

# THE FLINT RIVER OBSERVER

NEWSLETTER OF THE FLINT  
RIVER ASTRONOMY CLUB

An Affiliate of the Astronomical League

Vol. 24, No. 2 April 2020

**Officers:** President, **Sean Neckel**; Vice President, **Aaron Calhoun**; Secretary / ALCOR **Mark Grizzaffi**; Treasurer, **Steve Hollander**; Board of Directors: **Dwight Harness, Felix Luciano, and George Ruff**; Program/Observing Coordinator: **Sean Neckel**; Facebook Coordinator: **Aaron Calhoun**; Webmaster: **Tom Moore**; Newsletter Editor: **Dawn Chappell**; NASA Contact: **Felix Luciano**

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REMINDER: Membership dues are due by April 1<sup>st</sup>. Please turn them in ASAP, if you have not already. \$15 by cash or check made out to FRAC or Flint River Astronomy Club. Send dues to Sean Neckel at 788 Rising Star Rd. Brooks, GA 30205

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## Club Calendar:

Not yet cancelled:

April 17-18, 2020: Club observing, Joe Kurz WMA, sunset until whenever.

April 25, 2020, 8:15pm: Civil Air Patrol Observing, Peach State Aerodrome - Williamson, GA

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## Announcements:

Welcome to FRAC's newest member, Michael Vuocolo.

Due to the current situation with the COVID-19 Coronavirus, the following events have been cancelled or postponed:

FRAC Meetings: April 9 and May 14 - cancelled  
Springfest in the Garden, May 3, 2020 - postponed until at least June.

April 24, 2020, 8pm: Girl Scout Camporee Observing, Camp Meriwether, 653 Meadows Boone Rd, Luthersville, GA 30251 - postponed to September 11, 2020, 7:45pm.

Please keep checking your email for updates regarding club events. There are likely to be additional cancellations or postponements.

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## This 'n That:

Trivia

1. How large is the observable universe?
2. How far is the sun?
3. How large is the star Betelgeuse in Orion?

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## President's Message:

This has been a hard month for everyone, and FRAC has been no exception. Every email I've sent over the past few weeks has been to ask if something is being cancelled, or to tell everyone in the club that an event has been cancelled.

The worst part of this is that these cancellations are not because of the weather, which is typically the case, but because of a virus. When it's raining or cloudy, all you need to do is look out the window and know why astronomy is a no-go that night. It is disappointing to cancel these events on nights with clear skies, due to something we cannot see, touch, or directly observe.

Just the other morning, though, I was reminded that the Earth is still turning. I was walking into work (I have a job where I must work from work), and got a glimpse of the crescent moon, Jupiter, and Mars in a tight triangle in the pre-dawn sky. It was a reminder to me that the Sun is still rising and setting, the moon is still orbiting the Earth, the planets are still traversing the sky, and the stars are still shining, light-years away.

Things will get back to normal. The kids will go back to school, the Chik-fil-a dining rooms will open again, and there will be something on the news other than the Coronavirus. There will be TP on the shelves again, in every imaginable variety.

In the meantime, remember that you can always look up at the stars and planets, weather permitting, from your yard. They're still there. The sky is still open for business.

Stay safe, stay healthy. We'll all see each other again when this is in the past.

Sean  
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Don't be afraid to enjoy this fantastic hobby during these hard times. It is ok to go out at night.

Aaron  
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**Previous Meetings/Activities:**

March club meeting,  
Astronomy in the Park High Falls,  
Astronomy in the Park Lake Horton were all cancelled.

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**The April Sky:**

- April 1<sup>st</sup> - First Quarter moon
- April 8<sup>th</sup> - Full moon (Supermoon)
- April 15<sup>th</sup> - Last Quarter moon
- April 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> – Moon will pass Mars, Jupiter and Saturn
- April 23<sup>rd</sup> – New moon.
- April 22<sup>nd</sup> -23<sup>rd</sup> – Lyrid meteor shower
- April 28<sup>th</sup> – Venus at greatest brightness

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**Evening planets:**  
Venus (at its brightest)

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**Morning planets:**  
Mercury will be visible to the east. Mars, Jupiter and Saturn to the southeast.

**Astronomy fact:**

If you had a scale model where an inch is a light year, the Milky Way would be 1.5 miles across. The Andromeda galaxy would be 39.45 miles away.

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Random bits of information:

If two pieces of the same type of metal touch in space, they will bond and be permanently stuck together.

- This amazing effect is called cold welding. It happens because the atoms of the individual pieces of metal have no way of knowing that they are different pieces of metal, so the lumps join together.
- This wouldn't happen on Earth because there is air and water separating the pieces. The effect has a lot of implication for spacecraft construction and the future of metal-based construction in vacuums.

**THE FOOTPRINTS ON THE MOON WILL BE THERE FOR 100 MILLION YEARS.**

- The Moon has no atmosphere, which means there is no wind to erode the surface and no water to wash the footprints away. This means the footprints of the Apollo astronauts, along with spacecraft prints, rover-prints and discarded material, will be there for millions of years.

**Trivia Answers:**

1. 46 billion light years
2. About 93 million miles
3. About 560 times the size of the sun