



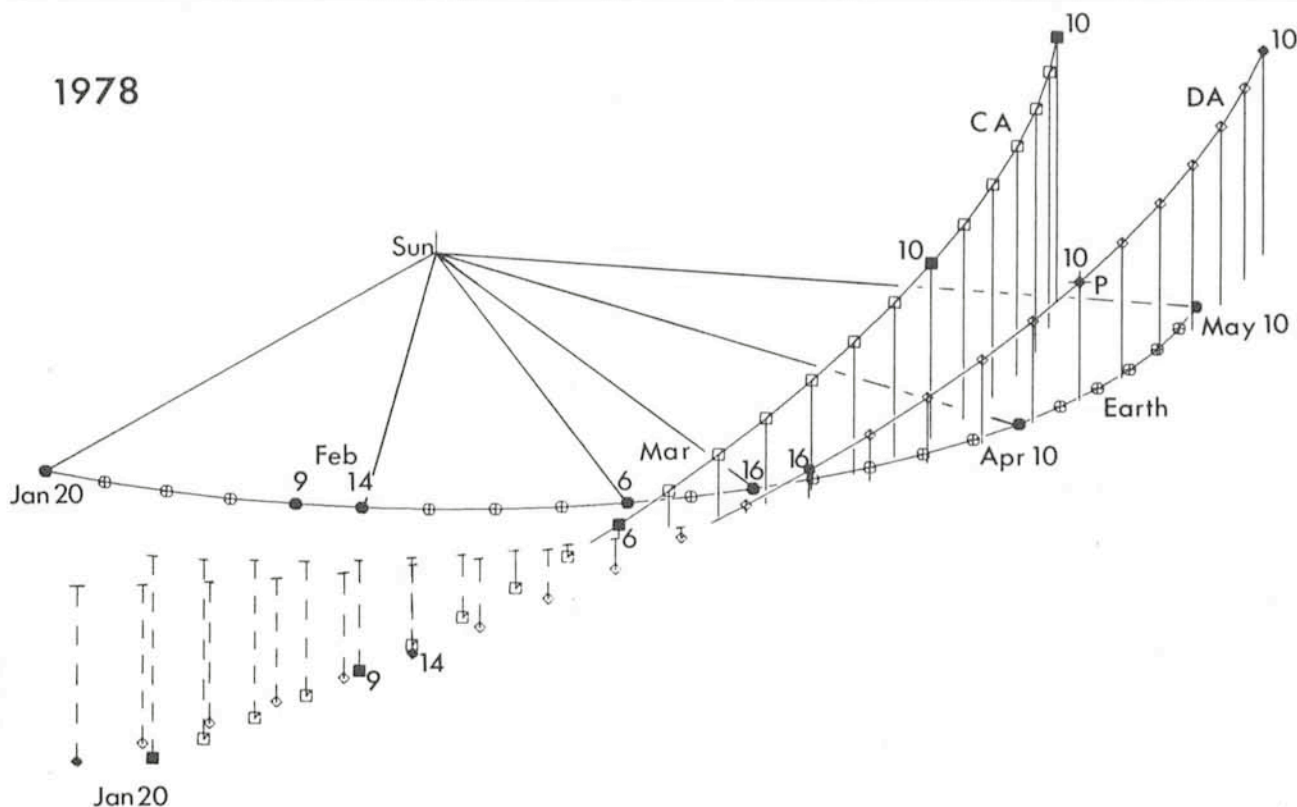
• La Silla
• La Serena
• Santiago

• Munich
• Geneva

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This issue of the *Messenger* focusses on the recent discovery of two Earth-approaching minor planets. Both were found with the ESO Schmidt telescope on La Silla by Dr. Hans-Emil Schuster. Working in close collaboration with Dr. B. Marsden of the Smithsonian Observatory in the USA, it was possible to establish the orbits *before* the closest approaches in March 1978. This enabled other observers to study the tiny planets and to learn more about their physical properties.

Although moving in very different orbits, 1978 CA and DA came within 3.8 million kilometres of each other on February 17, 1978.



The fly-by of 1978 CA and 1978 DA early 1978. The orbits of the Earth and the two minor planets are shown during a period of about four months, centered on the dates of closest approaches in March. The planets are marked at five-day intervals. Those parts of the orbits which are above the Ecliptic (plane of the Earth's orbit) are fully drawn. In order to better visualize the three-dimensional positions, vertical lines connecting the minor planets to the Ecliptic have been traced. 1978 CA was discovered on February 8 and came within 19 million kilometres on March 8; 1978 DA was discovered on February 17 and was only 13 million kilometres from the Earth on March 15. Note also the very close encounter between the two planets on February 17.