

The Flint River Observer

Newsletter of the Flint River Astronomy Club

August 2005

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Officers: President, **Steve Knight:** sdknight@flintriverastronomy.org;
Vice President, **Steven (Smitty) Smith:** Saratoga@flintriverastronomy.org;
Secretary, **Doug Maxwell:** doug@flintriverastronomy.org; Treasurer, **Dawn Knight:** sdknight@flintriverastronomy.org; Board of Directors: **David Ward:** dward@flintriverastronomy.org; **John Wallace:** JWCOSMOS@att.net and **Scott Hammonds:** Scott@creatorsview.com; Public Observing Liaison, **Felix Luciano:** felix.luciano@flintriverastronomy.org; **David Ward** webmaster (see above);
Librarian, **Curt Cole:** 24e29d55c@speedfactory.net; Event Photographer, **Doug Maxwell** (see above).

Club mailing address: 114 Central Lake Cir. Griffin, GA 30223.

Web page: www.flintriverastronomy.org

Discussion group: FRAC@yahogroups.com

Please notify **Dawn Knight** if you have a change of address, telephone number and or new e-mail address.

President's Message: Overheard at the Girl Scout observing on July 20.
FRAC member: "You seem to know a lot about astronomy."

Girl Scout leader: "I just got back from astronomy camp in Arizona, we got to observe with a 61 inch telescope. It was great and the staff was wonderful."

FM: "Really? Would you remember the names of any of the staff? Namely Katie Moore?"

GSL: "Of course. She was great, very knowledgeable and made it so much fun."

That little exchange really got me thinking. FRAC has a reach that's increasing it's grasp every year. With articles appearing in magazines like Amateur Astronomy (Look for more on that later in this issue.), the GSV that has attendees from all over the southeast, and last but not least Katie, all grown up and ready to graduate, is a mover and shaker on Mt. Lemmon. The little club that could is becoming fairly well known across the nation, and not just for the star party antics of the club president. The best part about this? This notoriety is coming without directly trying for such. It's because of the great people that make up FRAC, just doing what they do, without needing attention, to generate it. How cool is that? In case I haven't said it lately, I'm proud of our club, and proud to be a member of the best club in the world.

Club Calendar: August 5-6; Cox Field Observing, August 11; FRAC meeting, Griffin

Library 7:30 – 8:45, August 26-27; Cox Field Observing

Membership Renewals: All renewals are due during the month of February.

Last Month's Meeting Highlights: In attendance were Doug Maxwell, Curt and Irene Cole, Smitty, David Ward, John Wallace, Jim and Nancy Roberts (new members) and Steve and Dawn Knight. The meeting covered the dew system that Steve built and put on his telescope. Everyone got a chance to look at the system and see the damage caused to the scope by the fall in June. We also covered the new Night Sky Network kit that we just received. The door prize was won by Jim Roberts. If anyone is interested in speaking at next month's meeting we are looking for a speaker. Just let Dawn Knight know either by phone or email.

August Constellation Highlight: Lyra

From the Constellation Guidebook by Antonin Rukl; "Lyra was a stringed instrument which Apollo gave to his son Orpheus. The touching story of Orpheus and his wife Eurydice was put to music by Gluck and Monteverdi. Let us add that after Orpheus' death, Zeus placed the lyre in the sky. The small, but conspicuous constellation can be found best with the assistance of Vega, the brightest star of the summer sky."

<http://seds.lpl.arizona.edu/messier/m/m057.html> "M57 is very easy to locate as it is situated between Beta and Gamma Lyrae, at about one-third the distance from Beta to Gamma. It can be seen with binoculars as an almost stellar object, difficult to identify just because of its small apparent diameter. In smaller amateur telescopes, the ring becomes apparent at about 100 magnification, with a darker middle; a 12th-mag star is east of the planetary nebula, about 1' of the center. If ever color is notable, the Ring Nebula appears slightly greenish, not unexpected because most of its light is emitted in few green spectral lines. Even in small scopes, a slight ellipticity can be noted, with major axis in a position angle of about 60 deg. With increasing aperture and under good condition, more and more detail becomes visible, but even in large instruments, the central star will be apparent only under exceptionally good conditions, or with the help of filters. In large instruments, several very faint foreground or background stars can be glimpsed within the nebula's extension under very good conditions."

Astro Calendar of Events:

ALCON is August 10 – 14 in Kansas City, MO.

Tennessee Star Party (TNSP) is October 7 – 9, at Camp Nakanawa located 1,950 feet above sea level on the Cumberland Plateau, is a near-ideal location for the TNSP. With convenient proximity to Interstate 40, this remote area produces quite dark skies with a very prominent Milky Way. Camp Nakanawa has twelve hundred acres of wooded and open land plus a large clear water lake. Activities such as canoeing, paddle boating, fishing, biking, hiking, and tennis are all included with your registration fee.

Chiefland Fall Star Party, Chiefland, FL is October 30 to November 5.

Peach State Star Gaze (PSSG) is scheduled November 2 – 6, White Water Express

High Adventure Camp Ducktown, TN (Just across the Georgia border).

Equipment Review by Felix Luciano.

Telescope: Orion XT8 Dob, Focal Length 1200mm, f/r 5.9.

I purchased an Orion XT8 Dob a few years back. I wanted the XT10 but it would not fit on the back seat of our Camry (I tried it while at Camera Bug, a local dealer in the Atlanta area). So plan B turned out to be the XT8. I will say that I think I got a very good if not outstanding scope. I was very happy with it from the very beginning. It is easy to handle, lightweight, and holds collimation well. As time went by I "upgraded" a few things such as the stock 6X30 finder with a 9X50 Correct Image Right Angle finder also from Orion. While observing with club members I tried the Telrad "zero" finder and also liked it. The Telrad makes starhopping much easier. Also, if you are using any of the charts with the "bulls-eye" circles printed in them, that makes the navigation somewhat easier (you still have to know where the object is). So I mounted a Telrad on the far side of the finder (as you stand at the left side of the XT8 you will find the focuser (more to follow on that), followed by the 9X50 finder and then the Telrad. I was extremely happy with my set up. However, as time went by the original focuser began to develop a bit of a "slop." I adjusted the tension screws but that did not work as well as I expected. I called Orion and placed an inquiry about a new focuser and at the time the option was a replacement that was pretty much the same focuser I had on the scope already. So I decided to keep what I had on the scope. Eventually the "slop" was too much to handle. As I was getting close to getting a good focus the focuser would sort of "skip" some and I had to rack it in and out to reach a good image. The next "upgrade" had to be the focuser. I had looked into the Moonlite (www.focuser.com) focusers and placed a couple of calls to find out if that was an option for me. I decided to place my order for the "dual speed" focuser and the base needed to fit the XT8. The items arrived about a week or so after placing the order over the phone with Ron. I must tell you that the focuser unit itself is a very clean and precise piece of equipment. And it sure looks nice (I ordered the stock colors which are the black base with the red focuser unit). After a little glitch with the base – more on that at a later time – I was able to replace the stock focuser with the Moonlite focuser and what a difference. The two speed focusing action is nothing short of an excellent tool to achieve precise focus. Views of objects come into sharp focus with ease. Looking at Saturn and Jupiter you feel like you can "dive" right into the many features you get to see while at the eyepiece. I feel I have reached a point with all the above "upgrades" where I have everything (well except maybe a tracking base) I need to enjoy the best views the scope can provide. Clear skies!

Seen in the new issue of Amateur Astronomy magazine: Dressing for comfort and success by Steven "Smitty" Smith. By Steve Knight

I got AA#47 this past week, and as usual I scanned the table of contents to see what I wanted to read first. I read AA from cover to cover, but tech articles always catch my eye first, even if it's astrophotography or other subjects I don't participate in. I like being as well rounded as possible in astronomy, especially when it's people like me figuring out how to do something new or different. While looking it over, a name caught my eye, Steven "Smitty" Smith. Could it be our own Smitty? Turning to the article, I saw that it was indeed our Vice President, and it was a

rewrite of "Messier's and Mukluk's" that appeared in the Observer a few years ago. It covers good and bad observing dress habits people have in the name of fashion or "comfort" and what makes them good or bad. Comfort is relative when you factor in the state bird (Mosquitoes) or temperature six hours after dark, and fashion has no business in the dark. Smitty covers this with expert detail and real world advice about how to dress in all seasons, along with good advice about the use of insect repellants, especially those that contain deet, which can damage all sorts of materials including the coatings of our optics, which can make the dim objects disappear from view. He covers in detail the need for good footwear and dressing in layers to protect from the cold and wet we endure in the field. Remember, we stand in an open field while heat radiates out of the ground to open space. Dew forms and soaks us, and the cold sets in. Dressing in layers helps eliminate most of this problem, and this point is well reinforced in the article. Advice on what to buy and where to buy it is included, even advice on how to size yourself for max comfort and heat retention is in there. Even his penchant for wearing dryer sheets to repel insects is covered, which works pretty well and makes you springtime fresh for the evening. If you have the original article at home, I recommend giving it a reread. If you don't have it, I'll let you read my AA issue #47, and I'll also recommend you subscribe to AA. It's written by amateurs, for amateurs. I have an article in AA#40, Smitty now has one, some of Bill Warren's stories have been printed in the newsletter section, and Scott Hammonds was the first to appear with his tale of adventures in amateur astronomy in Star People, a regular series in AA that tells the stories of regular people in the hobby, people just like you and me. Look into it at www.amateurastronomy.com and see for yourself.

We are looking for people to submit articles to the newsletter. These can be articles on anything astronomy or club related. We also want someone to write equipment reviews for the upcoming newsletters. If you are interested in submitting anything please let Felix or Dawn know.

In October, the U.S. Postal Service will be releasing a stamp depicting Leo, Orion, Lyra and Pegasus. You can see the stamps at http://shop.usps.com/cgi-bin/vsbv/postal_store_non_ssl/browse_content/stampReleaseDisplay.jsp?OID=8605

Or just go to the Postal Service website at www.usps.gov and look under release schedule for constellations. They look pretty nice to me. I plan to buy some (and not borrow them from my mom).

August

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
	1	2	3	4 New Moon	5 Cox Field Observing	6 Cox Field Observing
7 Moon 2° from Venus	8	9	10 ALCON Kansas City, MO	11 FRAC Meeting – 7:30 – 8:45 Griffin Library ALCON	12 First Quarter Moon; Perseid Meteor Shower peak during early morning hours ALCON	13 ALCON
14 ALCON	15	16	17	18	19 Full Moon	20
21	22	23	24	25	26 Last Quarter Moon Cox Field Observing	27 Cox Field Observing
28	29	30	31 Jupiter above Venus shortly after sunset			

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