



Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Astronomical Society

[www.braastro.org](http://www.braastro.org)

**December 2012**

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hi Everyone,

Well, another year bites the dust. 2012 was quick, but eventful. I'd have to say that the Curiosity landing was pretty much the greatest highlight, although I have my fingers crossed that this exciting announcement that the team is supposed to make sometime in the next few weeks will trump even that. Other highlights include another successful Hodges Gardens Star Party, the 30th anniversary of the Deep South Regional Stargaze, the last Transit of Venus that any of us are likely to see in our lifetimes, BRAS' involvement with the International Planetarium Society Conference and the fly over of the Space Shuttle Endeavor at the Michoud Assembly Facility on its way out to California. Also, for those that may not be aware, the HRPO is celebrating its 15th anniversary so look for some fun events to come in 2013.

Winter is almost upon us and the sun is setting earlier. The bugs aren't so much of a problem due to the cool weather, and so far, we've had a decent share of clear nights. I hope you have had a chance to get out and see the night sky this season. Jupiter is nicely placed in Taurus at the moment and just the other night made a spectacular sight coming close to the nearly full Moon. I want to remind you all that being in this club means you have access to many other people with the same interest in astronomy. Do you feel like you want to go out and do some observing, but you just don't feel like going out alone? You probably aren't alone! All you have to do is let your voice be heard. Come out to some meetings and you are bound to meet several people that love to go out observing and would also love the company. Go to our website and sign up for the Forum and make a post. My point is, "not having anyone to go with" shouldn't end up being an excuse for you to not go out for some observing.

Our annual pot-luck is here with our December 10th meeting. I hope you all will be able to join us. Again, these food meetings are great times to bring along a friend or neighbor that may have an interest in astronomy. We have a good count when it comes to our total club membership, but the more people we have, the more people are available to help us grow as a club and continue to reach out to the rest of the community in our promotion of astronomy and our night skies.

Hope to see you out there and have a great rest of 2012!!

Clear Skies,  
Ben Toman  
BRAS President  
[tomanben@gmail.com](mailto:tomanben@gmail.com)

## NOTES FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Merry Christmas everybody!! As I write this the temperature is a balmy 75 degrees, so put on your favorite Christmas shorts and tank shirt and join the Christmas cheer Monday, December 10th at 7 PM at the Observatory for our annual Christmas party. Bring your appetite and a small side dish if you like. BRAS will supply the main course, napkins, and fine China (the best paper and plastic variety).

This will be mostly a social gathering, but Ben has some odds and ends he would like to present. Trevor may give a short history of our BRAS outreach over the years. If we can scrounge some photos, we will bring them. If time allows, I might have a short video we can watch.

Remember, we have the 9X63 MiniGiant binoculars to raffle. \$5 per chance or 6 for \$25. If we raise enough money on this maybe we will be able to give them to the winner the night of the meeting. Wouldn't that be a nice Christmas present? Proceeds from the raffle will go toward the purchase of future high quality raffle goodies.

On Christmas day and December 28th, we will have some nice conjunctions of the Moon, Jupiter, and Aldebaran. The Geminid meteor shower will range from December 4 - 17, and peak on the night of December 13-14. It is a fairly reliable shower and should produce a number of bright meteors any night during that period. Peak night should produce increased activity. Sometimes it peaks as much 120/hour.

There is a lot to see this December, so keep your eyes open.

Merrill Hess  
BRAS Vice President

## OUTREACH

Sidewalk Astronomy program is going to happen again this year. The flier shows the dates and location for this year's events. Let us know if you'd like to help out, and swing by during the events to see how enthralled the public gets when looking at Jupiter.

# SIDEWALK ASTRONOMY



Come see the moon,  
planets, binary stars,  
galaxies, and more,  
all for free!



All events start at 7PM

October 25th	CC's on Perkins
November 20th	CC's on Jefferson
December 18th	CC's on Perkins
January 22nd	CC's on Jefferson
February 19th	CC's on Perkins
March 19th	CC's on Jefferson

In the event of a rainy or cloudy night, we will automatically postpone the event to the following Tuesday. If that night is also rainy or cloudy, that event will be cancelled.

[www.BRastro.org](http://www.BRastro.org)

## MESSAGE FROM THE HRPO

### CONSTRUCTION ON HRPO GROUNDS

The final design for the new street sign at the entrance to HRPO property has been finalized—basically. The original idea was for BREC to use the round, color version of BRAS' logo. However, although the background for the sign is colored and “spacey”, all of the foreground text (HRPO's name and BREC and LSU's logos) are white. That would have made the BRAS logo the only in-color component. Therefore, I told BREC to use instead the black-and-white circle logo for BRAS; all text on the sign will look uniform as a result.

### FRIDAY NIGHT LECTURE SERIES

*all start at 7:30pm*

7 December: “Apollo 17 Fortieth Anniversary”

14 December: “The Mayan Calendar”

21 December: “The Star of Bethlehem”

28 December: “The Gregorian Calendar”

### HRPO 15<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY:

#### SPECIAL EVENTS, DECEMBER 2012 TO NOVEMBER 2013

Saturday, 17 November from 5pm to 8pm

Fred Barnett has established a special page at the HRPO website which details many of the special events we have planned over the next twelve months to commemorate HRPO's fifteen years of public service. These events begin with attempted viewing of the asteroid Toutatis and end with the (hopefully as predicted) amazing view of Comet ISON, which if occurs will probably start around Thanksgiving 2013.

### CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS: ON SITE

\*Wednesday, 12 December from 6pm to 12am. *Two volunteers.* **Asteroid Toutatis Viewing and Geminid Meteor Shower.** Small telescope; floating. Easy; training provided.

\*Saturday, 22 December from 5pm to 9pm. *Two volunteers in addition to regular BRAS compliment.* **Don't Fear the Future Party.** Marshmallow roast, demo and clock tables; small telescope; setup and takedown. Easy; training provided.

\*Saturday, 19 January from 3pm to 7pm. *Eight or nine volunteers.* **Learn to Use Your Telescope.** Instructing registrants for the class in the use of their personal telescopes. Previous telescope knowledge required.

### LIGHT POLLUTION NOTES

GLOBE at Night, the citizen science light pollution exercise sponsored by the International Dark-Sky Association, begins on 3 January. There will be five ten-day campaigns which will run from January to May. Orion is the constellation participants will view in January and February; they use Leo in April. (Both constellations are available in March.) As with past years, an observer notes the number of stars he or she sees and picks the online star chart which matches that view the closest. The more submitted reports the better, as this exercise allows the creation of a user-developed light pollution

map. More information is on the BRAS bulletin board, and at [www.globeatnight.org](http://www.globeatnight.org).

An alert BRAS member has called our attention to a new government building—the Public Works and Planning Center at 1100 Laurel Street. The Mayor’s Office sent out a press release dated 22 October mentioning the planned ribbon-cutting ceremony for the following day, and stating the Center is “the first LEED-certified municipal building in East Baton Rouge Parish”. LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, and that design apparently including well-crafted outside lighting fixtures!

### SKYWATCH 2013

The *Skywatch* guide for 2013 is now at HRPO. This annual guide is invaluable for basic skyviewing through the year. Any major eclipses, conjunctions, transits and meteor showers are listed. The eighty-two page book also includes tips on eradicating light pollution, skygazing under light-polluted skies in the meantime, a map for each month from December 2012 to December 2013, a lunar map with over 250 telescopic features marked, a four-page article on how best to see the planets, advice on looking at the Sun in a safe and fun manner, a eight-page section outlining the best deep-sky features for each season and more! Alan MacRobert, Fred Schaaf, Tony Flanders and J. Kelly Beaty are contributors. The book’s cost is \$10 with tax. *Skywatch* will be available for purchase during the 10 December party.

## TREASURER'S NOTES

Your membership will need to be renewed by January 1<sup>st</sup>. Some of you have already done so. Those of you who haven't, I encourage you to renew. I'll be at the December meeting. Feel free to renew in person. Alternatively, you can send me your renewal in the mail. You can find the necessary information at the BRAS website on the membership form.

Geoff Michelli  
BRAS Treasurer

## DARK SKY VIEWING

December 8th and 15<sup>th</sup>

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.braastro.org>

Art Barrios  
BRAS Observing Chairman  
[art.barrios@cox.net](mailto:art.barrios@cox.net)

## PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

### November 12 2012 Meeting Notes:

- 7:19 Meeting begins (BRAS President Ben Toman was not attending)
- 7:20 BRAS members told to consider who they want to nominate as election candidates.
- 7:23 Deep South Regional Star Gaze (DSRSG) discussed. BRAS winners in the DSRSG raffle announce winnings. Don won a \$2000 telescope.
- 7:28 Wally's retirement mentioned.
- 7:29 Astronomical League Meteor Observing Award given to Chris.
- 7:31 HRPO 15th anniversary party to be hosted on Saturday the 17th.
- 7:33 Chris talks about the upcoming asteroid Toutatis flyby.
- 7:34 Sidewalk Astronomy on Tuesday the 20th.
- 7:38 Hodges Gardens Star Party dates announced (March 13-17).
- 7:40 Merrill's talk begins.
- 8:09 Talk ends. Talk discusses upcoming comets PANSTARSS and Encke (both reaching perihelion in early 2013), and comet ISON (potential "great comet" reaching perihelion in November 2013).
- 8:10 Steve gives a talk about what happened to him at the DSRSG.
- 8:32 Steve's talk ends.
- 8:32-45 Discussion about DSRSG.
- 8:46 Raffle prizes announced.
- 8:48 Meeting adjourned.

Rory Bentley  
BRAS Co-Secretary