



Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Astronomical Society

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

**February 2012**

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hey Everyone,

First of all, thank you to everyone that was able to make it out to the screening of "The City Dark" last month. We had a good showing from BRAS with just over 30 members in attendance. We have a long way to go in the fight for dark skies over Baton Rouge, but the important thing is that it has started. If you have any ideas or would like to help contribute some time to this campaign for dark skies, please let us know.

Well, 2012 is off and running and we are starting to get lots of requests for a BRAS presence at different events around the area. As you may or may not know, last year we created a new post in the club, Outreach Chairperson. This individual will be in charge of most of the outreach activities of the club and will help to ensure we have the support from the members to make the outreach a success.

Our current chairperson is Trevor McGuire. For those that don't know him already, he is one of our most active members and is very dedicated to bringing astronomy to the public. We have an email list and you may hear from him on occasion enlisting volunteers. With that in mind, please don't hesitate to get involved with any of the outreach that we do as a club. It doesn't matter if you don't know how many miles are in an Astronomical Unit, or if you don't know how many light years away the Moon is; (That last one was a joke to see if anyone is still reading...haha) WE WANT YOUR HELP! Our outreach events are almost always for the general public or schools. The most important thing we can do at those events is to try to inspire someone with a desire to learn more about astronomy. So, don't be shy. If you see we need some people for an event, come on out. You'll be surprised how much you will learn yourself just by being around these events.

I hope everyone has had at least one chance to get outside to enjoy our winter night sky. The temperatures have been very mild and we've had a few very nice nights out at the HRPO. Jupiter and Orion rarely disappoint. Also, don't forget we have the Hodges Gardens Star Party coming up March 21st - 25th. Again, don't be shy about going to this star party. Sure, we have rules, but those rules are very easy to follow and make the whole experience more enjoyable for everyone. If you have any questions about the star party, please don't hesitate to contact either me ([tomanben@gmail.com](mailto:tomanben@gmail.com)) or via phone at [225-313-3743](tel:225-313-3743)) or Don Weinell ([kisatchie@cox.net](mailto:kisatchie@cox.net)) The more people we have at these things, the more fun we have.

Have a great February, everyone, and I hope to see you at the meeting or out observing somewhere!

Ben Toman  
BRAS President

## NOTES FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Hi Everyone,

Our very own Brad Schaefer will be our guest presenter at our next meeting on February 13th. As most of you should know by now, Brad and Martha traveled to Stockholm, Sweden to participate in the Nobel Prize ceremonies awarded to Saul Perlmutter and team, for the discovery of dark energy. Some of Brad's work on supernovae using the WIYN telescope was used in the discovery, so he gets partial credit (no prize or money, unfortunately). Brad's presentation will be in two parts. First, he will discuss his scientific contributions to the research that led to the discovery. Second, he will tell about his trip to Stockholm, the prize ceremonies and the black-tie celebrations. And maybe we will find out whether he got the diamond tiara as Martha wished. Really, Brad, she is a geologist. She deserves her stones.

Mark your calendars for March 9-11. A number of amateur astronomers will set up telescopes for the Sicilian Festival in Independence, LA. We will set up for solar viewing and night observing behind Charles Genovese's office, just backstage of the bandstand. I know that doesn't sound like a good location but it is fairly dark. Plus the sound from stage is somewhat muted. Charles says that on attendee surveys, the telescopes have received the most responses when asked to name their favorite part of the festival. So, if you want to share the sky, some good food, and good music, let me know ([merrillhess@gmail.com](mailto:merrillhess@gmail.com)) and I will give you the details.

Merrill Hess  
BRAS Vice President

## MESSAGE FROM HRPO

### JANUARY AT HRPO

January 2012 was an incredible month at HRPO. Attendance and hits at hrpo.lsu.edu both outdistanced the numbers for January of last year.

Thanks to Muralidar Chakravarthi, Peter Lazar, Barrow Leake, Trevor McGuire, Geoff Michelli, John Murphy, John Nagle and Ben Toman for their assistance at the 100%-filled Learn to Use Your Telescope course on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

### FRIDAY NIGHT LECTURE SERIES

*all start at 7:30pm*

- 10 February: "The Magnificent Milky Way" [Trevor McGuire]
- 17 February: "The Flight of Friendship 7" [Tom Northrop]
- 24 February: "Supernova 1987a 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary" [Chris you-know-who]
- 2 March: "The Mars Report" [Art Barrios]

### CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS: ON SITE

\*Saturday, 25 February from 3pm to 7pm. *Five to six volunteers.* For "Learn to Use Your Telescope" course. Basic knowledge of telescope parts and functions required.  
(If interested in helping at any of these sessions, please call HRPO in advance so we can include you in the schedule.)

\*Saturday, 3 March from 6pm to 10pm. *One additional volunteer in addition to regular BRAS compliment.* Evening Sky Viewing Plus. Marshmallow roast, demo and clock tables. Easy; training provided. We will also, from 6:30pm to 8:30pm, be looking for the seven brightest objects in the night sky.

\*Monday, 5 March from 8pm to 12am. *One to two volunteers.* This is Mars' Closest Approach! We'll need simultaneous telescopes in action. During the MCA of 2009, we saw over 300 visitors!

\*Saturday, 31 March from 6pm to 10pm. *One additional volunteer in addition to regular BRAS compliment.* Evening Sky Viewing Plus. Marshmallow roast, demo and clock tables. Easy; training provided. We will also, from 6:30pm to 8:30pm, be looking for the seven brightest objects in the night sky.

\*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

\*Saturday, 10 March from 9am to 4pm at Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center. *Three to four volunteers for three- to four-hour shifts.* This is BSNC's annual Rockin' at the Swamp. It's a huge event. Solar viewing and science demos.

\*Thursday, 15 March from 5pm to 9pm at Zachary Community Park. *Two or three volunteers.* This is the annual Zachary "Z" Fest. At long last we got in! Night viewing and science demos.

\*Saturday, 31 March from 9:30am to 5pm at Baton Rouge Zoo. *Three to four volunteers for three- to four-hour shifts.* This is the Zoo's annual Zippity Zoo Fest. A large event. Solar viewing and science demos.

### HRPO VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD

The winner of the Frank Conrad Volunteer of the Year Award for 2011 will be announced at the upcoming BRAS meeting.

### LIGHT POLLUTION NOTES

Baton Rouge *Advocate* columnist Danny Heitman wrote a wonderful op-ed piece on light pollution for the 20 January edition. He mentioned that his young son just recently got a telescope and that they quickly determined how bothersome light pollution is. He mentioned that they visit HRPO, and he mentioned the recent *City Dark* screening.

The Special Facilities Division of BREC's Department of Recreation has stated that it would pass along HRPO's request to cap/shield all park system lighting to the Planning and Engineering Division. I have yet to hear anything from either SF or P&E. BREC's # is 272-9200.

### EXPEDITION 30 SPACEWALK

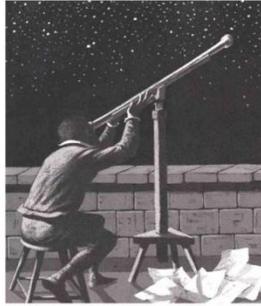
Thursday, 16 February from 8am to 2pm

During this EVA, Flight Engineers Anton Shkaplerov and Oleg Kononenko will exit the Pirs docking compartment to relocate a small crane and attach debris shields to the Zvezda service module. HRPO will provide a live feed to watch this event as it occurs. Refreshments. (Please check ahead of time to make sure it hasn't been postponed!)

## OUTREACH

# SIDEWALK ASTRONOMY

Come see the wonders of the night sky for free!



## All events start at sundown

October 4th	CC's on Jefferson
November 1st	Millerville Best Buy
December 6th	CC's on Jefferson
January 31st	Millerville Best Buy
February 28th	CC's on Jefferson
March 27th	Millerville Best Buy

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Trevor McGuire has worked out a plan of outreach with CC's Coffee on Jefferson Highway and Best Buy on Millerville Road where we can have telescopes setup at these two locations. We may need some volunteers to operate a scope or talk to the public at these various times so if you are available and interested in having a good time, talk to Trevor or let me know and we will try to fit you in.

The next outreach will be at the CC's Coffee House on Jefferson Hwy on February 28th, 2012. As the sun is setting, head over to catch the sights.

Unfortunately, due to overcast skies, the January event was cancelled, so hopefully the weather will cooperate for the February event.

**An additional outreach note:**

A few months ago, Mary Legoria approached BRAS about a huge outreach event at her school, Westdale Heights Academic Magnet (2000 College Dr.). The idea was that students' male figures, be they dads, uncles, grandfathers, etc, would buy a Galileoscope and an optional tripod. Then at the science night, they would assemble the scope together and use it to look at the things that Galileo looked at.

Several months went by, and last week I went to email her about it, only to have her beat me to the punch. Unfortunately, the date she had in mind was changed and there was nothing she could do about it. The new date for the event is February 16<sup>th</sup> from 6 to 8pm. The drawback to that night is that the moon is in third quarter, but we will have to make due.

The most current information I have is that the school bought 72 Galileoscopes, and has already sold 50 of them to parents. Mary expects 60-72 families at the event, so we are talking about a huge event here. A volunteers' job wouldn't be in the construction of the scopes, as they will have a powerpoint presentation for that part. Instead, our primary job would be to help them find some objects in the sky. Considering the power of the Galileoscope, we need to keep standards low. Even the big clusters like M36-38 are going to be hard to nab in that scope under College Dr. skies. I'm thinking primarily the Orion Nebula and the Pleiades to start. Keep your favorite wide double-stars in mind, too.

I would love to have at least 5 volunteers and if I could get up to 10, I would be extremely happy. If you are interested and able to participate, let me know at [outreach@brastro.org](mailto:outreach@brastro.org). Thanks!

-Trevor McGuire  
BRAS Outreach Coordinator

## PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

- Meeting was held on Wednesday, January 11 at the Independence Park theater.
- Trevor McGuire announced that the next sidewalk astronomy event will be at Best Buy on January 31st.
- Chris Kersey said he had met with people at LSU to discuss getting help with repairs to the 16 inch and 20 inch telescopes. One repair to the electronics has been made.
- The annual Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge trip will be held January 21 -22nd.
- Geoff Michelli will e-mail dues information to members this month. He is working towards computerizing the club's financial records.
- Chris said there will be a course on Saturday, January 28th for volunteers to learn to operate the observatory's telescopes.
- It was announced that the Hodges Garden Star Party will be held March 21st through March 25th.
- The speaker for the February meeting will be Brad Schafer, who will recount his trip to the Nobel Prize ceremonies.
- Introductions. John Moore was introduced as a new member.
- It was suggested that we might get LPB to telecast "The City Dark".
- The meeting was adjourned, and members went to watch "The City Dark."

-Charles Edwards  
BRAS Secretary

## OBSERVING NOTES

### Constellation of the Month

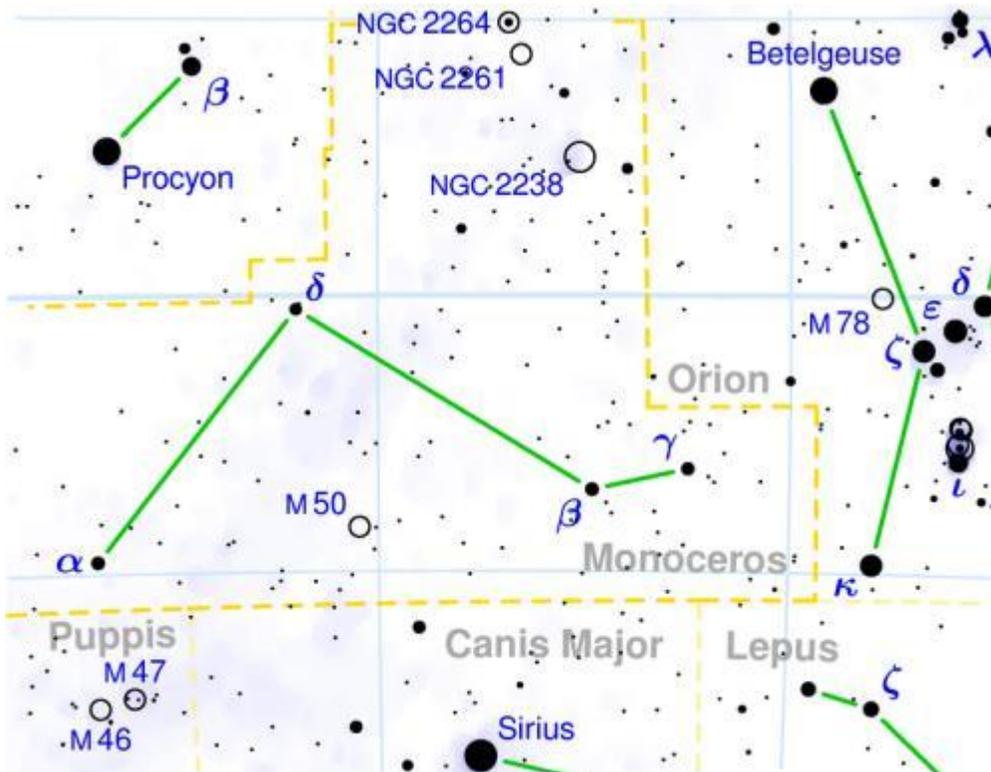
## Monoceros: The Unicorn

This dim constellation lies across the celestial equator and is bounded by a great triangle of brilliant stars namely: Sirius, Procyon, and Betelgeuse. Monoceros was first depicted in 1612 on a globe by the Dutch theologian and cartographer Petrus Plancius, who apparently introduced the constellation because a unicorn appears several times in the Old Testament of the Bible.

Although it is not very bright, Monoceros does have some interesting features to observe with the aid of a small telescope. Beta Monocerotis is an impressive triple star system, the three stars forming a triangle. The visual magnitudes of the stars are 4.7, 5.2 and 6.1. William Herschel discovered it in 1781 and commented that it is "one of the most beautiful sights in the heavens".

Among its most interesting deep sky objects are the Cone Nebula, the Rosette Nebula, Hubble's Variable Nebula (NGC 2261), and the open clusters M50 (NGC 2323), near the border with Canis Major, and the Christmas Tree Cluster (NGC 2244). The Monoceros Loop is a filamentary loop nebula, part of a 300,000-year-old supernova remnant, about 3,000 light-years away in the galactic plane northeast of the Rosette.

### Star Chart



### Position in the Sky

Right Ascension: 7 hour    Declination: -5 degrees

### Named Stars

None

## **Messier Objects**

M50 (open cluster)

NGC 2237 (diffuse nebula)

NGC 2264 Cone Nebula / Christmas Tree Cluster

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## **February Meteor Showers: February Leonids**

Duration: February 1<sup>st</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>

Peak: February 15th

Radiant: Constellation Leo

Right Ascension: 11 hours

Declination: 15 degrees

Expected Rate: 8/hr

Origin: Comet Tempel-Tuttle

## **BRAS Dark Sky Site Viewing Dates**

February 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>

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

Art Barrios

BRAS Observing Chairman

[art.barrios@cox.net](mailto:art.barrios@cox.net)

## TREASURER'S NOTES

The following memberships are up for renewal.

Cody Arceneaux	1/1/2012	Merrill Hess	1/1/2012
Art Barrios	11/1/2011	Kevin Hunter	1/1/2012
Rodney Bell	1/1/2012	Oneal Isaac	1/1/2012
Rory Bentley	1/1/2012	Prasad Kalghati	9/1/2011
Peggy Bohn	1/1/2012	Alice & Dan Lastrapes	1/1/2012
Donald Brocksmith	1/1/2012	Corey Luth	10/1/2011
Karen Cashio	6/1/2011	Art Newman	1/1/2012
Dwight Davis	1/1/2012	J.A. Rummler	1/1/2012
Karen & Jacob DesRoches	1/1/2012	Michael Russo	8/1/2011
Harold Fozzard	1/1/2012	Mohammed Shafi Syed	9/1/2011
Charles Genovese	1/1/2012	Forrest Smith	1/1/2012
Jonathan Glover	1/1/2012	Kristin Troxclair	1/1/2012
Tyler Guidry	10/1/2011	Stephen Turri	11/1/2011
Hansel Harlan	11/1/2011	Robin & Bill Walter	1/1/2012
		Don Weinell	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](#).

One of our biggest expenses each month is mailing the newsletter to those who don't have an email address on file. If you have been receiving this newsletter via postal mail, and you have an email address, I would like to switch you over to receiving the newsletter via email. You'll get the newsletter faster, and more importantly, you'll save the club some money, allowing us to buy a little more turkey for the Christmas party, extra toothpicks, and those neat-o bendy straws! So if you're reading this on a piece of paper that came in the mail, head over to your computer, and send an email to [geoff@michelli.net](mailto:geoff@michelli.net). Let me know that you'd like to receive the newsletter via email. You can also stop reading now... this is the end of the newsletter!

-Geoff Michelli  
BRAS Treasurer