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—Seattle

San Francisco Chronicle Aug 29 '82

Astronomers' Fuzzy Look At an Elusive New Comet

Lake of the Woods,
Kern County

A group of astronomers journeyed to a secluded spot near the top of Mount Piños to catch a weekend glimpse of newly discovered Comet Austin but said it looked more like a fuzzy cottonball.

The comet was discovered in June by amateur astronomer Rodney Richard Dacre Austin of New Zealand.

Comet Austin makes its closest approach to the sun today before heading back out to space with an

indefinite return date. Tails of comets are most easily visible when closest to the sun.

SF Chron Aug 29

After several tries Saturday at the darkened spot about 100 miles north of Los Angeles, a pair of binoculars mounted on a tripod picked up the comet in the northwest sky just above a cluster of pine trees and just below the Big Dipper.

Austin is expected to be visible through the end of this month and possibly next month. But an increasingly bright moon may make it difficult to observe it.

Associated Press