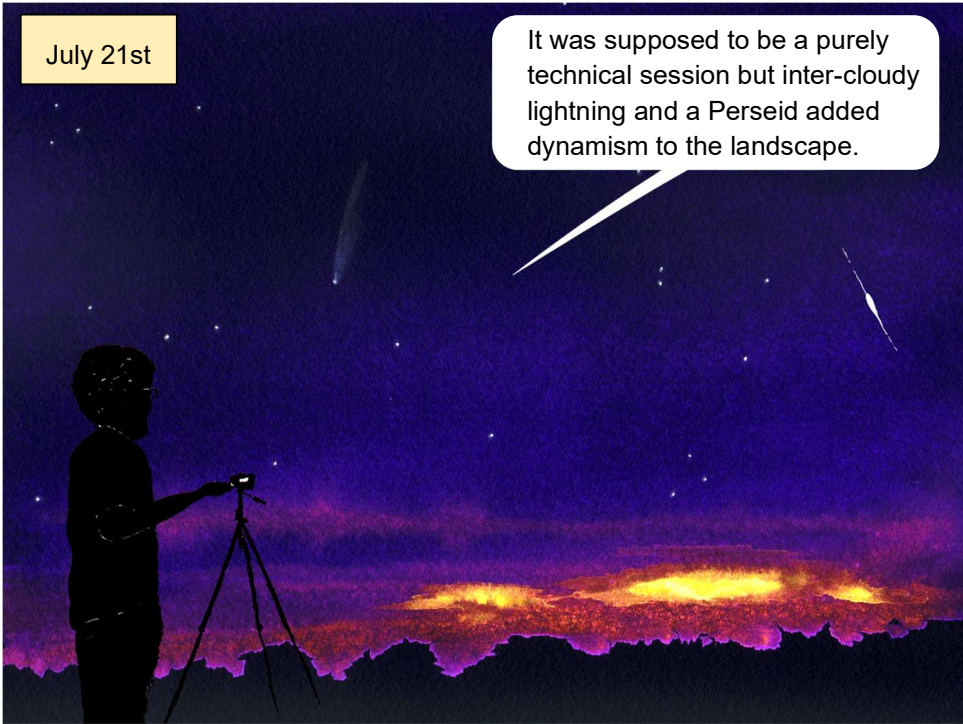
It is from this type of drawing that I will make the dimensional estimates. The stars will serve as a benchmark. To attempt an accurate measurement, it is a matter of placing them meticulously.

Artignosc, July 19th



July 21st

It was supposed to be a purely technical session but inter-cloudy lightning and a Perseid added dynamism to the landscape.



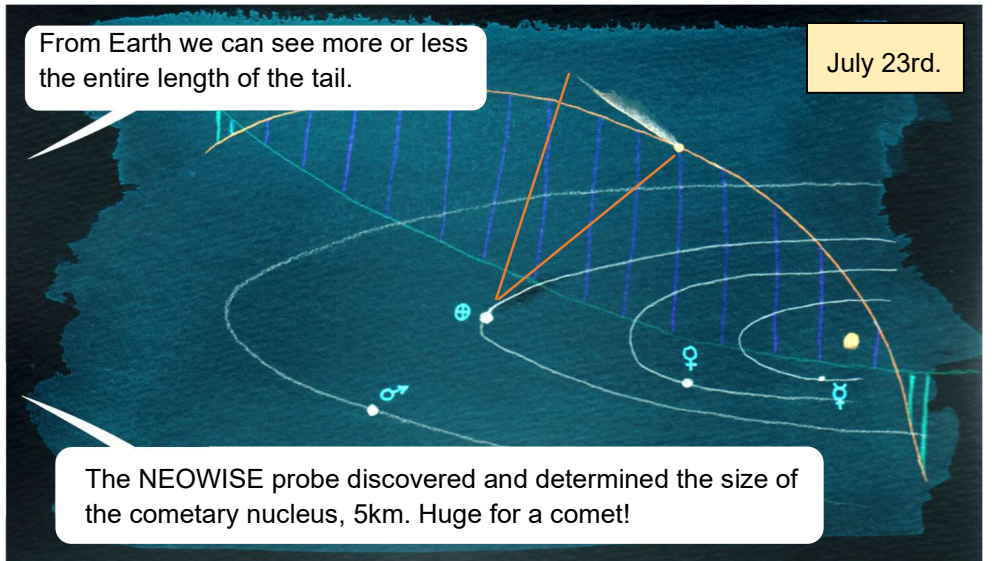
The ion tail is no longer visible but the dust tail is much longer.

Bino Vixen 126mm 40x.



From Earth we can see more or less the entire length of the tail.

July 23rd.

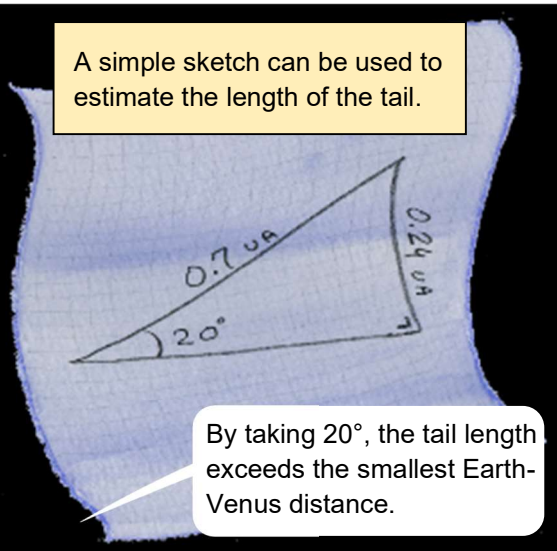


The NEOWISE probe discovered and determined the size of the cometary nucleus, 5km. Huge for a comet!

Such a sketch makes it possible to assess the radius of the coma: 70,000 km, close to the radius of Jupiter.



A simple sketch can be used to estimate the length of the tail.



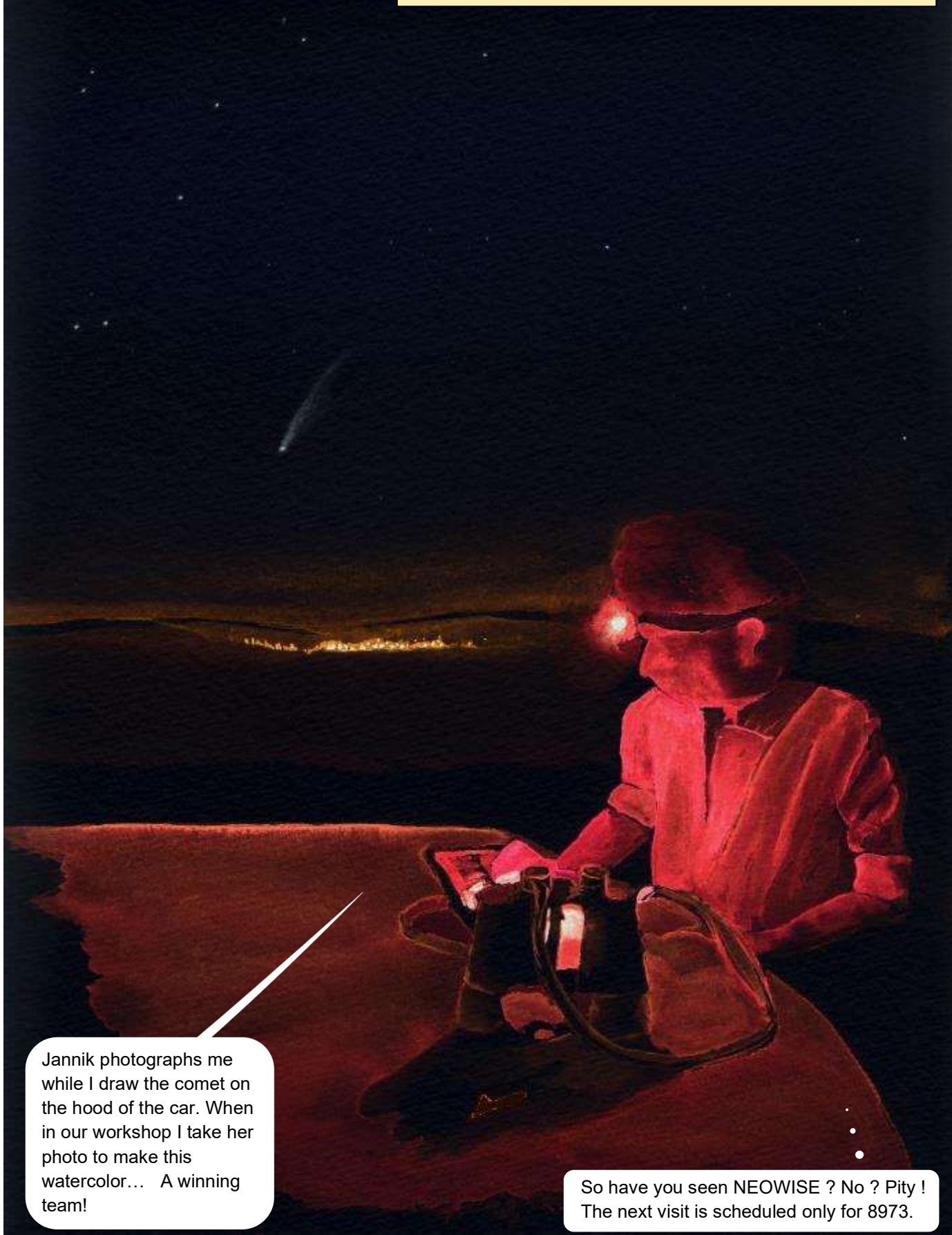
By taking 20°, the tail length exceeds the smallest Earth-Venus distance.

July 24. Five teenage girls join me.



Look how beautiful it is!

Above the Verdon gorges, facing the village of *Saint-Laurent*.



Jannik photographs me while I draw the comet on the hood of the car. When in our workshop I take her photo to make this watercolor... A winning team!

So have you seen NEOWISE ? No ? Pity !
The next visit is scheduled only for 8973.