

THE FLINT RIVER OBSERVER



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FLINT RIVER ASTRONOMY CLUB

September, 2002

Officers: President, **Steve Knight:** (770)227-9871, 114 Central Lake Circle, Griffin, GA 30223 <sdknight@bellsouth.net>; Vice President/newsletter editor, **Bill Warren:** (770)229-6108; <warren1212@mindspring.com>; Secretary/Treasurer, **Dawn Knight** (see above); Alcor, **Neal Wellons:** (770)946-5039; Webmaster, **David Ward** (770)989-5021, <dward51@bellsouth.net>; Librarian, **Tom Moore** (770)228-6447; <tmoore@dfiequipment.com>; Event Photographer, **Doug Maxwell** (770)719-7959; <dougmax1@bellsouth.net>. Club mailing address: 1212 Everee Inn Road, Griffin, GA 30224. Web page: <<http://welcome.to/frac>>, discussion group at <FRAC@yahoogroups.com>. Please notify **Bill Warren** if you have a change of address, telephone no. or e-mail provider.

Club Calendar. Fri.-Sat., Sept. 6-7: Cox Field observings, at dark; **Thurs., Sept. 12:** FRAC meeting (Beaverbrook, 7:30); **Fri.-Sat., Sept. 27-28:** Cox Field observings, at dark.

President's Message. Not only will we have star party committee progress updates at our September meeting, but we're also going to have a reading of our newly amended Bylaws, to be voted on for adoption at our October meeting. **Bill W.** and I have worked very hard in revising the bylaws to bring them into sync with the growth and development of FRAC.

Most of the changes are cosmetic – things like changing wordings and altering certain items to more accurately reflect current practices. The only major changes will be an alteration of FRAC's officer structure and the length of terms of office. Such changes were thought necessary in light of the

reduced future roles in FRAC to be played by **Bill Warren** and **Neal Wellons**, both of whom have announced that they will remain with the club in reduced capacities in the near future.

Bill, who was one of FRAC's co-founders and has served as vice president for three two-year terms, has decided not to run for any club officer position next term; and Neal, who recently retired, will no longer function as Alcor or newsletter distributor as of Jan. 1, 2003. Both of them have been instrumental in FRAC's success over the years; their services will be sorely missed.

Lastly but not leastly – is that a word? – I want to welcome our newest members, **Jerry Carlson** (who comes to us armed with an 8" Meade LXD55, and **Chris & Kim Thompson**, who use an 8" homemade Dob. Welcome to the club, folks, and don't hesitate to ask us about any problems or questions you may have, because somewhere in the club there is someone who either knows the solution or knows where to find it. We look forward to helping you, just as other members helped us when we were starting out in FRAC.

-Steve Knight

Last Month's Meeting/Activities. *What a month!!!* A record total of 64 members and guests attended our meeting and observings in August! On Aug. 2nd at Cox Field, we had **Joe Morris** – niceta seeya again, Joe! – **Dawn & Steve Knight, Doug Maxwell, Felix Luciano, Smitty** and yr. editor; on the following evening, they were joined by **Bill Snyder, Larry Fallin, David Ward, Joe Auriemma, David & Brendon O'Keeffe** and guest **Danny Lester**. The Knights unveiled their fabulous new travel trailer and a generator the size of a company safe, and David O'Keeffe showed off his new 'scope. The following weekend, **Steve & Dawn, Felix, Doug, yr. editor** and

John Wallace attended both observings, and were joined by Cory & Grady Dukes on Fri. night and Larry Fallin, David Ward, Dan Newcombe, Joe Auriemma, new member Jerry Carlson, and by David, Cherrie, Brendon & Sarah O'Keeffe and guest Jeffrey Stephens on Sat. evening. In the week between observings, David, his father and Brendon built a carrying case for the 'scope that was roughly half the size of Texas. Little Sarah had fun with her own tiny refractor.

Twelve members attended our Aug. meeting: guest speaker Phil Sacco, Dawn & Steve, John Wallace, Felix Luciano, Doug Maxwell, Greg Potter, Tim Astin, Tom Moore, David Ward, Larry Fallin and yr. editor. Phil's mythology talk on "The Lovers' Triangle" preceded a progress update of the proposed Spring, 2003, star party. After the meeting, Phil continued his mythology of the skies talk with Tom, John and yr. editor.

Adoption of a club logo (see pp. 3-4) was postponed until the Sept. meeting.

We had seven members – Steve & Dawn, Smitty, Bill Snyder, yr. editor and two newcomers to FRAC, Chris & Kim Thompson of Lovejoy, at our Perseids meteor shower observing. As of ten o'clock when yr. editor departed the scene (having convincingly lost his debate with Bill S. regarding whether Charles Messier made one mistake or four in preparing his famous list), three meteors and seven satellites had been seen; still, Kim & Chris found out what we've known all along, namely, that FRAC is composed of a lot of people who genuinely like each other and enjoy the fellowship that our get-togethers afford us.

Finally, yr. editor took his 3-1/2" refractor, solar filter and 12-1/2" reflector to both Beaverbrook and Orrs Elementary Schools a total of three times in August, showing and telling the 4th graders at both schools how telescopes differ and how they work, and showing the Sun via a pane of #14 welder's glass as well as the telescopically filtered view. An added attraction on Aug. 16th at BB was a *huge* sunspot that was easily visible naked-eye behind the welder's pane as a thick black dot, larger and more prominent than the naked-eye sunspot that many of us marveled at last spring.

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Membership Renewals Due in September: Dana, Gloria & Taylor Harris; and Roger Poore. Please send your check for \$12 payable to either Steve Knight or FRAC c/o Steve's address listed in the upper left hand portion of p. 1.

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This 'n That. On July 26th, David Ward was in Dahlonega, Ga., to pick up his kids from summer camp, and guess who he saw? **Katie Moore**, working as a counselor at Camp Glisson. "Katie asked me about everybody back at FRAC and if we were getting much observing done," says David. "I asked her if she had been following the FRAC group and she said she has not even been near a computer since May... We talked briefly about the PSSG, and of course she asked why it's now being held in Tennessee... She asked me to tell everybody back home hi for her."

Veteran members fondly recall the night when this strange-looking guy showed up at the Dec., 1998 FRAC meeting with a skinny little 14-year-old girl in tow. "Hi," he said, "my name is **Tom Moore**, and this is my daughter **Katie**. She's interested in astronomy." (Actually, it was Katie who brought Tom to the meeting; he had to choose between driving her out to Beaverbrook, or letting her hitchhike out there on her own.)

Now, almost four years later, Katie is a rising sophomore astronomy major and football cheerleader at Arizona State University, which is *the* place to go if you want to major in astronomy. (Their football team ain't doodly-squat, but their cheerleaders are *fabulous!*)

In the spring of 2000, Katie won first place nationally in the A.L.'s "Jack Horkheimer Award for Excellent Service to Astronomy By a Young Astronomer" competition, and next summer she'll be an instructor at the prestigious "Astronomy Camp" sponsored by ASU. A lovely young woman who embodies the very best qualities that all of us would like for our children to possess, Katie is destined for stardom in her chosen profession. Of course, Tom would like to claim credit for all that Katie has accomplished, but the rest of us would like to think that Katie herself had something to do with it.

As a p.s. to this story (which is being told for the benefit of those members who have joined FRAC since Katie left us), there is this: Most of us thought that Tom, who has yet to complete his Lunar Club program after nearly four years of trying, would drop out of FRAC after Katie moved west to darker skies. Wrong. Tom has stuck with us like a sore that won't heal, assuming Katie's position as Club Librarian and even volunteering to serve as a committee chair for our proposed star party. Some people wouldn't take a hint if you put a pipe bomb in their mailbox.

*Everyone in FRAC owes a huge "**Thanks!**" to **Grady Dukes** for his hard work in securing tax-exempt status for FRAC. And while we're at it, congratulations to **Cory Dukes** for completing his Universe Sampler program at Cox Field in August.

*Congratulations to **David O'Keefe** for the recent addition to his family, a 12-1/2" Discovery PDHQ with its own special casket. Thanks for the clouds, David. Sincerely.

*The A.L. now has 19 observing clubs, the newest (and by far the most difficult) being the **Galaxy Groups and Clusters Club**. (That's clusters of *galaxies*, not stars.)

***Yr. editor** has a 3-1/2" Meade 390 refractor (altazimuth mounting) and an Orion solar filter that he'll be happy to loan on a first-come, first-served basis to anyone who wants to go after a SunSpotters certificate and pin. Like lunar observing, solar observing holds two advantages over other A.L. observing programs, i.e., offering a target that is available year-round and is easy to find and observe. Even **Tom Moore** probably couldn't miss the Sun. (Incidentally: **yr. editor** loaned his SunSpotters Club manual and observing notes to someone in FRAC awhile back without recording the borrower's name. Since we're doing the October program on the SunSpotters we'll need that material back temporarily in order to prepare for the presentation. Your speedy response will keep us from having to buy another manual from the A. L.)

*If you haven't signed on to the FRACgroups discussion site yet, you're missing some lively fun between our members. For example, on Aug. 7 **Dan Newcombe** wrote, "I was reading the newsletter last night... about doing a star party (and) read the bit about the \$300 figure being made up of 75 \$5 payments. Then I read the next line: '... and \$5 for each person over 75' and wondered why the older astronomers should have to pay an extra \$5."

That prompted **Larry Fallin** to respond: "(Snicker, snicker, this is too good to pass up!) If you've ever observed with **Bill, Smitty or Grady**, you'll understand why we charge more for senior observers. (Sorry guys, I couldn't resist.)"

Grady's response: "Some of us pay more, of course, because we know more and do more. But I'm puzzled at why I'm in the Senior Division when I have more hair than at least one of those who is in another Division."

Yr. editor also responded to Larry's slow thinking – well, it wasn't really slow, just half-fast, if you know what we mean. But since firing verbal darts at Fallin is about as challenging as using a rocket launcher on a whale stuck in a bathtub, we merely reminded Larry that the newsletter editor always gets in the last word...

***Logo Thoughts from David Ward:** "I've created a 'FRAC Logo' folder in the pictures section of the FRAC Yahooogroup site so anyone can upload logo suggestions for all to see. This way, we can still get input from those who may not be able to make it to some of the meetings where logos are discussed. I've uploaded the current (unofficial) FRAC logo that's on our regular website as an entry into the "pick the logo" election. Anyone with a suggestion should feel free to submit it to the folder for all to review.

"P.S.: If you have an idea but don't have the software or know-how to produce high resolution outputs, contact me and I'll help create/convert your idea for everyone to see. If you can scan a rough sketch in and upload it, I'll take the concept/sketch and make a high res web-ready version for us to add to the list of candidates for a new logo. If you can't scan, direct e-mail me with a description and we'll create it from scratch. If you don't have a photo-

quality image to upload, we can create one from a sketch or a verbal description of what you're suggesting. I want all suggestions to be available for review, and not just those from members who have a graphic arts background."

***Also from David Ward:** "Thanks to **Scott Hammonds** we now have a new set of java applets running on the FRAC website. One shows the lunar data (no more manual updates for me!!!) and the other shows Jovian satellite data (both in real time). They are on the main FRAC page and the upcoming events page. If you don't see them, make sure your browser is java enabled (should show up fine in Internet Explorer 5 or greater and the newer versions of Netscape.) *Thanks, Scott!!!!*"

***Star Party Progress.** Although no site or name was selected at the August meeting, three alternate dates were chosen. They were, in order of preference, (1) March 29-31; (2) May 3-5; and (3) March 1-3. All of those dates were Fri.-Sun. in 2003.

We have five committees involved in planning, chaired by: **Dawn Knight** (Finances), phone no. (770)227-9871; **Smitty** (Publicity), (770)583-2200; **Tom Moore** (Registration), (770)228-6447; **Larry Fallin** (On-Site Maintenance), (678)432-2191; and **Greg Potter** (On-Site Volunteers), (770)412-9928. While much of the preliminary planning has been done, you can help out by agreeing to serve on one of the committees if asked, or by contacting **Bill Warren** at (770)229-6108 or any of the folks listed above to volunteer your services. Your assistance will go a long way toward ensuring the eventual success of our proposed star party.

*Since it seems that yr. editor is always ready to deliver a verbal dart to himself (occasionally) or anyone else (often), he should also be prepared -- as he is now -- to wholeheartedly endorse *in print* the job he thinks **Steve Knight** is doing as club president. In a word, **AWESOME!**

Regarding **Neal's** and yr. editor's decision (p. 1), we think the wizard **Gandalf** in *Lord of the Rings (Part III: Return of the King)*, speaking to the hobbits

Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin, said it well for both of us:

"I am with you at present," said Gandalf, "but soon I shall not be. I am not coming to the Shire. You must settle its affairs yourselves; that is what you have been trained for. Do you not yet understand? My time is over: it is no longer my task to set things to rights, nor to help folks to do so. And as for you, my dear friends, you will need no help. You are grown up now. Grown indeed very high; among the great you are, and I have no longer any fear at all for any of you."

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Upcoming Meetings/Activities. Thanks to shifting new moon appearances, our Cox Field observings will open and close the month, those dates being **Fri.-Sat., Sept. 6th-7th** and **Fri.-Sat., Sept. 27th-28th**. Our monthly meeting at Beaverbrook will be held at 7:30 on **Thurs., Sept. 12th**, the program consisting of committee progress updates by the respective chairs, all of whom are urged to attend, or at least send their progress notes to **Bill W., Dawn, Smitty, Larry or Greg**.

Our October meeting will feature yr. editor talking about the SunSpotters Club observing program.

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The Sky in September. **Venus** will still be up all month, albeit setting sooner after sunset than in previous months. If you've seen Venus before and were unimpressed, look again toward the end of September: its out-of-round shape, creeping inexorably toward crescent, is always fun to see.

Mercury, losing one magnitude of brightness between Sept. 1-16, will be visible from high elevations in the W sky at twilight, to the lower right of Venus. On Sept. 13th, greenish **Uranus** (mag. 5.8) will form what appears to be a close double star with mag. 5.1 **Mu** (μ) **Capricorni**. Blue **Neptune** (mag. 7.8) will lie one degree E of mag. 5.1 **Upsilon** (Υ) **Capricorni**. **Saturn** will rise in the ENE about

midnight, and **Jupiter** and **Mars** will be morning stars.

The constellation *Cygnus*, high overhead in September, offers such exciting and popular targets as: about 30 open clusters, including two Messier object (M29, M39); **Veil Nebula** (NGCs 6960, 6992-5), a supernova remnant; the **Blinking Planetary** (NGC 6826); the prettiest double star in the sky (**Albireo, Beta [] Cygni**); the dark nebula **North America Nebula** (NGC 7000), best seen in binoculars; and, lest we forget, the **Milky Way** itself, a cloudy band of stars stretching across the sky from *Sagittarius* in the S to beyond *Cassiopeia* in the N. To gain proper respect for what you're seeing, take

time to compare slow naked-eye, binocular and telescopic views of the bright regions of the Milky Way; then, consider that only a handful of the individual stars you see lie as close together as the **Sun** and its closest stellar neighbor, **Proxima Centauri**.

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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 September installment appears below.

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Constellations of the Month - September

	Messiers	Caldwells	Double Stars	Herschel 400
Aquila	none	none	57 Aquilae Struve 2404	NGC 6755 NGC 6756 NGC 6781
Capricornus	M30	none	Alpha Capricornus Beta Capricornus	none
Cygnus	M29 M39	C15 NGC 6826 C19 IC 5146 C20 NGC 7000 C27 NGC 6888 C33 NGC 6992/5 C34 NGC 6960	31 Cygni 61 Cygni Beta Cygni	NGC 6826 NGC 6834 NGC 6866 NGC 6910 NGC 7000 NGC 7008 NGC 7044 NGC 7062 NGC 7086 NGC 7128
Delphinus	none	C42 NGC 7006 C47 NGC 6934	Gamma Delphinus	NGC 6905 NGC 6934 NGC 7006
Sagitta	M71	none	none	none
Vulpecula	M27	C37 NGC 6885	none	NGC 6802 NGC 6823 NGC 6830 NGC 6882 NGC 6885 NGC 6940