

March 2024

Meetings at Highland Road Park Observatory and online through YouTube and Jitsi

<https://meet.jit.si/brasmeet>

March 2024 Calendar:

- 8 March: 7PM—BRAS Winter Star Party at HRPO
- 9 March: 9AM—Rockin' at the Swamp
- 11 March: 7PM—General Meeting
- 12 March: 6PM—Glasgow Middle
- 14 March: 6PM—Ascencion Parish Library, Gonzales
- 19 March: 6PM—Perkins Rowe
- 23 March: 9:30AM—LASM Astronomy Day
- 28 March: 7PM—Business Meeting
- 6 April: Zippity Zoo Fest
- 8 April: Eclipse Parties

Index:

Vice-President's Message—1
Outreach Report—2
Secretary's Report—6
Observatory Notes—8
Looking Up—10
Sky Map—14
Quickpicks—15
Contact Info—16

Vice-President's Message

Hi Everyone,

Another big thank you to Chris and Annette Raby for their presentation last month. I hated to miss it, but I heard from several members that it was a fun time.

I was working on coming up with a program for March and it was suggested we do something about the upcoming eclipse. My first thought was, "We just did a meeting about an eclipse not that long ago", but then I realized that was prior to the 2017 eclipse and was almost 7 years ago! (We talked about the annular eclipse in October, but didn't do a program about it.)

So, with hopes that some of our newer (and older) members could get some good info, our program for the March meeting will be regarding the upcoming Solar Eclipse. After the formal presentation, we'll open up the floor to the members to add their tidbits of knowledge and tips. It should be fun and informative!

Finally, our President, Don, is dealing with some family matters out of town and was not able to write up a Message for this month's newsletter. Our only pressing matter is the fact that the BRAS Business meeting (Thursday, February 29th) will be cancelled for this month. It is in conflict with our annual outreach at Westdale Heights and there just weren't any good options for a reschedule.

In discussion via email, we have reiterated our need to work on cleaning/clearing out the BRAS closet at the HRPO. A large part of that will be rehoming several of the telescopes that we've acquired over the years via donations. With that in mind, we WILL be choosing a couple to offer up as \$5 raffle prizes starting at the March meeting. The raffle will be held over until the April meeting (at least) and you will NOT need to be present to win. This should give us a good idea of the club's interest in these scopes as anything other than dust collectors.

I hope you have a great month and hope to see you at the March meeting!

Clear Skies,

Ben Toman

Vice-President

Outreach Chairperson

Outreach Report

Hi Everyone,

You've already received a couple emails from me within the last couple of weeks so you know how busy things are getting. It's that time of year! Be sure to look below and let me know what you can help out with if you'd like to get into doing some fun outreach with us.

A new request, and it's a long shot...the West Baton Rouge Library is planning an event to watch the Eclipse on April 8th and they've asked if we'd be interested in helping out. I've explained our situation, but said I'd at least ask. So, if you're going to be in town and you won't be volunteering at the HRPO AND you like to help them out with some eclipse viewing...let me know as soon as you can!

A big thank you to Chris R., Scott C., Roz R., Troy B., Coy W. and Ben T. for their assistance with the latest outreach events. (Ascension Library, Perkins Rowe and MSA West Academy)

We're off and running going into March and still have one more outreach event to do in February (See below). Our February events have been great and we met a lot of enthusiastic people. It's always so much fun watching people experience looking through a telescope for the first time!

There's no better time to start doing some volunteering with the club. As you can see, we have plenty of opportunities and all of these are repeat events which are always a good time. I hope you'll come join us for some!

Clear Skies,

Ben Toman

Upcoming Events

Thursday, February 29th

5:30pm-7:30pm

Westdale Heights Academic Middle School STEAM Night

(A few people needed for demos and possible telescope observing)

Tuesday, March 5th

5:30pm-8pm

Oak Grove Primary STEM Night

Demos and Table

Saturday, March 9th

9am-4pm

Rockin' At The Swamp (Bluebonnet Swamp and Nature Center)

Demos, info and Telescope

(Several people needed for shifts throughout the day)

Tuesday, March 12th

6pm-7:30pm

Glasgow Middle School Carnival of Learning

Telescope viewing/Demos (Request for focus on Mars)

Thursday, March 14th

8pm-9:30pm

Sidewalk Astronomy Ascension Parish Library Gonzales Branch

Tuesday, March 19th

6pm-9pm

Sidewalk Astronomy at Perkins Rowe

Saturday, March 23rd

9:45am-2pm

Louisiana Art and Science Museum Astronomy Day

(Several people needed for demos, info and possible solar observing)

They said lunch will be provided!

Saturday, April 6th

9:30am-5pm

Zippity ZooFest (Baton Rouge Zoo)

Demos/Solar Observing

(Several people needed for shifts throughout the day.)

PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF YOU CAN HELP OUT WITH THIS ASAP.

If we cannot get coverage, we may have to miss this year.

Monday, April 8th

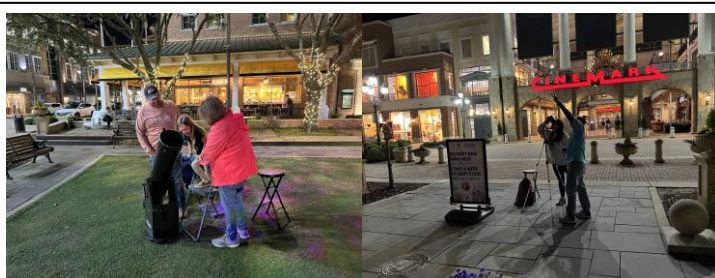
12pm-?

West Baton Rouge Library Eclipse Watching Party

(Possible telescope/other viewing of the eclipse)



Roz R. (top) wo-mans the table at MSA West while Chris R. (bottom) shows students the last few rays of the setting sun.



BRAS members Roz R., Coy W., Chris R., Ben T., Scott C., and Troy B. show off celestial wonders (or stare at their phones) during this month's Perkins Rowe Sidewalk Astronomy event.

Secretary's report of past meeting

- It was announced that since it's Mardi Gras, Ben is skipping the meeting to work the Balls—Hail Rex!
- Don is asking for volunteers for the Zippity Zoo Fest. The event takes place the weekend of the eclipse and a lot of people will be out of town. If we can't find enough people, we may have to decline the offer.
- Rockin' at the Swamp is coming up and we're still looking for people to man shifts throughout the day.
- It was announced that the April meeting has been moved to the third Monday in April (15 April) due to travel issues.
- AL awards were presented.
- A thank you letter we received for hosting Alcon was read.
- Mike is offering to sell his Oberwerk 100 ED binoculars to a club member for a generous discount to club members before posting them online.
- The evenings speakers, Chris and Annette Raby were introduced.
- Club members enjoyed a wonderful presentation on rock collecting and crafting.
- A raffle was held.
- Members were invited to set up equipment and stargaze until we lost energy.



Left, Chris and Annette Raby exhibiting some of their fluorescent rocks. Right, Sharon and Catherine Rouchon showing off and selling some of their artwork.

Secretary's report of Business meeting

The monthly business meeting was cancelled due to a schedule conflict with one of our favorite School Stem nights. Regular business was conducted by correspondence.

- We need to establish a day to set up and test the new AV equipment. Ben is in the process of familiarizing himself with the equipment. In the future, we hope to streamline the online broadcast of the club meetings so that we're only using Youtube, allowing interaction through chat only.
- The BRAS space at HRPO is in dire need of curation. It was decided we need to take a time to thoroughly go through the contents and choose what needs to go before handing over to a club custodian.
- We have decided we are going to try to raffle off a few of the older scopes in the closet for a long period raffle. Time and scope still under discussion.
- HRPO is looking at new policies for volunteers. If you are currently or are interested in volunteering at HRPO, please contact Chris Kersey.

Observatory Notes

FRIDAY NIGHT LECTURE SERIES

7:30pm / for ages fourteen and older / no admission fee

1 March = “Apollo 9 Fifty-Fifth Anniversary” The lunar successes continued as McDivitt, Schweickart and Scott performed the first command module-to-lunar module docking in space! Former HRPO Center Supervisor Tom Northrop recounts the thrilling challenge and the exploits of that brave crew.

15 March = “Wonders of the Spring Sky” BREC Education Curator Amy Northrop will take the audience on a fascinating tour of Baton Rouge’s upcoming spring season. She’ll highlight the celestial gems that will sparkle throughout those three months—gems visitors will be able to see live if they continue to visit HRPO!

22 March = “The Visible Passes” Since 1958 defunct satellites, rocket bodies, active payloads and space stations have peppered the views of those with little to no light pollution and/or magnification devices. How can you see these manmade objects. Do they cause problems for glamour shots of space or active scientific data gathering?

EVENING SKY VIEWING

for ages six and older / no admission fee

Fridays (1, 15 and 22 March from 8:30pm to 10pm)

Saturdays (2, 9, 23 and 30 March) from 7:30pm to 10pm

HRPO houses a 50-cm reflector, a 40-cm reflector and several smaller telescopes to bring the majesty of the night sky to the public. Trained operators, sharing duties via a rotating roster, work throughout the year in shifts. Each operator has a pre-planned list of objects to highlight. However, requests will be taken if there is time and if all present have viewed the previous target.

SCIENCE ACADEMY

Saturdays from 10am to 12pm.

for Cadets aged eight to twelve / \$5 per Cadet per week (\$6 if out-of-parish)

walk-ins welcome, but advanced registration via WebTrac strongly recommended

[activity #531990] / parents may stay with or leave Cadet

Four Cadet minimum and sixteen Cadets maximum per session.

2 March = “Otherwordly Volcanoes”

9 March = “Galaxies”

16 March = “Rocks and Minerals”

23 March = “Constellations”

THE EDGE OF NIGHT (winter session)

Friday 8 March from 5:30pm to 7:30pm

for ages six and older / no admission fee / binocular strongly recommended

It's not light, it's not dark. It's that special time called twilight, and HRPO wants to introduce you to it! Are all sections of the sky the same shade of blue? Which stars are seen first? Are Mercury and Venus or the Moon out? Is that moving object a plane, a satellite or space debris? How much actual darkness should I expect in a light-polluted city when twilight has passed? There is no other time like twilight. Bring it into your life!

PLUS NIGHT: "Pi in the Sky"

Saturday 16 March from 7pm to 10pm

for ages six and older / no admission fee / binocular recommended

During Plus Nights and extra features are available to the public...

- *The well-known marshmallow roast takes place at the campfire ring (weather-dependent).
- *Six to eight of HRPO's collection of over fifty physical science demonstrations will be on hand to perplex and amaze. Which demos will it be?
- *An unaided eye sky tour takes place, showing the public major features of the sky for that month.
- *Filters are inserted into the viewing mechanisms, to show patrons "hidden" details of the Moon, Mars and Jupiter (when they are available).
- *Reveal your age, and be shown any "birth stars" in the sky at that time.

MERCURIAN ELONGATION

Sunday 24 March from 7pm to 8:30pm

for ages six and older / no admission fee

Periodically Mercury reaches its greatest angular separation in the sky (elongation) from the Sun. This is the safest way to view Mercury by amateurs. Come join us at the Burbank Soccer Complex! The planet will appear as a "half-Mercury". The Full Moon and Jupiter will also be seen.

SOLAR VIEWING

Saturday 30 March from 12pm to 2pm

for ages six and older / no admission fee

Weather permitting, viewing of the Sun's image in three different manners—transferred onto a white surface, directly with safely-filtered optical light, and directly in safely-filtered hydrogen-alpha wavelength—will take place for two hours. Protective clothing and sunscreen are recommended.

STEM EXPANSION: "Chemistry"

Saturday 30 March from 3:30pm to 7:30pm

for ages twelve to sixteen. / \$15 each per in-parish registrant; \$18 each per out-of-parish registrant. Advanced registration via WebTrac required [activity #531993].

This program offers advanced topics, topic extensions and all-new games and activities to an older crowd. Certificates will be earned, and a section of archived experiments, some not seen in over fifteen years (and some *never* performed on site) take place. There are also giveaways and door prizes.

Looking up



Constant Companions: Circumpolar Constellations, Part II

By Kat Troche

As the seasons shift from Winter to Spring, heralding in the promise of warmer weather here in the northern hemisphere, our circumpolar constellations remain the same. Depending on your latitude, you will be able to see up to nine circumpolar constellations. This month, we'll focus on: **Lynx, Camelopardalis, and Perseus**. The objects within these constellations can all be spotted with a pair of binoculars or a small to medium-sized telescope, depending on your [Bortle scale](#) – the darkness of your night skies.

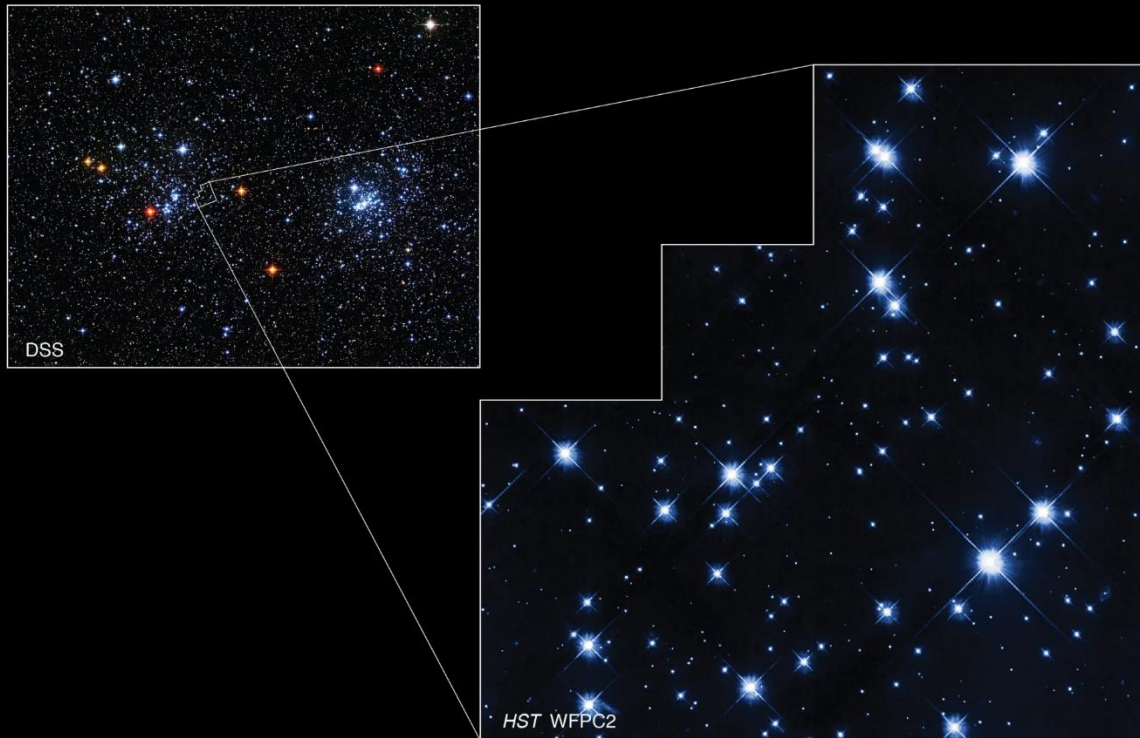


In the appearance of left to right: constellations Perseus, Camelopardalis, and Lynx in the night sky. Also featured: Cassiopeia as a guide constellation, and Capella as a guide star.

Credit: Stellarium Web

- **Double Stars:** The area that comprises the constellation Lynx is famous for its multiple star systems, all of which can be separated with a telescope under dark skies. Some of the notable stars in Lynx are the following:
 - **12 Lyncis** – a triple star that can be resolved with a medium-sized telescope.
 - **10 Ursae Majoris** – a double star that was once a part of Ursa Major.
 - **38 Lyncis** – a double star that is described as blue-white and lilac.
- **Kemble's Cascade:** This [asterism](#) located in Camelopardalis, has over 20 stars, ranging in visible magnitude (brightness) and temperature. The stars give the appearance of flowing in a straight line leading to the Jolly Roger Cluster (NGC 1502). On the opposite side of this constellation, you find the asterism **Kemble's Kite**. All three objects can be spotted with a pair of binoculars or a telescope and require moderate dark skies.

DOUBLE CLUSTER IN PERSEUS



A ground-based image from the Digitized Sky Survey (DSS) in the upper left shows Caldwell 14, the Double Cluster in Perseus, with an outline of the region imaged by Hubble's Wide Field and Planetary Camera 2 (WFPC2).

Ground-based image: Digitized Sky Survey (DSS); Hubble image: NASA, ESA, and S. Casertano (Space Telescope Science Institute); Processing: Gladys Kober (NASA/Catholic University of America)

- **Double Cluster:** The constellation Perseus contains the beautiful Double Cluster, two open star clusters (NGC 869 and 884) approximately 7,500 light-years from Earth. This object can be spotted with a small telescope or binoculars and is photographed by amateur and professional photographers alike. It can even be

seen with the naked eye in very dark skies. Also in Perseus lies **Algol, the Demon Star**. Algol is a triple-star system that contains an eclipsing binary, meaning two of its three stars constantly orbit each other. Because of this orbit, you can watch the brightness dim every two days, 20 hours, 49 minutes – for 10-hour periods at a time. For a visual representation of this, revisit [NASA's What's Up: November 2019](#).

Sky Map



Map Centered on 10PM, CDT on 15 March 2024 over Baton Rouge, LA

For an interactive sky map, go to <https://in-the-sky.org>

Quick Picks—Events for February 2024

- Sun 3 Antares 0.4°S of [Moon](#)
- Sun 3 [Last Quarter Moon](#)
- Thu 7 [Mars](#) 3.5°N of [Moon](#)
- Fri 8 [Venus](#) 3.3°N of [Moon](#)
- Sun 10 [Moon](#) Perigee at 0 km.
- Sun 10 [New Moon](#)
- Wed 13 [Jupiter](#) 3.6°S of [Moon](#)
- Thu 14 Pleiades 0.4°N of [Moon](#)
- Sat 16 [First Quarter Moon](#)
- Sun 17 [Neptune](#) in Conjunction with the Sun
- Sun 17 [Mercury](#) at Perihelion
- Tue 19 Pollux 1.5°N of [Moon](#)
- Tue 19 [Venus](#) at Aphelion
- Tue 19 Vernal Equinox
- Wed 20 Beehive 3.5°S of [Moon](#)
- Thu 21 Regulus 3.6°S of [Moon](#)
- Sat 23 [Moon](#) Apogee at 0 km.
- Sun 24 [Mercury](#) at Greatest Eastern Elongation - 18.70°
- Mon 25 [Full Moon](#)
- Mon 25 Penumbral Lunar Eclipse - Mag: 0.956
- Tue 26 Spica 1.4°S of [Moon](#)
- Sat 30 Antares 0.3°S of [Moon](#)

Events courtesy of Telescopius.com

Contact Information

President-----Don Weinell president.braastro@gmail.com

Vice-President-----Ben Toman vice-president.braastro@gmail.com

Secretary-----Scott Cadwallader secretary.braastro@gmail.com

Treasurer-----Trey Anding treasurer.braastro@gmail.com

Web: <http://www.braastro.org>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCS3Xkk1t7C9lRnB8GKrt9MQ>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Baton-Rouge-Astronomical-Society-122591151112271/>

Reddit: <https://www.reddit.com/r/BRAstro/>

Highland Road Park Observatory

13800 Highland Road

Baton Rouge, LA 70810

(225)-768-9948 // observatory@brec.org

