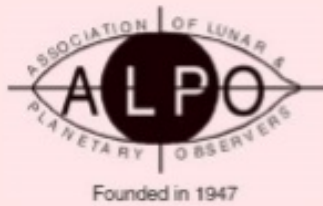


# Journal of the Association of Lunar & Planetary Observers



*The Strolling Astronomer*

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Beautiful bursts  
(See page 3 for details)



## Inside the ALPO Member, section and activity news

### Comets Section

Report by Carl Hergenrother,  
section coordinator  
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Most of 2019 has been lacking with respect to easy-to-observe visual comets. The last three months of the year will be a welcome change as two long-period comets are expected to be brighter than 9th magnitude.

The first visual comet, C/2018 W2 (Africano), reached perihelion on September 5 at 1.45 au and passed within 0.49 au of Earth on September 27. As October begins, Comet Africano

should still be near its maximum brightness between magnitude 7.5 and 8.0. October sees the comet starting a rapid fade to 10th magnitude by late October, 12th magnitude by late November, and 14th magnitude by late December. Since it is a dynamically old long-period comet, its post-perihelion fading may not be as precipitous as predicted here.

Northern hemisphere observers will find C/Africano well-placed in the evening sky at the start of October. Its southern motion makes it a difficult object for northern observers by November. It is well-placed for southern hemisphere

observers the entire quarter as it traverses Pisces (Oct 1-3), Aquarius (Oct 3-14), Pisces Australis (Oct 14-27), and Grus (Oct 27-Mar 7).

The second visual comet is C/2017 T2 (PANSTARRS). This dynamically new long-period comet has been brightening slowly since its discovery back in early October of 2017. Perihelion doesn't occur until 2020 May 4 at 1.62 au. Closest approach to Earth (at 1.66 au) occurs only a few weeks after perihelion. This comet is intrinsically bright. As a point of comparison, it is intrinsically ~2 magnitudes brighter than C/2018 W2. The greater geocentric range results in a peak brightness of 8th magnitude for C/2017 T2 which is similar to C/2018

W2. But its greater intrinsic brightness results in the comet being brighter than 10th magnitude for ~9 months (from 2019 December to 2020 August).

C/PANSTARRS starts October at ~12th magnitude and brightens to magnitude 9.4 by New Year's Eve. It will be located at northern declinations, thereby making it well-placed for northern hemisphere observers as it moves through Taurus (Oct 1-6), Auriga (Oct 6-Dec 3), Perseus (Dec 3-20), and Camelopardalis (Dec 20-30).

Image Caption: Sketch of comet C/2018 W2 (Africano) by Michel Deconinck with a Takahashi Mewlon 250.

As always, the Comet Section is happy to receive all comet observations, whether images, drawings, magnitude estimates, and even spectra. Please send your observations via email to [carl.hergenrother@alpo-astronomy.org](mailto:carl.hergenrother@alpo-astronomy.org)

Drawings and images of current and past comets are being archived in the ALPO Comets Section image gallery at [http://www.alpo-astronomy.org/gallery/main.php?g2\\_itemId=4491](http://www.alpo-astronomy.org/gallery/main.php?g2_itemId=4491)

Visit the ALPO Comets Section online at [www.alpo-astronomy.org/comet](http://www.alpo-astronomy.org/comet)

### Ephemerides for Comet C/2017 T2 (PANSTARRS) and Comet C/2018 W2 (Africano)

Date	R.A.	Decl.	r (au)	d (au)	Elong (deg)	m1	Conat	Max El 40N	Max El 40S
C/2017 T2 (PANSTARRS)									
2019 Oct 01	05 36.9	+27 31	3.15	2.78	102	11.9	Tau	76	21
2019 Oct 11	05 39.4	+29 38	3.06	2.55	111	11.6	Aur	80	20
C/2018 W2 (Africano)									
2019 Oct 01	23 28.9	+03 23	1.50	0.51	165	7.8	Psc	51	49
2019 Oct 11	22 32.8	-20 13	1.54	0.67	134	8.6	Aqr	28	72



Sketch of comet C/2018 W2 (Africano) by Michel Deconinck with a Takahashi Mewlon 250.