

THE FLINT RIVER OBSERVER

NEWSLETTER OF THE FLINT
RIVER ASTRONOMY CLUB

An Affiliate of the Astronomical League

Vol. 30, No. 8 **August 2026**

Officers: President, Larry Dove.

Vice President, Sean Neckel.

Secretary / ALCOR Terri Sutton.

Treasurer, Mark Sutton.

**Board of Directors: Aaron Calhoun, Bill Evans,
and George Ruff; Program/Observing**

**Coordinator and Social Media Coordinator:
Tom Partin.**

Webmaster: Sean Neckel.

Newsletter Editor: Dawn Chappell.

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Club Calendar:

FRAC Meeting:

We will have our club meeting on Thursday, August 13, 2026, 7:30pm at the UGA Gardens in Griffin and on Zoom.

Alan Pryor will present “It’s A Star’s Life”, and Mark Sutton will take us on a journey through Sagittarius.

Public Observing Events:

In August we have two public events scheduled.

We will be at Indian Springs on Friday, August 14, and in case of clouds we will have a weather make-up date for Saturday, August 15. The event starts at 8:15pm.

On Friday, August 21 we will visit Sprewell Bluff Park in Thomaston, GA for some public stargazing. A make-up date is scheduled for the following evening, if needed. This event also starts at 8:15pm.

FRAC Observing Events:

Our club observing weekend at Joe Kurz will be on August 7th and 8th 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:

It has been a struggle most evenings for any astronomy activity due to the persistent clouds left over from the afternoon thunderstorms. I've been hoping to catch a glimpse of SN2026SQF, the supernova that erupted on July 8th. Concurrently, with a planisphere in hand, I've wanted to get more familiar with the evening constellations. And, thanks to Mark, I hoped to see all he taught us about Scorpio. Ad astra, per aspera! (To the stars through hardships).

Surprisingly, the early morning skies have been friendlier. I've been watching as Comet 10P has gradually brightened. Not visible to the naked eye but I've captured images every few mornings when it's been clear. While the eVscope has been imaging, I've used that time to get familiar with my planisphere and lock down in my brain the most prominent stars and constellations. I may have to invest in a lay-flat lounge chair to alleviate the neck strain from identifying the Great Square of Pegasus which now is near its zenith in the pre-dawn skies.

August 12th will find Twila and I in Iceland. With luck and clear skies, we'll see the total solar eclipse, otherwise it will just get dark under the clouds during the late afternoon. Sunrise in Iceland will be around 5:00, sunset is around 10:00, so not much actual darkness this time of year for stargazing. But we'll keep an eye out for a good solar flare induced aurora if we're awake during the brief nautical twilight.

Clear skies,
Larry

Vice-President's Ramblings

While sitting here after dinner on a Tuesday a thought occurs to me.

I'm doing less work on the newsletter than I ever have, and there's a good reason for that.

We have so many more contributors to the newsletter recently that I spend more time copying emails and pictures than most anything else, and that is AMAZING! I would encourage you to contribute; we're all members of FRAC, and I'm sure many of you have interesting things to share. Interesting observing targets, pictures you've taken, and advice or interesting facts are all welcome. Pictures can be just about anything astronomy adjacent, not just astrophotographs.

So, share. Even if it's about 'bird poop maintenance' (see below).

Sean

From Alan Pryor to all astrophotographers

In the late April update to Windows 11 there were changes to their security policies. In particular, Windows will block device drivers that are not digitally signed by Microsoft. This means that devices that have drivers that are "legacy signed" or "third party signed" may not work on your computer. If you are using an astro-camera or a telescope mount that depends on a laptop (using Windows) to operate, then you may get to the field and find that your device may not work. So, test your equipment with your computer before going out.

It is possible to turn off the security that blocks the devices, but it is difficult to do. Also, a major Windows update may turn the security back on. The best resolution is to get a digitally signed driver from the manufacturer if they have one. If they don't have one, then ask if they plan to develop one.

A Tribute to Felix Luciano, by Alan Pryor

Felix Luciano was a long-time member of FRAC whose dedication and contributions had a lasting impact on the club.

Felix joined the club in the early 2000's, but I am not sure exactly when. He served as the NASA contact for the club starting in 2008, and he kept

members informed of NASA activities and accomplishments. He continued as the NASA contact throughout the remainder of his membership in the club.

He was one of the first club members to practice astrophotography. He regularly contributed his astrophotographs to the monthly newsletter showcasing the beauty of the sky.

He was always willing to help with club activities, including star parties and public outreach events. He was part of the team that started the first public outreach activities at Indian Springs. Whenever there was a clear night for an observing session at Cox Field or Joe Kurz Wildlife Management Area, he was there.

During those nights of astrophotography, he did not leave the site until the last person was packed up and ready to leave. He made sure the last person left safely and was not stranded due to a dead battery or other problem.

He left the club around 2022 after he was diagnosed with a terminal illness, and he decided to move to Puerto Rico to be with his family during those final years.

On July 22, 2026, Felix passed away. His dedication, generosity, and enthusiasm for astronomy left a lasting mark on FRAC and on all who had the privilege of knowing and observing with him. He will be greatly missed.

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Club Projects:

1000 yd. Solar System Update:

Other than bird poop maintenance, it's done!!

Thanks to everybody!!

-George

Well said, George!



14 members joined us at the meeting at the Garden building: Larry and Twila Dove, Sean Neckel, Wade Simmons, Alfred McClure, Carlos Flores, John Cruickshank, Mark and Terri Sutton, Mark Hess, George Ruff, Dave and Rosanne Stone, Ben Barker, and Tom Partin.

4 club members joined us on Zoom: Alan Pryor, Wayne White, Ann Angelheart, and Mark Grizzaffi.

Topics Discussed:

- PhD candidate from Georgia Tech Mason Starr presented and told us about his work and adventures with NASA's Lunar Flashlight mission.
- Mark Sutton gave a short presentation on Scorpius and objects to observe within the constellation.
- It was suggested that Sean contacts Brennan Czock about Alan Pryor's camera.

FRAC Observings:

The club held its monthly observing event at Joe Kurz WMA on Friday, July 10th and Saturday, July 11th.

Clouds covered the skies that weekend, but on July 11th members of FRAC met with the GADNR ranger, Rob Bartlett, to present 2 framed astrophotographs for display at the park office. Alan Pryor's Horsehead Nebula and Carlos Flores' Milky Way, both taken at the Joe Kurz observing field, were presented in appreciation for all that the GADNR and Rob has done for us over the years.

Tom Partin, Carlos Flores, Sean and Chelsea Neckel, George Ruff, John Cruickshank, and Mark and Terri Sutton were there to present the photos.

FRAC T-Shirts

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

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FRAC meeting:

FRAC meeting July 9, 2026, at 7:30pm at the UGA Gardens in Griffin and on Zoom.



Public Observing Events:

In July we had one public event scheduled at Indian Springs State Park, but it was cancelled for clouds and rain.

On Wednesday, July 21, Larry Dove, George Ruff, and Tom Partin participated in an outreach program for Pike County 4-H from 7:30 to 10pm. George did a presentation on the solar system and Larry and George provided the kids with great views of the moon and Venus, despite the weather.



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Solar System Observing August 2026

Mercury is close to the sun and not observable.

Venus is visible in the western sky about 9:00pm until it sets at 10:45pm.

Earth is the only place I get cell service.

Mars is visible starting around 3:20am until dawn.

Jupiter just passed behind the sun and is not observable.

Saturn is visible starting around 1am until dawn.

Uranus is visible through a telescope starting around 2:20am until dawn.

Neptune is also visible through a telescope, starting around 1:15am until dawn.

Moon: LQ 8/5 New: 8/12 FQ: 8/19 Full 8/28

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

In the sky, August 2026

August has several exciting astronomic targets, some visible here and one requiring a bit of travel. First up, on August 12th is a total solar eclipse. It will not be visible in Georgia, but travel northeast of a line stretching from Raleigh, NC. to Chicago, IL. and you'll get at least a partial view. The path of totality stretches from Greenland to Spain.

Closer to home, there is a new supernova! Located on the edge of NGC 3310 in the constellation Ursa Major, this Type II supernova erupted on July 8th. Since Ursa Major is circumpolar you may find it if you can see just southeast of the bottom of the Big Dipper. Evening skies have been too cloudy to catch a glimpse as of this writing...but I've tried!

Even easier to view is Venus. Go out on clear evenings in early August and take a look at the Venus dichotomy. With Venus at her greatest elongation, the Sun, Earth, and Venus create a right triangle. Viewed through a telescope, Venus will appear as a half disc.

Lastly, the Andromeda Galaxy (M31) and the Triangulum Galaxy (M33) are both high in the sky. The Triangulum Galaxy is a face on galaxy and should be good for imaging.

Classifieds:

Ioptron GEM28EC for sale. Like new condition. Comes with 1.75 literoc tripod. Hardly used. Comes in case and all original accessories. \$1700

ASIAir 32GB. Excellent condition. Comes with all original cables. \$150

Contact Brian Kennedy at
briankennedymail@gmail.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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**M92, Courtesy of Alan Pryor
Photographed 6/4/2026**

Messier 92 (NGC 6341) is a globular cluster in the constellation of Hercules. It has a magnitude of 6.3, and it is visible with binoculars and small telescopes. However, some people can see it with their naked eyes under ideal conditions. Larger scopes will reveal the stars in the cluster. It is about 15 degrees west of the bright star Vega.

The cluster is about 27,000 light-years away with a diameter of about 100 light-years. Like most globular clusters it is thought to be among the oldest structures in our galaxy with an estimated age of 10 to 12 billion years. The stars show very small concentrations of elements that are heavier than helium. This characterizes the cluster as one of “low metallicity”. The cluster probably contains over 300,000 stars.

It was surprising that the color of the cluster was aqua-blue. However, the color balance was determined by examining the spectroscopic data of over 100 stars that were captured in the image.

A full-size image of the cluster can be seen at [M-92](#).



The Crescent Nebula, courtesy of Eugene Rush

The Crescent Nebula, NGC6888, Courtesy of Eugene Rush

This photograph of The Crescent Nebula (NGC 6888) was taken at Sharpsburg, GA over three days (August 11, 24 and 25, 2024) using a Sharpstar 94EDPH refractor with a ZWO ASI 585 MC Pro camera and Svbnony SV-220 dual-band filter. The image consists of 110, 3-minute and 5, 5-minute subs.

The Crescent Nebula is an emission nebula located in the Constellation Cygnus. The nebula is approximately 5,000 light-years away. It is formed by the fast stellar wind from the Wolf-Rayet star WR 136 colliding with and energizing the slower moving wind ejected by the star when it became a red giant around 250,000 years ago. The result of the collision is a shell and two shock waves, one moving outward and one moving inward. The inward moving shock wave heats the stellar wind to X-ray-emitting temperatures.

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