

The Flint River Observer

Newsletter of the Flint River Astronomy Club

June 2005

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Officers: President, **Steve Knight:** sdknight@flintriverastronomy.org Vice President, **Steven (Smitty) Smith:** Saratoga@flintriverastronomy.org; Secretary, **Doug Maxwell:** doug@flintriverastronomy.org ; Treasurer, **Dawn Knight:** sdknight@flintriverastronomy.org; Board of Directors: **David Ward:** dward@flintriverastronomy.org; **John Wallace:** JWCOSMOS@att.net; and **Scott Hammonds:** Scott@creatorsview.com; Public Observing Liaison, **Felix Luciano:** montb02@yahoo.com; **David Ward** webmaster (see above); Librarian, **Curt Cole:** 24e29d55c@speedfactory.net; Event Photographer, **Doug Maxwell** (see above). Club mailing address: 114 Central Lake Cir. Griffin, GA 30223. Web page: www.flintriverastronomy.org, discussion group at FRAC@yahoogroups.com.

Please notify **Dawn Knight** if you have a change of address, telephone number and or new e-mail address.

Club Calendar: Fri.–Sat., June 3-4: Cox Field Observing, **Thurs., June 9:** 4-H Club Reward Camp out 34 Caldwell Road, Griffin, GA. There will be some 31 to 35 students and adults, **Thurs., June 16:** Club Meeting 7:00 – 8:45 Griffin Library **Fri.–Sat., June 24-25:** Cox Field Observing

Membership Renewals: All renewals are now due in February.

President's Message: Well, it seems that we had another successful GSV this year. By the end of the weekend, the only problem we had was the lack of hot water in the dorm the first day (A million thanks to Doug for getting that fixed.) and we were able to put a little coin in the bank account. Not a lot, but that wasn't the goal this year. Since we got off to a late start, attendance was down. It being Mother's day weekend didn't help much either, but it was the only weekend in the time frame. But we managed to keep the GSV name going, and that's what mattered this year. Next year promises to be better since we have more planning time, more hands on experience, and maybe a little more word of mouth advertising. The dates for next years GSV are April 20-23, yes it's a three day event, and we're capping it at 125 people, which is the max level attendance set for the GSV. I would like to have volunteers step forward for a planning committee so that new ideas can be put into place and keep things fresh. Thank your Mothers for letting me borrow you for most of the weekend, and last, but not least, all I can say is thank you. Thanks for all the help at the site, during planning, and all the support that you've given me recently.

Georgia Sky View 2005: What can we say about our club's second Star Party: **ANOTHER HUGE SUCCESS.** The park was made available after being determined that it was going to be closed for renovations. Steve and Dawn took it upon themselves to locate an alternate site to hold the GSV 2005 Star Party. They ran into dead ends and locations that were out of our financial reach. However, Indian Springs State Park informed them the planned renovations were put on hold until further notice and that the park was once again available for the club to hold its star party. Great news! Steve and Dawn started the process of sending out notices, emails and reaching out to points of contact to inform all that FRAC was moving forward with GSV 2005. Steve and a group of club volunteers made the field ready, folks started to arrive and they were asked to stop by the registration building where Dawn was running check in and issuing out registration packages. After that it was a short drive out to the observing field to park and set up for the event. The weather cooperated and Friday evening we were treated to some clear skies and a cool evening; a not too hot Saturday and again another clear and cool Saturday evening. David and family were (once again) providing the late evening snacks. That has become a GSV "unique trademark" at our star parties and we hope they/we can continue making it available to those attending our parties. I think I heard Steve saying that we have the dates for GSV 2006 (see club meeting notes below). Outstanding! Also many thanks to all those that helped either by supporting the party or helping with the set up and clean up of the site or both. Thanks to all.

Last Month's Meeting Highlights:

The meeting was held Thursday, May 12, at 7:00 PM at the Griffin Library. Present for that meeting were Steve Knight, Matt McEwen, Steven "Smitty" Smith, Doug Maxwell, Irene and Curt Cole, Dan Newcombe, Chuck Sims and Felix Luciano.

Steve did a lessons-learned session and a comments meeting of the once again, successful GSV 2005. He asked for any comments, suggestions and or ideas for next years Star Party.

Meeting highlights – in no particular order - were as follows: The snacks and late night biscuits were a huge success. Hot Cocoa was a welcome beverage for folks that were not coffee drinkers. The club had some \$2,000.00 worth of door prizes donated. Steve asked for ideas on what other snacks to have available next year. Also discussed was the possibility of having a catering service come in to provide food on two days. We discussed the possibility of using the kitchen to cook a chili dinner. The park staff commended the club for maintaining the field and keeping the facilities clean. **Next year's Star Party is scheduled for April 20 – 23, 2006 (park is reserved).** So mark your calendars, plus the club is going to need your assistance in getting the field ready for the star party and the exit clean up. Steve asked for the possibility to have a star party "Swap meet" that Friday PM and maybe one guest speaker later on. Steve will look into having NASA send a representative to be a guest speaker at GSV 2006. Also, to have club members do some sort of Astro talk as part of the presentations.

Steve is going to contact state clubs directly to let those members know about GSV 2006. We would like to see a greater participation of state astronomy club(s) members at our GSV.

Honorary Memberships - Dr. Richard Schmude, Art Zorka and Phil Sacco.

Also recommended was to have a group photo after the last speaker (GSV 2006). Steve also talked about having an online form for folks to fill out, print and mail in. Also discussed was the possibility of having a PayPal account set up for registrants to complete and pay online.

Sky highlights for the month of June: Venus is slowly getting higher and into easier view (look to the west, northwest). To the upper left of Venus is Saturn, which is fast approaching the western horizon. From June 24 to June 27, shortly after sundown, as you gaze to your western skies, you should be able to see Saturn, Venus and Mercury in close formation. A pair of binoculars should frame those planets nicely. Jupiter is high in the skies and it promises to be quite a sight. Hopefully we will get to see a lot of GRS Transits and all sort of activity with its Moons. The summer star Vega is already making an appearance in the eastern skies. It will be the brightest point of light as you look towards your east. Soon the "summer triangle" (or "lover's triangle" as some may know it) grouping should be nicely placed in our skies.

Talking about summer, June 21 is the official start of summer. Suntan lotion, bug repellent and a good hat should be parts of your stargazing equipment by now. Just don't rub either on your

eyepieces and or any other highly sensitive glass.

Notes From the Eyepiece Case:

Changes have been happening quickly in the astro equipment world recently with many of the major players. After founding Orion Telescope & Binoculars and operating it for a few decades, Tim Giesler has sold the company. And Larry Hardin, owner of Hardin Optical, has decided to stop retailing scopes and accessories and concentrate on their custom optical manufacturing business.

If you don't already know, most all of the small to medium Dobsonian telescopes (4"-12") are made in Taiwan by 2 manufacturers, Synta or Guan Sheng (GS). The optics of the GS dobs are considered slightly better than Synta's by many experienced amateurs, though Synta's are thought to be quite good. The Hardin Dobs (which will soon be unavailable) are from GS. Orion's and just about everybody else's are from Synta. Also, just recently Synta purchased Celestron and they are no longer American owned. Is this a bad thing? Maybe, maybe not. Over the years, Celestron had slowly lost some of their market and no longer had the capital to compete head to head with Meade, their major competitor.

Now I don't want to throw a wildcard into your thoughts about all of these changes but Synta now has an address in mainland China also. Can this mean that we might see a degradation of the quality of Synta's optics because some will be manufactured in China? We will just have to wait and see.

Saratoga Smitty

June

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
			1	2	3 Cox Field Observing	4 Cox Field Observing
5	6 New Moon	7	8	9 4-H Club Public Observing	10	11
12	13	14	15	16 Club Meeting 7:00 – 8:45, Griffin Library	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24 Cox Field Observing Saturn, Venus and Mercury close by (western skies)	25 Cox Field Observing
26	27	28	29	30		