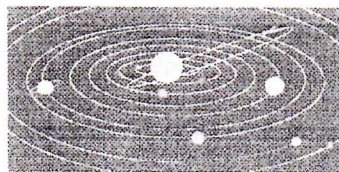


THE FLINT RIVER OBSERVER



Vol. 5, No. 5

FLINT RIVER ASTRONOMY CLUB

July, 2001

Officers: President, **Larry Higgins:** (770) 884-3982; <larrylhiggins@yahoo.com>; Vice President/newsletter editor, **Bill Warren:**(770) 229-6108 <warren 1212@mindspring.com>; Secretary (**Dawn Knight**)/Treasurer (**Steve Knight**): (770)227-9871, membership renewals to Steve at 114 Central Lake Circle, Griffin, GA 30223 <sdknight@bellsouth.net>; AICor, **Neal Wellons**, and Web Site Coordinator, **Cody Wellons**, (770)946-5039; Librarian, **Katie Moore** (770)228-6447. Club mailing address: 1212 Everee Inn Road, Griffin, GA 30224. FRAC web page: <<http://welcome.to/frac>>.

Please notify **Bill Warren** promptly if you have a change of address or e-mail.

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Club Calendar. Fri.-Sat., Jul. 20-21: Club meeting/observings at Cox Field. The meeting will begin at 7:00 Fri., with the observing afterward. If the weather is bad on Fri., the meeting will begin at 7:00 on Sat., with the observing afterward. And if the weather is bad Sat., we'll meet in Mr. Cox's hangar at the end of the field.

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Vice President's Message. Probably starting in August, we're going to try something new and -- we think -- *very* exciting at our monthly Cox Field weekend observings: ongoing "theme-related" sessions in which we'll take those who wish to participate on a tour of the available targets in a given observing club.

For example, part of one month's observings might be devoted to tracking down all of the available Universe Sampler targets, and the following month's observings might focus on Binocular Deep-Sky objects or Double Stars, etc.

You won't find *all* of the objects that weekend, of course, since most A. L. observing club targets are spaced out -- no pun intended -- over an entire year; still, you'll have a *great* start toward earning a bunch of new observing pins. (On average, somewhere between 1/4 and 3/4 of any given club's targets can be seen on any given clear night, depending on how late you stay out and how much difficulty you have in finding the various targets. We can't control the former, but we can -- and will -- assist you in overcoming the latter.)

No one attending our observings will be required to participate, of course; you'll still be free to pursue whatever observing interests you have, or to simply shoot the breeze among friends the way **Steve Knight** does while **Dawn** is using "Big Boy" to visually conquer the universe.

If you *do* decide to participate, though, it'll give you a chance to find out what those other observing clubs beyond Messier are all about. We'll have observing forms, pencils and paper available, and we'll show and tell you how to find whatever objects are "up" on that particular evening. You'll still have to find the objects and describe what you see, but it'll be a lot easier for you to get started this way since *everyone who is participating will be working on exactly the same thing at the same time!*

-Bill Warren

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Last Month's Meeting/Activities. A total of 16 members attended our May Cox Field observings, including: **Steve & Dawn Knight**, **Joe Auriemma**, **Smitty** and yr. editor (both nights); **Dan Newcombe** and **Donald Harden** (Fri. night); and **John Wallace**, **Larry Fallin**

and **Cory & Grady Dukes** (Sat. night). Cory & Grady stuck it out till 2:30 a.m. trying to see *Sagittarius* Messiers through the clouds.

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Membership Renewals Due in July: Chuck Beckham. Send your \$12 check to **Steve Knight.** His address is listed on p. 1.

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This 'n That. If you don't know already, **Katie** has added to her already impressive list of accomplishments by making the varsity cheerleading squad at the Univ. of Arizona. How Katie finds time for all she does is as big a mystery as the lunar feature **Reiner Gamma!**

*Katie isn't the only FRACster who's been busy lately: **Dr. Richard Schumde** has an article, "A Trip to Mars," in the May, 2001, issue of the (A. L.) *Reflector* (p. 10); and **Rich Jakiel**, our May speaker, has articles in the May, 2001, issues of *Astronomy* ("The Man Who Tracked Nebulae," pp. 52-57) and *Sky & Telescope* ("More Bridges, Tails and Rings," pp. 124-126).

Regarding observing progress, there is this: **Dawn Knight** has gathered 94 Messiers so far, and all but four of her Universe Samplers; hubby **Steve** found 16 galaxies in **Markarian's Chain** on May 14th, qualifying him for another "Katie's Club" certificate. (Steve also has bagged 70 Messiers to qualify him for a Regular Messier certificate.) **Joe Auriemma** painstakingly worked his way through the *Virgo/Coma* cluster of Messiers at our May observings; all Joe has left now is a handful of *Sagittarius* Messiers to earn his pin. **Cory Dukes** is well on his way to earning a Regular Messier certificate with 60 Messiers logged.

***Observing Tip #1: Larry Fallin** has done something really neat: he used some of his non-observing nights to fill in the constellation lines in his *Cambridge Star Atlas*.

***Observing Tip #2 (from Steve Knight):** "If, like me, you make notes about the things you find when you're observing and then go

back later to rewrite your notes at home, don't let them pile up until you have about 30 of them scattered around the house. I did that once with a bunch of Messiers, and it took me all day to get it straightened out."

***Observing Tip #3 (from Bill Warren):**

"When you find an object for the first time, try different magnifications to see which one gives the best view of the object. For example, I find objects with my 26mm eyepiece, study them at low power, and then switch to my medium power 9.7mm eyepiece and/or my high power 6.4mm eyepiece, and record whatever differences I see. With galaxies, I almost always get my best look at them at medium power.

"Beyond that, although it's not required I always include in my observing report instructions on how I found the object, in case I ever want to find it again or tell someone else how to find it."

*Can you believe there were six editing or typographical errors -- all of them minor, thank goodness! -- in last month's *Observer*? Who's editing this rag, the nearsighted Mr. Magoo?

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Upcoming Meetings/Activities. Okay, folks, pay attention here: our July meeting will NOT be held on the 2nd Thurs. of July, nor will it be at Beaverbrook. We'll hold our July meeting at **Cox Field at 7:00 p.m. on Fri., July 20th**, with our regularly scheduled observing to follow immediately.

If Friday is clouded out, we'll try again on Sat. evening -- as before, with the meeting at 7:00 and the observing afterward.

If the weather is uncooperative on Sat. evening as well, we'll meet in Mr. Cox's hangar at the end of the field.

Please bear in mind, though, that if either or both evenings are clear, we'll observe as usual after the meeting. **Don't forget to bring along your telescope and observing gear.**

Steve Knight and **Larry Fallin** will be our co-speakers; their program will be a hands-on demonstration of the Catseye collimating

system (\$34, including shipping, from Jim Fly, 7806 Wildcreek Trail, Huntsville, AL 35802, <flyj@earthlink.net>) and the Tectron Autocollimator (\$36, <www.amateurastronomy.com>). If you purchase either or both systems between now and the July meeting, Steve and Larry will show you exactly how to operate them to produce pinpoint collimation accuracy.

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The Sky in July. At mag. -2, **Mars** will be impressive in the night sky throughout July, rising above the trees in the SE at Cox Field after sunset. For the first half of the month, Mars will move toward *Antares*; at their closest, Mars will be 5° E of Antares -- but 15 times as bright -- on **July 19th** before moving eastward the rest of the month.

Venus (mag. -4.1) and **Saturn** (mag. 0.2) will rise about 3 a.m. in July: on the **15th**, they will lie only 0.7° apart -- and *that* should be a lovely sight indeed!

On the morning of **July 13th**, **Mercury** (mag. 0) will be 2° to the lower right of **Jupiter** (mag. -2). That same morning, the mag. 8 asteroid **4 Vesta** will be a mere 6' -- a pinky-width in your telescope's low-power field of view -- N of the naked-eye (mag. 4) star *5 Tauri*.

On **July 20th**, 8th-mag. **Neptune** will be an easy telescopic target, lying just 5' -- that's five arc-minutes -- S of *Upsilon (U) Capricorni*.

The **Moon** will be an easy target throughout July for everyone in FRAC except **Tom Moore**, who couldn't find water in the ocean.

Speaking of the Moon, here's an exciting opportunity to see ole **Luna** and the planet **Venus** up to some daytime hi-jinks: during the afternoon of **July 17th**, the crescent Moon will be "four fists to the right (west) of the Sun (*S&T*, p. 100)." Venus will be nearby -- so close, in fact, that, at 2:27 p.m. the Moon will occult (i.e., move in front of) Venus, hiding the planet from view until 3:39 p.m.

(**Tom**: "But if we can't see Venus because it's behind the Moon, why should we look for it then, especially in the daytime when we can't see it anyway?")

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Astronomical Questions for Preliminary Rounds of "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?"

humor by Bill Warren

1. Where should you look to find the stars? (A) Up (B) Down (C) Sideways (D) Hollywood parties

2. What was William Herschel's greatest contribution to astronomy? (A) He discovered Uranus in 1781, and he was the first person to categorize deep-sky objects in a systematic manner (B) He proved that the Sun is an optical illusion (C) Halley's Comet was named for him (D) He invented the candy bar

3. What is the largest gas giant in the solar system? (A) Jupiter (B) Saturn (C) Uranus (D) Ken Walburn

4. What is a light year? (A) The distance light travels in a year, i.e., 5.8 trillion miles (B) A year that doesn't weigh very much (C) One of those rare years when Ga. Power Co. doesn't cut off Dawn Knight's electricity (D) The distance Tom Moore is from finishing the Lunar Club program

5. Who invented the Dobsonian telescope? (A) John Dobsonian (B) Sir Reginald Smythe Telescope (C) Dan Newcombe (D) None of these

6. What was the "Big Bang"? (A) The moment in which the universe began (B) A wild party thrown by millionaire playboy Donald Harden (C) The sound made when Steve Knight dropped his wrench while collimating Big Boy's secondary mirror (D) Larry Higgins at Cox Field after a heavy meal at El Charro's Restaurant

7. Where would you find the Oort Cloud? (A) 2+ light years out from the Sun (B) Fogging up Joe Auriemma's telescope (C) Circling the planet Oort (D) Buzzing around Smitty's beard

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