

December 2025

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

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

Calendar:

- 3 December, 7PM: LSU's Astronomy on Tap at the Varsity
- 6 December, 7:30PM: LSU's Star Party at Landolt Observatory
- 8 December, 7PM: BRAS Monthly Meeting at HRPO
- 11 December, 5:30PM: Iberville Parish Elementary STEM Night
- 12 December, 9PM: Geminid Meteor Shower event at HRPO
- 15 December, 6PM: Sidewalk Astronomy at Ascension Parish Library, Gonzales, Main branch
- 30 December, 6PM: Sidewalk Astronomy at Perkins Rowe

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President's Message

Well, another year has come and gone. Astronomy-wise, it was a bit challenging. It seems like so many of our outreach programs were impacted by cloudy skies this year. Way back in March, I remember staying up late to watch the total lunar eclipse. Just as it was nearing about 90% coverage, the clouds rolled in and spoiled everything. Two of my three summer star parties up in North Dakota were canceled due to storms. Many of the Sidewalk Astronomy nights at Perkins Rowe and the Gonzales library were washed out. But, on the bright side, 2025 was the first year in more than a decade that no named storms made landfall in Louisiana. We can all be truly thankful for that.

Last week I attended the Deep South Star Gaze up near Clinton. After eight years, the event was finally held again at the Feliciana Retreat. I was told that Tuesday and Wednesday nights were OK. I arrived on Thursday. The sky was relatively clear until about 8:30 PM, then the clouds moved in and later that evening it rained. Friday night was similar but without the rain. Saturday night was nice. It was a bit “dewey”, but the skies remained clear all night. The number of attendees was down from previous years. On Saturday night I think there were around 30 people onsite, with about 15 telescopes set up. Hopefully as word gets out about the return to Feliciana, the numbers will bounce back.

I feel a little guilty about being absent so much this year (but you were warned in advance). I don't plan to run for any office this year. By the way, elections for the various officer positions will be held at our next meeting. This also coincides with our annual Christmas Party. Make sure you attend, or you might find yourself elected to something. I would like to thank Ben for stepping in and doing both President and Vice-President duties while I was gone. We have gained quite a few new members this year. I encourage all our new folks to consider running for an office. It seems that the same few faces end up rotating jobs every December. We welcome new blood into the system.

Looking ahead, our mostly annual field trip to Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge will take place in March next year. In the past we've always gone in January, but we thought we'd give March a try this time. We'll talk more about that as the time draws nearer.

Also on the near horizon is the possible launch of the Artemis II mission. As of now, the launch is tentatively scheduled for April (at the latest). My son John and I went over to Florida a few years ago to watch the launch of Artemis I, but as is often the case, the launch was scrubbed. If I remember correctly, it eventually launched a few months later. Maybe Artemis II will have better luck.

So, here's wishing everyone a joyous holiday season. May all of your astronomy dreams and goals be reached in the upcoming new year. Clear skies to all, and to all a good night.

Vice President's Word

Hi Everyone,

It's my last Vice President message!

First of all, thanks again to our guest speaker, Eric Borowski, for giving us an excellent presentation at last month's meeting. Learning about black holes is always a popular topic with our members and he had us thoroughly engaged.

Of course, our December meeting is coming up on Monday, December 8th at 7pm at the Highland Road Park Observatory and it's our annual Pot Luck Super Galactic Holiday Feast Extravaganza! (OK, I may have added a few new descriptors in there.) As always, the club will be providing a main-type dish and supplying plates, cups, utensils, napkins and a variety of beverage options. You are encouraged to bring a dish to share. (Please consider some type of side dish so we don't end up with a table full of cookies and cake like we did one year, haha! Not that cookies and cake aren't important!!)

We'll also be drawing a winner for the C8 scope raffle, play Shoot the Moon for some door prizes and last but not least, voting in a new slate of officers. It should be a very fun night so I hope you'll all be able to join us!

Finally, just a look back at 2025 from a VP perspective. We had some fantastic guest speakers and presentations. All of which, by the way, were completely FREE for the club since all of our guests were there on a volunteer basis. We had a cool trip to the Louisiana Art and Science Museum's Pennington Planetarium and LIGO. We also had a lot of good luck doing recreational viewing after the regular meeting had ended. Sometimes we had as many as 12 people sticking around outside with telescopes, binoculars and Seestars. Attendance at the club meetings is slowly starting to rise and we went from seeing around 20 or so members to seeing around 30 at our meetings. I hope we can maintain this level of programming and growth in 2026. We'll all be ready to support our next VP in helping out.

I hope you all have a great holiday season and wonderful New Year. I'm looking forward to more astronomical fun with you in 2026!

Clear Skies,
Ben Toman
Vice President



From the November meeting: Eric Borowski talks black holes. Annette and Ben celebrate the sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald (and Ben's Birthday too, probably).

Outreach Report

Hi Everyone,

We had a nice, relaxing November as a reward for all the hard work in October and it was wonderful! We started off the month partnering with LIGO for their Science Saturday on the 1st. That was such a fun day! We were all over that place with exhibits/demos indoors and out. The day was made extra special when Dr. Gabriela Gonzalez showed up to give one of the tours for the day. It was great to see her again and she stopped by most of our demo tables and even took a look at the Sun through Coy's H-Alpha rig.

Our Sidewalk Astronomy event at the library in Gonzales was essentially clouded out, but we were able to show the Moon briefly to a few youngsters and they were super excited. It also allowed us some time to check in on the library's loaner telescopes. Don made some adjustments here and there and Roz offered up some fresh batteries for the red dot finders.

The Perkins Rowe Sidewalk Astronomy event was 50/50. There were TONS of people out and that was great. Unfortunately, after the first hour some clouds socked us in for most of the rest of the evening. We did get pockets of views of Saturn here and there and things finally decided to clear up about 10 minutes before it was time to close down. The best part was that everyone that DID get a chance to look through the scopes were so appreciative and absolutely amazed at what they were seeing.

By the time December is over, we will have logged what I believe is a record number of events for a calendar year. A whopping 41 outreach events for 2025! (If one of our Sidewalk Astronomy events hadn't been cancelled, we'd have hit that magical 42 of Douglas Adams fame!)

None of this would be possible without the volunteerism of our club members. Helping out in 2025 we had Roz, Chad, Scott, Chris and Annette, Coy, Susan, Trey, Troy, John, Chris K., David, Don, Steve, Steven, Ronald, Merrill, Ashley and Ben.

You can see that with a membership roster of around 100, our volunteers are about 20% of the club. Not bad, but I'd like to see even MORE people in 2026. I know a lot of people don't join the club to become volunteers and that's completely acceptable. I just want to encourage you to give Outreach a chance. I think you'd be surprised at how much you end up learning about astronomy and our universe just by jumping in to help with our community outreach endeavors. Apart from going outside with a telescope to do personal observing, educational outreach is probably the best hands-on activity we can do as amateur astronomers.

Now, to close out 2025, please take a look at our last couple of opportunities below. If you'd like to come join in on the fun, just give me a shout!

Clear Skies,
Ben Toman

Upcoming Events

Thursday, December 11th

5:30pm-7:30pm

Family STEM Night at Iberville Elementary

Monday, December 15th

Sidewalk Astronomy

6pm-7:30pm

Sidewalk Astronomy at Ascension Parish Library-

Gonzales

Tuesday, December 30th

6pm-9pm

Sidewalk Astronomy at Perkins Rowe



At the Ascension Parish Library, main branch, Gonzales, LA, 708 S. Irma Blvd. Steve, Don, and Ben await the public. Roz and Don service the library scope.



Perkins Rowe: Top: Chad helps zoom in on Saturn, Coy breaks out the binoculars, Scott talks telescopes,

Bottom: Don readies the big scope, Troy and Coy pose with their kit, and Ben scans the skies for Saturn.

NIGHT VISIONS



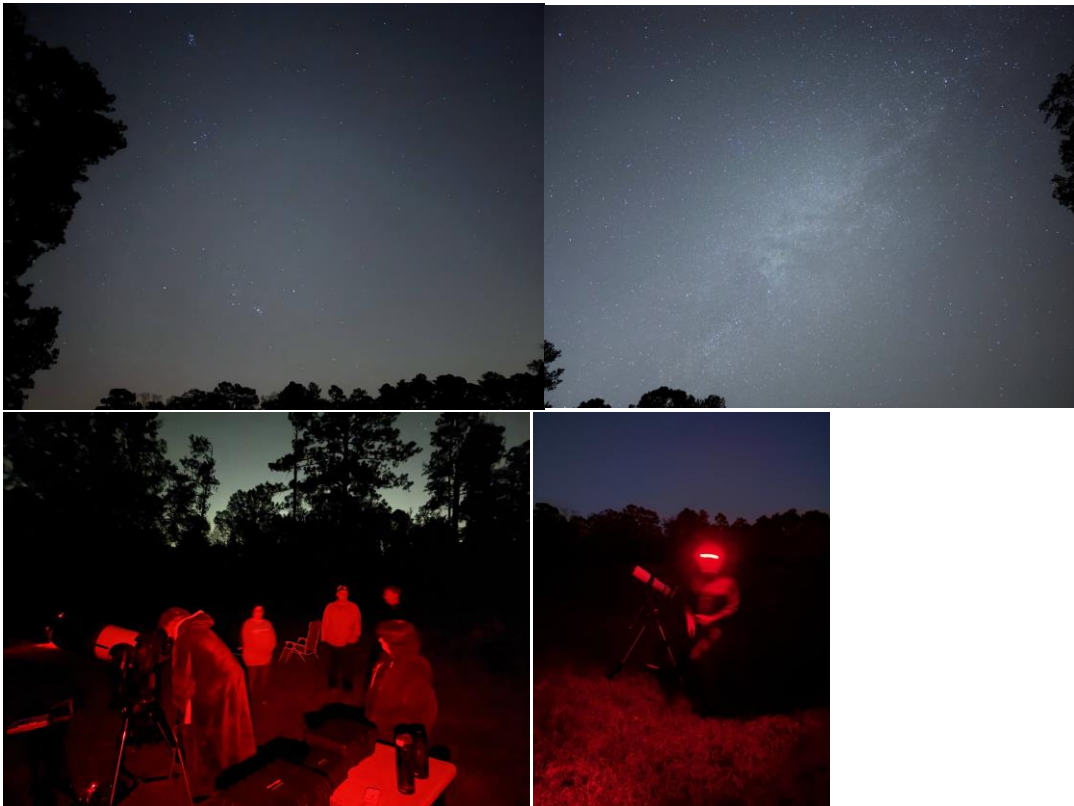
From LIGO: Top: Scott, Mishael, Ben, Susan, Roz, Coy, Troy, Merrill, & Bill pose at the end of the day. Chad shows off our meteorite collection, and Ronald works the Gravity well. Middle: Merrill explains how telescopes work to LIGO volunteers, Coy shows the sun in H-Alpha, and Scott explains heliophysics with a lively interpretive dance. Bottom: Guests attempt to photograph sunspots, Susan talks about the solar system, Ben proudly displays his new solar system apron while waiting for people to wreck his moon model, and Dr. Gonzalez catches a quick peek at Venus.



From Sidewalk Astronomy: Coy, Scott, Ben, Roz, Chad, and Troy pose with their scopes in front of the massive Perkins Rowe Holiday Tree.

Secretary's Summary

- Bras Meeting for November: 23 people in attendance.
- Don was absent.
- Ben introduced the speaker, Eric Borowski of LSU to speak on Black Holes and how to find them.
- Scott talked about the club's upcoming stargazing trip to Avondale Scout Reservation.
- Ben spoke about the next month's outreaches and talked about our busy fall schedule.
- Ben showed off his donation to the club of protective apparatus for the crater making model.
- Ben pointed out that he has caved to rampant public sentiment and incessant nagging and had business cards for the club made out.
- Ben spoke about the upcoming officer elections: a full slate of officers has agreed for next year and will be voted on at the December meeting. Anyone wanting to be added to the election slate should contact Ben before the meeting.
- The December meeting / Holliday party will be 14 December. The meeting is a pot-luck dinner with the main dish being provided by the club.
- The raffle for the classic Celestron 8"SCT will take place at the December meeting.



From the Avondale Scout Reservation Stargaze: Top, some widefield shots of the sky. Bottom, observers take turns sharing the scope and Roz found this alien looking fellow wondering around—she said all it asked for was if she had any cookies and then took off. A big thanks to our host for a great night, hopefully they'll have us back up there in the future for another event.

Observatory Notes

*{HRPO is closed to the public on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Day.}
Binocular recommended for all twilight and night viewing.*

FRIDAY NIGHT LECTURE SERIES

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

5 December = "Buying Skygazing Equipment" BRAS member (and asteroid discoverer) Merrill Hess heads this personnel-driven overview of this year's economic landscape for binoculars, telescopes, flashlights, eyepieces and filters.

19 December = "Wonders of the Winter Sky" BREC Education Program Specialist Amy Northrop will take the audience on a fascinating tour of Baton Rouge's winter season. She'll highlight the celestial gems that will sparkle throughout the next three months—gems visitors will be able to see live if they continue to visit HRPO!

SCIENCE ACADEMY

Saturdays from 10am to 12pm.

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

advanced registration via WebTrac strongly recommended

[activity #331320] / parents may stay with or leave Cadet

Four Cadet minimum and sixteen Cadets maximum per session.

6 December = "Surveying the Moon"

13 December = "Planet, Star, Galaxy, Universe II"

20 December = "Surveying the Sun"

EVENING SKY VIEWING

for ages six and older / no admission fee

Saturdays (6, 20 and 27 December) from 7:30pm to 10pm

Saturday 13 December from 8pm to 10pm

Fridays (5 and 19 December) from 8:30pm 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.

BATON ROUGE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY MEETING

Monday 8 December from 7pm to 9pm

for ages fourteen and older / no admission fee

DISCUSSION: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Friday 12 December from 8pm to 9pm

for ages twelve and older / no admission fee

Many game-changing moments have occurred since HRPO's last focus on AI—some astonishing, some alarming. This brief update is for any who want the latest information.

GEMINID METEOR SHOWER

Friday 12 December from 9pm to 1am
for ages six and older / no admission fee

The Geminid meteors, in addition to being part of one of the most reliable showers of the year, are quite intriguing and were first noticed in the 1860s. For this one viewing period the public is welcome to arrive for sky viewing during this shower's peak time.

AMATEUR ASTRONOMY COURSES

Saturdays from 3:30pm to 7:30pm / registration in progress [activity #431322 and #131322]
Registrants must be eighteen or older. / \$15 per registrant (\$18 if non-EBR Parish)

These exciting one-day classes are tailor-made to instruct the patron in the use of a personal telescope or binocular for skygazing, or the basics of the unaided-eye Baton Rouge sky. Sign up for one or more!

"Learn Your Sky" = 20 December

"Learn Your Binocular" = 10 January

"Learn Your Telescope" = 24 January

2025 PREVIEW PARTY

Friday 26 December from 6pm to 10pm
for ages six and older / no admission fee

The last open Friday of December is devoted to premiering much of the 2024 schedule (lectures, camps, celestial events, special programs, classes and guests).

STEM EXPANSION: "Archaeology"

Saturday 27 December from 2:30pm to 6:30pm
for ages twelve to sixteen. / \$15 each per in-parish registrant; \$18 each per out-of-parish registrant.
Advanced registration via WebTrac required [activity #331321].

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.

SOLAR VIEWING

Saturday 27 December 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. Protective clothing and sunscreen are recommended.

WINTER SPACE EXPLORATION CAMP

Monday 29 December and Tuesday 30 December (8am to 5pm daily)
for ages nine to thirteen / \$55 per Explorer (\$66 if non-EBR Parish)
advanced registration via WebTrac required [activity #431180]

Campers will build and fly a single-stage chemical rocket, while learning about the latest upcoming missions and space news! All materials are supplied; campers will need a sack lunch and drink that does not require refrigeration. Explorers will also need to bring a hat and sunscreen.

Sky Map



Centered on 10PM for 15 December 2025

Quick Picks—Events for December

- Wed 3 Pleiades 0.8° S of [Moon](#)
- Thu 4 [Moon](#) Perigee at 356,962 km.
- Thu 4 [Full Moon](#)
- Sun 7 [Jupiter](#) 3.7° S of [Moon](#)
- Sun 7 Pollux 2.9° N of [Moon](#)
- Sun 7 [Mercury](#) at Greatest Western Elongation - 20.70°
- Mon 8 Beehive 1.5° S of [Moon](#)
- Wed 10 Regulus 0.8° S of [Moon](#)
- Thu 11 [Last Quarter Moon](#)
- Sun 14 Geminid Meteor Shower
- Sun 14 Spica 1.4° N of [Moon](#)
- Wed 17 [Moon](#) Apogee at 406,324 km.
- Wed 17 [Jupiter](#) 6.4° S of Pollux
- Fri 19 [Mercury](#) 5.4° N of Antares
- Fri 19 [New Moon](#)
- Sun 21 Winter Solstice
- Mon 22 Ursid Meteor Shower
- Fri 26 [Saturn](#) 4.0° S of [Moon](#)
- Sat 27 [First Quarter Moon](#)
- Wed 31 Pleiades 0.9° S of [Moon](#)

All times GMT, check Stellarium.com for local times.

Contact Information

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

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

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