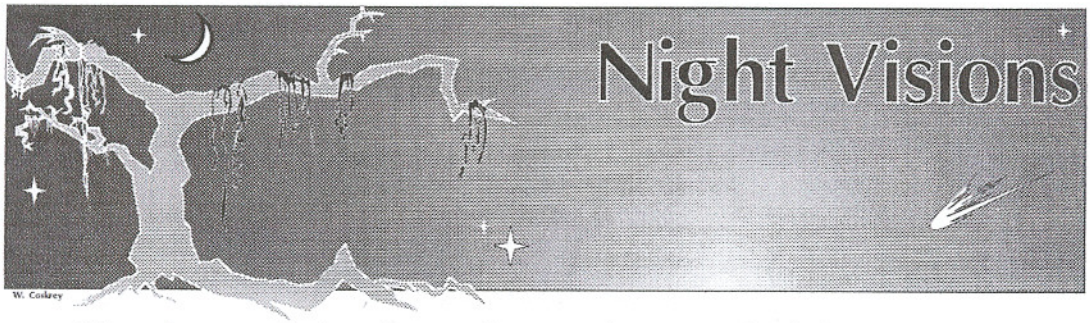


Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Astronomical Society

May 2010

The Next Meeting of the Baton Rouge Astronomical Society will be May 10, 2009 at 7pm.

The Baton Rouge Astronomical Society will hold it's annual Jambalaya and Pot Luck Dinner at our May 10 meeting. Please arrive early (about 6:30-6:45)) so that we can setup and begin to serving at 7pm.

The club will buy the chicken jambalaya, bread, and white beans. In addition we will have plates, cups, napkins, forks and spoons. Coffee, soft drinks and ice will also be taken care of. Please bring a side dish.

We will also have several very nice items for our raffle.

Please plan to attend as this will be our last monthly meeting till August 9.

May 10
Annual Jambalaya and Pot Luck Dinner

President's Message

We are coming to the close of another school year and the BRAS meeting set for Monday, May 10 at 7 PM is the annual Jambalaya meal. Bring your spouses or "other significant" person and plan to have a good time.

Based on instructions from the membership, your officers have proceeded with the acquisition of a 40" Samsung flat screen monitor to mount on the wall. We also are acquiring a Blu-Ray system with cables and connectors so that will assist us in displaying materials. Please come to the May BRAS meeting to see our new acquisition.

The last 30 years has been the Information Age when we expanded our capabilities with the Internet and related devices to have access to information. Although that Age is still with us and expanded by the minute, we have also been in a high level Technology Age with more advances in Technology in the last 50 years that we have seen in the last 2,000 years. We are all living in a very dramatic and exciting time. Not the least of the advances have been the development and use of the Space Shuttle system whereby we have been able to "fly" the astronauts back to earth. However, that phase of exploration is coming to an end with the last shuttle mission set for September of this year.

Another fantastic system that is on its last leg is the Hubble Space Telescope that is not scheduled for any further repair missions. Hubble was launched in April, 1990 and it seems hard to believe that it has been working now for 20 year. However, it has done a fantastic job of providing us lowly Earthlings with some photographs that are truly "out of this world" in the form of the Eagle Nebula, the Ultra Deep Sky Image to name only a couple. In addition, Hubble has taken the best pictures yet of Pluto and discovered its two additional moons as well as discovering a Kuiper Belt object on 1 kilometer across. Hubble has also taken the first image of an exoplanet at visible wavelenghts by using an occulting mask to bloc the blazing light from Fomalhaut. The image, taken over a two year period shows the movement of the exoplanet.

With the current attitude in Washington, how can the U.S. possibly remain the #1 leader in space exploration. As soon as the shuttle missions end, we will be dependent on Russia for taxi service to and from the International Space Station. The Aries and Constellation programs that would take men back to the moon are being scraped. In a time when the government is wanting to spend billions to keep people working, how can they fool themselves into thinking that a halt to space exploration will keep people working. It can only cause us to become a second rate nation behind those with forward looking technological planning. Let's just hope that the current plans for NASA to get out of the rocket business and start sub-contracting that work to commercial businesses will grow in the right direction to keep the U.S. a leader in this area.

Marvin E Owen, President, BRAS

Hodges Gardens Star Party II Recap

The second annual Hodges Gardens Star Party was held last March. This was the tenth year BRAS has hosted a spring star party, and once again it was a success. Our new location at Hodges Gardens State Park offers so many advantages over our previous site, and we have plenty of room to grow. The staff at Hodges Gardens is very enthusiastic about our event. It can only get better in the years ahead.

The first night of the event, Wednesday night, found approximately a dozen scopes on the field. A cloudy afternoon didn't bode well for the evening's viewing, so most of us hadn't bothered to set our scopes up. Surprisingly the sky cleared for a few hours after sunset, so a lot of binocular observing was done. Throughout the night, cloud bands passed overhead.

Thursday was a beautiful day with clear blue skies. A few more folks came in and set up scopes on the field. Most everyone took the afternoon to enjoy the park and the gardens. As the sun set, however, clouds again rolled in. Very quickly a thunderstorm arose, and lightning chased us from the field for several hours. By around ten or eleven, though, the skies once again cleared and the really dedicated were treated to a magnificent sky.

Friday evening was perhaps one of the best nights we've ever had at our star party. The sky was clear all night, and there was almost no dew until the wee hours of morning. Saturday was again a great spring day; breezy enough to keep the bugs at bay, but not so strong as to be bothersome. We ended up with about 40 attendees on the field by Saturday afternoon.

On Saturday evening, we tried something a little different. We opened the viewing field for a few hours to the general public. Hodges Gardens advertised the event in local media, and extra rangers were on hand to provide support and crowd control. During the public viewing period, over 225 people entered the park. The rangers were ecstatic! For many of our guests, this was their first time to ever see a telescope, much less look through one. Afterwards, the park received a number of e-mails thanking them, and us, for the opportunity.

Next year's Hodges Gardens Star Party is scheduled a little later in the spring due to Mardi Gras. The event will begin on Wednesday, March 30th, and will go through Saturday, April 2nd. Cabins at the park are generally reserved many months in advance, so if you plan to get a cabin, I suggest you call the State Park reservations office as soon as possible. Of course, you can always camp on the field, bring an RV and park it nearby, or stay in the hotel right outside the park.

As I mentioned earlier, one big advantage to Hodges Gardens is that we have plenty of room to grow. I believe that as word gets out, our attendance will increase significantly. As it is, we are getting a lot of participation from groups in Texas. I was also pleased to see many more BRAS members attending this event. Things are definitely looking up!

MESSAGE FROM HRPO

International Astronomy Day was an enormous success. Even with the less-than-nice weather forecast over 700 visitors graced the HRPO grounds to visit the exhibitors and demonstrators and to view Venus, Mars and Saturn. I'm still tired!

Thanks to BRAS for being there during this biggest and most hectic of days here at HRPO.

Christopher

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS: ON-SITE

Evening Sky Viewing: Saturdays from 7pm to 10pm.
One or two volunteers. To work physical science demos and telescopes and campfire. NOTE: We really do not need volunteers on Friday night on a regular basis.

Stargazers Camp: June and July, Monday to Friday from 8am to 1pm
Optional. If any of you are free and feel you can add to the enjoyment of the kids by doing a little show-and-tell, please let me know.

CALLS FOR VOLUNTEERS: OUTREACH

Pride-Chaneyville Library: Thursday, 20 May from 2:30pm to 5:30pm /// *One volunteer needed for a three-hour shift.*

Central Community Library: Tuesday, 25 May from 10am to 1pm /// *One volunteer needed for a three-hour shift.*

EBRP Main Library: Thursday, 27 May from 12:30pm to 3:30pm /// *One volunteer needed for a three-hour shift.*

HRPO FRIDAY NIGHT LECTURE SERIES

*7 MAY: "The Messier Objects (Part One)"

*14 MAY: "The Messier Objects (Part Two)" *Is it possible there has never been an HRPO lecture on the most popular of catalogs? BRAS's own Trevor McGuire makes his lecture debut with this double-header.*

*21 MAY: "An Introduction to Saturn" *The ringed beauty is rightfully highlighted in this incredible introduction. Learn about the massive amounts of X-rays coming from the planet, the highly successful Cassini mission--and the stunning moons, including Titan and Rhea.*

*28 MAY: "The Space Between the Stars" *LSU physics graduate student Jennifer Andrews presents the awesome story of interstellar dust.*

LSU PHYSICS COLLOQUIA

All in Nicholson 109 at 3:40pm

4 May: "Loop Quantum Gravity Dynamics"
Kristina Geisel, Technische Universität München

Newsletter via e-mail rather than snail mail ???????

If you are still receiving this Newsletter via snail mail and you want to help BRAS save effort and postage by getting it entirely by e-mail, please let me know by sending me a message to my e-mail address of marvin@meocpa.com Thanks for the help. Marvin E Owen

BRAS Observing Notes
May 2010

Constellation of the Month

Coma Berenices: The Queen's Hair

Berenice was queen of Egypt and the wife of Ptolemy III, the third ruler of the Ptolemaic dynasty around 250 BC.

During her husband's absence on an expedition to Syria, she dedicated her hair to Aphrodite for his safe return, and placed it in the temple of the goddess at Zephyrium. The hair having by some unknown means disappeared, Conon of Samos, explained the phenomenon in courtly phrase, by saying that it had been carried to the heavens and placed among the stars.

Position in the Sky

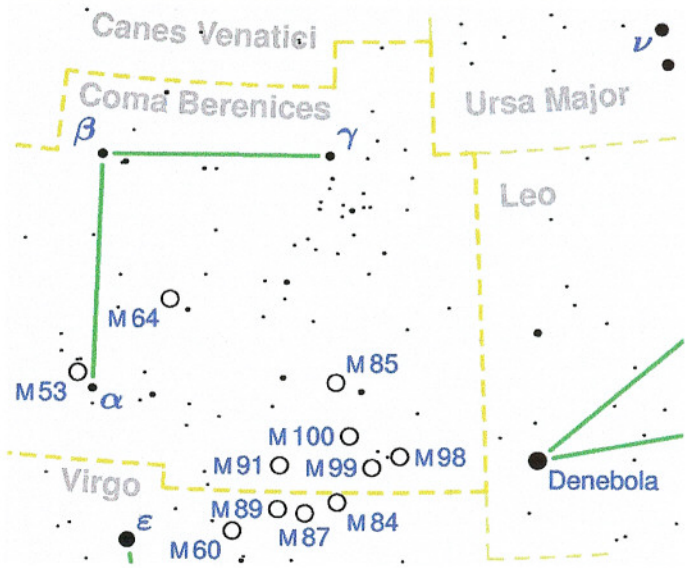
Right Ascension: 12.76 hours
Declination: 21.83 degrees

Named Stars

Diadem (Alpha Com)

Messier Objects

M53 (globular cluster)
M64 The Blackeye Galaxy (spiral galaxy)
M85 (elliptical galaxy)
M88 (spiral galaxy)
M91 (spiral galaxy)
M98 (spiral galaxy)
M99 (spiral galaxy)
M100 (spiral galaxy)



Messier Madness

Although Coma Berenices is not a large constellation, it contains several Messier objects. The constellation is rich in galaxies, containing the northern part of the Virgo cluster. There are also several globular clusters to be seen. These objects can be seen with minimal obscuration from dust because the constellation is not in the direction of the galactic plane.

Locating Coma Berenices

Locate the star Arcturus and the constellation Leo. Coma Berenices is about halfway between these two objects. Also note that one leg of Coma Berenices points nearly at Spica in Virgo.

BRAS Dark Sky Site Viewing Dates

May 8th and 15th 2010

A map of the BRAS Dark Site can be viewed at
http://www.bing.com/maps/?v=2&sp=Point.p1wwxc7c69n1_BRAS%255fDark%255fSky

For more information check out the BRAS website at http://www.brastro.org

Art Barrios
BRAS Observing Chairman
art.barrios@cox.net

Tips for Observing in Light Polluted Area

Sometimes it can be difficult observing in heavily light polluted skies. But by following a few procedures, your observing session can be more enjoyable and more rewarding. The following are tips that our crack team of observers offered to help increase your satisfaction in observing in light polluted areas.

- Observe during new moon. Just like observing in dark skies, the moon adds light to the night sky and reduces contrast.
- Observe after 11:00 p.m., Many stores have closed by this time, and because they turn off their lights, a city's light glow is reduced considerably.
- Observe after 1:00 a.m. After the stores have closed, most shoppers and workers have gone home which means that there is a lot less traffic on the streets and freeways, and light pollution is reduced.
- Ask your neighbors over for an observing session. After seeing the effect of light pollution on observing, they will be more cooperative in turning off their lights for you.
- Try to catch your target objects straight overhead. This is always the darkest part of the sky.
- Select the right objects to observe. Magnitude is not everything. A bright galaxy may be invisible, whereas a dim planetary may be easily seen. Small, high surface brightness and stellar objects are easier to observe than large, diffuse objects.
- If you have an altazimuth mount (Dobsonian), try to observe near the meridian. Up-down, left-right motions translate into north-south, east-west motions and makes following a path on a star chart easier.
- Observe after 10:00 P.M.. This gives the dust and water in the air a chance to settle. Dust and water reflect light that can turn a good night into a bad one.
- Pay close attention to the weather. Cool, dry nights are best at any location, but are more pronounced in the city.
- Learn to read the quality of the sky by the observing of stars with the naked eye. A clear night might seem perfect for observing, but may in fact be bad for viewing if the seeing is not good.
- Observe after a rain storm. The skies appear darker as light is no longer reflected off of dust particles in the air.
- Observe after a cold front has come through. The air is more stable and the air pollution has been blown out.
- Use a dark cloth to cover your head and eyepiece to shield them from stray light.
- Use a dew shield on your telescope to shade it from stray light.
- Clean and collimate all optics. Dirty optics scatter light.
- Light pollution and O-III filters are good for planetary and emission nebulae.
- Use a pirate's eyepatch to keep out stray light.
- Pick the darkest section of your site and make an extra effort to block out stray light. Using a light baffle made of a tarp and tent pegs help, as well as a three-sided wall made out of cardboard. Try to make the immediate area around your site as darkened and non-reflective as possible. Use existing structures and foliage to block the direct view of lights.
- A right-angle finder with amici prism under a dark cloth is helpful for finding objects.
- Setting circles are a great aid for finding difficult objects, especially when those objects are quite some distance from a naked eye star.
- A good star atlas, a pair of binoculars, and a one power finder (e.g., Telrad) with a template for that finder, are important for finding objects in bright, low contrast skies. Telrad-hopping can sometimes be easier and just as useful as star-hopping with a finder. Viewing the sky through your Telrad with binoculars is also a nice trick.
- Use earphones or a radio to mask neighborhood noise. Noise can be very distracting.

Finally, attitude is very important. Any observing is better than no observing or TV.

Compiled by Ken E. Boquis, Bill Geertsen, David Hasenauer, Lee Maisler, Chris Randall, Roberto Torres, John Wagoner

BATON ROUGE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

You can pay your Membership Dues at our next Meeting or Send your Dues to:

Baton Rouge Astronomical Society, inc.
c/o Bob Sinitiere, Treasure,
14558 Cottinham Ct.,
Baton Rouge, LA 70817-3543

If you have questions about dues or receiving your News Letter call Bob at 755-2079

♦ Regular Membership	$20.00	$_____
♦ Each Additional Family Membership	$ 5.00	$_____
♦ Student Membership (through age 17)	$10.00	$_____
♦ Donation* toward club building fund or (_____ *Specify*)		$_____
TOTAL ENCLOSED		$_____

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How do you wish to recieve the Society's Newsletter *Night Visions*-
___ By Mail or by ___ E-Mail
(Please Check one)

PLEASE CHECK THAT YOUR ADDRESS AND E-MAIL ARE CURRENT AND CURRENT.

Meetings are usually held the second Monday of each month at 7pm, except for June and July. Most meetings are held at the Highland Road Observatory.

*All donations to the *Baton Rouge Astronomical Society, Inc.* are tax-deductible under IRS Section 501(c)(3) & (a)(1) and also 170(b)(1)(A)(vi).
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