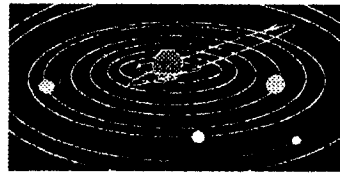


THE FLINT RIVER OBSERVER



Vol. 3, No. 9

FLINT RIVER ASTRONOMY CLUB

November, 1999

Officers: President, **Steven (Smitty) Smith** (583-2200); Vice President/newsletter editor, **Bill Warren** (229-6108 -- or, if you prefer e-mail: warren1212@mindspring.com); Secretary-Treasurer, **Ken Walburn** (P. O. Box 1179, McDonough, GA 30253 / 954-9442; AlCor, **Neal Wellons**, and Web Site Coordinator, **Cody Wellons** (946-5039); Librarians, **Tom and Katie Moore** (228-6447); Telephone/Hospitality Committee Chairman: **Dan Pillatzki** (707-0270). Club mailing address: 1212 Everee Inn Road, Griffin, GA 30224. All of these phone numbers have 770 area code prefixes. FRAC web page address: <http://welcome.to/frac>.

Please notify **Bill Warren** promptly if you have a change of address or e-mail.

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Club Calendar. Fri.-Sat., Nov. 5-6: FRAC deep-sky observings, Cox Field at dark; **Thurs., Nov. 11:** FRAC meeting (BB cafeteria, 7:30); **Fri.-Sat., Nov. 12-13:** club deep-sky observings (Cox Field at dark); **Thurs., Nov. 18:** Oakland Elementary School observing, at dark.

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President's Message. With a late deadline staring Bill in the face and space at a premium in this issue, let me: welcome our newest members, **Raymond Hughes** of McDonough and **Shirley & Brandy Allender** of Fayetteville; remind you that the **Leonids meteor shower** in mid-November will be an excellent opportunity for you to start on your Meteor Club observing program; and sign off till next month. Plot our course for the Lagoon

Nebula, Mr. Pillatzki.

-Steven "Saratoga Smitty" Smith

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Last Month's Meetings/Activities. We had 13 members and 2 guests at our Oct. club meeting. The evening's festivities began with **Tom Moore**, who must have been dipping into the cooking sherry earlier in the evening, cutting wheelies through the cones in the BB parking lot. (Not really, **Mr. Bozeman**.) In the media center, the meeting's highlights included: seeing **Smitty** and **Larry Higgins** in an old CNN film clip; **Katie Moore** and **Dan Pillatzki** receiving their Messier and Binocular Messier pins, respectively; and **Ken Walburn** staying awake through the entire meeting.

Our Oct. club observings were clouded out. **Steve & Dawn Knight** joined yrs. truly at Cox Field on Fri., Oct. 2nd, and **Katie & Tom Moore** came out on the 16th. Steve wondered why, even though it wasn't a scheduled observing evening, more of our members weren't out there on a clear night for observing. Good question.

The Beaverbrook PTA observing was switched from Oct. 22nd to the 29th, and on Thurs., Oct. 28th we scheduled a Cox Field observing for the Griffin High Science Club.

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Membership Renewals Due in November: **Mike, Danielle & Shane Stuart.** Send your \$10 check to Ken Walburn at the address listed on p. 1.

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Upcoming Meetings/Activities. At our club

meeting on **Thurs., Nov. 11th**, Neal Wellons will tell us about the "Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) At Home" project. This program takes data from the giant Arecibo radio telescope in Puerto Rico, splits it into small work units and sends it to over a million home computers around the world for analysis. Neal's computer automatically completes about 3 work units per week, performing 175 billion calculations per unit. If one of them hits paydirt, Neal will be credited as the discoverer of alien intelligence. The odds against such a discovery are astronomical, but probably no greater than the chances of **Tom Moore's** earning a Herschel 400 pin before the millennium concludes.

Our club observings at Cox Field will be held on **Fri.-Sat., Nov. 5th-6th**: with the new moon rising on the **7th**, the sky should be perfect except for the occasional cloud cover or hurricane warning that always seems to accompany our visits to Cox Field.

We'll also welcome any of you who want to observe at Cox Field the following weekend, **Fri.-Sat., Nov. 12th-13th**. That gives you *four* shots at finding a suitable night for observing in early- to mid-November!

On **Thurs., Nov. 18th**, we'll conduct an observing for Oakland Elementary School in Henry County. To get to the school from Griffin, go N on Hwy. 19/41, turn rt. onto Hwy. 20 at the Wendy's near A.I.R., and follow Hwy. 20 east as it winds through and beyond Hampton. Seven mi. E of Hampton, you'll come to a stoplight and motel at the Hwy. 81 intersection just W of I-75; turn left onto Hwy. 81, and the school will be one mile down the road. The observing will be held behind the school.

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The Sky in November. **Jupiter** and **Saturn**, up all night this month, will be the brightest they've been in decades. Regarding Jupiter, from **8:32-11:10 p.m.** on **Nov. 4th**, 2 black specks -- the shadows of **Io** and **Ganymede**, which comprise half of Jupiter's 4 Galilean moons -- will be visible against the belts and bands of Jupiter's cloud layers.

Mars will be fainter than previously but still a bright orange "star" in the SSW; on **Nov. 28th**, blue 8th-mag. **Neptune** will be less than 2° N of Mars. **Uranus** (5th-mag.) will still be in the vicinity of 4th-mag. Theta (Θ) Capricorni. **Venus** will be an easy target, rising 3 hrs. before the Sun.

On the afternoon of **Nov. 15th** -- specifically, from **4:15-5:07 p.m.** -- if you can beg, borrow or steal a solar filter or a pane of #14 welder's glass, you can watch **Mercury** move across the Sun's N edge. (You can also watch it by solar projection.) For details on how to watch it -- and *safely* -- see pp. 108-112 of the Nov. '99 issue of *Sky & Tel*.

Then there's the **Leonids meteor shower**. *Astronomy* suggests that nights from **Tues., Nov. 16th-Fri. morning, Nov. 19th**, are all prime candidates for viewing one of the most spectacular meteor showers of the century.

If you're looking E at 3 a.m. or later, the meteors should appear to be coming from the direction of the backward question mark that forms *Leo's* head and mane. Plan to stay up late or rise early, since three times a century -- **every 33 years** -- the Leonids put on a show to remember. This is one of those times.

At the peak of the 1966 Leonids shower, observers in the southwestern U. S. recorded an incredible **40 meteors per second!** This time around isn't supposed to produce anywhere near that total -- but wouldn't you like to be out watching in case it does? As John Denver wrote, "I've seen it raining fire in the sky." And you can too. Maybe.

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Did You Know...?

*That FRAC member **Richard Jakiel** has 55 of his drawings appearing in the magnificent new 2-vol. observers' book, *The Night Sky Observer's Guide*, by George Robert Kepple and Glen W. Sanner?

*That, if you have a Messier pin, you've already found 11% of the **Arp Peculiar Galaxies**? The following Messiers are also Arps: **M66** (Arp 16); **M101** (Arp 26); **M77** (Arp 37); **M90** (Arp 76); **M51** (Arp 85); **M60** (Arp 116); **M49** (Arp 134); **M87** (Arp 152);

M32 (Arp 168); **M65** (Arp 317); and **M82** (Arp 337). Twenty-five other Arps are also **Herschel 400** objects.

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Opinion. "Orion (Telescopes) is snubbing the bulk of their existing customers and beginning to cater to the newbie too much. I think their bottom line will suffer in the end."

-David Ward

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Ask Mr. Astronomy Person (a.k.a, "the artist formerly known as Mr. Stargazer"). *The following actual e-mail message from FRAC member Robert Hall was received recently by yr. humble editor, who promptly (and fraudulently) edited it into a query for FRAC's world-famous astronomy consultant and bee esser:*

"Dear Mr. Astronomy Person: A little over a month ago I went to Books A Million to see if they could order me a *Sky Atlas 2000.0* Deluxe Edition. The clerk said it would come in about 3 weeks and I could pay for it then. It cost \$49.95.

"After 3 weeks I went back to the store and found them in the process of moving. Everything was in disarray. They couldn't find any record of my order, but a clerk said she remembered ordering it and it would take another week or two to arrive. I could pay for it then.

"Last Tuesday, 4-1/2 weeks later, it arrived on my doorstep by drop shipment, not only prepaid but there was a price reduction that hadn't been posted in the price guide and I was due a refund of \$13 for an atlas that I hadn't paid for in the first place. What should I do?

-Robert Hall, Warner Robins

Dear Robert: Since there is no lasting satisfaction to be derived from taking advantage of other people's mistakes for one's own selfish gains, Mr. Astronomy Person feels that you should follow the morally correct path and immediately pack up the atlas and send it to Mr. Astronomy Person, along with the \$13

credit voucher and your Visa card.

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The Lunatix Challenge Series: #9

by Philip Sacco (Lunatic #82)

(Editor's Note: This is the 9th in a series of 12 monthly "Challenges" devised by AAC's Phil Sacco to make your Lunar Club award quest more interesting. Remember: If you miss a given feature one month, you can always look for it next month; and you can look for naked eye or binocular targets with a telescope or binoculars if you prefer to do so.)

Naked-Eye Targets. 1. What is the longest valley on the near side of the moon? 2. What is the term used for lunar soil? 3. (Challenge). If you stood in the center of the crater *Clavius*, assuming a diameter of 140 miles, how high would the walls have to be to see them?

Pickering's Ultimate Naked-Eye Challenge. ~~Can you see the Rhiphaeus Mtns.~~ without optical aid? This is a 12 rated challenge...

Binocular Targets. 1. Mountains *Pico* and *Piton*: solitary peaks. 2. *Rheita Valley*: 3- to 4-day moon or 17- to 18-day moon. 3. *Palus Epidemiarum*: Marsh of _____.
4. Crater *Aristillus*.

Telescopic Targets. 1. Domes between (craters) *Kepler* and *Copernicus*. 2. *Petavius* wall. 3. *Reiner Gamma*. 4. *Montes Alpes*.

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Errata. New members **David & Michael Chappell** are father and son, respectively, and not brothers as reported in last month's *Observer*. Also, we omitted the Universe Sampler in listing the AL's observing clubs.

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