

THE FLINT RIVER OBSERVER

NEWSLETTER OF THE FLINT
RIVER ASTRONOMY CLUB

An Affiliate of the
Astronomical League

Vol. 16, No. 5 **July, 2012**

Officers: President/Newsletter Editor, **Bill Warren:** (770)229-6108, warren7804@bellsouth.net; Vice President, **Larry Higgins;** Secretary-Treasurer, **Steve Bentley.**

Board of Directors: **Dwight Harness;** **Mike Stuart;** **Jessie Dasher;** and **Laura Harness.**

Facebook Coordinator, **Jessie Dasher;** Alcor, **Caros Flores;** Webmaster, **Tom Moore;** Observing Coordinator, **Dwight Harness;** NASA Contact, **Felix Luciano.**

Club mailing address: 1212 Everee Inn Rd., Griffin, GA 30224. Web page: www.flintriverastronomy.org.

Please notify **Bill Warren** if you have a change of home address, telephone no. or e-mail address.

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Club Calendar. Thurs., July 12: FRAC meeting (7:30 p.m., Rm. 315 Flynt Bldg., UGa-Griffin campus); **Fri.-Sat., July 20-21:** Cox Field observings (at dark); **Fri., July 27:** UGa-Griffin lunar observing (7-10 p.m.).

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President's Message. **Steve Bentley** has been doing something pretty cool on recent hot days and evenings: conducting solo observings for area residents.

First, he set up his solar 'scope on a streetcorner in downtown Forsyth on Mar. 10th-11th for a total of six hours during the local Forsythia Festival, showing the **Sun** to passersby. Then, on May 12th and 19th, he took his solar road show to the Monroe Co. Recreation Center and showed the Sun to attendees at softball games and a fundraiser for the sheriff's department. He says, "I just set up my telescope and asked people if they wanted to take a look." Between 80-100 people took advantage of his offer.

On June 26th, Steve set up one of his telescopes in his front yard (which is located just south of nowhere in the wilds of Monroe Co.), and for more than two hours he showed the night sky to a handful of kids and their parents.

As another Steve – **Ramsden** – has shown so conclusively in recent years, it doesn't take a club to conduct a public observing. All it takes is the desire to show others what we already know, i.e., that the sky is filled with objects of beauty and wonder, 24/7, all year long.

It doesn't take expensive telescopes and H-alpha filters, either: you could do the same thing in the daytime using solar projection, solar sunglasses or a pane of #14 welder's glass, or at night with any 'scope, no matter how small. Regardless of its size, it will show people things they would never see otherwise.

Elsewhere: if a picture is worth a thousand words, this edition of the *Observer* is verbose, to say the least. In addition to astrophotos by **Alan Pryor**, **Felix Luciano** and **Stephen Ramsden**, we've added photos of our **Venus** transit public observing at The Garden, courtesy of **Tom Moore**. (Next

month's issue will feature additional photos of the event from **Woody Jones.**)

Finally, please join me in welcoming Griffinites **Lewis McCrary**, his wife **Jennifer** and their son **Alex**, to FRAC. They attended our **Venus** transit observing at The Garden, and joined the club that evening. We're excited to have y'all join us, folks; please let us know how we can make your membership as exciting as you'd like for it to be.

-Bill Warren

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Last Month's Meeting/Activities. Our ten FRAC members doubled the number of visitors at our May 29th UGa-Griffin lunar observing, but those five visitors stayed for hours and had a great time. FRAC attendees included: **Betty & Steve Bentley; Mike Stuart; Tom Moore; Larry Higgins; Julie Avery & Sam Harrell; Carlos Flores; Charles Turner;** and yrs. truly.

Sixteen members – **McKenzie & Smitty Smith; Mason & Erik Erikson; Bagitta & Chris Smallwood; Ben & Woody Jones; Tom Moore; Charles Turner; Mike Stuart; Cynthia Armstrong;** new members **Jennifer, Lewis & Alex McCrary;** and yr. editor – attended our **Venus** transit public observing at UGa-Griffin's "The Garden" facility on West Ellis Rd. before sunset on June 6th. Woody and Tom took a passel of photos of the event (see pp. 5-6), which was well attended by area residents. Charles's friend **Patrick Crumbley** of Little Caesar's Pizza of Griffin was one of the attendees: he brought along four boxes of pizza that everyone present would have enjoyed if **Dwight Harness** hadn't eaten all of them himself. (Just kidding, he wasn't even there.) He even ate the boxes they came in, and later defended his actions by saying "Hey, I was hungry. Actually, I'm a light

eater: when it's light, I'm eating." (More kidding.)

The next time you decide to have pizza for lunch or supper, we hope you'll order it from Little Caesar's. (And order four extras if Dwight is around.)

The sky was anything but promising on that morning and early afternoon, but we got to see the first 45 min. of the transit before the clouds decided that we'd seen enough. We showed visitors the transit in H-alpha (Charles and Smitty), white light, solar sunglasses, #14 welder's glass and via solar projection, and members and visitors alike were duly impressed, both at the special nature of the occasion and at Venus's size against the backdrop of the **Sun.** (See p. 5.)

Meanwhile, **Dwight Harness** and his family were watching the transit and showing it to others in Gatlinburg, Tenn., **Frank Hiller** viewed it in Hilton Head, S. C., and **Stephen Ramsden** from atop Mauna Kea in Hawaii. **Dr. Richard Schmude** and a friend conducted an observing for Gordon College students and the public in Barnesville. **Larry Higgins** was stuck in traffic on I-285 in Atlanta.

Dwight Harness and yr. editor spent more than 3 hrs. showing the Sun and talking about constellations and the solar system to a group of about forty 8-12-year-olds enrolled in UGa-Griffin's "Kids University" summer program on June 5th and 9th. The kids were better behaved than the Sun, which played peekaboo with us. We gave out solar sunglasses (thanks to **Stephen Ramsden**) and an ocean of handouts (thanks to **Carlos Flores**), and a good time was had by all.

We had twelve members at our June meeting: **Steve & Betty Bentley; Tom Moore; Joseph Auriemma; Steven "Smitty" Smith; Aaron Calhoun; Woody & Ben Jones; Erik Erikson; Chris & Bagitta Smallwood;** and yr. editor. Teenager **Laura Harness** was elected to fill

the unexpired term of office on FRAC's board of directors that was created when **Tom Moore** resigned the post recently after several years on the job.

Eleven members – **Aaron Calhoun; Laura & Dwight Harness; Betty & Steve Bentley** and grandkids **Brianna & Erin Mills; Tom Moore; Charles Turner;** and yrs. truly – showed up for **Dr. Richard Schmude's** Abbott's farm observing for Gordon College students on the 21st. The sky was great; Brianna was the first to find and show **Mercury**, low in the NW sky.

The following evening, seven FRACsters – **Erik Eriksen, Larry Higgins, Aaron Calhoun, Charles "Prince of Darkness" Turner; Laura & Dwight Harness;** and yr. editor – attended our Cox Field club observing. Charles installed the mirror in his new 25-in. truss tube Obsession reflector, but was too tired to put the rest of the 'scope together that night. We looked for Messiers until the clouds rolled in, then called it a night.

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This 'n That. **Jessie Dasher** is recovering nicely from emergency gall bladder surgery. He wrote on June 13th: "I am doing well, surgery went great. Bad news is, no strenuous activity and can't lift anything over 20 lbs. for three weeks... Somehow I have to learn to enjoy doing nothing for awhile, HAHA!"

Jessie also wants to know if any active Facebook users would be willing to share moderator duties for FRAC's site with him. If you want to help, contact Jessie at 770-227-6396 or jessie.dasher@gmail.com.

*From **Maria Zorka, Art's** widow, came the following brief but heartfelt thank-you message: "Thank you so much to our friends in FRAC for your generosity and thoughtfulness during this time of need. Art

really liked the camaraderie he found in FRAC."

*Maybe it's something in the water, but FRAC has suffered its share and more of back problems in recent months. **Doug Maxwell** had to take time off from work awhile back, **Larry Higgins** just re-aggravated an earlier lengthy siege of back trouble, **Dwight Harness** and yr. editor have worn back braces recently, and **Erik Eriksen** was wearing one at our most recent Cox Field observing.

Maybe we need to take **Tom Moore's** advice and move to the **Moon**, where the gravity is only 1/6th that of the Earth. A 180-lb. human weighs only 30 lbs. on the Moon, so the weight loss and reduced spinal compression would significantly improve our health and dispositions.

*We've added a new astronomy site to our FRAC website, "Astronomy and Space Resources." It contains information about the **Sun**, the **Moon**, a tour of the planets, NASA; Human Spaceflight; Space Weather; a link to the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum (including **Katie's** National Observatory), and several other topics including three sites for kids' astronomy.

Say what you want about **Tom Moore** – and we would, but we didn't want to clutter up this issue of the *Observer* with a bunch of "expletive deleted" notations – but man!, can that guy manage a website! Describing Tom as a workaholic is an understatement like describing **Angelina Jolie** as a girl. Even Tom would admit, though, that she probably looks better in an evening dress than he does.

*From the July '12 issue of *Astronomy*: (p. 74): "A NASA study points out 14 ways to help 'slow the pace of global warming, improve health and boost agricultural production.'" Not that those things aren't

important, but with thousands of other federal agencies in Washington, D.C., why is NASA involved? (The same page also mentions that “The lousy economy forces NASA to abandon its collaboration with the European Space Agency’s ExoMars missions.” Taken together, those two items offer an example of how NASA’s priorities have moved from space to the earth in the past three years.)

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Upcoming Meetings/Activities. On **Thurs., July 12th**, we’ll have our monthly meeting at 7:30 p.m. in Rm. 315 of the Flynt Bldg. **Yr. president** will be in Ft. Myers, Fla., on that date, so **Dwight Harness** will show the Cosmos video we were supposed to watch at the June meeting.

On **Fri.-Sat., July 20th-21st**, we’ll hold our club observations at Cox Field.

On **Fri., July 27th**, we’ll conduct our regular UGa-Griffin lunar observing from 7-10 p.m. on the lawn in front of the Flynt Bldg.

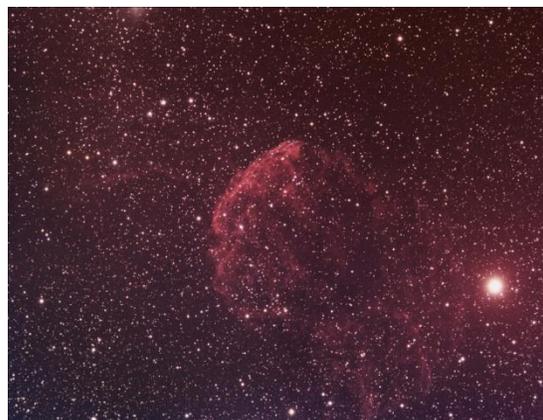
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Above: You’ve seen **Alan Pryor’s** stunning photo of **M104 (Sombrero Galaxy in Virgo)** before – but like many other treasures of the night sky, its beauty never ceases to amaze and delight us.



Above: The lovely bluish-white binocular triple star **Rho Ophiuchi** is thickly embedded in blue nebulosity just E of the dark nebula **Barnard 42** in **Alan Pryor’s** photo.



Above: **Jellyfish Nebula in IC 443**, a large supernova remnant (SNR) in **Gemini**. Nearly twice as large as the naked-eye **Moon**, the Jellyfish requires dark skies and an O-III filter to be seen telescopically but is clearly evident in **Felix Luciano’s** magnificent photo. The bright star near the right edge of the photo is 3rd mag. **Eta Geminorum**.



Above: NGCs 869 & 884, the Double Cluster in Perseus. This showcase pair of open clusters is almost as pretty visually as it is in **Felix Luciano's** photo – but this way you can enjoy it any time you want to, day or night.



Above: Venus transiting the Sun (photo by **Stephen Ramsden**). *This* is what all the

fuss was about – and it shows why all of us would like to be able to afford an H-alpha filter!

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“The Garden” Venus Transit Observing

photos by Tom Moore





Last Month's Meeting/Activities cont'd.: Rather than waste space at the end of the newsletter, we'll mention that **Aaron Calhoun, Dwight Harness, Erik Erikson** and **yr. editor** joined **Charles Turner** at Cox Field on Sat., June 23rd. First light for Charles's 25-in. 'scope was the **Moon**, and the view was everything you'd expect from a monster telescope. Aaron began his Messier quest by looking for globulars, while Dwight searched our vehicles for scraps of pizza. (Just kidding. Actually, he was looking for M&Ms or Reese's pieces.)

On Fri., June 29th, **Tom Moore, Mike Stuart, Charles Turner, Dwight Harness, Aaron Calhoun** and **yrs. truly** braved 101° heat to attend our UGa-Griffin observing. It cooled down nicely after sundown, though, and Aaron bagged 22 Lunar Club objects while we waited for visitors. Fifty-six more and he'll catch Tom.

