

# THE FLINT RIVER OBSERVER



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FLINT RIVER ASTRONOMY CLUB

September, 2001

**Officers:** President, **Larry Higgins**; 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, **Tom 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. Thurs., Sept. 6:** FRAC meeting (Beaverbrook, 7:30); **Fri., Sept. 7:** BB observing (at the school, at dark); **Thurs.-Sun., Sept. 13-16:** Peach State Star Gaze (Camp McIntosh, adjacent to Indian Springs State Park near Jackson, Ga.); **Fri.-Sat., Sept. 21-22:** Cox Field observings (at dark).

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**Vice President's Message.** **Larry Fallin** has suggested that it would be neat if FRAC could come up with a new observing club program to add to the AL's list. There is, in fact, a brand-new one, the "Earth-Orbiting Satellite Observing Program"; and **Phil Sacco**, representative of the Southeastern Region of the Astronomical League (SERAL), says that two even newer clubs, the "Smythe Club" and the "Caldwell Club", are in the process of being added. The Smythe Club will be

restricted to telescopes of 6" aperture or less. The Caldwell Club will offer pins for finding 70 or all 109 of the deep-sky objects Sir Patrick Caldwell-Moore's famous list of overlooked celestial wonders. Beyond that, numerous possibilities come to mind, most of which our members probably are unqualified to create or administer: a "Dark Nebula Club"; an "Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) Club" for members living at more northerly latitudes; an "H II Regions/OB Associations Club" (an ideal project for **Rich Jakiel**); a "Planetary Nebula Club" or "Globular Cluster Club", either of which probably would, like the Arp Peculiar Galaxies Club, lean rather heavily on objects contained in other, existing AL observing programs; an "Asterisms Club" -- now, *there's* one we could do -- and one I like (but the AL probably wouldn't), a "Solar Projection Club". It would be just like the Sunspotters Club, only participants would be limited to observing the Sun by solar projection (i.e., projecting the Sun's image onto a white card or screen) rather than using a solar filter. It's a pretty safe bet that no one has ever earned a Sunspotters pin *that way*.

Anybody have any other ideas? (I can't wait to hear what **Tom Moore** comes up with.)

Elsewhere, on behalf of everyone in FRAC I want to extend a hearty welcome to this summer's newest members: **Rick Goodman** (555 Walker Road, Byron, GA 31008; (478) 956-1961; <[rick.goodman@trw.com](mailto:rick.goodman@trw.com)>; and **Dana, Gloria & Taylor Harris** (210 Southland Station Drive, Apt. # 255, Warner Robins, GA 31088, (478)929-9761; <[jdannaharris@home.com](mailto:jdannaharris@home.com)>. Glad to have you aboard, folks.

Finally, let me offer my humble apologies

for leaving out so much information in recent newsletters (e.g., "The Sky in ...", information about the Peach State Star Gaze). I'd plead insanity, but **Tom Moore** has exclusive rights to that one. All I can say is, they must have removed my brain along with those bone spurs on my heels. I'll try to do a better job of keeping you informed in the future.

-**Bill Warren**

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**Last Month's Meeting/Activities.** It's been a lousy spring and summer for observing, hasn't it? Since April 4th when the sky glittered with stars to mag. 5.5, we've had only two nights -- May 22nd and our July meeting/observing night on the 23rd -- when transparency at Cox Field has been as good as mag. 5.0. On the 23rd, 13-year-old **Cory Dukes** finished his Honorary (110) Messiers -- it took him less than a year to go through the list -- and **Dawn Knight** finished both her Honorary Messier and Universe Sampler programs.

Other members who attended **Steve Knight's** and **Larry Fallin's** fine presentation on Cat's-Eye collimation at our July meeting and/or the observing session afterward included: **Tom & Katie Moore** -- Katie left for the U. of Cactus the next day -- **Keith & Denise Cox, Grady Dukes, Smitty, Joe Auriemma, Dan Newcombe, Tim Astin** and **yr. editor**.

We had a fine crowd of 20 in attendance at our August meeting. **Steve Knight** discussed secondary mirror collimation.

Incidentally, **Smitty** tried out a new and unusual method of keeping the insects away at our July observing, using a simple technique that didn't involve the use of greasy spray or liquid repellents such as Off!, Cutter or Avon Skin-So-Soft -- *and he didn't get even one mosquito bite!* His secret? "You know those fabric sheets you throw in the dryer with your clothes? Yep! Grab yourself a box of BOUNCE, rub your exposed skin with a sheet and pin the sheet to your shoulder...I also left sheets hanging out of my back pockets."

Smitty learned this little trick from a

Canadian astronomer friend, **Paul Greenhalgh**, of the Fraser Valley Astronomers Society in British Columbia.

"I honestly didn't believe Paul when he told me about it," Smitty says, "but I tried it and *it works!* So next time you're out observing and smell a Chinese laundry whenever I come within eight feet of you -- you'll know it's **me!**"

Smitty recommends, though, that you continue to use insect repellent on your lower legs and shoes to keep the ticks off.

Nine members, two guests and a double handful of meteors showed up at Cox Field on Sat., Aug. 11th, for our special Perseids meteor shower observing. Despite largely overcast skies throughout the evening (thanks to **Larry Fallin's** new 10" Discovery Dob), **Dawn Knight** earned another Katie's Club certificate for finding **M49** low in the western sky without using her Telrad, and hubby **Steve** did likewise by finding **Andromeda Galaxy** deep in the sky glow of Griffin. Other members present included: **Smitty and Steven Smith, David Ward, Bill Snyder, Dan Newcombe** and **yr. editor**.

Our Fri., Aug. 17th Cox Field observing was clouded out. The next night looked bad initially but cleared up considerably by 10:00. **Dana, Gloria & Taylor Harris** and a guest got their first look at **Steve & Dawn Knight, Smitty & Steven Smith, Larry Fallin, David Ward** and **yr. editor**, all of whom under dark skies bear uncanny resemblances to Hollywood's best-looking movie stars. (*Yeah, Tom Moore is thinking, now that you mention it Bill does look a lot like Rin Tin Tin.*)

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**Membership Renewals Due in September:** none.

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**This 'n That.** In preparing the report on FRAC's observing award recipients that appears on pp. 4-5 of this issue of the *Observer*, a glaring omission leaped out at us: **Rich Jakiel**, who has observed more than

2,100 Herschels and nearly 200 Arp Peculiar Galaxies -- and drawn more than 500 of them as well -- wasn't listed as having a Messier pin. We asked him about it. His response: "I did (the Messiers) back in 1974-5 with my old Edmund 4-1/2" reflector. In those days there weren't any pins or certificates (programs) so I never bothered to get one...I'm not much of a pin getter."

Well, you are now, Rich. You've gone light-years beyond the Messiers since 1975; we've taken the liberty of correcting that massive oversight by ordering an Honorary Messier certificate and pin for you through FRAC. It's the least we can do, we think, to honor a member whose observing skills and accomplishments rate among the very best in the world. (Could anyone seriously doubt that Rich, who has 55 drawings in Kepple & Sanner's *Night Sky Observer's Guide* -- and who, in 1996, won first place in the Webb Society's international deep-sky astrodrawing competition -- has observed all the Messiers along the way? Hey, we're talking about a guy who studies H II regions and OB associations within galaxies.)

\*Speaking of **Dawn Knight** (as we so often do whenever there's absolutely nothing else to talk about except whose cat had kittens): my, what an excellent observer she's become! (*Despite her handicap*, we might add: Dawn has to stand with her eye two inches away from the eyepiece when observing to keep from getting mudpack all over the lens.)

\***Smitty** has set up (and will serve as moderator for) "the FRAC group", a free, easy-to-use e-mail group service. You can learn more about it at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FRAC>. To start sending messages to members of this group, simply send e-mail to [FRAC@yahoo.com](mailto:FRAC@yahoo.com).

\***Dr. Richard Schmude** was the featured speaker at the August meeting of the Atlanta Astronomy Club. His topic was "NASA's Last Five Years With Mars."

\*There's a nice article on **John Dobson** in the Sept. issue of *Astronomy*, pp. 68-71.

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**Upcoming Meetings/Activities.** Due to the **Peach State Star Gaze** at Camp McIntosh near Jackson, Ga., from **Thurs.-Sun., Sept. 13th-16th**, we're moving our club meeting up a week to **Thurs., Sept. 6th** at Beaverbrook. At that 7:30 meeting, we'll discuss (a) the results of our recent membership survey, (b) getting ready for the PSSG, and (c) the Chiefland Star Party. (See **Steve Knight**, p. 4.)

We'll resume our Beaverbrook observings at the school on the next evening, **Fri., Sept. 7th**.

**About the PSSG.** If you plan to attend the Peach State, don't wait to sign up when you arrive at Camp McIntosh; it may be too late. Last year's event was a sellout, as well this one might be, too, given the presence of the world famous astrocartographer **Wil Tirion** (*Cambridge Star Atlas, Bright Sky Atlas, Deep Map 600, Sky Atlas 2000*). Send your check **now to: Ken Poshedly**, 1741 Bruckner Court, Snellville, GA 30078-2784. Make your check payable to the Atlanta Astronomy Club, and designate it for the Peach State Star Gaze.

The costs are: \$25.00 registration fee, \$2.00 for overnight parking, and \$10 per night per person for camping.

Two FRAC members -- **Rich Jakiel** and **Dr. Richard Schmude, Jr.** -- are scheduled for daytime presentations and/or workshops, along with Tirion and an outstanding list of other speakers. Rich's topic will be amateur observing of galaxies; Dr. Schmude's, the recent Mars dust storms.

In case you haven't attended a PSSG before and would like to observe and/or camp among FRAC friends rather than strangers, some of us will be arriving and setting up on Thursday. (We get there early to grab a choice piece of real estate at the north end of the observing field, i.e., the end farthest away from the registration office.) If you bring your 'scope on Thursday but can't stay the night, we'll look after it for you until you return on Fri. evening. ("Look after it" means (a) seeing that it doesn't

wander off while you're gone, and (b) protecting it from rain.)

The PSSG will preempt our regular Cox Field observings in September; we will, however, hold observings on the following weekend, **Fri.-Sat., Sept. 21st-22nd**, although the weather doubtless will be miserable because **Dana & Gloria Harris** are getting a new 10" Orion Skyquest XT10 Dob.

Our October meeting will feature **yr. editor** addressing a long overdue topic, the **Lunar Club** -- its requirements and how to find its various features. Then we'll go outside and look for some of them.

You'll be happy to learn that **Phil Sacco** will be back with us for a return engagement at our Nov. meeting.

**AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT FROM STEVE KNIGHT.** "In our recent survey, several of you expressed an interest in attending the **Chiefland (Fla.) Star Party**; well, I'm organizing a FRAC motorcade to Chiefland on **Thurs., Nov. 15th**. We'll stay through **Sun. morning, Nov. 18th**. Chiefland is a week-long star party; we're going on Thursday to beat the weekend crowd.

"I'll have more to say about Chiefland in next month's *Observer*, but our present schedule involves meeting somewhere at 8:00-8:30 on the 15th to make the 5-6 hr. drive to the Chiefland site as a group. We'll stop every two hours to gas up, get snacks, stretch legs, etc., and have lunch around 1:00 and arrive at Chiefland by mid- to late-afternoon so we can set up before dark. Maps and detailed plans will be handed out before we go so everyone can go at their own pace if they wish.

"For more details on Chiefland, go to C-AV.COM and see for yourself. I don't think you'll be disappointed.

"I'll discuss the trip in greater detail at our Sept. meeting and in the Oct. *Observer*, but if you'd like to go with the FRAC group please let me know by **Sept. 20th** so we can register (and hopefully set up) as a group. Fees include \$10.00 for once-only registration and \$5.00 per person per night for camping. As with all star parties there are no refunds for bad weather.

"You can make your check out to me or FRAC, and either mail it to me at my home address (see p. 1), or give it to me at our September meeting or sometime during the Chiefland weekend."

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**The Sky in September.** Mars will dance around the Sagittarius "Teapot" this month; on **Sept. 8th-10th** it will be 2-1/2° S of **M8, Lagoon Nebula**. Mercury probably will be too low in the W to be seen from Cox Field. **Neptune** and **Uranus** will be binocular targets in S Capricorn during September, and **Pluto** will be up there somewhere, for all the good it will do you. *S&T* (Sept. 2001, p. 96) shows where to find Uranus in Sept.

**Saturn** will rise around midnight initially and about 10:00 by the end of the month. **Jupiter** will trail Saturn by two hours. **Venus** will be the brightest morning "star".

On one of the centerfold pages of the Sept. issue of *S&T*, **Gary Seronik** tells you about **31 Cygni**, an easy telescopic triple star and one of the Double Star Club's 100 targets. As an article in next month's *Observer* will point out, 31 Cyg is one of a handful of Double Star targets that isn't listed by name in *Seasonal Star Charts* or *Cambridge Star Atlas*. The excellent photo in *S&T* will show you exactly where to find 31 Cyg.

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### Prize in the Skies: FRAC Members'

#### Observing Awards

report by **Bill Warren**

I've said it before: we're a busy little club. (And that's understandable, since we hold our meetings at *Beaverbrook*.) But now I have the facts to prove it.

Of our 43 current members, 16 -- that's 37% -- have earned at least one AL pin. (Not all of the pins have arrived as this is being written.) Here's the breakdown of pins earned per observing program ("U" means the certificate

no. is unknown):

\***Asteroid Club:** none.

\***Arp Peculiar Galaxies Club:** **Bill Warren**, certificate #15V.

\***Binocular Messier Club:** **Rich Jakiel**, #57; **Phil Sacco**, #290; **Smitty**, #343; **Bill Warren**, #357; **Joanne Cirincione**, #398; **David Ward**, #420; **Larry Higgins**, #422; and **Tim Astin**, #429.

\***Deep Sky Binocular Club:** **Phil Sacco**, #79; **Smitty**, #82; and **Bill Warren**, #84.

\***Double Star Club:** **Phil Sacco**, #46; and **Bill Warren**, #68.

\***Earth-Orbiting Satellite Observing Club:** none.

\***Herschel 400 Club:** **Bill Warren**, #183; and **Phil Sacco**, #210.

\***Herschel 2 Club:** none.

\***Lunar Club:** **Phil Sacco**, #82; **Joanne Cirincione**, #99; **Bill Warren**, #129; **Mike Stuart**, #151; **Tim Astin**, #164; **Larry Higgins**, #217; and **Jerry Williams**, #228.

\***Messier Club:** **Alex Langoussis**, #1409; **Phil Sacco**, #1454; **Larry Higgins**, #1484; **Bill Warren**, #1539; **Smitty**, #1629; **John Wallace**, #1648; **Mike Stuart**, #1657; **Katie Moore**, #1683; **Joe Auriemma**, #1739; **David Ward**, #1751; **Dawn Knight**, #1835; **Cory Dukes**, #1875; and **Rich Jakiel** (U).

Three other FRAC members -- **Tim Astin**, **Larry Fallin** and **Steve Knight** have received Regular (70) Messier certificates but have not at writing completed the entire Messier list.

\***Meteor Club:** **Smitty** and **Joanne Cirincione** have received 6-hr. certificates; 30 hrs. and five certificates are required for a pin. **Phil Sacco** (U) has completed his 30 hrs., but at writing he had not submitted his observations.

\***Planetary Club:** **Phil Sacco**, #9.

\***Southern Skies Binocular Club:** none.

\***Sunspotters Club:** **Smitty**, #27; and **Bill Warren** (U). **Phil Sacco** (U) has completed his Sunspotters program but had not submitted his observations as of this writing.

\***Universe Sampler:** **Bill Warren**, #16-17; **Larry Higgins**, #18; **Phil Sacco**, #23; and **Dawn Knight** (U).

\***Urban Club:** **Phil Sacco**, #1; and **Bill**

**Warren**, #4.

Finally, we have two FRAC-created observing awards, the **Zombies** and **Katie's Club**. The term "zombie" as applied to late-night observers was created six years ago by **Larry Higgins** when he was observing chairman of the Atlanta Astronomy Club; we began using it as a local award in March, 2000. **Katie's Club** was created in April, 2000, to commemorate **Katie Moore's** finding the **Trapezium** on an overcast evening when only one star, *Betelgeuse*, was visible in Orion.

\***Zombie certificates** (for staying up all night observing): **Smitty**; **David Ward**; **Charles Sykes**; **Katie Moore**; **Bill Warren**; **Steve Knight**; **Jerry Williams**; and **Larry Higgins**.

\***Katie's Club certificates** (for finding celestial objects under extremely difficult observing conditions): **Katie Moore**, **Steve Knight** (2) and **Dawn Knight** (2).

On an individual basis, the pin breakdown is as follows: **Phil Sacco**, 11; **Bill Warren**, 10; **Smitty** and **Larry Higgins**, 4; **Joanne Cirincione**, **David Ward**, **Tim Astin**, **Mike Stuart**, **Dawn Knight** and **Rich Jakiel**, 2; and **John Wallace**, **Katie Moore**, **Jerry Williams**, **Joe Auriemma**, **Cory Dukes** and **Alex Langoussis**, 1.

With a total of 47 pins earned (if not received as yet), we're averaging 1.1 pins per FRAC member. Our pin total will rise to 50 when **Tim Astin**, **Larry Fallin** and **Steve Knight** finish their Honorary Messier; and the total will be even higher when any of our 36 Lunar Pin-less members decides to find out how easy the Lunar Club program really is.

Of course, it could be argued that 17 of our pins shouldn't count because they were earned through the Atlanta Astronomy Club, not ours; still, this report deals with the accomplishments of FRAC members and we are extremely proud of all of our members, including those who choose to receive their pins through another club.

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