

## View Comet Lovejoy at KOSC!

In winter, the temperature outside may be low, but the sky tends to be clear and is filled with bright stars and easily recognizable constellations such as Orion, Taurus, and Gemini. If you want to learn more about these stars, head up to the Kopernik Observatory & Science Center on Friday, January 16 for a presentation on *Winter Skies*. If the sky is clear afterwards, you can view the stars up close through KOSC's telescopes.



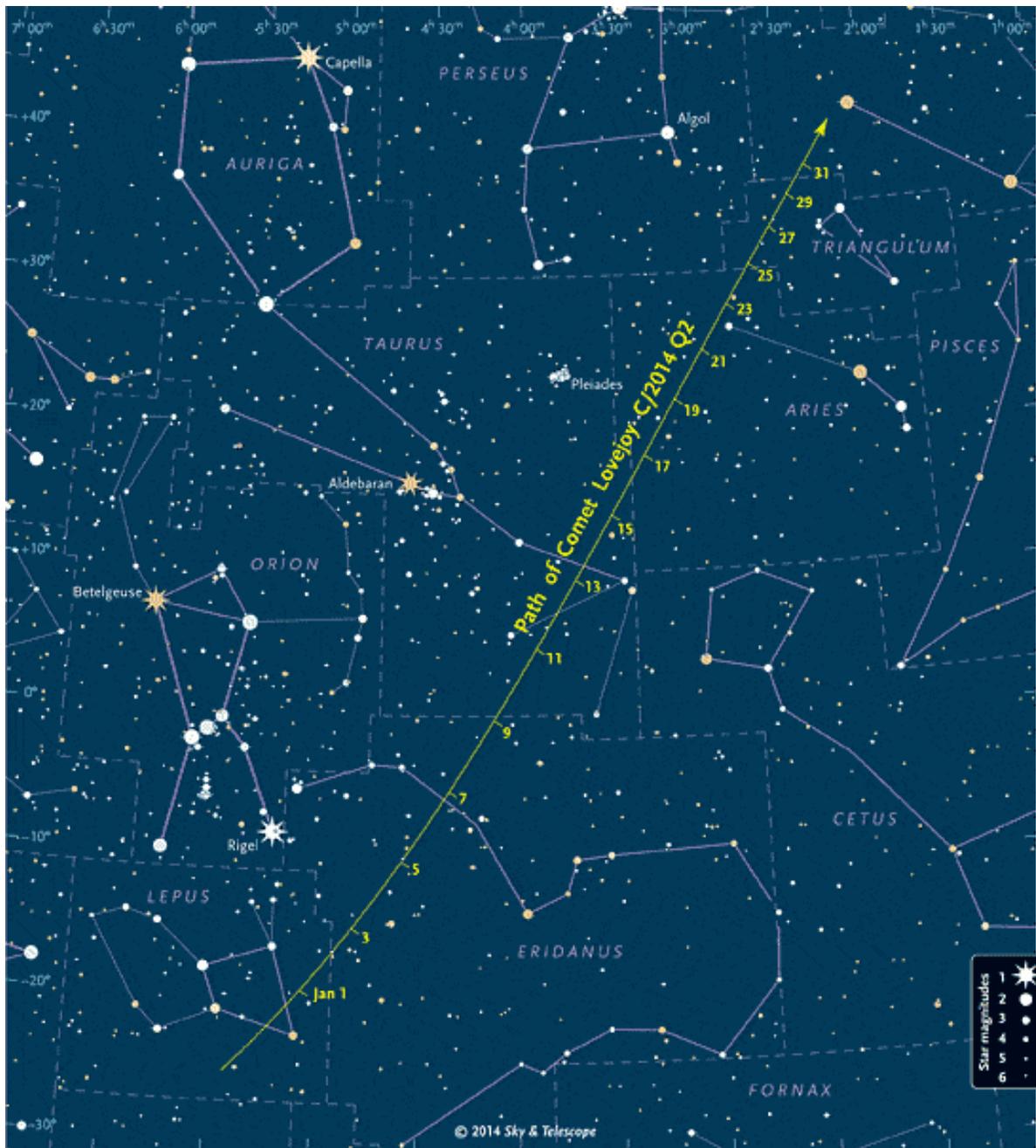
Winter 2015 brings a special reason to look up at the night sky – the recently discovered Comet Lovejoy! Comets are small icy objects orbiting the Sun. They are remnants leftover from the formation of our solar system. Some comets have relatively close-by origins, such as the icy Kuiper belt (where Pluto travels), while others are from much farther away, such as the mysterious Oort cloud, whose outer edge extends more than half way to the nearest star!

Comet Lovejoy, officially designated C2014/Q2, is actually one of several comets discovered by Terry Lovejoy, an amateur Australian astronomer. This new comet will be visible for the next few weeks as it travels through the constellation Taurus and into

Ares. It is currently visible to the naked-eye under dark sky conditions, glowing with a greenish hue, and will slowly increase in magnitude over the next week. It is expected to remain visible in binoculars and small telescopes until at least the end of the month.

On January 7, Comet Lovejoy passed closest to the Earth at 46 million miles. On January 30, it will reach its perihelion (point closest to the Sun) at 120 million miles. It then will make its long trek toward the outer reaches of the solar system – dimming as it gets farther and farther away. It is a long period comet and will not return to our vicinity for another 8,000 years.

Comet Lovejoy should offer good viewing for several reasons. First, it is relatively bright and currently visible to the naked eye from a dark site. In addition, when the comet is at its brightest, there will be no Moon in the sky to wash out its subtle features. Furthermore, unlike some recent comets, this comet is fairly high in the sky. The higher an object, the brighter it appears, because its light passes through less atmosphere. Also, the higher an object is in the sky, the longer it will be visible during the night. Comet Lovejoy will be visible for several hours each night.



So, for the *Love* of astronomy, put your boots on, dress warm, and get away from the city lights to a dark site like KOSC to enjoy this glowing spectacle before the end of January! Information about Comet Lovejoy will be included in the January 16 program at KOSC. KOSC also will be open for viewing on any clear nights from January 17-19. Check [www.kopernik.org](http://www.kopernik.org) or call (607)748-3685 after 5 p.m. for weather conditions.

On Saturday, January 24 join us for KOSC's annual Winter Star Party featuring science activities for the whole family, telescope observing (if clear), astronomy talks, and a special presentation on the Search

for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) by Shami Chatterjee of Cornell University. Stay warm inside or brave the cold and see Comet Lovejoy, a crescent moon, Jupiter, the Orion Nebula, and much more through KOSC's powerful telescopes.

### **Upcoming KOSC Classes**

Jan 17: Let's Magnify (ages 3 – 6) 10:30 a.m. - noon

Jan 19: Glowtopia (grades 1-2) 1-4 p.m.

Jan 23: Lunar Explorations (grades 3-4) 6-9p.m.

Feb 16: Electricity & Magnetism (grades 5-6) 1-4 p.m.

Mar 7: Extreme Magnification (grades 6-8) 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Mar 27/28: Observational Astronomy (grades 8-12) 7-10 p.m.

Fun classes for students continue at KOSC on weekends and holidays throughout the school year. Saturday January 17 kicks off the 2015 KoperniKids series for preschoolers with Let's Magnify. Bring your curious youngster to KOSC to view and learn about tiny new worlds up close.

On Monday January 19, first and second grade students will do experiments to learn about various types of light and explore the mysterious planet Glowtopia.

On Friday January 23, third and fourth grade students will become Lunar Explorers, taking a virtual trip to the Moon to investigate its environment. Using KOSC's extensive collection of Moon maps and data, they will find a suitable spot for a Moon Colony. They also will find out how craters are made.

On Monday February 16, fifth and sixth grade students will explore Electricity & Magnetism with KOSC's own Dr. Dangerous (Nicholas Guydosh, Ph.D.). Students will safely produce artificial lightning packing more than 10,000 volts in KOSC's lab! They will learn how to create magnetism from electricity and reverse the process to get electricity from magnetism.

See [www.kopernik.org](http://www.kopernik.org) for more information about Comet Lovejoy, Winter Star Party, and our classes and events for students of all ages.

[More information on Comet Lovejoy](#)

<http://www.skyandtelescope.com/astronomy-news/observing-news/binocular-comet-lovejoy-heading-c2014-q2-lovejoy-1211142/>