

# The Flint River Observer

## Newsletter of the Flint River Astronomy Club

June 2006

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

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

**Club Calendar:** Saturday, June 3, 7:30 p.m., McCurry Park Pavilion - "*Stargazing*" class for Fayette Co. Parks & Rec.; Thursday, June 8, 7:30 p.m. - Club Meeting (Maria's Mex. Restaurant afterward); June 16 & 17, 23 & 24, Cox Field Observing.

### May 11 Meeting Minutes:

7:45 p.m. Curt called the meeting to order. Introductions were made around the room. Present were **Curt and Irene Cole, Smitty, Bill Snyder, Chuck Simms, Felix Luciano, Matt McEwen, Steve Knight, Doug Maxwell**, and visitor **Steve Hollander**. The meeting started out with discussion of GSV 2006, the success of the party, ideas for improvements for next year, and the financial status of the party in general. Curt handed out some flyers he had put together that tell a little about FRAC for the purpose of increasing awareness of the club. Plans were made to place them in strategic locations, hand them out at observings, etc. There was discussion about the newsletter and it was decided that any submissions should be made available by the 22nd of the month in an effort to get the newsletter out in time for everyone to have before the regular club meeting. The new look of the FRAC web-site was discussed and those that had visited it since the changes were implemented liked the new lay-out. The very attractive opening page of the site impressed most, but there was some concern about the time it takes to load, particularly for those still on dial-up. Discussion was made about the clean-up of the list of those that receive the newsletter, and about continuing to send the newsletters to those that spoke at the Star Party. Felix gave a report on the recent public observing at the M.D. Roberts school in Clayton county. Members present at the observing were **Felix Luciano, Curt Cole, Doug Maxwell, David, Brandon and Sara Okeefe**. More than 60 kids-parents-teachers looked through the scopes at mostly Saturn, the moon and Jupiter. Overall it was a very successful observing in spite of threatening weather early in the evening. It was also discussed

that plans for a girl scout observing were in the works. The meeting concluded with **Steve Hollander** doing show and tell on his stovepipe reflecting telescope.

#### **Upcoming meeting:**

**Steve Knight** will give a program about choosing eyepieces. Also, we'll continue looking at ideas to increase membership. Also looking for ideas for programs. We need someone to volunteer to take the position of program chairman.

**Calendar of Events:** Mercury up high first half of June. Saturn, Mars & Vesta at Beehive 15 June. Bootid meteor shower near June 25 - Boom or bust?

**Cox Field Club Observings:** June 16 & 17, 23 & 24.

#### **Club Notes:**

May 3rd the club hosted a **school observing** at M.D. Middle School. Club members hosting the event were: **David O'Keefe**, **Sara O'Keefe** (daughter), **Brendon O'Keefe** (brother), **Zach Force** (Brendon's friend), **Curt Cole** (Club President), **Doug Maxwell** (Club Secretary) and **Felix Luciano** (Observing Liaison). All around us the skies were cloudy and you could hear rolling thunder out in the distance. For a little while we were not sure if the observing event would be happening due to the weather and thought that we would have to cancel the event. We moved over to the track & field behind the school and got started setting up the scopes. In no time kids, parents and a few teachers were coming around to take a look and ask questions. The evening highlights were the Moon, Saturn, M44, Mars and late in the evening Jupiter. The kids had a booklet with a list of questions that they had to complete during the course of the observing. I want to say that we all had a great time at the observing. The teacher was very happy and pleased with the event and told me that she was keeping our number available to plan another event for next year.

#### **Member Profile: Doug Maxwell**

by Curt Cole

Doug Maxwell, a Brooks resident, has lived in the Atlanta area all of his 51 years. He has two daughters and a wife, Laura.

Doug's first scope was a Sears 60mm refractor (450x!). The first one that he built was a 6" reflector, and that was used to view Halley's Comet. His current scope, a 13.1" Dob, he built about 2001. Then a couple years later the talented Mr. Maxwell built a Poncet platform for it. He has done a good bit of observing and considers himself an intermediate observer, having earned Messier, Caldwell and Double Star pins, and he's working on the Herschel 400 list. Doug diligently performs his duties as FRAC photographer. When he's not flying or observing or being a family man, he relaxes by quilting.

The flying bug bit him early on so he started out flying radio controlled planes. He had to get in the air himself though so he got his pilot's license before he turned twenty, then a commercial and instrument rating a year later. He's owned two planes. Bought his first, a 1943 Taylorcraft, and while still a student pilot, flew it to Oshkosh, Wisconsin for the Experimental Aircraft Association Fly-in. Doug worked several jobs as pilot, including: two summers as a tow-plane pilot at Peachstate Gliderport in Williamson; flying freight in a DC-3; and flying an aerial photo plane. He also had some training in Oklahoma as an air traffic controller. It wasn't long before Doug's T-craft was damaged in a tornado. Before he completed repairs, he sold it. In the summer of 2005 he happened to hear it was again damaged and for sale in Texas. He bought it, restored it, and now flies it every chance he gets.

He started college to become a dentist but changed his mind so he got his Associates Degree in computer service and applied science. Since college he's mostly worked in his current capacity as heating and air conditioning sales and service.

### **Astronomy News:**



NASA Space Place Column

## **Not a Moment Wasted**

by Dr. Tony Phillips

The Ring Nebula. Check. M13. Check. Next up: The Whirlpool galaxy.

You punch in the coordinates and your telescope takes off, slewing across the sky. You tap your feet and stare at the stars. These Messier marathons would go much faster if the telescope didn't take so long to slew. What a waste of time!

Don't tell that to the x-ray astronomers.

"We're putting our slew time to good use," explains Norbert ScharTEL, project scientist for the European Space Agency's XMM-Newton x-ray telescope. The telescope, named for Sir Isaac Newton, was launched into Earth orbit in 1999. It's now midway through an 11-year mission to study black holes, neutron stars, active galaxies and other violent denizens of the Universe that show up particularly well at x-ray wavelengths.

For the past four years, whenever XMM-Newton slewed from one object to another, astronomers kept the telescope's cameras running, recording whatever might drift through the field of view. The result is a stunning survey of the heavens covering 15% of the entire sky.

Sifting through the data, ESA astronomers have found entire clusters of galaxies unknown before anyone started paying attention to "slew time." Some already-known galaxies have been caught in the act of flaring—a sign, researchers believe, of a central black hole gobbling matter from nearby stars and interstellar clouds. Here in our own galaxy, the 20,000 year old Vela supernova remnant has been expanding. XMM-Newton has slewed across it many times, tracing its changing contours in exquisite detail.

The slew technique works because of XMM-Newton's great sensitivity. It has more collecting area than any other x-ray telescope in the history of astronomy. Sources flit through the field of view in only 10 seconds, but that's plenty of time in most cases to gather valuable data.

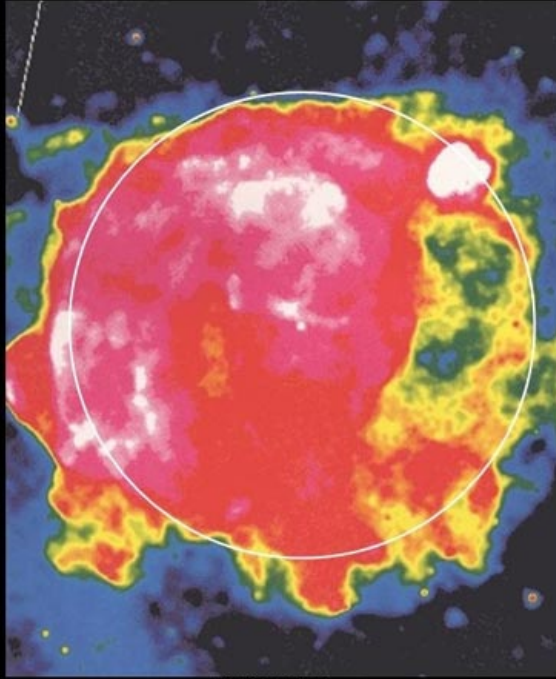
The work is just beginning. Astronomers plan to continue the slew survey, eventually mapping as much as 80% of the entire sky. No one knows how many new clusters will be found or how many black holes might be caught gobbling their neighbors. One thing's for sure: "There *will* be new discoveries," says Schartel.

Tap, tap, tap. The next time you're in the backyard with your telescope, and it takes off for the Whirlpool galaxy, don't just stand there. Try to keep up with the moving eyepiece. Look, you never know what might drift by.

See some of the other XMM-Newton images at <http://sci.esa.int> . For more about XMM-Newton's Education and Public Outreach program, including downloadable classroom materials, go to <http://xmm.sonoma.edu>. Kids can learn about black holes and play "Black Hole Rescue" at The Space Place, <http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/>, under "Games."

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## Vela Supernova Remnant



ROSAT



XMM-Newton Slew

Caption:

*The image on the left is the Vela Supernova Remnant as imaged in X-rays by ROSAT. On the right are some of the slew images obtained by XMM-Newton in its "spare" time.*

# June

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
				<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> Stargazing class Fayetteville 1st qtr. Moon
<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> FRAC Meeting 7:30 p.m.	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>11</b> Full Moon	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> Cox Field	<b>17</b> Cox Field
<b>18</b> Last qtr. Moon	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> Cox Field	<b>24</b> Cox Field
<b>25</b> New Moon	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	

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