

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Astronomical Society

www.braastro.org

April 2012

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An important note:

The April 2012 BRAS meeting WILL NOT BE HELD AT THE HRPO.

The meeting will be at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana.

5525 Reitz Ave. in Baton Rouge on Monday April 9th at 7:00 PM

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hey Everyone,

Well, we've finally been having a string of clear nights that have been denied us for most of the winter. Our annual Hodges Gardens Star Party was a success with clear skies for all four nights. (A first in the event's history...including when it was at Kisatchie!) I hope you've been able to get out and see the great show Venus and Jupiter have been putting on for us just after sunset.

We have a big event coming up at the HRPO on April 28th. International Astronomy Day. We've averaged over 650 people at this event for the last 2 years, so to say we need some help is an understatement. I know I've said it before, but you can help no matter what your experience level may be. We'll need everything from telescope operators to answering the phone. This event lasts from 3PM-11PM so the more folks we have to help out, the fewer folks we have pulling 5-8 hour shifts to help cover what needs to be covered. I think it would be great if we could also have a BRAS member or two available to answer questions about the club and pass out information to any guests that may be interested.

If you would like to help us out, please let us know at one of the contacts below:

Ben Toman (BRAS President)

tomanben@gmail.com

[225-313-3743](tel:225-313-3743)

Christopher Kersey (HRPO Manager)

obeservatory@brec.org

[225-768-9948](tel:225-768-9948)

I'm looking forward to our meeting this month. Be sure to check out the details here in the newsletter as it will NOT be at our usual meeting place. Also, as discussed at our last meeting, we have a nice raffle prize in the Celestron 15x70 binoculars. This item will be raffled off soon, but you still have time to purchase a ticket. The tickets for this raffle are \$5 each or 6 for \$25 and you do not have to be present to win. Finally, don't forget that our club exists more than just one night a month. If you have questions, comments or just want to talk about astronomy stuff we have the Forum on our website at brastro.org and even a Facebook page. And as always, if you have any suggestions or ideas for the club, don't hesitate to let us know. We're always looking for ways to make our club the most enjoyable place it can be for all amateur astronomers no matter what your experience level may be.

Clear Skies,

Ben Toman

BRAS President

NOTES FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

IMPORTANT!! Our next BRAS meeting will be Monday, April 9th, 2012. WE WILL NOT MEET AT THE OBSERVATORY. **Instead, we will meet at the Blue Cross Blue Shield building at 5525 Reitz Ave. in Baton Rouge.**

We will view an IMAX film in the building's auditorium on the Hubble Space Telescope, including the repair mission. The facility is not an IMAX theater, so we won't have that effect. But it should still be enjoyable watching it on a bigger screen.

Here are directions from Geoff:

Enter through the main entrance on Bluebonnet Blvd, one block north of I-10.

When you turn in, go to the stop sign and take a right. This will bring you around to the south side of the building. Park anywhere you'd like and enter via the main entrance that faces the interstate. You will be required to show a photo ID. If you're a BRAS member, you will should have a badge already printed with your name on it. Non-members will have to wait an extra minute or two so a badge can be printed for them. The guards will direct you where to go from there.

Call Geoff at 225-573-4313 if you get lost or have any questions.

Binocular Raffle:

Bring some cash for the drawing. We still have the Celestron 15X70 Binoculars to be raffled off. If we reach our cash goal, Monday, we may give it away then.

May Meeting:

Bill Buck sent me a very nice PowerPoint of his observing/astrophotography trip to the Southwest, which he will share at the May meeting. I am envious. Don't miss it.

Merrill Hess
BRAS Vice President

MESSAGE FROM HRPO

MARCH AT HRPO

March 2012 was outstanding! The attendance at the third annual NanoDays was our highest ever for that event, with over 100 people learning about nanotechnology.

The registration for Spring Rocket Camp (which took place 3 and 4 April) zoomed during the last few days of March.

FRIDAY NIGHT LECTURE SERIES

all start at 7:30pm

6 April: "Dating the Crucifixion" [Brad Schaefer]

13 April: "Apollo 16 40th Anniversary" [Tom Northrop]

20 April: "Wonders of the Spring Sky" [Erin Anding]

27 April: {HRPO CLOSED}

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS: ON SITE

*Saturday, 28 April from 3pm to 11pm. *Twelve to fifteen volunteers for three- to six-hour shifts.* International Astronomy Day; need I say more?

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS: OUTREACH

*Sunday, 22 April from 11am to 5pm, probably at Old State Capitol. *Two or three volunteers for two- or three-hour shifts.* I say probably, since that is where the Earth Day coordinators usually put us. If the location changes I'll pass the word. Do I really need to tell anyone what Louisiana Earth Day is? I thought not.

HRPO VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Congratulations to Ben Toman for winning the award for work performed during the 2011 calendar year.

LIGHT POLLUTION NOTES

By the time all of you receive this, the work order to cap the archery range bathroom light and the HRPO porch light should have been processed by BREC HQ.

BRAS has composed the letter in support of the proposal I sent in November to cap and shield all BREC property lighting. It was signed by Ben Toman, Merrill Hess, Craig Brenden, Wally Pursell and over a dozen other members at the March meeting. Ben delivered two copies—one for Director of Special Facilities Donna Mitchell and one for Assistant Superintendent Ted Jack. Donna is retiring within eight weeks; I have yet to find out who her replacement will be. Ted Jack oversees planning, operations and resources for BREC; I have yet to hear a response from him concerning either the original proposal or BRAS's support letter.

BREC's new Superintendent Carolyn McKnight held general meetings with BREC staff to introduce herself and invite comments. At separate meetings both HRPO Education Curator Erin Anding and I directly expressed our concerns about light pollution in the park system and briefly outlined ways to eradicate it.

OUTREACH

Sidewalk Astronomy Report

As many of you know, we have had a Sidewalk Astronomy program that was operating this past winter. We had our final event last week at Best Buy. We alternated monthly between Community Coffee on Jefferson Highway and Best Buy on Millerville. In general, the volume at Best Buy was higher than CC's, but the enthusiasm at CC's far surpassed that of Best Buy. The reasons for these differences is pretty clear: Best Buy has more customers, but they tend to be in a hurry, and CC's has less customers, but they have more time.

After the inaugural season of our Sidewalk program, I see some immediate changes that need to occur for next year:

- Don't create flyers for the whole observing season all at once; maybe only put the next 2 months' events.
- Preschedule rain dates and put that information on the flyer. This season, we had 3 out of 6 events that were hindered by weather, and we had no way of informing the public.
- Develop more symbiosis with the businesses: we need to get more people to come out for the sake of the astronomy with the hope that they will patronize the business.

Although we had fun this winter and showed lots of people the sky (and had some success getting people over to HRPO), I think we can find businesses that will be a better fit for next season. Additionally, if we could find a business that has later hours (say 10pm) that works for us, we might even be able to do Sidewalk year round.

So if anyone has any suggestions or comments about how to proceed, I would love to hear them at the next meeting (or any time for that matter!). If you have a business in mind that might work for us, or if you come across one, don't hold back.

Thanks to everyone who helped out with Sidewalk this winter!

As many of you have heard, the International Planetarium Society Conference is being held in Baton Rouge this summer July 21st-26th. They are hoping to get plenty of volunteers to help out with the event and have sent out the first call. We'll be discussing this a lot in the upcoming weeks and we'll find out how they would like to manage our volunteers. (For example, do they want to get us as a group, or should we just contact them individually?) Please take a look at the info they have sent along and start thinking about whether or not you would be willing to lend a hand. It sounds like it will be quite the experience. Check out the flier they sent on the next page

-Trevor McGuire
BRAS Outreach Coordinator

Volunteers Needed for the International Planetarium Society in Baton Rouge on July 21-26 2012

I am writing to share this unique opportunity for our community with you and your organization. This event is being sponsored by LASM. Two years ago, the IPS met in Alexandria, Egypt and their next meeting will be held in Beijing in 2014. The organizers expect up to 500 delegates from 40+ countries.

As the Volunteer Chair for this event, I would like extend this opportunity to you and your organization at this once in a lifetime event. My objective is to have volunteers and subcommittee chairs and members from across the Baton Rouge Metro area and from a variety of organizations. This is our chance to shine a positive light on Baton Rouge and extend a bit of southern hospitality to the international delegates.

If you or someone you know that would be interested in assisting with this event or being a subcommittee chair, please have them contact me. Feel free to share this invitation with anyone that may be interested in volunteering.

Thank you,

Kathleen S. Giesfeldt
kathleen.s.giesfeldt@exxonmobil.com
WK 225-977-5822
Cell 865-386-3292

Potential Sources of Volunteers (not limited to):

- Southern University: Sororities/fraternities, Physics and Science Organizations
- LSU including: LSU translators, LSU-SWE, LSU-SHIP, APO, Physics and Science Organization, Sororities/fraternities
- BR Community College
- EBR & WBR High school teachers and students (service hours!) (Beta Clubs)
- United Way: Volunteers United, RSVP
- BREC Observatory club
- CAN!: EXC!TE, EMCOT, ACE, Teams, WIN, BEST, and the Annuitants Clubs
- Girl and Boy Scouts

Types of Volunteer Commitments:

- Subcommittee chairs and assistance with the coordination of the event.
- Volunteers: work in blocks of 2-4 hours. Perks include: access to the conference, planetarium & t-shirt

Subcommittee Chairs Needed for the Event:

1. Registration
2. Logistics
3. Translators
4. Volunteer Organizations

Highlighted Needs for the Event:

1. Registration
2. Logistics
3. Contacting Volunteer organizations
4. Room Monitors
5. Participant conference bag preparation
6. Set-up/tear-down of displays and conference rooms
7. Runners
8. Translators

Calendar:

Feb-March: recruit volunteers

April-May: train volunteers

June-July: on-site training

PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

- 7:14 Meeting begins
- 7:16 First "Good Lighting" award to be given to the Bass Pro Shop. The club will present a certificate of appreciation for shielding outdoor lighting on its property. Brad Schafer suggested getting the Advocate to do an article on the event.
- 7:22 Chris Kersey brought the club up to date on the effort to get BREC to shield lighting on the property surrounding the observatory. So far, BREC has taken no action on the proposal, which was submitted in November. Ben has drafted a letter requesting them to do this, and members were asked to sign it to show their support.
- 7:31 The upcoming planetarium convention was mentioned, and possible club participation in the event was discussed.
- 7:33 Don Weinell said the Hodges Garden Stargaze would be held March 21st through the 25th.
- 7:35 Chris presented the Frank Conrad award to Ben Toman.
- 7:37 Ben announced that in addition to the monthly raffle there will be a new raffle, to be held from time to time, based on ticket sales. Cost of a ticket is \$5.00 each or 6 tickets for \$25.00.
- 7:43 Trevor McGuire gave a talk on the Milky Way Galaxy.
- 8:08 Merrill Hess said that Geoff Michelli will show a movie on the Hubble Space Telescope at the April meeting. The meeting will be held at the Blue Cross building on Bluebonnet Drive.
- 8:11 Merrill will introduce useful astronomy websites to members.
- 8:14 Meeting adjourned

-Charles Edwards
BRAS Secretary

-Rory Bentley
BRAS Co-Secretary

OBSERVING NOTES

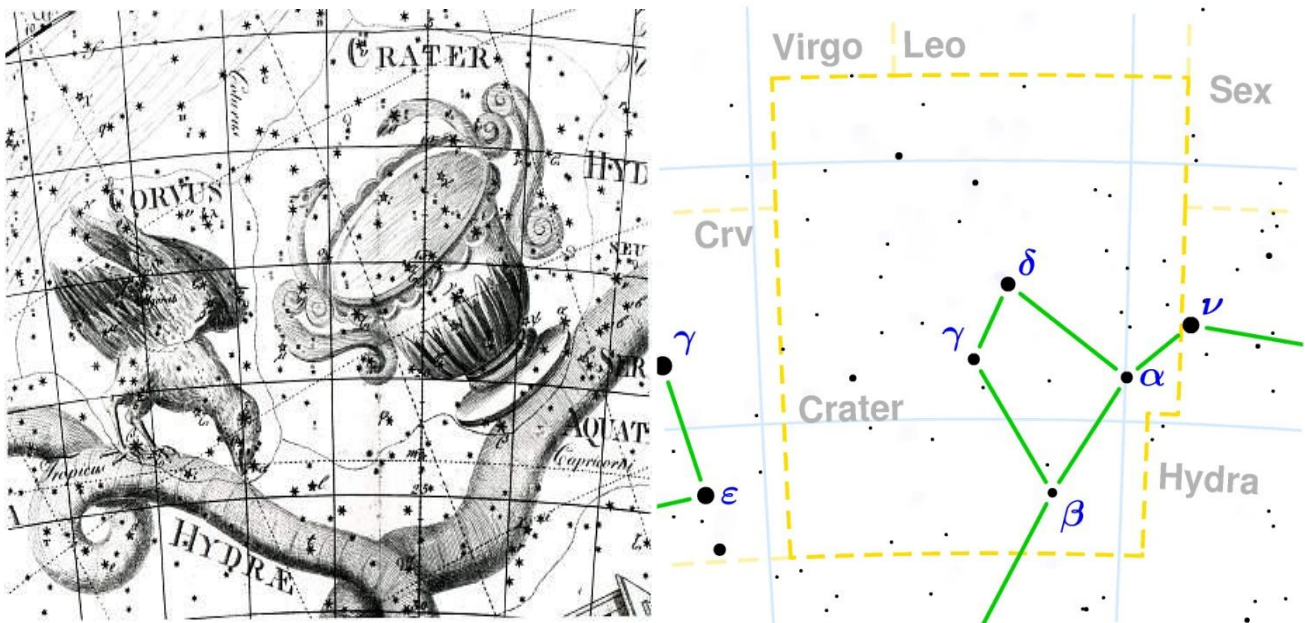
Constellation of the Month

Crater: The Cup

The mythical story of the constellation Crater is closely related to the nearby constellations Corvus (the Crow) and Hydra (the Snake). These adjacent constellations are part of a tale told by Ovid whereby Apollo sent the crow (Corvus) on a quest to find and return water from a running spring. The crow flew off with a cup (Crater) in its claws to use in returning the water. It came upon a fig tree near the spring which was filled with unripe fruit and instead of gathering the water stopped to wait for the fruit to ripen. After several days the fruit was ready and the crow had its fill. He looked around for an alibi and spotted a water-snake (Hydra) nearby. He returned with it in his claws to Apollo, blaming the snake for blocking the way to the spring.

Apollo did not accept the story and condemned the crow to a life of thirst and placed the crow, the cup and the snake together in the sky.

Star Chart



Position in the Sky

Right Ascension: 11 hours Declination: -16 degrees

Named Stars

None

Deep Sky Objects

NGC 3511 (spiral galaxy)

NGC 3887 (spiral galaxy)

NGC 3981 (spiral galaxy)

February Meteor Showers: Lyrids

Duration: April 15th to April 28th

Peak: April 22nd

Radiant: Constellation Lyra

Right Ascension: 18 hours

Declination: 34 degrees

Expected Rate: 15/hr

Origin: Comet C/1861 G1 Thatcher

BRAS Dark Sky Site Viewing Dates

NOTE: The location of the BRAS Dark Sky Site is going to be changed. Until the new site is finalized dark sky site viewing will be suspended. Stay tuned for further details.

For more information check out the BRAS website at <http://www.braastro.org>

Art Barrios

BRAS Observing Chairman

art.barrios@cox.net

TREASURER'S NOTES

The following memberships are up for renewal.

Jonathan Glover	1/1/2012	Prasad Kalghati	9/1/2011
Tyler Guidry	10/1/2011	Alice & Dan Lastrapes	1/1/2012
Rodney Bell	1/1/2012	Corey Luth	10/1/2011
Peggy Bohn	1/1/2012	Art Newman	1/1/2012
Cody Arceneaux	1/1/2012	J.A. Rummler	1/1/2012
Art Barrios	11/1/2011	Mohammed Shafi Syed	9/1/2011
Karen Cashio	6/1/2011	Michael Russo	8/1/2011
Harold Fozzard	1/1/2012	Kristin Troxclair	1/1/2012
Hansel Harlan	11/1/2011	Stephen Tuuri	11/1/2011
Oneal Isaac	1/1/2012	Robin & Bill Walter	1/1/2012
Kevin Hunter	1/1/2012		

If you have already sent in your membership renewal, Thank You!

If you still need to send it in, you can find the membership form on our website by [clicking here](#).

I'd like to make another call (as I have done in past newsletters) to urge people receiving the newsletter via the good ole' postal system to let me send you the newsletter via email. If you don't want to switch to email delivery because you like having a paper copy, fear not! I always bring plenty of paper copies with me to the monthly meetings.

As Merrill mentioned in the VP notes, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana is hosting this month's meeting. They have some nice conference facilities there, and are letting us use them to watch the Hubble movie. I've included a couple of maps that should help you find it. If you have any problems, give me a call.

-Geoff Michelli
BRAS Treasurer

