

February 2025

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

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

Calendar:

- 4 February:
 - 5PM: MSA West
 - 6PM: Perkins' Rowe
 - 6PM: Ascencion Parish Library
- 8 February, 7PM: Landolt Star Party
- 10 February, 7PM: Monthly Meeting
- 27 February, 9AM: Port Hudson School Day
- 8 March, 9AM-4PM: Rockin' at the Swamp
- 11 March, 6PM: Perkins' Rowe
- 28 March, 6PM: St. George School

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President's Message

What an interesting month this has been! Maybe not from an astronomical standpoint, but certainly from a climatological one. I often joke to my friends up in North Dakota that “last winter was a rough week”. Hopefully, last week WAS our winter.

Other than the typical panic-stricken drivers on our roadways and excited kids of all ages making snowmen, the biggest impact to our club was the cancellation of our Rockefeller trip. On Wednesday evening I made the decision to cancel the trip altogether. It turned out to be the right choice because on Friday the Refuge Manager called me to say that the roads were still bad, their office would be closed through the weekend, and all water had been turned off to the buildings. We'll try again next year.

Speaking of decisions, I've decided to issue an “Executive Order” (that seems to be a trend these days) to officially disband the Light Pollution Committee at our next meeting. However, since I am only an amateur despot, I will consider any objections to this plan. At our recent quarterly officers' meeting the general feeling was the Light Pollution Committee has strayed from its original course. It was intended to have a focus on educating the public about the causes and effects of light pollution and to recognize businesses that were installing night-sky friendly lighting. The more recent focus seems to be on advocating for political or regulatory solutions. This is problematic. As a non-profit organization, our club's charter specifically prohibits political activity. Our charter also states that any official BRAS committee serves at the discretion of the President (at this time, me). There is nothing in our charter or in our Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with BREC or LSU that requires maintaining such a committee. Finally, since the previous committee chairman resigned and no one has volunteered to step into this role, I can only assume that interest in the Light Pollution Committee has waned. If any BRAS member has objections to dissolving the committee, let them speak at February's meeting or forever hold their peace.

Lastly, a reminder about our February Sidewalk Astronomy events. Both events will occur on Tuesday, February 4th; one at Perkins Rowe and one at the library in Gonzales. I can't guarantee clear skies this far out, but I'm pretty sure it won't be as cold as last month. So, take your pick, bring out your scope, and share your passion with others. If you want, you can even talk about light pollution.

Vice President's Word

Hi Everyone,

Be sure to come join us on **Monday, February 10th at 7pm at the Highland Road Park Observatory** for our next monthly meeting. We will be hosting LSU Physics and Astronomy professor, Dr. Colin Turley. This should be a fun talk. He's going to tell us how to go FAST!!

Our meeting in January was excellent! Even though not many people seemed to have gotten much for the holidays to show off, we did have some new Seestars on hand. After a bit of business, a good raffle and some socializing, we all headed outside and watched the Moon occult Mars! It was pretty cool to see so many club members all hanging out actually being able to look up to the night sky and see something going on. Too often the clouds come rolling in and wreck those plans, but we got pretty lucky and everyone was able to view the occultation.

Let me know if there are any topics you feel may be of interest to the club for future presentations. I'll also be thinking of ways to get us outside for some more real time observing for a change!

Clear Skies,

Ben Toman

Vice President

Outreach Report

Hi Everyone,

Not a whole lot to report as far as outreach that has happened so far this year, but we DID have a couple of nights of Sidewalk Astronomy. The Seestars have been a big hit, but they can't compare to the telescopes when it comes to looking at the Moon and planets.

As I write this, we're looking at a challenging, busy couple weeks ahead. Busy because we'll have our rescheduled outreach to Westdale Heights Academic Magnet on Thursday, January 30th followed by more outreach the next week. Challenging because somehow we have 3 events scheduled for Tuesday, February 4th! (Sidewalk Astronomy at both Perkins Rowe and Gonzales Library AND the STEM night in Plaquemine for MSA academy. It'll be tough, but we'll make it through!!

Finally, it's time to start looking forward to the annual Rockin' at the Swamp event at the Bluebonnet Swamp and Nature Center. This is always a fun event, but it IS all day so we need plenty of hands to help out. You don't need to be there all day, of course. Just let me know how long you can be there and if you have a preference of time and we'll start building a schedule for the day.

I'm looking forward to seeing some new faces from the club helping out at our Outreach this year. Don't be shy! This is a great way to get to know some fellow club members, have fun talking about astronomy AND provide a great community service all at the same time. Take a look at the list below and if you'd like to help out, just let me know!

Clear Skies,

Ben Toman

Outreach Chairperson

Upcoming Events

Tuesday February 4th

5pm-6:15pm

MSA West in Plaquemine STEM Night
(demos and possible telescope viewing/Seestar)

Tuesday, February 4th

6pm-9pm

Sidewalk Astronomy at Perkins Rowe

Tuesday, February 4th

6pm-7:30pm

Sidewalk Astronomy at Ascension Parish Library Gonzales

Thursday, February 27th

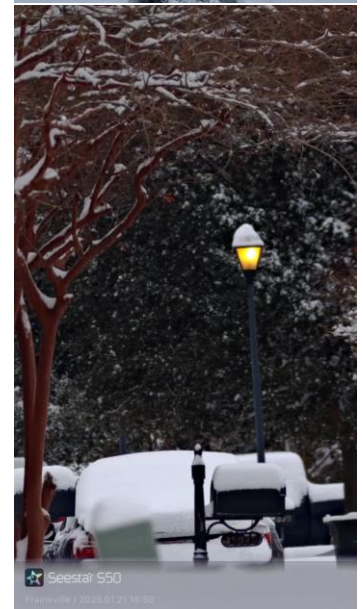
9am-11:30am

Port Hudson Historic Site School Day
(demos and possible solar viewing)

Saturday, March 8th

9am-4pm

Rockin at the Swamp
Bluebonnet Swamp and Nature Center
Several people needed for shifts to cover the whole day
Demos and solar viewing



Top, the frozen few from Perkins' Rowe (minus Roz, who we hear has taken to Piracy). Center, Ben walking his "snowstar" after the blizzard and what they saw.

Tuesday, March 11th

6pm-9pm

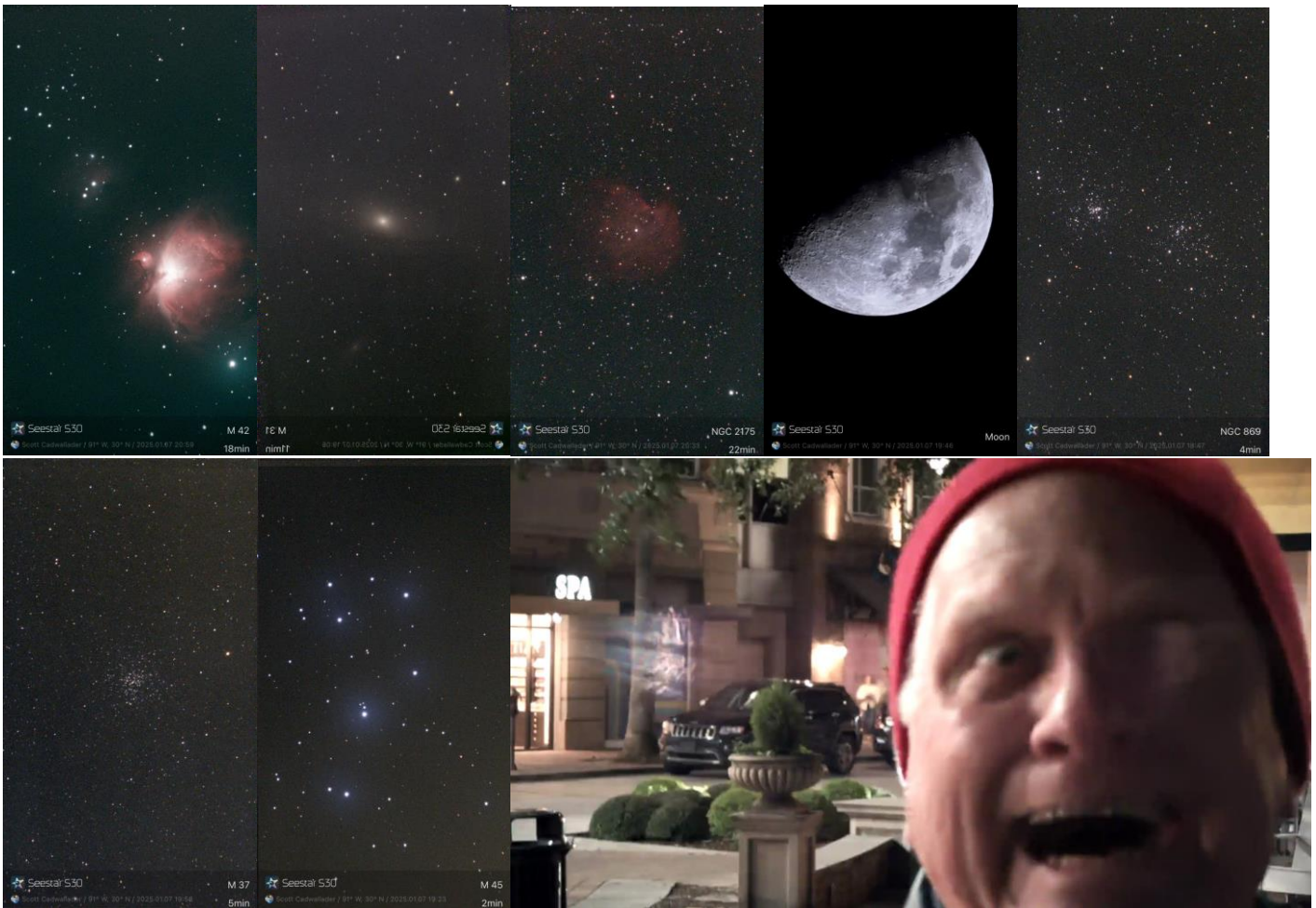
Sidewalk Astronomy at Perkins Rowe

Friday, March 28th

6pm-8pm

St George School (Siegen Lane-Baton Rouge) Star Night

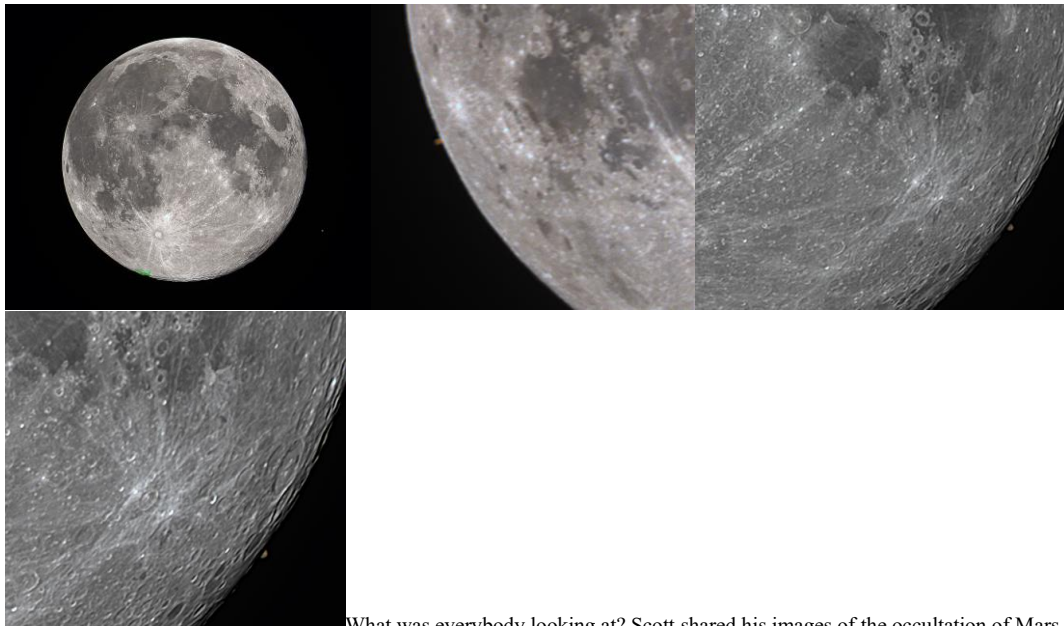
Telescope observing



A few of the captures from the Seestar taken during January's event at Perkins Rowe Sidewalk Astronomy.

Secretary's Summary

- Don called the meeting to order
- The upcoming occultation of Mars by the Moon was being live streamed to the big screen via Scott's AP rig
- Rockefeller Star Party was discussed
- Upcoming outreach was discussed by Ben
- Scrubbed Blue Origin launch was mentioned and Ben mentioned he was working on someone from Blue Origin as a guest for a future club meeting
- Show and tell commenced with Ben showing accessories he got for his new Seestar S50
- Chris R. showed off his cobbled together scope w/mount he brought to view the occultation.
- Don inquired if there were any announcements or requests from BREC and Chris K. said there was nothing at the time
- Raffle was held
- Socializing and snacks until all headed outside to view the occultation
- Occultation viewing was a complete success
- Several members stayed for an additional hour to see the reemergence of Mars from behind the Moon



What was everybody looking at? Scott shared his images of the occultation of Mars with the people at HRPO during and after the meeting. It looked so good on the big screen inside, in real time.

Observatory Notes

HIGHLAND ROAD PARK OBSERVATORY February 2025 Public Schedule

SCIENCE ACADEMY

Saturdays from 10am to 12pm

for Cadets aged eight to twelve / \$5 per Cadet per session (\$6 if non-EBR Parish)

advanced registration via WebTrac strongly recommended

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

Limit sixteen Cadets per session.

1 February = “Sirius and Canopus”

8 February = “ISS Expedition 9”

15 February = “Deep Space Objects I”

AMATEUR ASTRONOMY COURSES

Saturdays from 3:30pm to 7:30pm / registration in progress [activity #531992]

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!

“Learn Your Sky” = 1 February

“Learn Your Binocular” = 1 March (*postponed from 4 January*)

EVENING SKY VIEWING

for ages six and older / no admission fee

Saturdays (1, 8, and 22 February) from 8:30pm to 10pm

Fridays (7, 21 and 28 February) from 7:30pm to 10pm

FRIDAY NIGHT LECTURE SERIES

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

7 February = “Nome Serum Run” In a record time, the life-saving antitoxin medicine reached the Alaska town threatened with annihilation from a spread of diphtheria. Education Program Specialist Amy Northrop for the 100th anniversary of this thrilling event. (*postponed from 24 January*)

21 February = “The Asteroids” Remnants of our Solar System’s early existence are still with us. Over one million of them orbit the Sun—some do so dangerously close to the Earth. Some can be seen unaided-eye and some have been visited by our spacecraft.

28 February = “The Dawn Mission” In March 2015, Dawn became the first spacecraft to orbit around two bodies. Amy Northrop provide a fresh look at this incredible accomplishment.

SOLAR VIEWING SPECIAL SESSIONThursday 13 February from 11:15am to 1:15pmfor 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.

A CELESTIAL ROMANCEFriday 14 February from 6pm to 10pmfor ages twelve and older / no admission fee / drinks

An enthralling look at the true “affair of the heart” each skygazer has with our sky this night: satellites, maybe an asteroid, planets, stars and clusters—and the Moon joins us halfway through the event!

PLUS NIGHT: “Love in the Ether”Saturday 15 February from 7pm to 10pmfor 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).

*Seven to ten 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.

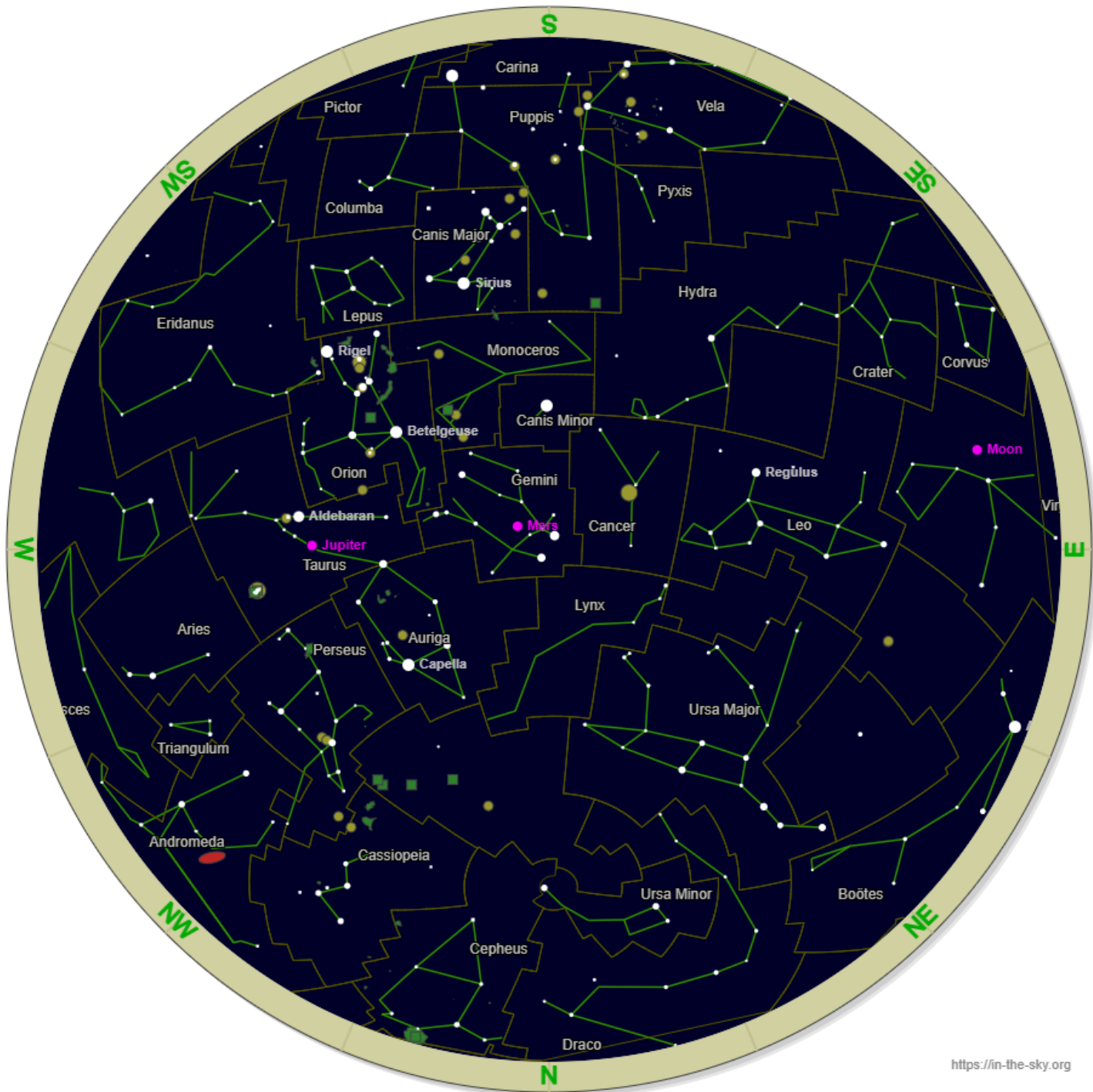
SOLAR VIEWINGSaturday 22 February from 12pm to 2pmfor ages six and older / no admission fee

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.

STEM EXPANSION: “Physics”Saturday 22 February from 2:30pm to 6:30pmfor ages twelve to sixteen / \$15 per registrant (\$18 if non EBR-Parish)advanced registration via WebTrac required [activity #531993]

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

Sky Map



<https://in-the-sky.org>

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

Quick Picks—Events for February 2025

- Sat 1 [Venus](#) 2.3°N of [Moon](#)
- Sat 1 [Moon](#) Perigee at 367,457 km.
- Wed 5 [First Quarter Moon](#)
- Thu 6 Pleiades 0.5°S of [Moon](#)
- Thu 6 [Jupiter](#) 5.5°S of [Moon](#)
- Sun 9 [Mercury](#) in Superior Conjunction
- Sun 9 Occultation of [Mars](#) by the Moon
- Sun 9 Pollux 2.1°N of [Moon](#)
- Mon 10 Beehive 2.6°S of [Moon](#)
- Wed 12 [Full Moon](#)
- Wed 12 Regulus 2.2°S of [Moon](#)
- Mon 17 Spica 0.3°N of [Moon](#)
- Mon 17 [Moon](#) Apogee at 404,882 km.
- Wed 19 [Venus](#) at Perihelion
- Thu 20 [Last Quarter Moon](#)
- Fri 21 Antares 0.4°N of [Moon](#)
- Tue 25 [Mercury](#) 1.4° of [Saturn](#)
- Thu 27 [New Moon](#)
- Fri 28 Occultation of [Mercury](#) by the Moon (South Pacific area)

(Courtesy of Telescopius.com. Check Stellarium.com for exact times and visibility for your location.)

Looking up



Celebrating 20 Years: Night Sky Network

By Vivian White and Kat Troche

NASA's Night Sky Network is one of the most successful and longstanding grassroots initiatives for public engagement in astronomy education. Started in 2004 with the PlanetQuest program out of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory and currently supported by NASA's Science Activation, the Night Sky Network (NSN) is critical in fostering science literacy through astronomy. By connecting NASA science and missions to support amateur astronomy clubs, NSN leverages the expertise and enthusiasm of club members, who bring this knowledge to schools, museums, observatories, and other organizations, bridging the gap between NASA science and the public. Now in its 20th year, NSN supports over 400 astronomy clubs dedicated to bringing the wonder of the night sky to their communities across the U.S. and connecting with 7.4 million people across the United States and its territories since its inception.



International Observe the Moon Night, September 2024. Credit: Oklahoma City Astronomy Club/Dave Huntz

Humble Beginnings

It all started with an idea – astronomy clubs already do significant outreach, and club members know a lot about astronomy (shown definitively by founder Marni Berendsen’s research), and they love to talk with the public. How could NASA support these astronomy clubs in sharing current research and ideas through informal activities designed for use in the places where amateur astronomers conduct outreach? Thanks to funding through NASA JPL’s PlanetQuest public engagement program, the Night Sky Network was born in 2004, with more than 100 clubs joining in the first year.



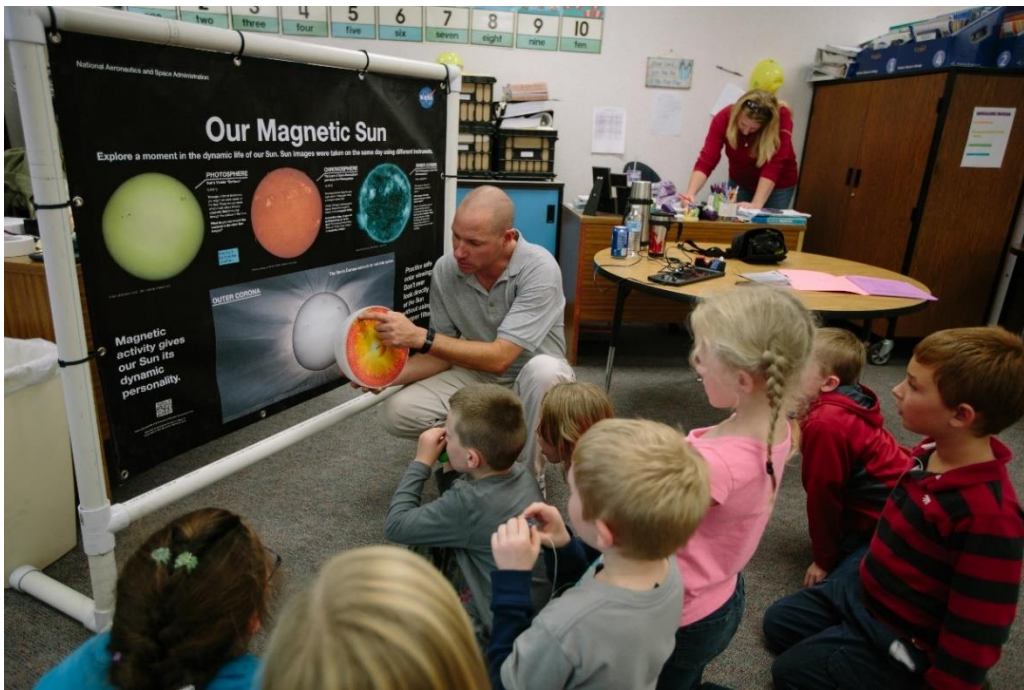
Raynham Public Observing Night, February 2004. Credit: Astronomical Society of Southern New England/Mark Gibson

As quoted from the first NSN news article, "NASA is very excited to be working closely with the amateur astronomy community," said Michael Greene, current Director of Communications and Education and former head of public engagement for JPL's Navigator Program and PlanetQuest initiatives. "Amateurs want more people to look at the sky and understand astronomy, and so do we. Connecting what we do with our missions to the sense of wonder that comes when you look up at the stars and the planets is one of our long-term objectives. We have a strong commitment to inspiring the next generation of explorers. Lending support to the energy that the amateur astronomy community brings to students and the public will allow NASA to reach many more people."

Taking off like a rocket, Night Sky Network had over 100 clubs registered on their website within the first year.

The Toolkits

Outreach Toolkits were developed to assist clubs with their endeavors. These kits include educational materials, hands-on activities, and guides for explaining topics in an accessible way. So far, 13 toolkits have been created on topics ranging from the scale of the universe to how telescopes work. To qualify for these free Toolkits, clubs must be active in their communities, hosting two outreach events every three months or five outreach events within a calendar year. Supplemental toolkits were also created based on special events like the solar eclipses and the 50th anniversary of Apollo’s Moon landing. A new toolkit is being developed to teach audiences about solar science, and NSN is on track to support clubs well into the future.



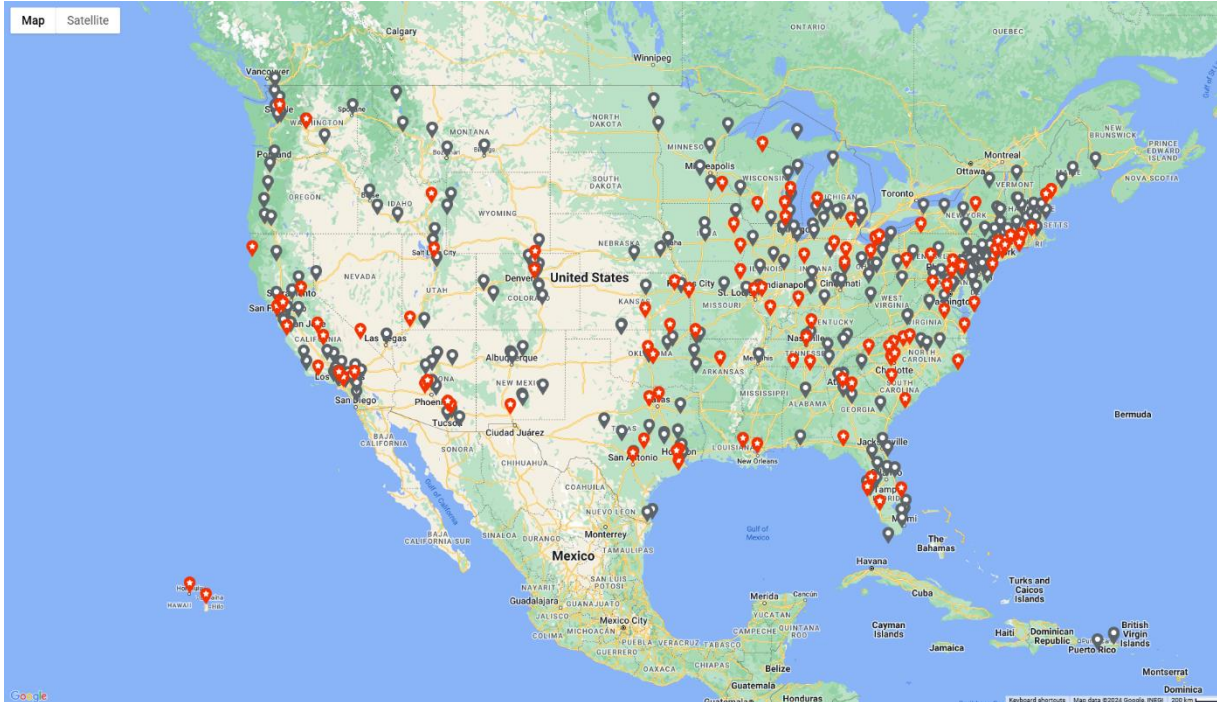
Rye Science Day, October 2014. Credit: Southern Colorado Astronomical Society/Malissa Pacheco

NSN also hosts archived video trainings on these toolkits and other topics via its YouTube channel and a [monthly webinar series](#) with scientists from various institutions worldwide. Lastly, a monthly segment called [Night Sky Notes](#) is produced for clubs to share with their audiences via newsletters and mailing lists.

Sharing the Universe

In 2007, a National Science Foundation grant funded further research into astronomy club needs. From that came three club resources: the [Growing Your Astronomy Club](#) and Getting Started with Outreach video series, an updated website with a national calendar, and club and event coordination. Now, you can find [hundreds of monthly events](#) nationwide, including virtual events you can join from anywhere.

Night Sky Network: Current and Future



Map of Night Sky Network clubs within the United States as of November 2024

As of November 2024, NSN has over 400 clubs as far north as Washington State, west as Hawaii, and south as far as Puerto Rico. Astronomy clubs worldwide share the wonder of the day and night sky with their communities, and the Night Sky Network is happy to support US clubs with public engagement tools. Through their outreach efforts, member clubs have reached more than 7 million people to date, and the community is still going strong. Find an upcoming star party near you on our [new public website](#).

Noted

From the January Planning meeting:

- Two new donations were mentioned: an old Meade single arm mount and a 70ETX: suggested use was to raffle them.
- The question of what to do with the Coast Instruments Inc., Trekerscope Galaxy Series 8” was discussed: the three proposals were to create a card talking about it’s significance, donate it to a museum, or raffle it off at a future meeting.
- Possible dates for future HRPO star party were discussed
- A lengthy discussion of the LPC was had focused on proposed changes to structure and accessibility as well as purpose and aims of the committee. It was agreed that the discussion was better had at an open meeting of the club to receive the most input.
- There was a proposal for the creation of club business cards.
- It was agreed that we should purchase new, light-weight and easily transported sandwich boards for sidewalk astronomy events.
- The AV setup for HRPO was discussed at length. There is a need to move the BRAS computer and LSU needs to be contacted about how to rewire the internet to meet our needs.
- The Perkins’ Rowe advertisement was discussed.
- There was a lengthy discussion of migration of outreach signups to a Night Sky Network account.
- A policy for check-out of the Seestar was discussed—more thought needs to be put into it.
- Trey advertised that if anybody needed a Girl Scout cookie dealer, his eldest daughter has what you covered—just hit him up at a meeting to get your fix.

Contact Information

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

Vice-President-----Ben Toman outreach.brastro@gmail.com

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

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

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

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCS3Xkk1t7C9IRnB8GKrt9MQ>

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

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

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