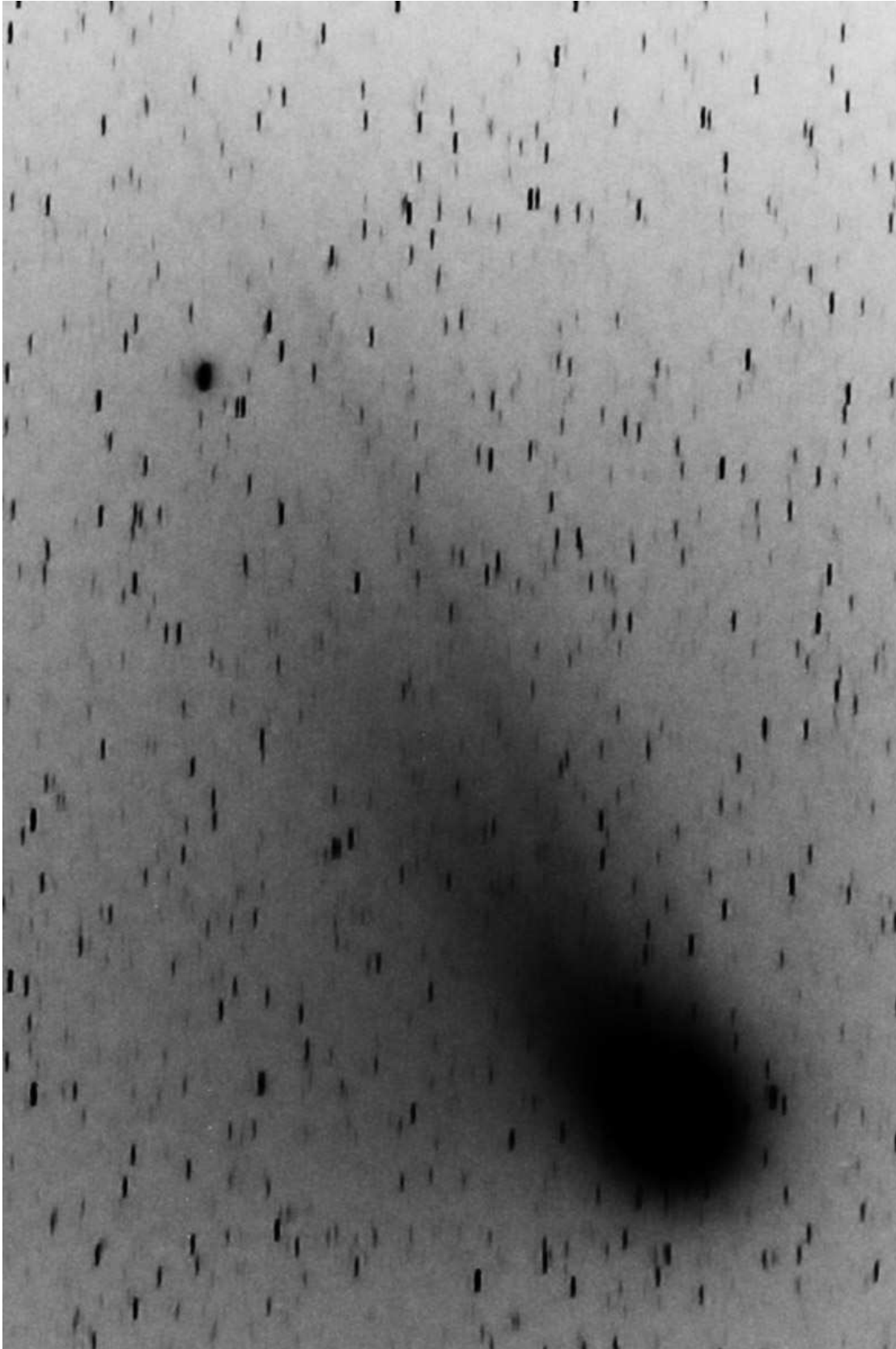


C/2001 Q4 (NEAT)

By Greg Morgan

There is nothing quite as exciting as the appearance of a really great comet. No matter how many you have seen, each one brings its own magic into the night skies. The last few months have provided more than one comet for

our observing pleasure. Comet NEAT has put on a great show for those of you that have been watching it. I first observed NEAT, my 12th comet, after an informative phone call from Steve Harness that tipped me off to its location near Sirius.



Left: Comet NEAT was imaged Sunday May 9, 2004 at 9:05 PM PDT. This is a stack of three 30 second exposures with a Nikon D-70 DSLR and Nikon 300mm lens at f/2.8 riding piggyback on the 10 inch LX-200 that was self-guiding on the comet with the SBIG ST-10XME. The field was cropped down from its original 4x3 degrees and shown to the left at 1.88 x 1.25 degrees.

Stars are measured down to about magnitude 14 in this short, 90 second, exposure through the ultra-fast f/2.8, 4.2 inch aperture optics. Processing used RegiStax 2 for aligning and stacking. Photoshop 7 was used to remove all the color information and create the negative grayscale image. No unsharp masking was done. Neat Image 3.17 Pro was used for noise reduction.