A Comet, a Meteor, and a Sky Trick

A new NASA sky photo shows two bright visitors that look close, but are really far apart.



A comet with faint tails and a colorful meteor streak appear together in a starry night sky.

NASA shared a sky photo today with a **comet** and a colorful **meteor** in the same view, according to NASA's Astronomy Picture of the Day. At first, the meteor looks like it might have come from the comet. NASA says it probably did not.

That is the interesting part. A comet is a giant icy body that travels around the Sun. It can leave **dust** and small rocks behind. A meteor is the bright **streak** we see when a small bit of space rock burns in Earth's atmosphere. The atmosphere is the blanket of air around Earth.

In the photo, the comet is far behind the meteor. They only look close because the **camera** sees them in the same direction. It is like holding a finger near your face so it seems to touch the Moon. Your eye can line things up, even when they are not near each other.

The comet in the picture is called C/2025 R3, or PanSTARRS. It was photographed from Hautacam, France, in April. NASA says the comet had two tails. One was a blue ion tail. An ion is a tiny charged piece of an atom. The other was a dust tail, made from small bits left by the comet.

The meteor in the front was probably made by rocky **debris** about the size of sand. Its colors may give clues about what it was made of. Scientists call that its composition, which means the materials inside it.

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The photo matters because November is a busy month for meteor watching. NASA says three notable meteor showers will peak this month. A meteor **shower** is a time when many meteors seem to come from one area of the sky.

The Southern Taurids are reaching their peak over the next few days. The Northern Taurids will peak about a week later. Both come from dust left by Comet 2P/Encke. The Leonids, November's famous meteor shower, will peak in about two weeks. Those meteors come from Comet 55P/Tempel-Tuttle.

The picture is also a reminder that space can fool our eyes. One streak may be close. One fuzzy visitor may be very far away. Both can share the same patch of sky for one quick photograph.

Written from reporting by NASA.

THINK IT THROUGH

1. **Why might a photo make two objects in space seem connected when they are not?**

   > **A strong answer:** A strong answer should discuss point of view, distance, and how our eyes line up objects.

2. **Should scientists be careful about saying where a meteor came from? Why or why not?**

   > **A strong answer:** A strong answer should weigh evidence, uncertainty, and the fact that many comets leave debris.

3. **How could watching a meteor shower change the way someone thinks about Earth's place in space?**

   > **A strong answer:** A strong answer should connect an everyday skywatching experience to Earth's atmosphere and the Solar System.

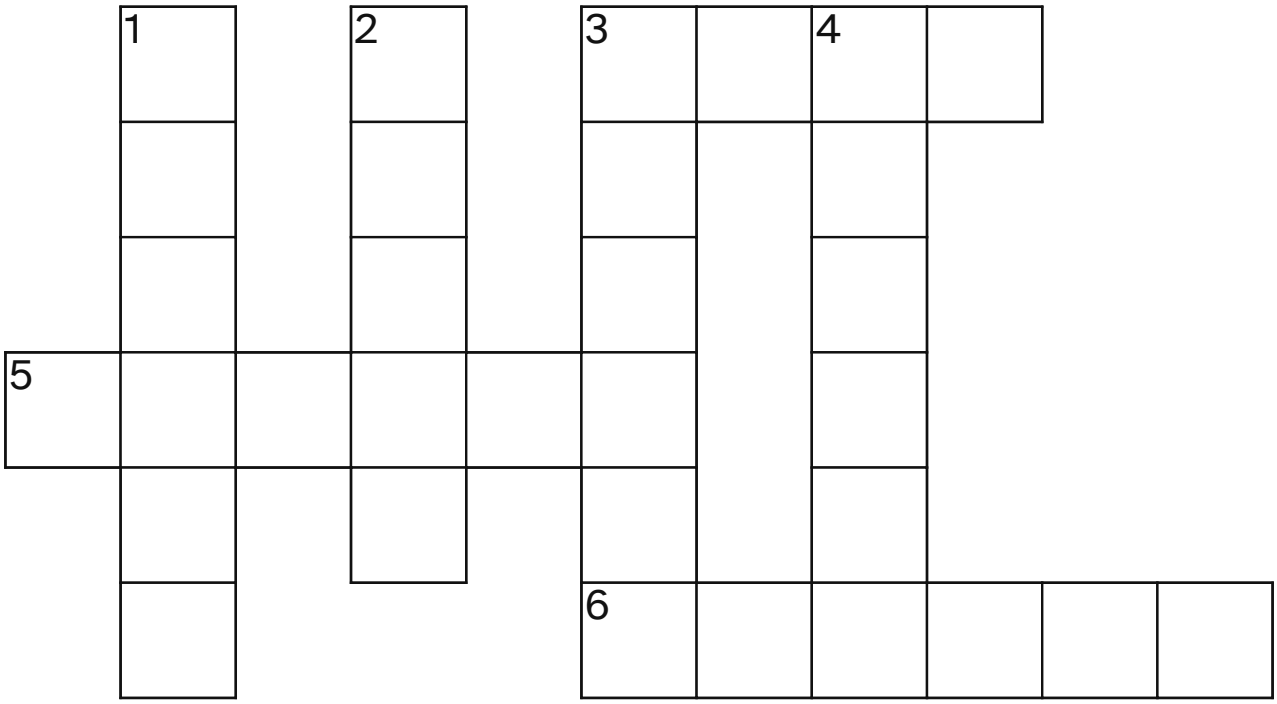
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E S K R E O A R T T
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E M E T E O R O I T
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A U E D S T M O E R

CAMERA COMET DEBRIS DUST METEOR SHOWER STREAK

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A Comet, a Meteor, and a Sky Trick



ACROSS

3 Tiny bits left behind by an icy space traveler

5 Bright sky flash from a burning space rock

6 Long, thin line of light across the sky

DOWN

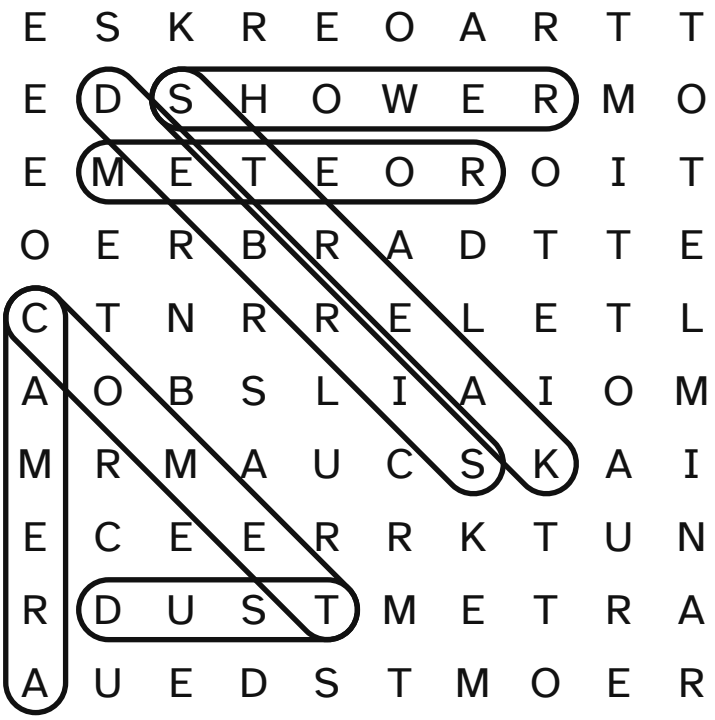
1 Device used to take pictures

2 Icy space traveler that goes around the Sun and leaves bits behind

3 Small leftover pieces floating in space

4 Sky event with many bright flashes from one area

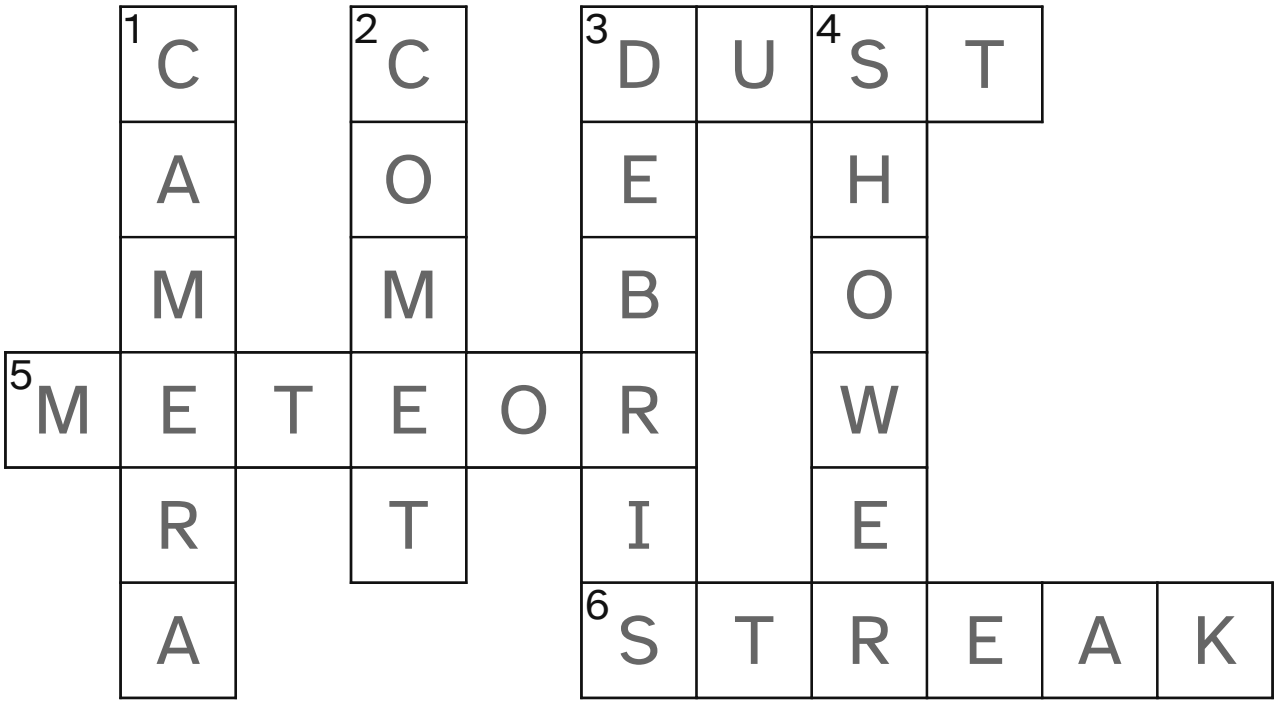
A Comet, a Meteor, and a Sky Trick — answer key



CAMERA COMET DEBRIS DUST METEOR SHOWER STREAK

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A Comet, a Meteor, and a Sky Trick — answer key



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Where this came from

This article was written for 3andB from the reporting below. It is not a reprint — the wording is ours and the facts are theirs.

NASA

"APOD: 2026 November 3 – Comet PanSTARRs and Rainbow Meteor"

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WHAT IS IN THIS PACKET

The article with a note on each question, a word search, a crossword, and the answer key to both.

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