

# THE FLINT RIVER OBSERVER



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FLINT RIVER ASTRONOMY CLUB

August, 2002

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**Club Calendar.** Fri.-Sat., August 2-3: Cox Field observings (at dark); Thurs., Aug. 8: FRAC meeting (Beaverbrook, 7:30); Fri.-Sat., Aug. 9-10: Cox Field observings (at dark); Mon., Aug. 12: Perseids meteor shower observings (Cox Field, at dark).

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**President's Message.** Our July meeting was exciting: among other things, we tossed around ideas pertaining to a weekend star party we're hoping to hold next spring. An organizational committee was formed, headed by **Bill Warren** and including **Tom Moore, Greg Potter, Larry Fallin, Smitty and Dawn Knight**. Plans are still sketchy at this point: we don't yet have a name for the event, a specific date in mind except during the spring, or even a site. We'll co-host the affair with the **Middle Ga. Astronomical Society (MGAS)**.

Putting on a star party involves a lot of planning and, later, a lot of on-site volunteer work. If you're willing to be involved in either or both of these areas, please notify Bill via phone or e-mail. The biggest thing you can do right now, though, is to make the decision to actively support us in whatever capacity you can do.

Regarding potential sites: If you know of a dark site, whether it be a campground, an old hunting club, family

land or whatever, that might suit our needs, please contact us so we can check it out. Dark skies, plumbing and toilet facilities are a must, and the site should be easily accessible by car and large and open enough to accommodate cars, RVs, tents and telescopes in one area. If it's not as large as a football field, forget it. Star parties require wide open spaces and dark skies.

Please contact Bill or me as soon as possible if you know of such a site, so we can evaluate it for discussion at our September meeting.

Elsewhere: We're in the market for a club logo. If you'd like to submit a design, work something up, bring it to the August meeting. It doesn't matter if your original draft is a rough sketch; if it's accepted, the finer details can be finished later. The deadline for submissions is the September meeting, so get to work on it now if you have a good idea or two to work with.

Finally, I want to say again how proud I am of your attendance at recent FRAC events. Summertime and cloudy skies haven't slowed us down a bit. I promised you when taking office that we'd be doing some exciting things, and the proposed star party and logo adoption are just two of the ideas we're setting in motion. We're heading in the right direction, and with your continued help and support FRAC will become everything that all of us want it to be. Just remember that you can't spell *success* without "U".

-Steve Knight

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**Last Month's Meeting/Activities.** Aint' that the way it goes? We brag on the improving skies one month, and they close down the next month. We had 11 at our July 5 observing -- **Dawn & Steve K., Smitty & Little Smitty, John Wallace, Felix Luciano, David, Brendon, Cherrie & Sarah O'Keeffe** and yr. editor -- and got in some observing before the clouds took over.

We had 12 members at our July meeting -- **Tom**

**Moore, Bill Snyder, Steve & Dawn, Greg Potter, Chuck Woodward, Larry Fallin, Grady Dukes, Doug Maxwell, David Ward, Louise Warren, and yr. editor** -- and had fun discussing the proposed FRAC/MGAS star party. Grady Dukes is securing nonprofit organization status for FRAC.

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**Membership Renewals Due in August: Grady & Cory Dukes, and Chuck Hancock.** 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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**This 'n That. \*For Sale (From Phil Sacco):** A Meade LX5 telescope, top of the line in the late '80s, that includes the following: multi-coated optics group; 9x60 illuminated polar finderscope; dual axis drives; JMI Moto Focus (drive correction and focus are controlled with the BEC hand unit); Meade Wide Field Adapter System (focal reducer/diagonal combo); 2" Mirror Star Diagonal; Losmandy counterweight system; dew shield; trunk case; same adjustable field tripod and wedge that comes with the LX200; 26mm Plossl eyepiece (excellent optics). Asking \$800. Contact Phil at (404)296-6332 or <ppsacco@attbi.com>.

\*From **Doug Maxwell:** "I've posted FRAC event photos on my web site, <<http://home.bellsouth.net/personalpages/PWP-DMM>>. The photos have been reduced to 640 x 480 to make them load faster, but if you see a picture you want I can e-mail it to you in its original size. I took them with a Nikon 950 digital camera at 1024 x 768 at 120 dpi. Just go to my website and click on "photo albums" and then click on whichever album interests you.

"I have a few pix from the first FRAC meeting I attended back in April, when **Steve** brought his fire-resistant telescope and **Smitty** brought his binocular table mount. Another album contains about 20 pix from Astronomy Day at Kohl's in Fayetteville, and a third shows the ACS Walkathon in Griffin.

"Comments and criticisms are welcome, and if you see anything there that you don't want posted let me know and I'll remove it."

\*From **Smitty:** "Cool website, Doug! And great pictures, too! Keep it up, I think it's great!"

"If anyone wants to share photos here at the Yahoogroup web site (see p.1), you can upload them to the photo section. The same goes for any diagrams, plans, tech articles,

observing lists, etc. -- you can upload them to the Files section. And if you find a great website, add the address to the Bookmarks section.

"Anything you upload here can also be deleted, if you so desire. Any member can upload "stuff" for all of us to see and use, and only that member, the group owner -- me -- or designated moderators can delete it. So don't be bashful, y'all -- sign on with Yahoogroup and use the site when you have something good!

"And Doug, keep taking those pictures; keep our history alive!"

\*Also from **Smitty:** "If you've seen or smelled me at observings, you're aware that I don't use insect repellent anymore. Wearing 2 to 4 Bounce dryer sheets attached to my clothing has kept me bite-free from mosquitos during the past 2 summers. (I still spray my shoes and lower legs with repellent, though, to keep ticks off.)

"While at Lowe's home improvement store recently, I saw one of those mosquito control rigs by Coleman. At \$200, it's powered by a propane tank and imitates us humans, luring mosquitos to it by heat, carbon dioxide, etc., killing them. As I recall, it covers a pretty big area.

"There's also a line of clothing available that keeps the insects off yet is cool to wear. (See: <<http://www.bugshirt.com/>>) The clothing sound promising, and I especially like the idea of gaiters to keep these Ga. ticks away.

"Please remember, insect repellent containing "deet" will eat away your own and other's equipment."

*(I've gone to that website, Smitty, and I've already told Louise that that's what I want for Christmas. It is expensive, though: the shirt goes for \$52.95 and an elite edition for \$59.95, the pants for \$56.95, and the gaiters for \$17.95. -Ed.)*

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**Upcoming Meetings/Activities.** Our Cox Field observings will be held on **Fri.-Sat., Aug. 2nd-3rd** and **Fri.-Sat., Aug. 8th-9th.**

Our club meeting will be at Beaverbrook on **Thurs., Aug. 7th.** Our speaker, SERAL Representative **Phil Sacco**, will talk on "The Lover's Triangle: Cygnus, Lyra and Aquila, On the Wings of Love." With the new moon on the 8th, Phil probably will take us outside for his mythology talk if the weather permits. Afterward, we'll go back inside for the rest of our program.

On Monday, Aug. 12th, we'll have a very informal Perseids meteor shower stargaze at Cox Field. (See below.) This is the kind of event that entire families can enjoy; just bring reclining chairs or a blanket and insect repellent, leave your telescope at home, and sit back and enjoy a couple of hours of fellowship and Perseids. Since children may be present, drive slower than usual on the field.

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**The Sky in August.** Venus will be up all month as an evening star. Mercury will be low in the W 30 min. after sunset for most of the first 3 weeks of August. Neptune's (mag. 7.8) blue disk can be seen telescopically, 1-1/2 degrees E of mag. 5.5 Upsilon (U) Cap on Aug. 2nd. Green Uranus (mag. 5.8) will lie very near mag. 5.5 Mu (M) Cap all month. Saturn will rise after midnight toward the end of August. Jupiter will be a morning star in late August.

The annual Perseids meteor shower, composed of debris from Comet Swift-Tuttle, is always a summertime treat, offering 60-70 meteors per hour at peak (which occurs at 6 p.m. on the 12th). The thin crescent Moon won't interfere, so all we need is you (and your family) and a clear night at Cox Field to make for a fun, free evening under the stars. Think of it as a scaled-down version of Stone Mountain's laser show, only far less expensive.

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### A STAR PARTY OF OUR OWN

Report by Bill Warren

It was Phil Sacco who first suggested that we consider putting together a star party. Well, Phil, we're gonna give it a try. Whether we can pull it off or not will depend on how much physical and financial support we get from our members and those of our co-hosts, the Middle Ga. Astronomical Society.

**The Concept.** We want to stage a Fri.-Sun. star party sometime next Spring. *Simplicity* is our goal: two nights of overnight stargazing/camping at a facility that is large enough to comfortably accommodate at least 50-100 participants, their vehicles, camping gear and telescopes. We chose the Spring season in order to avoid conflicting with the Atlanta Astronomy Club's annual *Peach State Star Gaze*, which PSSG coordinator Ken Poshedly assures me will remain a fall event in the years to come. We also liked the Spring because the weather is mild and the time doesn't conflict with Summer vacations or Winter holiday plans. We don't intend to invite vendors this year, or

sell tee shirts, hold group meals on-site to make money, or invite outside speakers beyond those who normally speak at our club meetings. We want to put on a stargaze that everyone will enjoy, but it is imperative that we at least break even financially if it is to become an annual event.

**Site.** We want and need a comfortable setting, which means having, at minimum, access to drinking water, toilets -- Port-O-Lets cost \$90/night -- and an ample parking/viewing/camping area with open skies in a dark site. Camp McIntosh, located 7 mi. S of Jackson, Ga., and the place where the PSSG was held until 2002, comes to mind most readily in that regard. It has ample room for our purposes: 3 cabins and 2 bunkhouses, all of which contain toilets, sinks and hot/cold running water showers as well as cots; a football field-sized camping/viewing area; a craft building; and a dining hall/meeting area. Camp McIntosh is easily accessible to FRAC and MGAS members, and its location, facilities and amenities are well known to members of the Atlanta Astronomy Club and previous PSSG attendees.

So what's the problem?

Well, renting the Camp for two nights will cost a minimum of \$300 per night, based on \$5.00 per person for 75 campers and \$5.00 additional for each camper over 75. We'll also have to post a \$100 security deposit that will be returned if the camp is left in satisfactory condition. The 7% state sales tax will be waived if we have tax-exempt status when we send in our completed contract to rent the facility.

If, as planned, we split the costs and profits 50-50 with MGAS, we'll be responsible for at least \$300, half of which, as a deposit, will be due when we send in our rental application. In order to break even, we'll need at least 30 registrants at \$20 apiece to cover the minimum expense of renting the facility.

Can we do it? Sure we can, as long as no one expects the success of our star party to depend on someone else's hard work, time and money.

Although many of us in both clubs prefer Camp McIntosh for the reasons previously cited, the site is still open for debate. We're prepared to entertain suggestions regarding other sites -- but not for long: Dec. 31st is the last day that we can reserve the Camp for anytime during 2003. If you have another site in mind, speak now. Be specific about facilities and costs.

**Date.** Larry Fallin has suggested a weekend in March

when a Messier Marathon can be pursued; that's probably as good a starting point for discussion as any, since Feb. will be too cold. Others have pointed out that, since the Camp McIntosh site doesn't offer realistic chances for completing a Marathon anyway due to the treelines, any time in March, April or May will do equally well except the Easter (Sun., Apr. 20th) or Mother's Day (Sun., May 11th) weekends and weekends when the Moon will interfere with observing. That leaves the following best times:

\*Fri.-Sun., Mar. 1-3 (with the new moon on March 3, 2003);

\*Fri.-Sun., Mar. 29-31 or Apr. 5-7 (with the new moon on April 1st);

\*Fri.-Sun., May 3-5 (with the new moon on May 1st); or

\*Fri.-Sun., May 31-June 2 (with the new moon on May 31st).

**Name.** The only name suggested for the event thus far has been **Georgia Sky View (A Stellar Event)**, by **Tom Moore**. If you have a name to suggest, you can notify me or bring it up at the Aug. club meeting, where we hope to finalize the name, date and location.

**Where Do We Go From Here?** I'm presently setting up an organizational structure (i.e., deciding how many committees we'll need and what each committee will be responsible for). I'll report on my progress at the August FRAC meeting, at which time committee chairmen will be selected and we'll get to work in earnest.

Our September FRAC meeting will be devoted to reports from the various committees; hopefully, we'll be far enough along by then to have set registration, camping, bunk house and cottage fees and start accepting individual registrations.

Equally hopefully, you'll want to show your support for FRAC by registering promptly and paying your admission fee even if you do not plan to attend the event. This is our first real attempt to extend or club's activities beyond the norm in a big way, and we need your help. We've had only one dues increase in the 5-1/2 years of FRAC's existence (and that only because the A.L. raised its dues), so it's not like we're constantly gouging you for money. My personal goal is 30 paying registrants from FRAC, and I think it's a realistic goal to shoot for. I think there are at least that many FRACsters out there who feel strongly about our club and the positive directions we're taking.

We probably could, with limited vision, rent a couple of Port-O-Lets and stage another weekend Zombie Party at Cox Field as we did a few years ago -- but is that really what you want? *Proverbs 29:18* says it best: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." If we are to become a larger force in amateur

astronomy than we presently are, this -- a star party of our own -- is the way to get there. Please stake your personal claim to a share in that vision by helping us in every way you can.

(Incidentally, please don't stay away from our monthly club meetings for fear that you'll be named to a committee or asked to work when you prefer not to get involved. That's not what this is all about. We're inviting you to help out *here*, in the Aug. newsletter, and we won't ask again. While there's a lot of work to be done, I'm sure that MGAS will have a number of people who will want to become involved. If, anywhere down the line, a committee chairman asks you to help out -- probably as an on-site volunteer -- all you need to say is "Sure, what can I do?" or "I'm sorry, I can't." No questions will be asked.)

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**\*An Apology from Yr. Editor.** As you've noticed, the format and print of this edition of the *Observer* are dramatically different. Sorry 'bout that, but the old program, *Student Writing Center*, suddenly decided not to work anymore. I can create newsletters in it, but can't print them off, which makes it about as useful as a screen porch on the International Space Station. Or **Ken Walburn**, anywhere.

Thus, the change to *The Print Shop*, with which I am almost totally unfamiliar. My wife **Louise**, although largely bedridden from gall bladder surgery two days ago, had to set up four separate files to accommodate a five-page newsletter.

The print is too small -- which is good in terms of getting more material in less space but bad if your vision ain't what it used to be and you don't happen to have your reading glasses handy. The setup looks amateurish, and editing has been a holy horror for me (and even moreso for Louise) this time around; if you read fast enough, though, maybe you won't notice how badly the quality has fallen off.

At any rate, please bear with me while I get used to the new format. I'll try to do better next time, but with the old system biting the dust just five days before I was supposed to get the newsletter to **Neal** for mailing, you're lucky to have a newsletter at all this month. (Or maybe not, depending on how favorably or unfavorably you regard my editing under normal circumstances.)

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**Final Thoughts from Steve Knight**

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The Oct. 3-6 PSSG is closing in, and it seems that the field arrangements are resolved at long last, so it may be time to send in your money. They promise to have a great pair of guest speakers this year in **David Levy** and **Wil Tirion**, the latter of which we missed last year due to 9-11. Plus their usual complement of workshops, vendors and a pretty good swap meet. And not long after that, the Chiefland star party is **Nov. 3-10** and I'll be there for the whole week-long event. Feel free to come along and try it out. **Bill Warren** says he's

going this time, and you should too. With more big telescopes in place than you've ever seen (including **Tom Clark's 42"** Dob, which should be finished by then), I can promise that you won't be disappointed. (Of *course* the weather will be good that weekend!; I'll personally guarantee cloud-free skies.) The drive down isn't bad, and the skies and facilities are great, as are the crowds that show up.

-Steve

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### Constellations of the Month - August

	Messiers	Caldwells	Double Stars	Herschel 400
<b>Lyra</b>	M56 M57	<i>none</i>	Beta Lyrae Epsilon Lyrae Otto Struve 525 Zeta Lyrae	<i>none</i>
<b>Sagittarius</b>	M8 M17 M18 M20 M21 M22 M23 M24 M25 M28 M54 M55 M69 M70 M75	C57 NGC 6822	<i>none</i>	NGC 6440 NGC 6445 NGC 6514 NGC 6520 NGC 6522 NGC 6528 NGC 6540 NGC 6544 NGC 6553 NGC 6568 NGC 6569 NGC 6583 NGC 6624 NGC 6629 NGC 6638 NGC 6642 NGC 6645 NGC 6818
<b>Scutum</b>	M11 M26	<i>none</i>	<i>none</i>	NGC 6664 NGC 6712

11/11/11