

THE FLINT RIVER OBSERVER

NEWSLETTER OF THE FLINT
RIVER ASTRONOMY CLUB

An Affiliate of the Astronomical League

Vol. 27, No. 4 April 2023

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:

FRAC Meeting: Thursday, April 13, 2023, 7:30pm
On Zoom only. We will discuss our Globe at Night updates, the upcoming Fernbank Planetarium trip, and our upcoming observing schedule.

Public Observing Events:

Friday April 14th at Lake Horton in Fayette County from 8pm until 10:30. There is a weather makeup date on Saturday April 15th.

Indian Springs State Park in Flovilla on Friday April 28th from 8pm until 11pm. There is a weather makeup date on Saturday April 29th.

FRAC Observing Events:

Friday and Saturday night April 21st - April 22nd, from Sunset until whenever at Joe Kurz Wildlife Management Area.

Remember if you are the last to leave and the gate was locked when you arrived, lock our combination lock to the other lock on the chain when you go.

The lock code is 9321.

Please keep checking your email for updates regarding club events.

FRAC Field Trip:

FRAC will be going to the Fernbank Planetarium on Thursday, April 20 at 8pm. There is a planetarium show from 8-9pm, and possibly an observatory tour after. You do not have to be a club member to attend. Details are here:

“Forward To The Moon”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWIackZ5Rew>

Admission:

Adults (Ages 19 - 61) \$10.00

Students (Ages 3 - 18) \$5.00

Seniors (Ages 62+) \$5.00

Tickets must be purchased at the door.

There is an Observatory Open House at 9PM, weather permitting.

The Fernbank Science Center is located at
[156 Heaton Park Dr, Atlanta, GA 30307](https://www.fernbank.org/156-Heaton-Park-Dr-Atlanta-GA-30307)

Parking is free.

In order to get a head count for the trip, please RSVP at this link by April 10:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0F4BAEAC2FA1FDC70-frac1>

Club Dues:

A reminder to everyone that club dues are now being collected for 2023. You can pay by cash or check (made out to Flint River Astronomy Club). Please send dues to our new treasurer:
Mark Sutton
107 Pintail Way
Locust Grove, GA 30248

The final date for dues collection will be April 15th.

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President's Message:

Hello FRAC Members,

I know I use this space to thank people quite often, and I'm going to do it again. In the newsletter, we regularly recap our group efforts at outreach at various parks, schools, and other venues. But our individual contributors often get missed. It's time that we recognize a few outstanding FRAC members who have dedicated their time to bringing astronomy to the people!

Richard Thomas has been doing an amazing job working with schools and kids in Fayette County. He taught a high school astronomy class at the Foundry Academy in Fayetteville for an entire semester. He also went to Liberty Tech in Brooks to present to their science classes. Richard and I will continue to try and find a venue for them to get a chance to look through our scopes.

Alan Pryor has been to several schools to share astronomy with kids over the past year. He has lectured, presented on Zoom, demonstrated telescope and astrophotography equipment, shown his amazing astrophotography portfolio, and enriched the lives of hundreds of kids and adults.

George Ruff has been traveling with his scale solar system model, and recently put on a one-man public observing for about 75 people at Heritage Elementary School in Macon. Managing that many guests all on your own is a special kind of challenge, and I'm sure everyone really appreciated it.

This kind of individual effort should (and will be) applauded more often. We are all ambassadors of our hobby, and should try and take every opportunity to show people our universe. It enriches our lives as much as theirs.

So whether it is outside (or inside) a school, or just your friends, relatives, or neighbors in the backyard, let's hear about your efforts to show others the stars!!

Thanks,
Sean

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Club Projects:

Globe at Night

At the February meeting, I introduced the Globe at Night project, an opportunity to participate in doing some citizen science. The idea is to assess the darkness of the sky wherever you might be by using constellations to determine the limiting magnitude.

Our club has been 'filling in the map' quite nicely over the past couple months. I have seen quite a few new pins for our observations. Keep up the great work, FRAC!!

This month's campaign is April 12-21, and will use the constellation [Leo](#).

Details of the process are here: <https://globeatnight.org/6-steps.php>

FRAC T-Shirts

T-shirts are still available. They are \$20 at all future FRAC gatherings.

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Astronomy Trivia:

1. If you could taste a star, what would it taste like?
2. What is the location where gravity forces balance to zero between two bodies called?
3. What is the most expensive item ever constructed?
4. What is the longest a human has stayed in outer space?
5. What is the shortest time a human spent in outer space?

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Previous Meetings/Activities:

March Events:

FRAC Meeting - March 9, 2023 - 7:30pm at the UGA Gardens and on Zoom.

- 14 Members attended the meeting at the UGA Gardens in Griffin. Sean Neckel, Alfred McClure, Larry and Twila Dove, Carmen and Wade Simmons, Ray Goodfellow, Richard Thomas, Mark Sutton, Rosanne and David Stone, Dr. Richard Schmude, Ben and Mercy Barker.

- 9 members and one guest attended the Zoom meeting. Mark Grizzaffi, Alan Pryor, Dave Mandell, Scott Hanson, Elaine Stachowiak, Chelsea Neckel, Dwight Harness, Michael Basmajian, and John Cruickshank.
- Mark Grizzaffi will set up a date for the planetarium visit and send an invite to everyone.
- Mark Sutton indicated that overnight camping is available at Joe Kurtz. No cost to camp but must have a fishing/hunting license as rangers do check.
- David Stone indicated that our public outreach will be busy this Summer. Indian Springs and Lake Horton will be the busiest locations.
- Sean showed where members made night sky observations so far through the Globe at Night website. There were seven so far.
- Dr. Schmude presented his work on reflectivity of the moon during an eclipse and using infrared filters.

Welcome Back Returning Member!

FRAC would like to welcome back a returning FRAC member, Michael Basmajian. Great to have you back, Michael!

FRAC Observings:

Friday, March 17 was a rainy mess. Saturday March 18 was cloudy at my house, so I stayed home. Was anyone out there? Let me know!

Public Observing Events:

Thursday March 16th, 4 FRAC members participated in an outreach event at Cotton Indian Elementary School in Stockbridge, GA. Sean Neckel, David and Rosanne Stone, and Bill Evans showed a lot of elementary and junior high kids Jupiter, Venus, and the Orion Nebula.

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Solar System Observing – April 2023

Mercury is visible low on the horizon starting around 8pm until 9pm.

Venus is visible in the evening, starting around 8pm.

Earth is at peak visibility during daytime hours, less so at night.

Mars is visible starting around 8:30pm until 2:30am.

Jupiter is close to the sun and not easily observable.

Saturn is becoming visible in the morning sky around 5:45am until dawn.

Uranus is close to the sun and not observable.

Neptune is close to the sun and not observable.

Moon: Full: 4/6 LQ:4/13 New: 4/20 FQ: 4/27

<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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NGC3344, Courtesy of Alan Pryor.

NGC 3344 is a barred spiral galaxy in the constellation of Leo Minor. Its magnitude is 9.7, and it is about 22 million light-years away. The bar is somewhat small. It is part of a smaller galaxy group which is part of the Virgo Supercluster of galaxies. It has well defined spiral arms and numerous HII areas. The inner arms are unusually blue.

The exposure time was 4 hours and 5 minutes with my 14" telescope.

NGC 3344 is about 7 degrees north-east of the 2nd magnitude star Algieba which is actually in Leo. You should be able to view this galaxy with an 8 or 10" telescope.

A full sized uncropped photo of NGC 3344 can be found at [NGC3344](#).

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Trivia Answers:

1. Sour. Stars are mostly hydrogen, and hydrogen ions typically produce sour taste. (Credit to XKCD cartoonist and *What if...* author Randall Monroe for this one)
2. A LaGrange point. There are 5 Lagrange points between any 2 astronomical bodies. The James Webb telescope is currently parked at Earth-Sun L2 point.
3. The International Space Station at a cost of over \$150 billion. It also costs about \$7.5 million to keep each person alive for each day on the station.
4. Valery Poliyakov, a Russian Cosmonaut spent 438 days aboard the Mir space station from January 9, 1994 to March 22, 1995.
5. Less than 15 minutes. Alan Shepard, the first American in space, piloted Freedom 7 above the Earth's atmosphere on May 5, 1961.

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