

THE FLINT RIVER OBSERVER

NEWSLETTER OF THE FLINT
RIVER ASTRONOMY CLUB

An Affiliate of the Astronomical League

Vol. 28, No. 1 **January 2024**

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: **Dave and Rosanne Stone**; Facebook Coordinator: **Aaron Calhoun**; Webmaster: **Chelsea Neckel**; Newsletter Editor: **Dawn Chappell**; NASA Contact: **Felix Luciano**

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Club Calendar:

FRAC Meeting:

Thursday, January 11, 2023, 7:30pm at the UGA Gardens in Griffin and on Zoom. Sean Neckel will give a presentation on AL Observing programs and observation tools and techniques.

Public Observing Events:

We have one public event for January. We will meet at Lake Horton on Friday, January 19th at 5:45pm with a weather make-up date a week later on January 26th, also at 5:45pm. The reason for the Friday make-up date is because this event was requested by the Girl Scouts and they really need the event to happen on a Friday.

FRAC Observing Events:

Our monthly Club Observation at Joe Kurz will be on January 12th and 13th. I'm sure everybody who received new Telescopes from Santa will be itching to observe with their new scopes.

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.

President's Message:

Hello FRAC Members,

It is with sadness that I must report that one of our members, Richard Thomas passed away on December 17th, 2023.

Richard had been a member of FRAC for the past 3 years, joining in 2021. In that short time, he had a profound effect on our club and our local astronomy community. Richard was a regular at our public observing events. He volunteered to teach astronomy to high school students at the Foundry Academy in Fayetteville. At the Foundry, Richard taught astronomy, organized observing events, had students build a scale solar system, and guided them through a telescope building project.

Additionally, he worked with students and Liberty Tech in Brooks, giving astronomy presentations and encouraging them to join us at our public observing events at Lake Horton.

So, take a few minutes to reflect on our time with Richard in FRAC, and please keep his wife Christine in your thoughts.

Services for Richard will be held on Friday, January 26th, 2024 at Mowell Funeral Home in Fayetteville. Visitation at 10am and service at 11am.

Sean

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Club Projects:

Globe at Night

This month's campaign is January 2-11, and will use the constellations [Perseus](#), [Pegasus](#), and [Orion](#). Details of the process are here: <https://globeatnight.org/6-steps.php>

This will be the second year we are participating in the Globe at Night project. Keep those observations coming, and help us show the effects of increasing light pollution year to year.

FRAC T-Shirts

More T-shirts are in!! They are \$20 at all FRAC gatherings.

Amateur Astronomy Series by the Kalamazoo Astronomy Society

From Richard Bell, President of KAS:

Greetings, Fellow Astronomy Clubs & Happy New Year!

The Kalamazoo Astronomical Society's five-part Introduction to Amateur Astronomy lecture series begins January 13th at 1:00 pm EST. Over 400 people from around the world have already registered.

We would be very grateful if you could remind your members about this FREE online series that covers all the basics of getting started in our wonderful hobby. Hopefully, it'll encourage your novice members to maintain their membership and stay or become active for years to come! Full details on the series and how to register can be found on the Introduction to Amateur Astronomy web page:

<https://www.kasonline.org/amastro.html>

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December Events:

FRAC Holiday Party- December 14, 2023 - 7:30pm at the UGA Gardens.

19 FRAC members attended our annual potluck holiday party and gift exchange. Sean and Chelsea Neckel, Ray Goodfellow, George Ruff, Alfred McClure, Carlos Flores, Mark and Terri Sutton, Scott Hasson, John Cruickshank, Carmen and Wade Simmons, Nelson and Kathy Stephenson, Mark Grizzaffi, Brent and Denise Summers, and Steve Hyde.

- Many thanks to everyone who brought food, beverage, and utensils. This was the best potluck yet!
- We exchanged many great astronomy gifts.
- Astronomy Pictionary was a fun way to pass out the gifts.

- Carlos Flores raffled off a ton of extra prizes. Thanks Carlos!!

FRAC Observings:

The weekend of December 8th and 9th at Joe Kurz was cloudy.

Public Observing Events:

No public events were scheduled for December.

Welcome New Members!

Ronda Dyer and Steve Hyde joined FRAC in December. Welcome to FRAC!!

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Astronomy Trivia - Astronomy Vocabulary Edition

1. What is the term used to describe when a solar system object is on the opposite side of the Sun from Earth?
2. When a planet is at its furthest distance from the Sun, this is called...
3. What is the orbital plane of the Earth's orbit around the sun called?
4. What is the term used to describe the brightness of an astronomical body as viewed from Earth?
5. When 3 or more gravitationally bound objects align in approximately straight line, what is this called?

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Solar System Observing – January 2024

Mercury is visible low on the horizon in the morning starting around 6am.

Venus is visible from around 5am until dawn.

Earth is best observed during the day, with decreased visibility at night depending on the observer's location.

Mars just passed behind the sun and not easily observable.

Jupiter is visible from about 6pm until 2am.

Saturn is visible around 6pm until 9:30pm.

Uranus is visible in a telescope from 6:45pm until 2am.

Neptune is visible in a telescope starting at 6:45pm until 11:30pm.

Moon: LQ: 1/3 New: 1/11 FQ: 1/17 Full: 1/25

<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

For Sale:

iOptron Skyguider Pro
Williams Optics High Latitude Vixen all metal base
iOptron Tall Tripod with 1.5" legs
Pelican style hard case

Asking \$400.00

Brian Kennedy
770-490-1339



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NGC 253, The Silver Coin Galaxy. Courtesy of Alan Pryor.

"I, Alan Pryor, took this photo of NGC 253 in 2014 with my 11-inch Celestron EdgeHD. This is the brightest galaxy in the constellation of Sculptor. It is quite bright for a galaxy at a magnitude of 7.3 so it should be visible in smaller scopes. It has a tremendous amount of dust clouds in it. It is known by several other names such as the Silver Coin Galaxy, the Sculptor Galaxy or Caldwell 65. The galaxy is thought to be about 11 million light-years away, and it is estimated to have a diameter of about 70,000 light-years. It is also believed that there is a supermassive black hole at the center of the galaxy with a mass that is 5 million times that of our sun.

You need a good southern horizon to see NGC 253. If you locate the 2nd magnitude star, Daphla, in the constellation of Cetus then you are close to the galaxy. Look about 7 degrees south and slightly east of Diphda to find NGC 253. The full size image can be seen at [NGC 253](#)." (without a tripod) from below the dam at Indian Springs State Park. (That's a power transmission line on the right.)"

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Answers:

1. Superior conjunction.
2. Aphelion.
3. The ecliptic plane.
4. Apparent magnitude.
5. Syzygy.

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