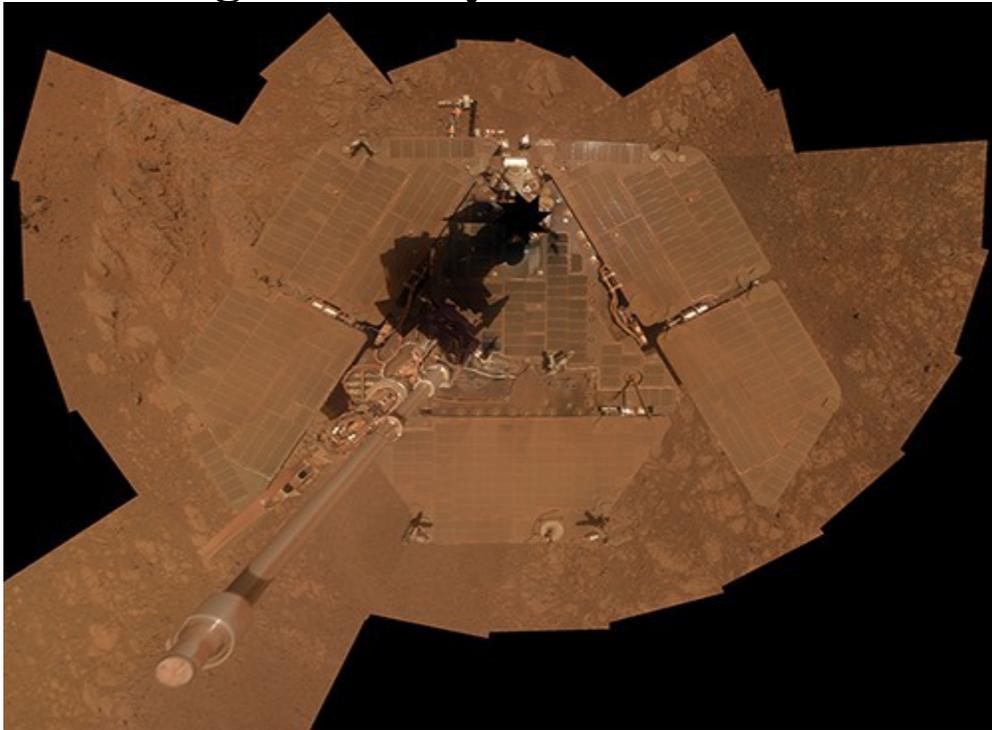


Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Astronomical Society



**February, 2014**  
**Next Meeting February 10<sup>th</sup> 7PM at the HRPO**



**Self Portrait of Mars Rover Opportunity: 10 years and still going!**

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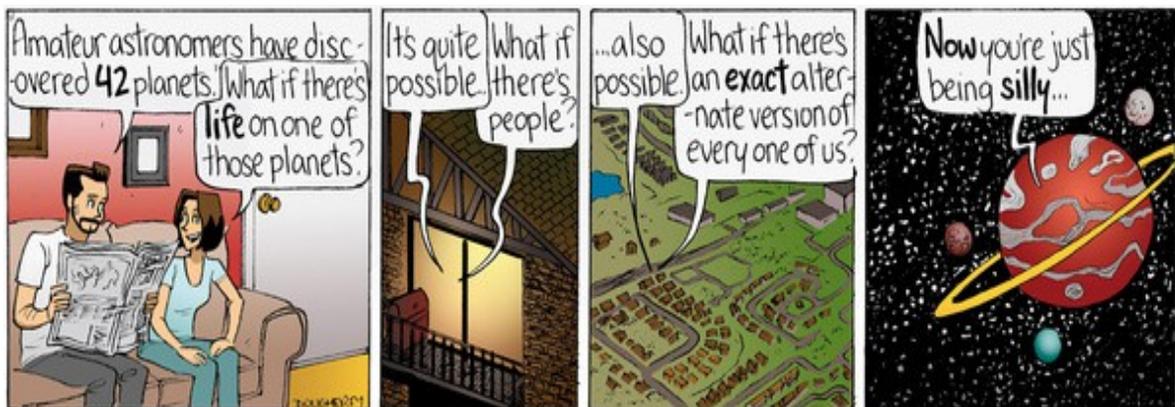
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# President's Message

Well, the Nordic ice giants have moved into the state and have settled in for a while. By the time you get this we will have gone through at least two episodes of wet icy sub-freezing weather fronts. We sorry Louisianans just are not used to this stuff.

Thankfully, the skies are crystal clear afterwards. They aren't always the best for planetary work, with the high atmospheric turbulence that often follows a front, but it is a good time for deep sky work. The skies provide a much higher contrast that allows us to see those fine low-contrast details that are often so hard to pull out in these climes.

There is a supernova visible in the edge-on galaxy M82, in Ursa Major. As I write this, it is visible in scopes around 8 inches aperture and up, and easily photographed. Be sure to take a look. It is not every day we get a supernova so bright.

During our last meeting, we took a vote on what item we BRAS members would like most as our next big ticket raffle prize. The Coronado PST won. They are much more affordable now, sometimes selling for as little as \$650. We are shopping around for the best deal now. We will not have it for the next meeting but hopefully we will by the March meeting. At that price, it will probably take a few months to sell enough tickets to cover our costs, so you will have plenty of time for nail-biting.

Be sure to come to our next BRAS meeting. Usual time, 7 PM at the Observatory. That is, if we don't have another "ice storm" that night.

Clear skies,

Merrill Hess  
President

# Vice-President's Message

Hello Everyone,

I hope that everyone that was present in last months meeting had a great time and really learned a bunch from our speaker. Its really interesting what one can achieve in backyard astro photography. If you have not already, I recommend everyone to join the telescope addicts facebook club. I would like to see us posting and entering some of the challenges and monthly competitions.

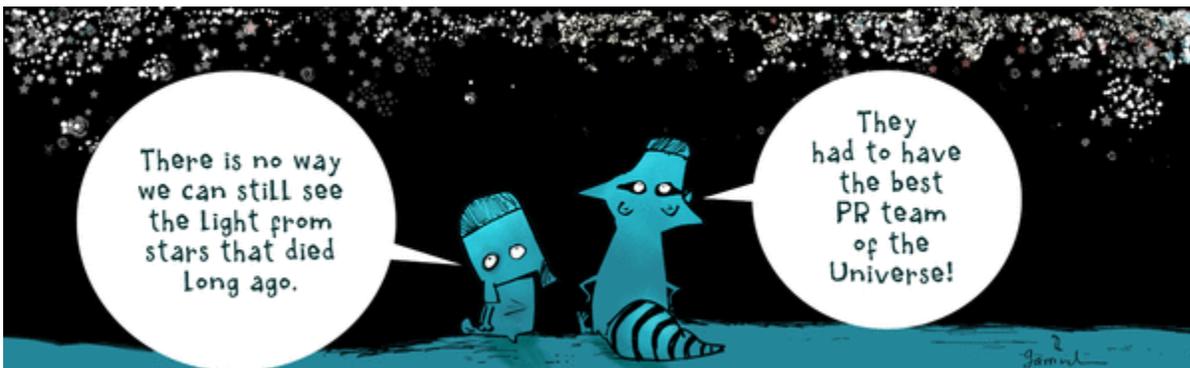
This months guest speaker is one of our own BRAS members William Buck who happens to be an avid amateur astronomer. In the past he's given talks on his past visits to dark skies out west and his adventures in spectroscopy. He recently visited Kitt Peak Observatory, the Mt. Lemmon Sky Center, and the San Pedro Valley Observatory. He also visited the mirror lab at Arizona State University where he saw the 28' mirror being finished for the LSST to be installed in Chile. (Large Synoptic Survey Telescope).

We might also show off some of our astro photography session outputs, even though the clouds and the weather has been horrible this month except for a small fraction of the time.

If you have not paid member dues, it would also be a good time to take care of that. I am sure that Trey can take care of that in the February meeting. I look forward to seeing you all there.

Regards,  
Murali Chakravarthi

BRAS VP



# Secretary's Summary

- Since there were a few new faces in the group, we went around the room with the introductions.
- Trevor gave his report on outreach. Chris mentioned that Tonya Dixon of BREC had asked him if BRAS would show up at the grand opening of the Grand Pavilion on Saturday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, from 2:00 pm to 6:00 pm. Trevor mentioned that Sidewalk Astronomy at the Art Market (Main St. Market, downtown) is also being held that day from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm. The volunteer listserv is up and running now; those who are interested in volunteering need to get Trevor or Fred to add their email address to this as it will help with informing those interested about upcoming opportunities. There are two more Tuesday night events on February 4<sup>th</sup> and March 4<sup>th</sup> for sidewalk astronomy at the Jones Creek Library; the previous week's event was on January 7<sup>th</sup> with 20 brave souls facing the cold to observe the night sky.
- This is "dues month"; if you haven't paid dues yet for this year, please talk to Trey (treasurer).
- Craig mentioned that he had gone through the box that holds the raffle prizes for BRAS and noticed that the supply was low. They are soliciting raffle prizes from anyone who wants to donate something in the \$10 and under price range; suggestions are books, flash drives, and the like.
- Merrill introduced the speaker for the evening, Ahmed Jaber, from Chalmette. He had a slide presentation about his experiences getting into astronomy and astrophotography. He also talked about his website at Telescope Addicts.
- Merrill announced that John Stiles with Optical Guidance Systems was upstairs working on the 20-inch telescope installing a new instrument cluster.
- Chris mentioned that the BREC newsletter Park Bench had talked about a series of meetings coming up concerning the new tax that they are going to try to get passed. This will be used to focus on the special facilities in the park system like the observatory. The strategic plan for this is titled Imagine Your Parks 2: Better Parks/Better Living. There are supposed to be 30 – 40 public meetings held at various parks in the parish for input. Chris was suggesting that these would be good opportunities to show up and discuss good lighting for dark skies. The kickoff event is this Thursday, January 16<sup>th</sup>, at 6 pm at Independence Park.
- Chris announced Roslyn Readinger as the winner of the Frank Conrad Memorial Volunteer of the Year Award.
- Future "big-ticket" raffle prizes were discussed. These included a DSLR camera, image-stabilizing binoculars, and a Coronado PST. The club is looking for any and all good ideas regarding this.
- A raffle was held, and the meeting adjourned.

# HRPO

## FRIDAY NIGHT LECTURE SERIES

*all start at 7:30pm*

24 January: “An Introduction to Jupiter”

31 January: “Volcanoes!”

7 February: “The Asteroid Grand Initiative”

## CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

\*Saturday, 8 February from 3pm to 7pm. *Eight or nine volunteers.* **Learn Your Binocular.** Instructing registrants in the use of their personal binoculars. Previous binocular knowledge required.

\*Saturday, 15 February from 6pm to 10pm. *Two volunteers in addition to regular BRAS compliment.* **Evening Sky Viewing Plus.** Marshmallow roast, demonstration tables; small telescope; setup and takedown. Easy; training provided.

\*8pm on Monday, 14 April to 4am on Tuesday, 15 April. *Six volunteers needed for two- to three-hour shifts.* **Mars’ Closest Approach/Total Lunar Eclipse.** That’s right—HRPO will be open all night long! We need BRAS to assist not only with a couple of telescopes, but also with enforcing the on-site policies to keep all patrons safe.

\*Saturday, 10 May from 3pm to 11pm. *Eleven to fourteen volunteers; two- to four-hour shifts.* **International Astronomy Day.** Staffing of front desk, children’s rides, raffle ticket “booth”; operating telescopes. All needed training given.

## CONCERNING THE NEW 20OGS OPERATING EQUIPMENT

LSU P&A and Optical Guidance Systems have finished the overhaul of the 20OGS. The system now has new computers, new connection cables, new motors for the RA and Dec gears, and new contacts for the dome (among other components). The 20OGS operators are at this time receiving training from Professor Guzik, who I am sure will compose the start-up and shut-down checklists soon.

## LEARN YOUR SKY COURSE

Saturday 1 February from 3pm to 7pm

\$15 per in-parish registrant; \$18 per out-of-parish registrant

HRPO is hosting a brand-new, hands-on introduction to the unaided-eye Baton Rouge sky. Included will be an overview of all major sky events for the next twelve months. If any BRAS members know friends who might be interested, by all means let them know. All attendees must be over eighteen; children are not allowed. Once again, this one-day course focuses specifically on the *unaided-eye Baton Rouge sky*.

Topics covered will include...

\*major stars and constellations in Baton Rouge

\*major lunar features and how to find them

\*basic skygazing terminology

\*how to distinguish planets from stars

\*what meteors are, and how to see them

\*major unaided-eye features of our Milky Way Galaxy

\*solar viewing safety, and how to view the Sun without store-bought equipment

\*how to help in the eradication of light pollution

\*upcoming unaided-eye events (including eclipses and conjunctions)

\*benefits of belonging to an astronomy club

Online registration is available at <https://webtrac.brec.org>.

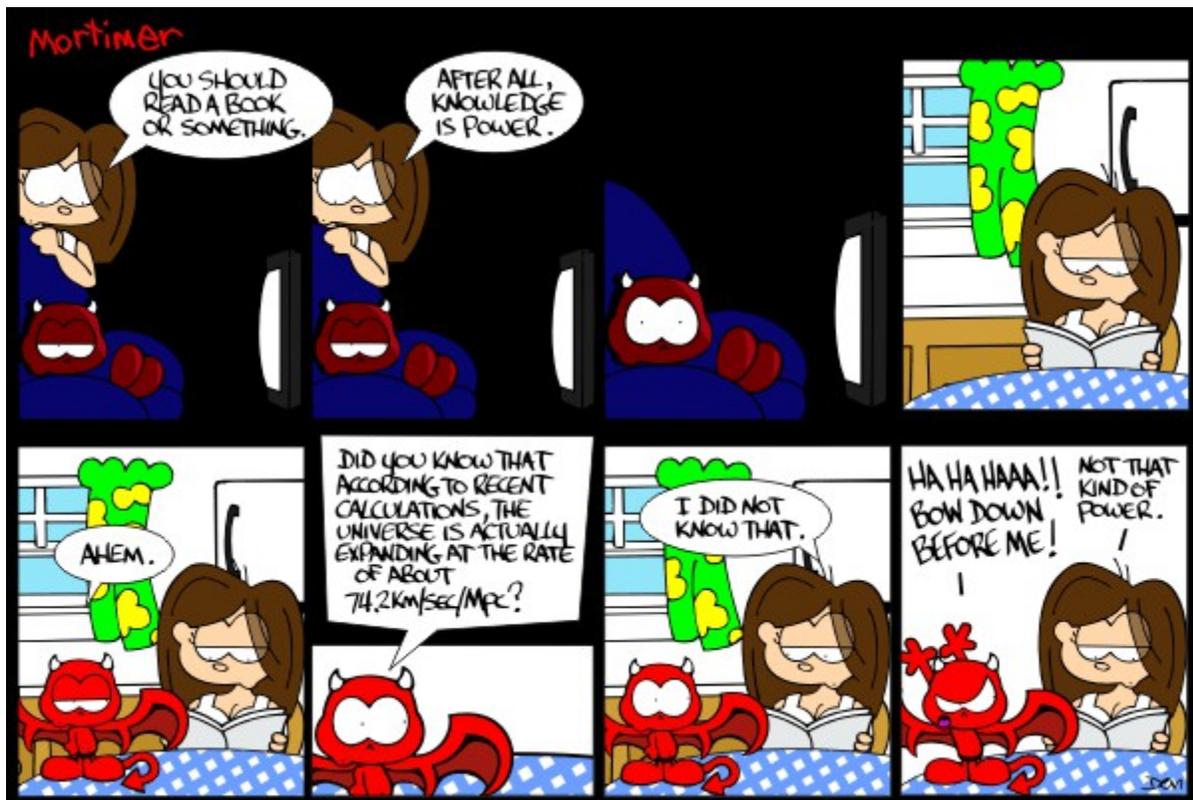
**GLOBE At Night**  
*now through 29 January and  
19 February to 28 February*

Everyone's favorite winter light pollution exercise is back...except it's no longer just for winter. During 2014 the GLOBE at Night staff will collect observations during *all twelve* New Moon periods!

This is an excellent time to start compilation a good historical record of sky glow in Baton Rouge. Each BRAS member should take at least one measurement per season during 2014. The GLOBE at Night website makes it as easy as possible, with step-by-step instructions and an downloadable instruction manual. (In January and February, participants use the constellation Orion.)

HRPO is in the process of alerting schools, churches, homeschool groups and scouting groups.

**The heading on this page hyperlinks to the BRAS Forum thread devoted to GLOBE at Night. Visit there regularly for updates and answered questions.**



# **20/20 Vision Campaign**

**Deadline: November 2017**

**SQM Goal: 20.0 (back viewing pad at HRPO)**

THE FOLLOWING TASKS HAVE BEEN ACCOMPLISHED.

\*initial contact with science coordinators for the following school systems—

- East Baton Rouge Parish
- Zachary
- Central
- Baker
- West Baton Rouge Parish
- Ascension Parish
- Livingston Parish

\*meeting with the Louisiana Department of Education

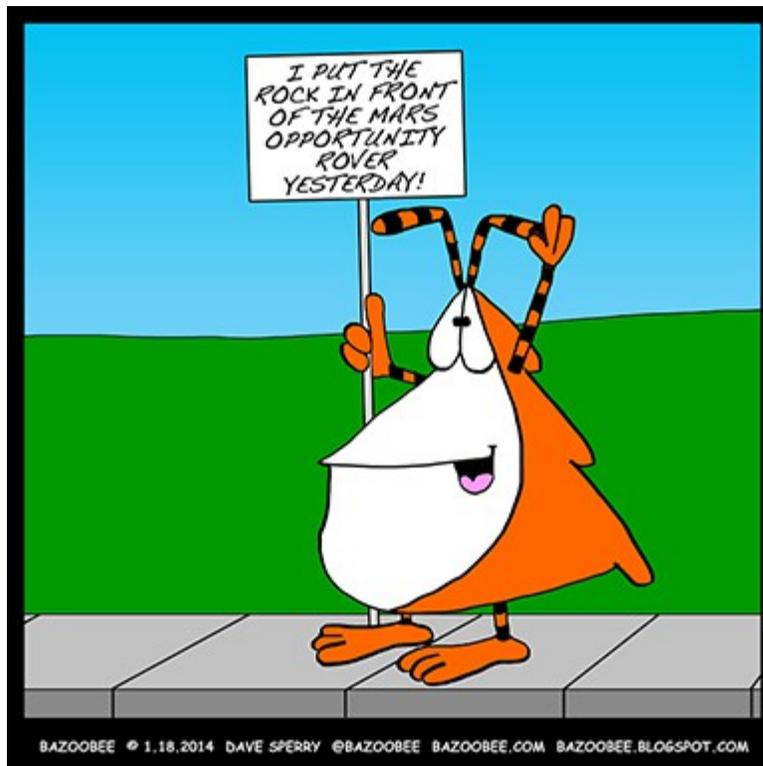
THE FOLLOWING TASKS WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED BEFORE THE RELEASE OF THE MARCH *NIGHT VISIONS*.

\*update to the Atchafalaya Trace Commission

THE FOLLOWING TASK IS ONGOING AND NEEDS TO BE PERFORMED BY MULTIPLE B.R.A.S. MEMBERS

- (1) looking for new construction in East Baton Rouge and adjacent parishes
- (2) contacting contractor/owner or government entity and requesting that any outside lights installed be dark-sky friendly

**Assistance greatly appreciated.**



## Imagine Your Parks 2: Better Parks, Better Living

BREC is holding a series of community meetings starting tomorrow and going through March. The purpose of these meetings is to gather input about the future direction of the park system and BREC's new strategic plan.

As we all know, an astronomical observatory needs a certain type of environment to function properly. One of the most pressing concerns at this time is the re-darkening of the sky above HRPO's domes. This would be incredible and thrilling to accomplish step-by-step over the next few years, especially since Professor Greg Guzik, Doug Granger and John Stiles of Optical Guidance Systems have installed new motors, new computers and new operating programs for both large professional-grade telescopes...in essence, brought them into the twenty-first century.

Not to mention, more capping/shielding of any lights in the local area would contribute to the re-darkening of skies above most BRAS members' residences.

Each who is interested in the most successful future for HRPO (and the darkest skies for local amateur astronomers and schoolkids) should attend the meeting most convenient for him or her. If one's residence is too far away to show up for a gathering in-person, by all means call BREC directly at (225) 272-9200, or use the "Mind Mixer" tool, which is available at BREC's website.

As can be seen below, several meetings occur simultaneously. All of the meetings will run from 6pm to 7pm.

Thursday, 30 January = T.D. Bickham Jr. Park / Perkins Road Community Park / Sharp Road Park

Tuesday, 4 February = Independence Road Park / Antioch Boulevard Park / Pride-Chaneyville Branch Library

Thursday, 6 February = Anna T. Jordan Community Park / Plank Road Park / Gus Young Park

Tuesday, 11 February = City Park / Ben Burge Park

Thursday, 13 February = Jackson Park / Baker Recreation Center / McKinley Middle School

Tuesday, 18 February = Forest Community Park / Cadillac Street Park / Barringer Road Park

Thursday, 20 February = North Sherwood Forest Community Park / Louisiana School for the Deaf and the Visually Impaired / Flanacher Road Park

Tuesday, 25 February = River Center Branch Library / Greenwood Community Park

Tuesday, 11 March = Howell Community Park / Santa Maria Golf Course / Jefferson Methodist Church

Thursday, 13 March = Bluebonnet Regional Branch Library / Cedar Ridge Avenue Park

Tuesday, 18 March = Monte Sano Park / Lovett Road Park

## Recent Entries in the Forum

*Below are selected recent additions to the BRAS Forum. There are also nine active polls.*

[Astronomy Survey from Oil Region Astronomical Society](#)

[“What’s Up for January 2014?”](#)

[Public Observing Areas?](#)

[The Return of a Former Member](#)

[Multiple Planets for This Year’s HGSP](#)

[DSRSG Dates through 2017](#)

[Darkest Area in Louisiana?](#)

[Great Red Spot Viewing Times through February](#)

[Mars’ Size and Magnitude Predictions through August](#)

[Upcoming Cassini Flybys](#)

[Dryden Flight Research Center Renamed for Armstrong](#)

[Occultation of 104 Tauri on 9 February](#)

[Ongoing Solar Cycle 24](#)

[Anyone See the Quadrantids?](#)

[2014 AA Hits Earth](#)

[New Horizons Reaches Pluto in Fewer Than 550 Days](#)

[Comet ISON becomes Comet I-Saw-Nothing](#)

[I Went Outside Just to See Sirius](#)

[Discrepancy in Starry Night for Sharpless Objects?](#)

**Baton Rouge Culmination Times for the [Helix Nebula](#), the [Eagle Nebula](#), the [Omega Nebula](#), [M9](#), [NGC 2841](#) and [Tycho’s Star](#)**

