

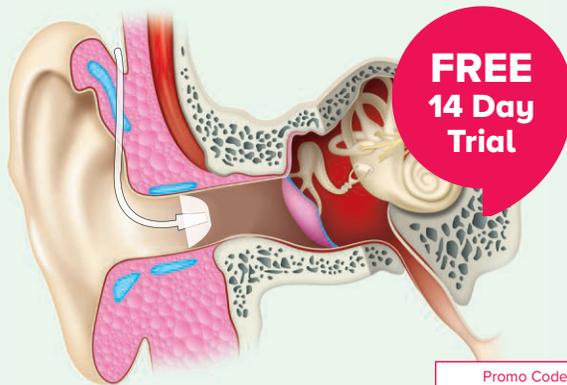
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OPINION

AN INTERSTELLAR COMET MAY BE VISITING OUR SOLAR SYSTEM

IT'S COMING TOWARD US AT 150,000 KM/H, WRITES MARIO CARR



MARIO CARR
Column

There's a new comet visitor and astronomers think it may have interstellar origins.

It's officially called C/2019 Q4 (Borisov) and was discovered Aug. 30 by Gennady Borisov at the MARGO observatory in Nauchnij, Crimea. The comet is 420 million kilometres from the Sun and will reach its closest point on Dec. 8 at 300 million kilometers.

The new comet is traveling at 150,000 km/h. Its high velocity indicates that it could have interstellar origins. If it's confirmed to have originated from outside the solar system, then it will be the second time we've observed an interstellar comet visitor.

The first was comet Oumuamua in 2017.

Here are October stargazing events, which are listed in the Hamilton Amateur Astronomers calendar.

Oct. 5: Public stargazing night at the Grimsby Niagara Gateway Tourism Centre 8-11 p.m.

Oct. 11: Hamilton Amateur Astronomers annual general meeting 7:30-9:30 p.m.

Hamilton Spectator, 44 Frid St. Free admission, door prizes and everybody welcome. An optional food

bank donation of non-perishable goods is collected and appreciated.

Oct. 21/22: The Orionid meteor shower peaks. The Moon is also close to the Beehive cluster.

Oct. 26: For the next two weeks from a dark location in the eastern predawn sky you could see the Zodiacal Light. It's caused by sunlight reflecting off dust particles in the solar system.

Oct. 28: Uranus is at opposition. The planet is at its closest point to the Earth and can be seen all night rising in the east at sunset.

Oct. 29: The Moon is above Venus low in the eastern sky at dusk.

For more information, see the Hamilton Amateur Astronomers website (amateurastronomy.org) or call 905-627-4323. The club offers a basic astronomy course for members.

Mario Carr, the author of this report, is the club's director of publicity and can be reached at mario-carr@cogeco.ca.

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