

See the "Exploding Comet" at UT

Updated November 7, 2007

UPDATE: Additional Comet Observations Scheduled for November 7, 8, and 9 at 8:00 p.m.!

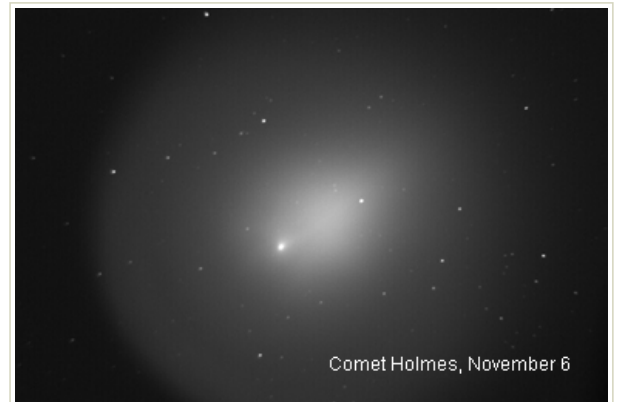
Comet Holmes is making its way through the skies, and the Department of Physics and Astronomy is a great place to witness the journey. Observations on the roof of the A.H. Nielsen Physics Building have been extended and are scheduled for November 7, 8, and 9. All sessions begin at 8:00 p.m.

The comet was first discovered by Edwin Holmes in 1892 and reappears about every seven years. The 2007 viewing is different because during this trip, Comet Holmes seems to be undergoing an explosive outburst, making it easier to spot in the night sky.

"No one really understands what's happened to this comet," said Paul Lewis, director of the department's space science outreach program.

"Normally what we expect to see is the comet nucleus brighten and grow a tail as it nears the sun. And this one looks like it just exploded. Speculation is that there are voids inside comets and one of these may have collapsed, exposing fresh ice and dust to the sun, which may be gushing from the comet."

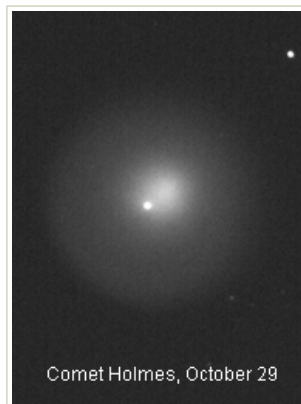
Lewis will coordinate the observing sessions on the physics rooftop. Parking is available in the University Center Parking Garage. Handicapped parking is available on "the Hill" on the UT campus.



Comet Holmes, November 6



Comet Holmes, October 25



Comet Holmes, October 29

Photos by Paul Lewis, UT Physics