

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Astronomical Society

www.brastro.org

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hey Everyone,

Well, the July night sky hasn't been much better than what we had for most of the winter when it comes to clouds and rain. I hope you've had at least a couple of opportunities to get outside and see some of the summer constellations. For the most part, though, it's been cloudy nights. That hasn't stopped July from being exciting when it comes to our hobby, though. The main excitement was brought by the International Planetarium Society Conference. I know we had at least 10 BRAS members helping out as volunteers and I hope some of you got a chance to go check it out. The final count of registered delegates was 701. There were people from all over the world! The world of the planetarium is a bit different from our world of the observatory, but one way in which we are the same is in our desire to share our knowledge of science and the night sky with our communities. Many of the delegates I spoke with had telescopes of their own and were even members of their local astronomical clubs. The whole conference was a great experience and along with wanting to work on more BRAS outreach, it has made many of us want to continue to strengthen our relationship with the planetarium.

We've got some great stuff coming up soon, too. First will be the Perseid Meteor Shower. We'll be open at the HRPO during the peak night of Saturday, August 11th until 2AM so come out and join us for that. Next, we will have our August meeting Monday the 13th. Something else of interest happening on that day is a daytime occultation of Venus by the Moon. This is taking place at about 2:51PM if I am correct in my calculation of Universal Time. Several of us may try to catch a glimpse of this event at the Burbank Soccer Complex. I'll send out an email update as the plans evolve and the time approaches.

I hope to see you all at the August meeting. Also, let me know if you've given any thought to any of the points from my last President's Message. (Now is the time for you to go back through your email or sift through your old mail to read last month's message and figure out what I'm talking about! You can also always access the past newsletters via the archive on our website...brastro.org.)

Clear Skies,
Ben Toman
BRAS President

NOTES FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Lots of people take vacations in the summertime, including BRAS members. Plus lots of parents are getting their kids ready for the new school year. So, we will have a fairly laid back BRAS meeting at the Observatory this Monday, the 13th. We will explore some astronomy sites on the World Wide Web. Sites where you can do astronomy, get information, learn new skills, and look at pretty things. No, not the two-legged heavenly bodies, but the celestial kind.

So, if you have a laptop and want to follow along, the Observatory has wireless. Also, bring your favorite astronomy or related website for us to consider for future meetings. See you there.

P.S. - Keep your eyes open for Felix Baumgartner's edge-of-space jump. It could happen this month.

And how about that Curiosity Mars Rover?

Merrill Hess
BRAS Vice President

OUTREACH

Last week, we received a call from a Cub Scout leader requesting our help with an event they are having in the future. The event will be at the Lamar-Dixon center and they expect somewhere in the neighborhood of 500 kids and adults to be in attendance.

They would like to know if we can bring as many telescopes as we can find so their kids can view objects as part of an educational exercise.

The event will be held on Saturday, October 6th, 2012. We will start sending requests for help in the near future, so start thinking if you can attend.

OBSERVING NOTES

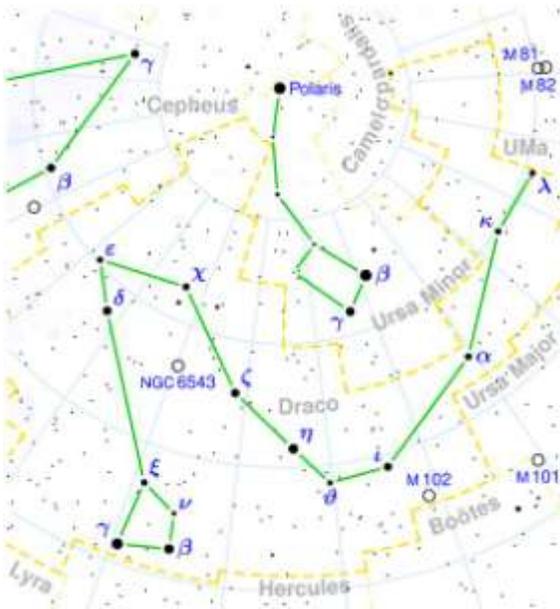
Constellation of the Month

Draco: The Dragon

As it marches around the celestial pole the dragon Draco seems to be guarding something of great value hidden there. According to ancient Greek legend this precious treasure was a tree presented as a wedding present to Hera which produced golden apples. Draco represents the dragon residing in the garden of the Hesperides where the tree was planted. One of the labors of Hercules was to steal these apples and thus the need for a powerful protector.

Draco contains the beautiful Cat's Eye Nebula known as NGC 6543. This planetary nebula is about 3000 light years away and was originally discovered by William Herschel in 1786. Its complex shape is attributed to the gravitational interactions of the multiple stars located at the center of the nebula.

Star Chart



Position in the Sky

Right Ascension: 17 hours Declination: 65 degrees

Named Stars

THUBAN (Alpha Dra), Rastaban (Beta Dra), ETAMIN (Gamma Dra), Nodus Secundus (Delta Dra), Tyl (Epsilon Dra), Aldhibah (Zeta Dra), Ed Asich (Iota Dra), Gianfar (Lambda Dra), Arrakis (Mu Dra), Kuma (Nu 2 Dra), Grumium (Xi Dra), Alsafi (Sigma Dra), Dsiban (Psi 1 Dra)

Deep Sky Objects

NGC 6543 – Cats Eye Nebula
M102 – Lenticular Galaxy

Meteor Showers: Perseids

Duration: July 17th to August 24th

Peak: August 12th
Radiant: Constellation Perseus
Right Ascension: 3 hours
Declination: 58 degrees
Expected Rate: 80/hr
Origin: Comet Swift-Tuttle

BRAS Dark Sky Site Viewing Dates

August 11th and 18th

Directions: From Baton Rouge take I-10 west to exit 135 Ramah/Maringouin. At Highway 3000 take a right and go about 100 feet and take a left. Go about 200 feet and take a right. This will take you to the levee road where you take a right. Travel north on the levee road for about 1/3 of a mile and just past a left hand curve you will see a gravel road leading up the levee. Go up and over the levee there and park on the other side of the levee.

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

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