

# THE FLINT RIVER OBSERVER

NEWSLETTER OF THE FLINT  
RIVER ASTRONOMY CLUB

An Affiliate of the Astronomical League

Vol. 27, No. 5 May 2023

**Officers:** President, **Sean Neckel**; Vice President, **Aaron Calhoun**; Secretary / ALCOR **Mark Grizzaffi**; Treasurer, **Mark Sutton**; 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, May 11, 2023, 7:30pm on Zoom only. We will discuss our Globe at Night updates, and our upcoming observing schedule. I will be out of town that week and not able to open the Garden building, so we will have an online only meeting again. We will have an in-person meeting in June.

## Public Observing Events:

On Saturday May 6th, at 8:30pm we have a public observing event at Sprewell Bluff in Upson County. There is no weather make-up date for Sprewell Bluff.

On Friday May 12th at 8:30pm we have a public observing event at Lake Horton in Fayetteville with a weather make-up date for Saturday May 13th.

On Friday May 26th at 8pm we have a public observing event at Indian Spring in Flovilla with a make-up date of May 27th.

## FRAC Observing Events:

Friday and Saturday night, May 19-20, 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.

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Just a reminder that with the warmer months come warm weather pests. Make sure that you are protecting yourself from mosquitoes, ticks, etc. If you are using bug spray, make sure that you don't spray it near your optics. Also, don't touch any of your optics if you have any of the spray on your hands.

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## Club Projects:

### Globe at Night

This month's campaign is May 11-20, and will use the constellations [Leo](#) and [Bootes](#).

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 – Next Best Thing Edition:

1. Hydrogen and helium are the most common elements in the universe. What is the 3rd most common element?
2. Ganymede (radius 2634 km) is the largest natural satellite in the solar system. What is the 2nd largest?
3. Sirius (mag. -1.46) is the brightest nighttime star in our sky. What is the 2nd brightest?
4. Proxima Centauri (4.246 LY) is the closest star to our solar system. What is the 2nd closest?
5. Andromeda Galaxy (2.51 MLY) is the nearest major galaxy to the Milky Way. What is the next nearest major galaxy?

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## Previous Meetings/Activities:

### April Events:

FRAC Meeting - April 13, 2023 - 7:30pm on Zoom.

- 13 Members attended the meeting on Zoom: Sean Neckel, Alan Pryor, Alfred McClure, David and Rosanne Stone, Elaine Stachowiak, Mark Sutton, Mark Grizzaffi, Wade Simmons, Ben Barker, Carlos Flores, Dwight Harness, and King Davis.
- Mark Grizzaffi will send out the latest roster info to the Astronomical League as soon as Sean verifies the member list.
- The gate is once again locked. If anyone wants to go to Joe Kurz on a night other than the scheduled weekend, that person should notify the ranger to get the OK as well as notifying Sean.
- Everyone was encouraged to continue making observations for the Globe at Night program. Include observations at JKWMA.
- Sean showed us a cool project. He created a solar finder using a 3D printer.

### Welcome New Members!

FRAC would like to welcome our newest members, Jim Heidman and Jorge Mayo. Jim Joined us at Fernbank and Indian Springs in April. I had the pleasure of meeting Jorge at our Indian Springs observing event. Glad to have you in the club Jim and Jorge!

### FRAC Observings:

Friday, April 21 was a rainy mess, but Saturday April 22 was a beautiful, cool and clear night. Sean Neckel, Nelson and Kathy Stephenson, Mark and Terri Sutton, Richard and Christine Thomas, Wade Simmons, Dave and Rosanne Stone, and Bill Evans enjoyed a fine night of stargazing.

### Public Observing Events:

The Fayette County stargazing event planned for April 14/15 was clouded out. Dave and Rosanne Stone, Alfred McClure, Nelson and Cathy Stephenson, Bill Honea, Bill Evans, and Sean Neckel made the trip and stood in the parking lot on Saturday until it was decided to cancel the event.

Friday April 28 was a perfectly clear night at Indian Springs State Park in Flovilla. Bill Evans, Alfred McClure, David and Rosanne Stone, Sean Neckel, Wade Simmons, Jim Heidman, and Jorge Mayo showed about 40 guests the Moon, Venus, Mars, the Orion Nebula, and some double stars.

### FRAC Field Trip

On April 20, 22 FRAC members and guests met at the Fernbank Planetarium to watch their presentation, "Forward To The Moon". Mark and Charlene Grizzaffi, Dave and Rosanne Stone, Bill and Millie Evans, Richard and Christine Thomas, Jim Heidman, Alfred McClure, Diane Wildes, Nelson and Kathy Stephenson, Sean Neckel, Steven Barker, Mercy Barker, Caleb Barker, Kelly Barker, Isabel Barker, Ben Barker, Aaron Hahn, and Katiana Bernard attended.

Special thanks to Mark Grizzaffi for setting up the trip for us!

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### Solar System Observing – May 2023

**Mercury** is very close to the sun and not easily observable.

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

**Earth** will be here long after we're gone.

**Mars** is visible starting around 9pm until 1:30am.

**Jupiter** is close to the sun and not easily observable.

**Saturn** is becoming visible in the morning sky around 4am until dawn.

**Uranus** is close to the sun and not observable.

**Neptune** is close to the sun and not observable.

**Moon:** Full: 5/5 LQ:5/12 New: 5/19 FQ: 5/27

<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](mailto:stneckel@gmail.com)

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### Solar Finder for Telrad Mounts

If anyone has a Telrad mount on their scope, and would like a 3d printed solar finder, please email me at [stneckel@gmail.com](mailto:stneckel@gmail.com) . I can print one for

you, or if you have a 3D printer, I can send you the files to print for yourself. No charge.

This finder acts like a pinhole camera to help align your scope on the sun. This is **ONLY TO BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH A SOLAR FILTER**. Never point your scope at the sun without a solar filter. Severe telescope and eye damage **WILL OCCUR!**



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NGC3184, The Little Pinwheel Galaxy, Courtesy of Alan Pryor.

NGC 3184, sometimes known as the Little Pinwheel Galaxy, is a spiral galaxy in the constellation of Ursa Major, the Big Dipper. Its distance is about 40 million light-years, and it has a visual magnitude of 9.6. Like most spiral galaxies, its surface brightness is low, but with an 8- or 10-inch telescope you should be able to find the core of the galaxy if the skies are dark. To find it you can locate two 3<sup>rd</sup> magnitude stars, Tania Australis and Tania Borealis, that mark the edge of Ursa Major (near border of Leo Minor). These stars are very close together, 1.75 degrees. NGC 3184 is 0.75 southwest of Tania Australis.

This galaxy has two symmetrical arms, a predominance of blue (new blue stars) and numerous HII areas. It has also had at least 7 supernovae in the last 105 years.

This photo was taken the night of April 11, 2023, using a 14-inch telescope and an FLI 16803 camera. The total exposure was 4 hours.

A full size wide field photo can be seen at [NGC 3184 Wide](#). A full size photo of the cropped version can be seen at [NGC 3184 Cropped](#).

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Trivia Answers:

1. Oxygen
2. Titan, radius 2574 km.
3. Canopus, magnitude -0.74.
4. Rigil Kentaurusi, 4.344 LY
5. Triangulum Galaxy, 2.73 MLY

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