

THE FLINT RIVER OBSERVER

NEWSLETTER OF THE FLINT
RIVER ASTRONOMY CLUB

An Affiliate of the Astronomical League

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Presidents Message

What is Astronomy and Where do I go from here?

Astronomy is the scientific study of celestial objects, space, and the universe as a whole. It involves observing and analyzing stars, planets, moons, comets, galaxies, and other celestial phenomena. Astronomers use telescopes and other instruments to gather data and develop theories about the origins, evolution, and properties of these objects. The field of astronomy is divided into various sub-disciplines, including observational astronomy, theoretical astronomy, and astrophysics, each focusing on different aspects of the universe. It's a fascinating field that helps us understand our place in the cosmos and the fundamental workings of the universe.

This a very broad definition of what Astronomy may be so how do I get started if I want to be a hobbyist?

Becoming a hobbyist astronomer is a rewarding and fascinating journey. Here are some steps and tips to get you started:

1. **Books for Astronomy:** Reading is a great way to start. Some recommended books include:
 - o *Back Yard Astronomer's Guide*
 - o *Turn Left at Orion*
 - o *Astronomy, a self-teaching guide*
 - o *Star Mentor* by Daniel Barth
 - o *Night Watch* by Terence Dickinson.
 - o *Books and Pamphlets from the A.L.*
2. **Equipment:** You don't need to start with expensive equipment. Binoculars and small telescopes are great for beginners. The Flint River Astronomy Club encourages members to bring their binoculars and telescopes to meetings.
3. **Join a Club:** Joining an astronomy club can provide you with valuable resources, guidance, and a community of like-minded individuals. The Flint River Astronomy Club, for example, offers public observing events and meetings where you can learn and share experiences.
4. **Observing Events:** Participate in public observing events to gain practical experience. These events are often organized by local astronomy clubs and provide opportunities to observe celestial objects with the help of experienced astronomers.

Additional Tips:

- **Learn the Night Sky:** Familiarize yourself with the constellations and major celestial objects. There are many apps and star charts available to help you navigate the night sky.
- **Stay Curious:** Astronomy is a vast field with endless opportunities for learning. Stay curious and keep exploring new topics and phenomena.
- **Patience and Practice:** Observing celestial objects requires patience and practice. Don't get discouraged if you don't see everything clearly at first.

When I start looking at the sky above and I start see what other astronomers are showing what they can see, I start wondering why I can't produce images like theirs. Well, there is always a learning curve in nearly all things. Just because I have a computer does not mean I can wright code or do deep computer forensics, I

may own a car but that doesn't make me a NASCAR driver. Start small and above all ENJOY. Many people will display their accomplishments in Astronomy and are truly beautiful, but if you think that just by purchasing a telescope you are automatically an expert in the field, you are just fooling yourself and may soon loose that desire to enjoy the hobby. Setback, grab a cup of coffee or hot chocolate and enjoy the experience and don't make yourself believe you must be the very best. Relax, Relax, Relax it's not a race, it's not a competition. If you don't, you will find that you will be looking for another hobby and we will miss your hot cup of coffee and the fellowship.

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Club Calendar:

FRAC Meeting:

Thursday, January 8 2026

Bring your Binoculars & Telescopes

Please continue to check your email and the FRAC Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2002160466558902> for news updates.

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“The stars we are given. The constellations we make. That is to say, stars exist in the cosmos, but **constellations are the imaginary lines we draw between them**, the readings we give the sky, the stories we tell.”

— Rebecca Solnit, [Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscapes for Politics](#)

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“It's lovely to live on a raft. We had the sky up there, all speckled with stars, and we used to lay on our backs and look up at them and discuss about whether they were made or only just happened.”

— Mark Twain

FRAC T-Shirts

FRAC T-shirts are still available! They are \$20 at most FRAC gatherings.

Club dues ---- Please turn in **ASAP** if you have not already done so. \$15 by cash, check or by Venmo to Mark Sutton. Make check out to Flint River Astronomy Club send to Mark’s address or at the meeting, or pay through Venmo@fracmoney24 (search for a business account)

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“Those shining stars, he liked to point out, were one of the special treats for people like us who lived out in the wilderness. Rich city folks, he'd say, lived in fancy apartments, but their air was so polluted they couldn't even see the stars. We'd have to be out of our minds to want to trade places with any of them.”

— Jeannette Walls, [The Glass Castle](#)

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- 4.Rosetta
- 5.Hayabusa2
- 6.New Horizons

“Look at the stars. It won't fix the economy. It won't stop wars. It won't give you flat abs, or even help you figure out your relationship. But it's important. It helps you to remember that you and your problems are both infinitesimally small and conversely, that you are a piece of an amazing and vast universe.”

— Kate Bartolotta

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Members Corner
Clayton Wilson



3I/Atlas on Dec 16th. You are welcome to use this for the newsletter if you wish.

I captured 3I/Atlas at magnitude ~11.7 in Leo, just days before its closest approach to Earth. While racing through the inner solar system at over 137,000 kph, this visitor masks its tiny <6 km nucleus within a sprawling 350,000 km gas cloud—a coma nearly large enough to span the distance between Earth and the Moon. The final result is compiled from 157 individual 60-second exposures taken early on December 16th using a Celestron C8 and ASI294MC camera. The processing was quite challenging, requiring many hours in PixInsight to separately process the stars and the comet before blending them back together.....

IC348
Alan Pryor

IC 348 is a reflection nebula in the constellation of Perseus. It is a good object for January observations.

This bluish nebula contains a star cluster, and it is surrounded by red toned dust clouds of the Milky Way.

It is also a star forming region. It is about 1000 light-years away with an apparent magnitude of 7.3.

This nebula is considered a binocular object probably because of the many magnitude 8.5 stars in the star cluster which may help one see the faint glow, but a 12" scope should reveal more of the glowing

nebulosity especially if a deep sky filter is used.

IC 348 is located about 11 degrees south-southeast of the star Algol which shines with a magnitude of 2.1.

A full-size photo of IC 348 can be found at

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipPHM-e11TX3CD5ZO2Pvjbz4K3xkq-ZTqCWcJXv020FQQatVSzoKchd0d_rMFzSamg/photo/AF1QipMQ4C2TnHNhk1kkGXlwP5r2HafbikhxbHzm-IRi?key=RldwVku0TkZOQkxGa0JvcGNzSDNhcfF5T1VYQXVn



