

THE FLINT RIVER OBSERVER

NEWSLETTER OF THE FLINT
RIVER ASTRONOMY CLUB

An Affiliate of the Astronomical League

Vol. 25, No. 1 January 2021

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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Club Calendar:

KAS Remote Observing: Another remote observing event, hosted by KAS (Kalamazoo Astronomical Society), will take place on January 9, 2020 at 9:00pm EST. Register at this link: [1/9/2021 Registration Link](#)

FRAC Meeting: Thursday, January 14, 2021, 7:30pm on Zoom.

- Katie Nagy will give a presentation on the history of sunspot observation. The newest sunspot cycle started in December 2019 and should peak between 2023 and 2026. [Solar Cycle 25](#)
- Officer elections will take place in February 2021. If you would like to nominate yourself or someone else for an officer position, we will start taking nominations at the January meeting, or you can email me at stneckel@gmail.com. More information on the responsibilities of each office can be found in the club charter [here](#).

A meeting invitation will be sent out in early January for the meeting. If you do not get an invite to the meeting, please email me at stneckel@gmail.com and I will reply with the invite.

Meetings will continue to be virtual going forward in 2021 until we have use of the UGA Experimental Garden in Griffin again.

FRAC Observing: Club observing weekend, Friday and Saturday January 15-16, 2021 at Joe Kurz WMA, sunset until whenever.

No other events are scheduled for January 2021.

Please keep checking your email for updates regarding club events.

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Trivia:

1. When is the Earth closest to the sun?
2. What two planets have no moons?
3. How old is the solar system?
4. What type of galaxy is the Milky Way?
5. How long does it take for the solar system to go around the Milky Way?

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President's Message:

Hello FRAC Members,

Happy New Year!

Now that the arbitrary day is upon us that marks the end of one year and the beginning of that period where you write the wrong date on everything for a month, I am not going to rehash what a year it has been (anyone remember the Australian brush fires?). The reality that was 2020 will continue into 2021, probably for longer than most of us would like.

I would however, like to remember some of the positives from 2020, astronomy related and otherwise.

- I saw my first naked-eye comet, C/NEOWISE 2020 F3 in July.
- The conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in December was a once every other decade occurrence and was as fantastic to see naked eye as it was in the eyepiece.

- Our family adopted a puppy, Tycho. I am not a dog person, but I guess I might change.

What made 2020 memorable for you? What will you do to make 2021 memorable?

Sean

I hope everyone got a chance to see Jupiter and Saturn get as close as they did in over 400 years! Also hope everyone has a great new year.

Aaron

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Welcome!

Welcome new members John Cruickshank and Jeff Baldwin!

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Previous Meetings/Activities:

FRAC Meeting - December 10, 2020 - 7:30pm on zoom.us

- 12 members attended our virtual meeting. Sean Neckel, Alan Pryor, Steve Hollander, Aaron Calhoun, John Cruickshank, Katie Nagy, Tom Moore, Jeffrey Baldwin, Terry Morgan, Dwight Harness, Felix Luciano, and Elaine Stachowiak.
- Our show-and-tell program was a lot of fun. Members showed off their early holiday gifts to themselves. Thanks to everyone who participated!
 - o Sean presented a LED powered artificial star used for collimating, and his dog Tycho, named after astronomer Tycho Brahe.
 - o Alan Pryor showed off his new 14" Planewave telescope. You can see what his new 'scope can do at the end of our newsletter each month.
 - o Steve Hollander presented his new binocular solar filters.
 - o Aaron Calhoun also showed off his new scope, a 10" Orion Skyquest Dobsonian, and his new dog, Maya
 - o Katie Nagy showed us her new 2" Feathertouch focuser and got some advice from other members about counterbalancing her scope.
 - o Tom Moore shared his recent project to construct a device to allow him to

find stars during the day - a cardboard tube. Let us know how it works, Tom!

- o Dwight Harness gave us a demo of his new green laser pointer, which he said he can see on trees up to 100 yards away! [Don't shoot your eye out, kid!](#)

FRAC Observings:

Friday and Saturday December 11-12 were a bust for clouds and rain, respectively.

Monday December 21 was a clear night, and WMA manager Rob Bartlett allowed us to use the field to observe the Great Conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. Sean, Chelsea, Isabelle, and Gianna Neckel, John Cruickshank, and Dwight Harness attended. By dark, Jupiter and Saturn were clearly visible to the naked eye and looked great in the eyepiece as well.

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Solar System Observing - January 2021

Mercury Reaches maximum elongation east of the sun on January 23. It will reach maximum visible altitude above the horizon (17°) after sunset on January 26.

Venus Visible to the east in the early morning sky until it begins to pass behind the Sun in late January.

Earth is taking another lap.

Mars will be visible at dusk, setting after midnight.

Jupiter and Saturn will be visible after sunset, setting about an hour after the sun in early January. Neither will be visible by month's end, as they reach solar conjunction on the 28th and 23rd, respectively.

Uranus is visible with a telescope early evening until just after midnight.

Neptune is visible with a telescope early evening until about an hour after sunset.

Moon: LQ 1/6 New: 1/13 FQ: 1/20 Full: 1/28

<https://in-the-sky.org/>

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Classifieds:

If you have something you would like to buy, sell, or trade, email the specifics, including your contact information to stneckel@gmail.com

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[The Great Conjunction 2020](#)

[Jupiter 2014](#)

[Saturn 2016](#)

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Trivia Answers:

1. January 2nd
2. Mercury and Venus
3. 4.6 billion years old
4. A spiral
5. 250 million years.

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NGC 743 Open Cluster in Cassiopeia Courtesy of Felix Luciano

Details:

AP130GT @ FL819mm

ST8300m @ -20C

RGB: 12 subs X 300 sec

From Wikipedia:

https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/NGC_743

NGC 743 is an open cluster in the Cassiopeia constellation, discovered by John Herschel in 1829.

The full-size photo is located here: [NGC 743](#)



The Great Conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, December 21, 2020

Photo courtesy of Alan Pryor

The full-size photo, as well as other photos of Jupiter (2014) and Saturn (2016) can be found here: