Fun Facts:

**Comet Encke**

* **Other Names:**
  + 2P/Encke
* **Basics:**
  + This is a periodic comet.
  + Diameter: 3.2 miles
  + Orbital Period: 3.30 years
    - Astronomers sometimes refer to this as the “Old Faithful” of comets because of its short orbital period and consistency in being visible.
* **History:**
  + First recorded by Pierre Mechain in 1786.
  + It was the second periodic comet discovered (the first being Halley’s Comet).
  + Johann Franz Encke computed its orbit after linking observations of comets in 1786, 1795, 1805, and 1818 to this same object. He published his findings in 1819 through the *Correspondance Astronomique* and correctly predicted its return in 1822.
* **Other Notes:**
  + Has the shortest period of any known comet and has been observed at every approach since its discovery in 1819.
  + It seems that the comet has faded since 1786. The brightest it has been recorded was in 1829 at 3.5. It has not been observed beyond a 5.0 since the 1800s.
  + The longest recorded tail was 3 degrees in 1805. It reached 2 degrees in 1871 and 1961.
  + It comes as close as 0.17 AU to Earth and will next be that close on June 29, 2172. Close approaches to Earth usually occur every 33 years.
  + Like most comets, it has a very low albedo, reflecting on 4.6% of the light it receives.
  + It is believed to be the originator of the Taurids meteor shower.
  + A piece of this comet is also thought to have caused the Tunguska Event that occurred on June 30, 1908.
    - The Tunguska Event is the largest meteoroid impact event in recorded history.
    - The explosion flattened and decimated 770 square miles of forest in a remote part of Siberia. There were no known casualties.
    - No known pieces have ever been recovered, so the meteor likely burned up completely upon entering our atmosphere and a gigantic burst of air is what caused the explosion.
    - Estimates of the diameter of the meteor range from 200 – 650 feet.
    - The energy released was equivalent to 15 megatons TNT. This is about 1000 times greater than the atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima, and equals the largest nuclear explosion (Castle Bravo) that the United States has ever detonated.