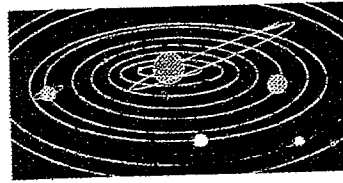


# THE FLINT RIVER OBSERVER



Vol. 6, No. 5

FLINT RIVER ASTRONOMY CLUB

July, 2002

**Officers:** President, **Steve Knight:** (770)227-9871, 114 Central Lake Circle, Griffin, GA 30223 <sdknight@bellsouth.net>; Vice President/newsletter editor, **Bill Warren:** <warren1212@mindspring.com>, (770)229-6108; Secretary/Treasurer, **Dawn Knight** (see above); AICor, **Neal Wellons** (770)946-5039; Webmaster: **David Ward** (770)989-5201, <dward51@bellsouth.net>; Librarian, **Tom Moore:** (770)228-6447. Event Photographer: **Doug Maxwell** (770)719-7959. Club mailing address: 1212 Everee Inn Road, Griffin, GA 30224. Web page: <<http://welcome.to/frac>>, discussion group at <[FRAC@yahoo.com](mailto:FRAC@yahoo.com)>.

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

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**Club Calendar.** **Fri-Sat., July 5-6:** Cox Field observings (at dark); **Thurs., Jul. 11:** FRAC meeting (Bill Warren's house, 7:30 [6:00 if you wanta swim beforehand]); and **Fri-Sat., July 12-13:** Cox Field observings (at dark).

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**President's Message.** I want to say how happy I am that more members are coming out to our public events and observings lately, especially since attendance at club events normally drops off during the summer months. We had 17 members and guests at our June 14th-15th Cox Field observings, and 13 at the May 31st Relay For Life. I hope to see even more of you out there doing what we do best.

If you weren't with us on the 14th or 15th, you missed a real treat in the **International Space Station/Shuttle** flyovers. On Fri., we saw a great deal of detail as the Station passed

directly overhead with the Shuttle docked. The solar panels, body and Shuttle were well defined even in binos, and could be followed from horizon to horizon.

On Sat. evening, the Shuttle had undocked and gained about a 3-min. lead on ISS, so we got to watch first one, then the other pass overhead. It was truly spectacular.

Those two observings had some of the best skies we've seen in a long time, including enough detail in **M51's** spiral arms to knock your socks off. And with **Lagoon Nebula (M8)** easily naked-eye, the nights were really incredible. If the rest of the summer is even half that good, we're in for a treat. I may go back to the Herschel 400s.

Binocular observing can be great fun, but it's often difficult to hold the binos steady while observing and studying details with the binos shaking. There are many ways to remedy this. For instance, you can (a) build a table mount like **Smitty's**, (b) use a tripod to hold the binos steady, or (c) build a chair/tripod combination that holds the binos in place in front of you. But in (a) you still have to move the mount, in (b) you have to stand up, and in (c) you still have to move the chair and tripod. But what if there were a way to hold the binos steady in front of you, sit in a nice chair and swivel around at will, all at the same time?

There is a way, albeit more expensive than the other projects I've done. So far, I've spent about \$80 on materials, with about another \$40 to go. Even so, the total cost will be far less than the hundreds of \$\$\$ such a commercially available chair costs.

The **bino chair** consists of a sheet of 3/4" cabinet plywood, a lazy susan bearing, and a lot of pvc piping to produce a rotating platform

that works like a Dobsonian telescope, a framework that holds the binos in front of your face, and a comfy chair to sit in. I have the chair already, and am gathering the other materials. I'm down to the odds and ends now, which is the most time-consuming part of any project. Hopefully, I'll have the chair ready for the PSSG. (Incidentally, the bino chair is easily portable, taking up no more space when folded up than a lawn chair -- unless, that is, like **Bill Warren** you want to sit in a sofa chair.)

Other projects in the works for ol' Blaze include: a redesigned version of my Denver observing chair and preparing the travel trailer we're getting for astronomical use (including ways to get rid of interlopers who think we're going to let them sleep on the sofa).

-Steve Knight

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**Last Month's Meeting/Activities.** We had eight members -- **Steve & Dawn Knight, Smitty, Neal Wellons, Doug Maxwell, Felix Luciano, Bill Snyder** and yr. editor -- and one visitor, **Jerry Carlson** -- at our June meeting. The team of Dawn, Steve, Felix and Bill S. won the trivia contest, and Bill S. also won the door prize.

As for observing -- well, while many of us have complained about how poor the skies have been over the past 2-3 years, we've already had more nights of mag. 5.5-6.0 transparency since Jan. '02 than we had in '00 and '01 combined. **Doug Maxwell** recently found 30 Messiers in one evening using his new 13" Dob, and over the past six months **David Ward** has found about 70 Herschel 400s with his 6" 'scope and yr. editor about as many Herschel 2s. **Larry Fallin** is up to about 90 Double Stars now, and on June 7th **Dawn Knight** found her 70th Caldwell object. You don't do those kinds of things under poor skies.

At any rate, last month was a busy one for FRAC observers, starting with our ACS "Relay For Life" walkathon observing that was a huge success in every regard. Hundreds of people visited our site during the long afternoon, evening and night, and we were amply prepared for them with no less than 13

members present: **Greg Potter, Dawn & Steve Knight, Veronica & Larry Fallin, Smitty, Felix Luciano, Doug Maxwell, yr. editor** and four members that we haven't seen nearly often enough in recent months: **Tom Moore, John Wallace, Mike Stuart** and **Rod ("Win-the-Door-Prizes-and-Vanish") Dougherty**. Felix, Doug and Rod stayed all night and earned Zombie Die-Hard certificates.

Cox Field didn't exactly go unused, either: **Steve & Dawn, yr. editor, Doug Maxwell** and a friend he brought along, **Mike Robinson**, showed up on June 1st; Steve & Dawn, **Larry Fallin** and yr. editor came out on June 7th and 8th; **Mike Stuart** attended our observing on the 7th, and the 8th brought out **David Ward** and **Dan Newcombe**. **John Wallace** and yr. editor came out on the 10th, and our scheduled observings on the 14th-15th brought out **Dawn & Steve Knight, Smitty, Doug Maxwell** and **Felix Luciano** (both nights), visitor **Jerry Carlson** (Fri. night) and **Joe Auriemma, Bill Snyder** and **David, Sara & Brendan O'Keeffe** (Sat. night).

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**Membership Renewals Due in July: Chuck Beckham; and Rick Goodman.** Please send your check for \$12 payable to either Steve Knight or the Flint River Astronomy Club c/o Steve's address listed in the upper left hand portion of p. 1.

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"I wanted to be sure I was seeing everything that I was supposed to be seeing in it."

-**John Wallace**, when asked why he had recorded seven observations of **M31** in the Messier Club program when only one observation was required.

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**This 'n That.** The May '02 *Reflector* announced what looked like a good deal for \$75 a year: insurance coverage for affiliate groups such as FRAC that would protect us against lawsuits related to public observings. Since the premium had to be in by 6/15/02, **Steve** promptly sent them a check. It returned

a week later, uncashed, along with an apologetic letter from the A.L. explaining that the deal had fallen through. (The insurance company's definition of *chapters* didn't include affiliated groups.) As Steve noted, "Big corporations tend to make changes at the last minute to suit themselves, not their clients. The A.L. is looking for another carrier." Stay tuned.

\*In case you haven't noticed, *two* FRAC members had articles appearing in the May, '02 issue of the *Reflector*: **Dr. Richard Schmude** (an article about A.L.P.O.), p. 16; and **Bill Warren** ("How to Become a Master Observer"), pp. 22, 30.

\*Yr. editor inadvertently overlooked a 229th duplication of A.L. observing club objects that you should add to your list: **NGC 1582**, an open cluster in *Perseus*, is a Deep-Sky Binocular and Herschel II object.

\*From **Smitty** re the "Walk For Life" observing: "Well, I don't know about everyone else, but I thoroughly enjoyed the Spalding High observing. Yes, we had to contend with the floodlights on the (football) field and the hazy/cloudy sky conditions, and the objects -- even **M13** -- we managed to show people didn't stand out like they should have. But I counted ten 'scopes set up and most of the time we were all actively trying, and succeeding, in finding objects in the night.

"Way to go, FRACsters!!! Give yourselves some pats on the back and a couple of "Atta boys!" and "Atta girls!," you deserve!"

\*From **David O'Keeffe**: "I would like to share with you one of my favorite galaxies, the **Milky Way** -- our home. You don't even need a 'scope to see it in all its glory. I have been catching faint glimpses of it when I get home from work about 4 a.m. I can't wait to see it under dark sky this summer."

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**Upcoming Meetings/Activities.** Our club observings will be held at Cox Field on **Fri.-Sat., July 5th-6th** and **Fri.-Sat., July**

**12th-13th**, with the new moon occurring on the 10th.

Our club meeting will be at **7:30 on Thurs., July 11th**; as with last month's meeting, it will be held at **Bill Warren's** house at **1212 Everee Inn Rd.** near the airport in Griffin. To get there from, say, N of Griffin, come in on 19/41 like you're going to Cox Field, but instead of getting off the 4-lane at Hwy. 362 (Williamson Road), stay on the 4-lane to the next exit and turn left at the stoplight at Airport Rd. Turn right at the 4-way stop sign at Everee Inn Rd., and the Warren abode will be the brick house on the left at the first corner. Turn left at Roberts St., and either park in the driveway or turn around and park on the side of the road facing Everee Inn Rd.

At that meeting we'll discuss the pros and cons of conducting a spring star party, whether at Camp McIntosh or elsewhere, and whether with the MGAS folks or by ourselves.

Before that, though, we'll swim from 5:30 to 7:00, and refreshments will be available.

SERAL representative **Phil Sacco** will be the featured speaker at our August meeting. His topic will be "Love and Sex in the Night Sky."

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**The Sky in July.** **Venus**, like yr. editor (i.e., fat but not quite circular), will be up all month. **Mars** and **Jupiter** will be near the W horizon. **Uranus** and **Neptune** will be up after midnight. Neptune, the fainter of the two at mag. 8 or thereabouts, will lie between *Upsilon* ( $\nu$ ) and *19 Cap*; Uranus (mag. 5.8 and an easy binocular target) will be 1-1/2° NE of *Iota Aqr*. **Saturn** and **Mercury** will be morning stars.

The **Delta Aquarids meteor shower** will peak on **July 28th**, but likely will be lost in the **Moon's** bright glow.

On **June 27th**, mag. 11 **Comet Ikeya-Zhang** will be less than 1° NE of the brightest globular cluster in the N sky, **M5** in *Serpens*.

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**MR. STARGAZER'S ASTRONOMY QUIZ**  
**FOR THE INTELLECTUALLY**  
**CHALLENGED**

All right, so what if **Greg Potter** gets his intellectual stimulation from watching reruns of *Gilligan's Island*, and **Tom Moore** never met a *Where's Waldo?* puzzle that he couldn't eventually solve.

Mr. Stargazer has no problem with that.

Mr. Stargazer recognizes **Larry Fallin's** right to buy *Astronomy* and *Sky & Telescope* just to read the pictures; he sympathizes with **Ken Walburn**, who recently broke his finger and couldn't read the *Observer* or clear his nasal passages until the cast came off; and he respects both **Dawn Knight**, who considers the greatest astronomer of the 20th century to have been **Jodie Foster** in *Contact*, and **David Ward**, who is still warning people that the alien invasion force that hid behind Comet Hale-Bopp is due to arrive and attack us any day now.

Of course, Mr. Stargazer doesn't mean to belittle these fine folks. The only reason he's kidding them is, he knows they can't read.

Still, recognizing that some people's nerve impulses never make it past their spinal cords, if you catch Mr. Stargazer's drift, he has prepared a brief quiz designed to show intellectually challenged stargazers -- none of whom are in FRAC, of course -- that they know more about astronomy than they think they do.

Without further ado, then, let's a-do it: take Mr. Stargazer's handy dandy little quiz and find out which flower of the astronomical garden you are, a budding genius or a blooming idiot.

#### Multiple Choice (10 points each)

- \_\_\_1. A Seyfert galaxy is a type of: (a) star cluster (b) nebula (c) galaxy.
- \_\_\_2. The Ursa Major Moving Group is located in: (a) Ursa Major (b) Sagittarius (c) Athens, Ga.
- \_\_\_3. The Hubble Space Telescope was named after: (a) Edwin Hubble (b) Joe Auriemma (c) Elvis Presley
- \_\_\_4. How many of the ten smallest Messier objects can you name? (a) All of them (b)

Some of them (c) None of them

#### True-False (10 points each)

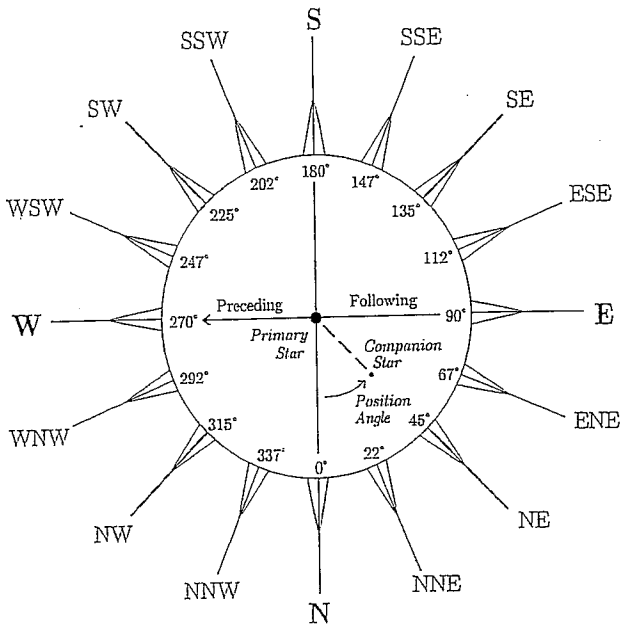
- \_\_\_5. Black holes are either black or some other color. Or maybe not.
- \_\_\_6. The first object on the Messier list is M75.
- \_\_\_7. Stephan's Quintet consists of four galaxies and a guy with a really high voice.
- \_\_\_8. A meteor shower is an event that occurs shortly before two meteors marry or have a baby.
- \_\_\_9. A nova is a star that flares up in such sudden brightness that it becomes a series on PBS.
- \_\_\_10. A parsec is the amount of time it takes a parson to get dressed when the lady's husband comes home unexpectedly.

**Scoring.** 1. If you took this quiz, you obviously have too much time on your hands. Give yourself 50 points no matter what answers you put down. 2. If you thought Mr. Stargazer's quiz was funny, you're deeply perceptive, highly intelligent, and you'll probably wind up at Harvard. (In a jar on a shelf in a science lab.) Give yourself 50 more points. 3. If you scored exactly 100 points, you probably cheated. Take away all 100 points and go stand in the corner. 4. If you scored more or less than 100 points, you probably played football for the University of Georgia. Turn in your scholarship, pay your bar tab and bail bondsman, and turn out the lights in Sanford Stadium before you leave.

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*Editor's Note: Are you having trouble organizing your monthly searches for objects in the night sky? If so, Larry Fallin offers a monthly guide to which Messiers, Caldwell's, Herschel 400s and Double Stars are up. His July installment appear below.*

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Compass Directions & Position Angles

**THE GREEK ALPHABET**

	ρ	σ	τ	υ	φ	χ	ψ	ω
	Ρ	Σ	Τ	Υ	Φ	Χ	Ψ	Ω
Rho	ι	κ	λ	μ	ν	ξ	ο	π
Sigma	Ι	Κ	Λ	Μ	Ν	Ξ	Ο	Π
Tau	Ιοτα	Καππα	Λαμβδα	Μυ	Νυ	Ξι	Ομικρον	Πι
Upsilon	Α	Β	Γ	Δ	Ε	Ζ	Η	Θ
Phi	Α	Β	Γ	Δ	Ε	Ζ	Η	Θ
Chi	Α	Β	Γ	Δ	Ε	Ζ	Η	Θ
Psi	Α	Β	Γ	Δ	Ε	Ζ	Η	Θ
Omega	Α	Β	Γ	Δ	Ε	Ζ	Η	Θ

(The Bayer nomenclature always uses lower-case letters)

**Constellations of the Month - July**

	Messiers	Caldwells	Double Stars	Herschel 400
<b>Hercules</b>	M13 M92	none	95 Herculis Alpha Herculis Delta Herculis Kappa Herculis Rho Herculis	NGC 6207 NGC 6229
<b>Ophiuchus</b>	M9 M10 M12 M14 M19 M62 M107	none	36 Ophiuchi 70 Ophiuchi Omicron Ophiuchi	NGC 6171 NGC 6304 NGC 6369 NGC 6235 NGC 6316 NGC 6401 NGC 6284 NGC 6342 NGC 6426 NGC 6287 NGC 6355 NGC 6517 NGC 6293 NGC 6356 NGC 6633
<b>Scorpius</b>	M4 M6 M7 M80	C69 NGC 6302 C75 NGC 6124 C76 NGC 6231	Beta Scorpii Nu Scorpii Struve 1999 Xi Scorpii	NGC 6144 NGC 6451
<b>Serpens</b>	M5	none	Delta Serpentis Theta Serpentis	NGC 6118