

# THE FLINT RIVER OBSERVER

NEWSLETTER OF THE FLINT  
RIVER ASTRONOMY CLUB

An Affiliate of the  
Astronomical League

**Vol. 16, No. 7**                      **September, 2012**

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

Facebook Coordinators, **Jessie Dasher** and **Laura Harness;** Alcor, **Carlos Flores;** Webmaster, **Tom Moore;** Program Co-chairmen: **Bill Warren** and **Larry Higgins;** Observing Coordinator, **Dwight Harness;** NASA Contact, **Felix Luciano.**

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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., Sept. 13:** FRAC meeting (7:30 p.m., Rm. 305, Flynt Bldg. on the UGa-Griffin campus); **Fri.-Sat., Sept. 14-15:** club observings (Joe Kurtz Wildlife

Management Area, at dark); **Fri., Sept. 21:** UGa-Griffin lunar observing (7-10 p.m.).

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**President's Message.** We're trying out a new observing site in September, this one at the **Joe Kurz Wildlife Management Area** in Meriwether County. It's about 16 mi. W of Griffin and 7.8 mi. from another observing site we've tried out a couple of times. This isn't "Kurtz Rock," though, but an equally dark site that doesn't involve driving on or observing on a granite surface at night.

**Dwight Harness** made the arrangements for us to use JKWMA as an observing site, and we think you're gonna like it. It's easy to find, located immediately adjacent to a paved road, the skies there are deliciously dark and there's even an open pole barn shelter in case of a sudden rainfall.

With both of the Coxses in their late 80s and Kurtz Rock too hot to use about half of the year, we need a year-round site. Joe Kurz Wildlife Management Area may be just what we're looking for.

-Bill Warren

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**Last Month's Meeting/Activities.** **Aaron Calhoun** and yr. editor spent awhile at Cox Field on a partly cloudy evening on July 20<sup>th</sup>, but the next evening was clouded out. **Charles Turner** and yr. editor gave UGa-Griffin a try on July 27<sup>th</sup>, but again the clouds conspired to keep other members and visitors home. It was fun spending time with Charles and Aaron, though.

Like **Larry Higgins** and **Smitty**, Charles (a.k.a. "Prince of Darkness") is a Renaissance man, i.e., he is equally adept at discussing telescopes, equipment, observing, the tech side of astronomy, or whatever else

you want to talk about. Charles is a quiet, soft-spoken man who generally keeps to himself at observings, but -- again, like Larry and Smitty -- Charles's observing skills and astronomy I.Q. are off the charts.

Aaron slipped under FRAC's radar as a newcomer, probably because he hasn't had much observing experience. But he showed everyone at our recent quizbowl contest that his general knowledge of astronomy is prodigious. Aaron is an avid, quick learner, and if he continues to improve his observing skills one can only imagine how far his astronomy experiences will take him.

(About that quizbowl contest: Aaron and Charles were on the same team. Any guess as to which team won?)

Our Pool, Pizza and Perseids Party on Aug. 11<sup>th</sup> was short on Perseids meteors, but long on fun, food and fellowship. We had 24 members and guests: **Steve & Betty Bentley and Brianna & Erin Mills; Dwight Harness; Phil Sacco, Courtney Seabolt, Vicky Walters & Yvonne Oakley; Roger Brackett & Jane Barreski; Joe & Martha Auriemma; Carlos Flores; Larry Higgins; Charles Turner; Aaron Calhoun; Woody & Ben Jones and Sherry Nichols; Jessie & Ronny Dasher; and hosts Bill & Louise Warren.** There was enough food to satisfy a small army, including 15 pizzas -- more about that later -- and the sky was partly cloudy, a far cry from the thunderstorms that had been predicted for the area. Phil Sacco won the doorprize, a Skyline Deluxe Laser Pointer.

We had five members, including a very special one, at our Cox Field observing on Aug. 17<sup>th</sup>. That special member was, of course, **yr. editor.**

No, we're kidding, it was **Katie Moore, Tom's** astronomically gifted daughter. Katie was in town for the weekend, and she and Tom decided to drop by Cox Field so she could renew her acquaintance with her old 10-in. Dob and see how much her

friends in FRAC have aged since we last saw her. (Again, just kidding, but the answer is, *We haven't aged a day, Katie. Several years, maybe, but not a day.*)

Anyway, it was great seeing Katie again. She's married now, and living the life of her youthful dreams, working with the Public Observatory Project at the Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum in Washington, D. C.

Our other Cox Field attendees that night were **Aaron Calhoun, Dwight Harness and Erik Erikson.** FRAC gave Aaron a 4-1/2" Meade GoTo 'scope that **Larry Higgins** had repaired and FRAC had given to an ex-member, who subsequently returned it when he found that he didn't have time to use it. Now all Aaron has to do is learn how to operate the GoTo. The universe awaits.

We had a good group of visitors at our Aug. UGa-Griffin observing, including the **Hoard** family -- **Kacie, Jason, Serai & Aslyn** -- who joined the club that night. Other FRACsters present included **Larry Higgins, Betty & Steve Bentley, Aaron Calhoun, Charles Turner, Jessie Dasher** and **yr. truly.** Charles brought along and set up his 8" 'scope -- which isn't especially noteworthy until you realize that it's the *finderscope* on his 25" 'scope!

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**This 'n That.** **Laura Harness** is now co-coordinator of FRAC's Facebook site with **Jessie Dasher.** Thanks, Laura.

**\*Trivia Questions.** 1. *How many of the American flags planted in lunar soil by U. S. astronauts are still standing?* 2. *During which lunar phase do solar eclipses occur?* (Answers on p. 4.)

\*Re the pizzas we ordered for our Aug. PP&P Party: **Charles Turner's** friend **Patrick Crumbley** -- who runs Little

Caesar's Pizza in Griffin and brought four free pizzas to our Venus transit observing earlier this summer -- donated four large pizzas, which amounted to a 25% saving for the club on the 15 pizzas we ordered from them. It's another reason why you should patronize Little Caesar's whenever possible.

(Incidentally, when we told you of Mr. Crumbley's generosity a couple of issues ago, we inadvertently gave the wrong location for Little Caesar's Pizza in Griffin: it's at the north end of the North Griffin Square Shopping Center [a.k.a. the Belk's Shopping Center] -- by U. S. 19/41 and next door to the Family Medical Center. Their phone no. is 770-233-3322, and their pizzas are first-rate, as our party attendees will eagerly attest!)

**\*A Personal Message from Bill Warren to His Friends in FRAC.** "This is probably a bit premature since I haven't actually received the money yet, but I couldn't wait to tell you: *I'll soon be fabulously wealthy beyond my wildest dreams!*

"No, I didn't win the Powerball or Mega Millions lottery, or win the Publisher's Clearinghouse Grand Prize -- and I didn't inherit a fortune from a recently deceased relative, either. But in a matter of days I'm due to receive **54.9 million dollars** from some very wonderful people!

"There are roughly 314 million people living in the U. S. And out of that vast multitude, in the past week no less than *nine* different heirs to multi-million dollar fortunes in Nigeria chose me -- *Bill Warren* -- to share in their inheritances in return for helping them transfer a total of \$109.8 million to banks in the U. S. All I have to do to earn my share is send them certain personal financial information that will allow them to establish bank accounts here in my name. I need to complete the transactions quickly, however, or else the

evil, rebel-supported Nigerian Minister of Finances (whose name escapes me, probably because it was a different name in each e-mail) will step in and seize the funds for himself. Apparently, there's a large turnover in Nigerian Ministers of Finance.

"I won't let all that newfound wealth go to my head, though -- and I don't intend to become part of the 'evil rich' that you hear so much about. No, I want to share my good fortune with *you*, my loyal friends in FRAC. When the cash transfer is completed, I'm going to give each of you \$1 million, and we'll all be millionaires! (Hey, don't thank me, what are friends for?)

"All you need to do to receive your share is send me certain personal financial information..."

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**Upcoming Meetings/Activities.** Our Sept. club meeting will be at 7:30 p.m. on **Thurs., Sept. 13th** in Room 305 of the Flynt Bldg. on the UGa-Griffin campus. The speaker will be **Bill Warren**; his topic will be the A. L.'s observing programs.

Our Sept. club observings will be held on **Fri.-Sat., Sept. 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>**. Instead of conducting those observings at Cox Field, however, we're going to try out a new site, this one at **Joe Kurz Wildlife Management Area**. It's a bit farther out Ga. 362 than Cox Field is, but that also means it's a very dark site. (*Please Note: This is NOT "Kurtz Rock," the observing site owned by ex-member Bill Kurtz. --Ed.*)

To get to the wildlife management area from, say, Hampton, come S on U. S. 19/41 and stay on the 4-lane past the Hardee's/McDonald's stoplight at Ga. 92. Continue past the Griffin exit, and past the Newnan-Griffin exit at Ga. 16. Get off the 4-lane at the Ga. 362/Williamson Rd. exit, bear right (west) and set your odometer at 0.0.

Go 15.8 mi. on Hwy. 362W, and turn left at Mt. Carmel Road. (There's a sign announcing the intersection just before you get to it.)

Go 4.8 mi. on Mt. Carmel Rd., and Joe Kurz Wildlife Management Area will be on your right, just beyond a gray mailbox. (Along the way, you'll pass Mt. Sinai Bapt. Church, White Oak Creek Boat Ramp and Germany Rd., all of them on the left.) Stay on Mt. Carmel Rd. all the way from Ga. 362 to the wildlife area, turn right when you get to it and look for our cars. (There's a sign at the entrance, and since this isn't Kurtz Rock you won't have to worry about driving a granite surface.) This will be our first time observing at JKWMA, so try to arrive before dark if at all possible.

The GPS coordinates for the wildlife management area are: latitude 33.113386, longitude -84.538085.

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**Answers to Trivia Questions on p. 2.** 1. American astronauts from the Apollo 11, 12, 14, 15, 16 and 17 lunar landing missions planted six U. S. flags on the **Moon**. Recent NASA Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter Camera (LROC) photos taken from 15 mi. above the Moon's surface show that five of those flags are still standing. (The Apollo 11 flag was blown down by the exhaust from the ascent engine during the Eagle's liftoff from the Moon.) 2. Solar eclipses occur during the New Moon phase.

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### Bill and Tom's Excellent Adventures

Leaping boldly into FRAC's inner circle of high tech innovators, **Bill Warren** has come up with a brilliantly creative concept: *a GoTo system that talks to you*. Bill says

it's the most important advance in electronic finder systems since Mr. Go met Mr. To.

"I tried a hand-controlled GoTo system with my telescope," Bill explained, "but I had trouble with it from the start. The numbers for right ascension and declination kept changing every time I moved the 'scope and I thought: *If the stars aren't moving, why do the numbers keep changing?*"

"Then I recalled the book *TURN LEFT AT ORION* and it hit me: *The heck with the numbers, what I need is a GoTo device that will tell me how to find things.*"

"So I built one."

*Does it work?*, Bill was asked.

"Well...sort of. But not the way I intended."

*What do you mean?*

"I guess I made the computer controls too life-like. The first time I turned it on the female voice I installed said, 'What am I doing out here? I want to watch "The Real Housewives of New Jersey."'"

"Find Ring Nebula,' I said.

"Not tonight, dear, I have a headache. Why don't we go inside and look at the ring you left around the bathtub?"

"But I want to find Ring Nebula!,' I said.

"Oh, all right, if you insist.'

"I moved into position beside the telescope.

"Go down' the computer said. I moved the tube down.

"No, I meant move the tube up so the image will go down. Your telescope inverts images. Now, move the 'scope up – SLOW DOWN, YOU'RE GOING TOO FAST, YOU'RE GONNA WRECK US! I can't watch this.

"Now you've done it, Mr. Leadfoot, you went past the turn! Go back and – See that bright star in the upper left-hand corner? Go to it and turn right – No, you've turned the wrong way again, you didn't let me finish. I

meant turn right there left. I should have listened to my mother, you never do anything right. And heaven forbid that you should ever stop and ask for directions!”

*Did you ever find Ring Nebula?*, Bill was asked.

“No, but on ‘The Real Housewives of New Jersey’ Julietta found out that the two-carat diamond ring Marco gave her for her birthday was actually a \$19.95 cubic zirconium ring that he had his secretary buy for her at CVS pharmacy.”

**Tom Moore** is an exceptional lunar observer. If you ask him why he hasn’t completed his Lunar Club search he’ll tell you, “I’d do it, except...”

When yr. reporter asked Tom recently how he was coming on his Lunar list he said, “I took my telescope out in my backyard last night but I couldn’t find the Moon.”

“Last night was cloudy, Tom.”

“That could explain it,” he said. “I was afraid my eyesight or observing skills had deteriorated since the last time I worked on the Lunar Club list.”

“When was that?”

“Nineteen ninety-nine.”

We asked Tom if he needed help with the remaining 22 features on the list. He stared at us like we had asked him to drop his pants and moon the club at our next meeting. Then he reluctantly agreed. (To let us help him, that is. Not the other thing.)

“Okay, let’s get started.” We handed Tom a lunar map, a lunar observing form and a pencil. He examined the pencil.

“It’s not a No. 2,” he said.

We gave him a No. 2 pencil.

“Do you have a yellow one? I always use yellow No. 2 pencils.”

We gave him a yellow No. 2 pencil.

“That’s better,” he said. “But it doesn’t have an eraser.”

We gave him a yellow No. 2 pencil with an eraser. “Anything else?”

He eyed the pencil. “There’s not much of a point. Do you have a pencil sharpener?”

“No,” we said through gritted teeth, “Will a pocket knife do?” By now we were thinking of other uses for that knife.

“I always use an electric sharpener,” Tom said. “**Cathy** doesn’t let me use sharp objects.”

We sharpened the pencil for him and he started writing on the observing form. “Uh-oh. The point broke and I punched a hole in the paper. Do you have another yellow No. 2 pencil and observing form? And maybe a book to bear down on?”

“No,” yr. reporter replied wearily, “but I think I feel a migraine coming on. Let’s quit for tonight.”

“Okay,” Tom said, “but I was really looking forward to getting started. Except I forgot my telescope, and I have to be home in ten minutes to watch Huckleberry Hound on the Cartoon Network.”

The next time we asked Tom how he was progressing with his lunar observations he said, “I’ve decided to draw the Moon and fill in the features as I find them. But I’m not too good at drawing, so I’m gonna go up in the attic and look for **Katie’s** old Etch-A-Sketch.”

We can’t wait to see how *that* turns out.

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**NEXT PAGE: Photos by Woody Jones of FRAC’s Venus transit public observing at The Garden in Griffin on Tues., June 5, 2012.**

