

# The Flint River Observer

## Newsletter of the Flint River Astronomy Club

September 2005

Vol.9, No. 7

**Officers:** President, **Steve Knight:** [sdknight@flintriverastronomy.org](mailto:sdknight@flintriverastronomy.org)  
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Web page: [www.flintriverastronomy.org](http://www.flintriverastronomy.org)

Discussion group: [FRAC@yahoogroups.com](mailto:FRAC@yahoogroups.com)

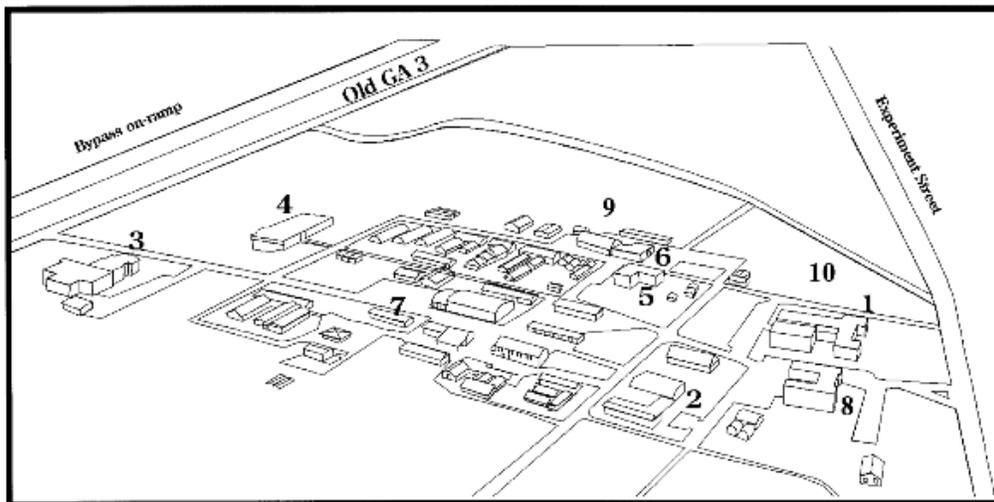
Please notify **Dawn Knight** if you have a change of address, telephone number and or new e-mail address.

**President's Message:** With summer holding all of us tight within its steamy and muggy grasp, I look forward to the cooler months and being able to observe again. Speaking of observing, I have been working on some plans for GSV 2006 and would like to hear any suggestions that anyone has. We discussed this at the last meeting and got some good ideas to work on. We had suggestions like a chili dinner hosted by FRAC and having some club members do presentations. I am open to suggestions that you think will make GSV once again a wonderful star party. On another note, the observing for Jackson Road elementary fell victim to the weather. Of course, 30 minutes after canceling and sending everyone home the skies cleared up. We hope to have another event scheduled with them in the future. We did however get to witness a beautiful rainbow just beyond the school. Thanks to Larry Higgins, I will be meeting with the staff in charge at the Experiment station about holding our monthly meetings there. In exchange for meeting facilities we would provide them with presentations for various age groups. Dawn and I are working on writing up some presentations using the Night Sky Network kits that we currently have. I hope to meet with them soon and get this ball rolling. On that note, anyone who is interested in being signed up for the Night Sky Network should let Dawn know. She can sign you up as a presenter, which gives you access to the information we have in the kits. You can print out whatever you want to use and present it to any groups you may work with. Once you present it, all you have to do is log the event online and Dawn can approve it for you. You do not have to have the club present to do the presentation. This would work great for anyone who teaches, does scouts, or gets together with a group of people interested in learning astronomy basics. We have done well with logging events (except this summer when it is just too hot to observe).

**Club Calendar:** September 2-3 & September 30 – October 1, Cox Field Observing; September 8, 7:30 p.m. **Club meeting at the UGA Experiment Station.**

**Directions** – From Hampton - Continue to the first stoplight in Spalding County. Coming up a long sloping hill, a car wash is on the left; a shopping mall (BigLots and Belk's) and a McDonald's, on the right. Get into the left lane; turn left at the stoplight onto McIntosh Road. When on McIntosh Road, bear to the right, continue to the next stoplight and go straight onto Experiment Street. This intersection is more of an "X." Travel about .6 mile on Experiment Street to a three-way stoplight. Continue straight, cross railroad tracks (now paved over, but they can be seen on either side of the road). Continue straight on Experiment Street to the main entrance on the right. Upon entering the campus, the Stuckey Building is on the right. The gate will be closed so park in the outside lot and go through the walk in gate.

South of Griffin - The third main stoplight in Griffin is the intersection of Highway 16 (Taylor Street) and Hill Street. First Baptist Church is on the left corner. Continue for two more stoplights to 10th Street. A bank will be on the right side; Chevron and Amoco gas stations are across the intersection. Turn right onto 10th Street and continue to the second stoplight (Broad Street). Turn left onto Broad Street and immediately veer right onto Experiment Street. Continue on Experiment Street approximately 2 miles to the Griffin Campus/Georgia Experiment Station. After passing an electrical substation and the Griffin Campus turf plots on your left, you will reach the main entrance to the Griffin Campus; turn left into the campus.



**LEGEND**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Stuckey Building                             | 7. Physical Plant/Field Research Services          |
| 2. Biological & Agricultural Engineering        | 8. Flynt Building                                  |
| 3. Center for Food Safety & Quality Enhancement | 9. Georgia Structural Pest Control Training Center |
| 4. Redding Building                             | 10. Naomi Chapman Woodroof Agricultural Pavilion   |
| 5. Coward Building                              |  |
| 6. Alamo/ECT & Entomology Labs                  |  |

**\*\*NOTE:** By the time this letter reaches your email or mailbox at home the **Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter (MRO)** would be well on its way to the red planet. The MRO is set to blast off August 10 from Cape Canaveral in Florida.

From the NASA website; "NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter, scheduled for launch in August 2005, is on a search for evidence that water persisted on the surface of Mars for a long period of time. While other Mars missions have shown that water flowed across the surface in Mars' history, it remains a mystery whether water was ever around long enough to provide a habitat for life. After a seven-month cruise to Mars and six months of aerobraking to reach its science orbit, Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter will seek to find out about the history of water on Mars with its science instruments. They will zoom in for extreme close-up photography of the martian surface, analyze minerals, look for subsurface water, trace how much dust and water are distributed in the atmosphere, and monitor daily global weather."

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

**Last Month's Meeting Highlights:** We discussed the club meeting being moved to the UGA experiment station thanks to Larry Higgins networking. We look forward to working with them and having some great observings with their staff and students. We also discussed the elections for next year. While it is still early everyone should start thinking about running for office. Steve and Smitty both have done wonderful jobs as president and vice president for years now. I think we can all agree though that for the club to grow someone else should take the reins for a time. Steve and Smitty will both be available to help but there should be new blood come in. Start thinking about it now. Running the club is not a hard job and can be rewarding. Of course, all officer positions (except treasurer) will be up for election. You can ask anyone who currently holds an officer position or anyone who has held one in the past and they will tell you that it is not hard. We hope to see a good response when it comes time for elections. During the meeting we also discussed GSV 2006. We took suggestions and discussed the fact that Steve doesn't delegate. He is compiling a list of duties that have to be performed during the party and he will be contacting members about the possibility of them handling those duties. None of the duties will be difficult and no one will be tied to any job that they sign up for. We discussed several of the duties like gate attendant, kitchen and coffee duty, lining the field, maintaining the cabins, etc. We will be officially announcing GSV 2006 in October. That will give people plenty of time to take time off and get registered. Remember that GSV 2006 will be 3 days long. Also, we will possibly be using gallon milk jugs for lining the field. We will let you know so that you everyone can start saving them up. (Be sure to wash them out before saving them).

**September Highlights:** September 1, shortly after sunset, looking towards the western, low in the horizon skies you will find Jupiter and Venus in close proximity. Mars become brighter towards the end of the month. The red planet is coming to be higher in the evening skies before midnight. From Sky & Telescope, September 2005 issue, page 67; "Although Mars won't appear as big as in 2003, it will be higher in the sky, where the atmospheric seeing is sharper and steadier. ... For observers everywhere, the red planet will be *the* celestial highlight of the coming months." Saturn is back in the eastern skies early in the morning, look to your East-Northeast skies.

### **Astro Calendar of Events:**

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 site 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 Winter 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).

**Wanderings by Felix:** Recently I was out on a business trip to the Midwest. I was heading out to a town called Waterloo, Iowa. We flew into Cedar Rapids, Iowa. From there we drove for an hour to our destination for the next four and a half days. As we drove over you could not help but notice what we would consider to be “wide open land.” There were corns fields as far as the eye could see, nice gentle, rolling hills and what promised to be some dark skies as sunset was coming upon us. You would see a farmhouse at the distance, grain silos next to it and hardly any artificial light. Miles down the road there is another farmhouse. By the time we arrived at Waterloo we found the typical city lights but as you look towards the countryside and all the way around you, you get to see the same dark skies out in the distance and hardly any sky glow! We were lucky to enjoy some nice cool days and evenings with temps in the low 50s during the early evening hours. There was not a lot of time available to do personal business but still a coworker and I got to do a little naked eye stargazing. Venus was shining brighter than what it looks like from my driveway as a steady point of light. Jupiter was also a steady point of light. A few of the constellations were nicely placed over the skies. I wished I had my scope with me. I was feeling a little down having to come back to the skies we have here in the Atlanta area after experiencing such dark, country skies. I plan on taking my binoculars with me the next time traveling. One of the best dark skies I have seen in my very short stargazing experience. A star party in Iowa, [www.iowastarparty.com](http://www.iowastarparty.com).

**Astro News:** From Space.com: Asteroid Trio Discovered, Posted 10 August 2005, “An asteroid known to astronomers for more than a century has now been found to harbor two small satellites. It is the first asteroid trio ever discovered. And there may be more than three. The main asteroid, named 87 Sylvia, is one of the largest known to orbit the Sun in the main asteroid belt, between Mars and Jupiter. It is potato-shaped, about 175 miles (280 kilometers) in diameter and 235 miles (380 kilometers) long. It was discovered in 1866. The first moon was found four years ago and the second one was announced today. ... The discovery was made with a European Southern Observatory telescope in Chile.”

# September 2005

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
			1 Jupiter & Venus in close proximity - West skies	2 Cox Field Observing	3 Cox Field Observing	4
5	6	7	8 Club Meeting 7:30 PM Experiment Station	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23 Cox Field Observing	24 Cox Field Observing	25
26	27	28	29	30		