THE

FLINT RIVER OBSERVER

NEWSLETTER OF THE FLINT RIVER ASTRONOMY CLUB

An Affiliate of the Astronomical League

Vol. 30, No. 6 June 2026

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Club Calendar:
FRAC Meeting:
We will have our club meeting on Thursday, June 11, 2026, 7:30pm at the UGA Gardens in Griffin and on Zoom.

Public Observing Events:
In June, we have one public event. We will be at Indian Springs on Friday, June 5, and in case of clouds we will have a weather make-up date for Saturday, June 6. The event starts at 8:30pm

FRAC Observing Events:
Our club observing weekend at Joe Kurz will be on June 12th and 13th from sunset until whenever.

The gate is now closed, so please be sure to leave the gate as you find it when the last person leaves for the night.

The lock code is 9321.

Please keep checking your email for updates regarding club events.

President's Message:

On March 21st, while studying sunspots and prominences on the sun, I watched as a "bug" crawled across the face of the sun as viewed through the eyepiece. As I got up to remove the culprit from the front of the telescope, I realized it really wasn't a bug. I had unwittingly stumbled on a satellite transit of the sun. In this case it was a Defense Meteorological satellite.

I've had a mere twitch of curiosity about searching for solar and lunar transits, but now I'm on a mission to make it happen. On May 23rd, I watched a piece of space junk transit the sun. My goal now is to see an ISS transit of the sun. Ultimately, I'd like to capture an image of the ISS transit of the sun. Maybe even an ISS transit of the moon.

Join me this month as we discuss the ins and outs of this endeavor!
Clear Skies,

Larry

Vice-President's Ramblings
We are looking for ideas for programs for our meetings. Larry and I cannot (and should not) do it all! If you have a topic you would like to discuss or knowledge you'd like to present, or an idea about a program, a guest speaker, an activity, or just some vague notion of an idea, let's hear it. Send me an email at stneckel@gmail.com and let's figure out how to make it happen.

Sean

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Club Projects:
Our Solar System scale model project is still ongoing.

An email will be sent out soon asking for volunteers for the build event. Once we have volunteers, a Zoom meeting will be held to discuss and plan.

FRAC T-Shirts
FRAC T-shirts are still available! They are $20 at all FRAC gatherings.

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FRAC meeting:

FRAC meeting May 14, 2026, at 7:30pm at the UGA Gardens in Griffin and on Zoom.

14 club members and 2 guests were present at the UGA Garden for the April meeting: Larry Dove, Sean and Chelsea Neckel, Carmen and Wade Simmons, Alfred McClure, Carlos Flores, Tom Moore, George Ruff, Tom Partin, Ben Barker, Dave and Rosanne Stone, and John Cruickshank. 2 guests also joined us, Sam McBrayer and Karen Geraci.

8 club members joined us on Zoom: Alan Pryor, Mark and Terri Sutton, Ann Angelheart, Doyne Tallman, Brent Summers, Wayne White, and Brent Hayslett.

Topics Discussed:

- Volunteers are needed for construction of our Scale Solar System Model at the UGA Research and Education Gardens. An email will be sent out asking for volunteers. A planning meeting for the build event will occur on Zoom at some point.
- Scott Harris, Planetary Geologist at UGA and President of the Atlanta Geological Society joined us at the Garden to update us on his work to identify our local crater, the Roosevelt Impact Structure.

FRAC Observings:
The club held its monthly observing event at Joe Kurz WMA on May 15th and 16th.

Public Observing Events:
In May we had one public event scheduled at Indian Springs State Park that was cancelled due to cloudy skies and rain.

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Solar System Observing June 2026
Mercury is visible starting around 9:00pm in the northwest sky, setting around 10pm**.**
Venus is visible on the western sky about 9:00pm until it sets at 11:15pm**.**
Earth is our made-up word for home. It means 'dirt'.
Mars is just past solar conjunction and is not observable during June.
Jupiter is visible starting at 9:00pm until about 11:30pm**.**
Saturn is just past solar conjunction but is visible starting around 3:30am until dawn.
Uranus is just past solar conjunction and is not observable during June.
Neptune is just past solar conjunction but is visible with a telescope starting around 3am until dawn.
Moon: LQ 6/8 New: 6/14 FQ: 6/21 Full 6/29

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

In the sky, June 2026

This month's highlight will be the conjunction of what are typically the two brightest planets, Venus and Jupiter. Watch the western sky in the hour after sunset, especially around June 7th. For about a week, Venus and Jupiter will hover in the sky about 1° apart. As a reference, the width of a finger held at arm's length is approximately 1°.

Later in the month on the 17th, the crescent moon and Mercury will join the parade. Mercury will be near its easternmost elongation. Make sure to look within an hour of sunset as this planet will set shortly thereafter.

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Classifieds:

For sale QSI583wsg camera for $450. It has a built-in off-axis guide port. A Lodestar guider camera is included. It is monochrome. It has a built-in 5 position filter wheel. Also included is a set of Astrodon filters: Luminance, Red, Green, Blue and Ha. It has a 120V power supply, but it can run off a 12-volt battery too. It will cool the sensor to 35 degrees C below ambient. Contact Alan Pryor at adpryor1953@gmail.com

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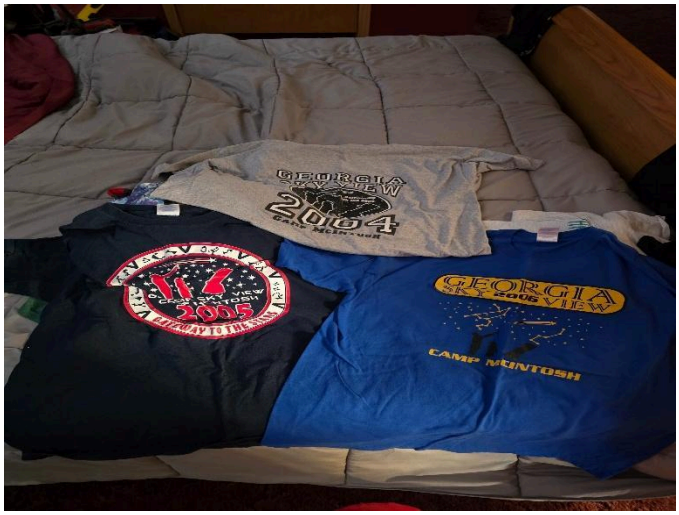
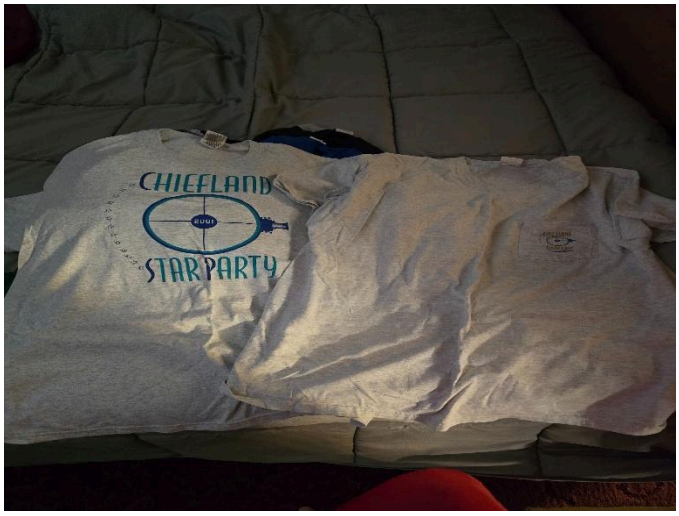
Dawn Chappell has some vintage Star Party t-shirts. 2 gray Chiefland shirts and 3 Georgia Sky View, 2004-2006, all in size XL. If you'd like a piece of recent (relative to the age of the universe) astronomy history, contact Dawn at collegeparkcid@hotmail.com





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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M109 Courtesy of Alan Pryor, Photographed 4/20/26

M109 (NGC 3992) is a barred spiral galaxy in Ursa Major. It is about ½ of a degree southeast of the star Phecda (bottom east-most star of the bowl in the Big Dipper). It has a magnitude of 9.8. 8-inch scopes should reveal the core and the bar, but 16-inch scopes are needed to reveal the spiral arms due to the low surface brightness.

This galaxy is around 60 million light-years away. The spiral arms lie outside of the central bar, and the arms exhibit a lot of blue stars. The galaxy has a diameter of about 100,000 light-years, and it probably has about 1 trillion stars. It has three satellite galaxies, and it is part of the M109 Galaxy Cluster of about 50 galaxies.

A full-sized photo of this galaxy can be seen at M109.

Thor's Helmet (NGC 2359), Courtesy of Eugene Rush

This photograph of Thor's Helmet (NGC 2359) was taken at Sharpsburg, GA on March 14, 2026 using an 8-inch Ritchie Chretien telescope with a ZWO ASI585MC Pro camera and Antila triband filter. The image consists of 20, 180-second and 6, 300-second subs.

Thor's Helmet is an emission nebula located in the constellation Canis Major. The nebula is approximately 11.96 thousand light years away and 30 light-years in size. The central star is the Wolf-Rayet star WR7, an extremely hot star thought to be in a brief pre-supernova stage of evolution. Interactions with a nearby large molecular cloud are thought to have contributed to the more complex shape and curved bow-shock structure of Thor's Helmet.

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