

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Astronomical Society

www.brastro.org

May 2012

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hi Everyone,

First of all, a big "Thank You!" to all that helped out with International Astronomy Day on April 28th. We had a great day for it and it was well attended, for sure.

I hope you've had a chance to get outside sometime over the last week or so and see the great show Venus has been putting on. (Especially those nights when the Moon was close.) Don't forget we have our last chance to view a Transit of Venus coming up this June. I know most of you know about these Venus transits, but for those that don't...the Transit of Venus we are talking about is a celestial event in which Venus will cross in front of our Sun from our point of view. With proper equipment, you'll be able to see the small black dot of Venus make its way across the Sun. Due to the orbit of Venus being a bit inclined to our own orbit, these transit events have an odd cycle. Basically, the cycle is 121 1/2 years, 8 years, 105 1/2 years, 8 years and repeat. The last transit happened in 2004 and we are in the part of the cycle putting the next transit in another 105 1/2 years. Sure, I plan on being around for that one, too, but I'll be sure to catch this one just in case! We'll be keeping you up to date with what's going on in our area for the ToV via the forum at our website (brastro.org). You can also get a lot of information at the website transitofvenus.org.

Finally, I'll mention again the International Planetarium Society conference coming up this July 22nd-26th in Baton Rouge. So far, we have 17 people that have expressed interest in volunteering to help out. I will be sending out a separate email "Call for Volunteers" soon. (It may come before this newsletter is sent out.) Anyone that has an interest in participating, please get me your name and email address (or phone number if you don't have email.) The Volunteer Chairperson for the conference will be setting up a meeting for volunteers in May where you will be able to sign up for different events on the days and times you are available. This is a once-in-a-lifetime event for Baton Rouge and it's a big honor for the Louisiana Art and Science Museum to be hosting it. (They happen every 2 years with the last one in Alexandria, Egypt and the next one in 2014 in Beijing, China.) More information on the conference can be found at the IPS website <http://www.ips-planetarium.org/>.

That's it for now. I hope to see you all at our next meeting or out at the HRPO on the weekends.

Clear Skies,
Ben Toman
BRAS President

NOTES FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

BRAS member Bill Buck will be our guest speaker for the May meeting. Bill will show a very nice slide presentation on his trip to an astronomy "vacation" lodge in the Southwest. He was fortunate enough to make the trip just before the lodge closed reservations and converted into an online robotic observatory. It should be very interesting. If you are interested in astrophotography, please come. I got a preview of some images and they are very nice.

Also, we will have a report and evaluation of the new BRAS dark observing site from some members who have visited it at night. It is at the same exit but on the other side of the Interstate.

Remember, our June meeting will be on the third Saturday, June 16, 2012, at LIGO. Pot luck and Saturday Science and tours afterward, just as before. Meet around 11 AM at the pavilion.

Please give me the addresses of any astronomy websites you think would be good to share with other members. We can sneak some in as lagniappe at the meetings, but if we get a few good ones, we may make a whole meeting just on cyber astronomy.

Merrill Hess
BRAS Vice President

MESSAGE FROM HRPO

RESULTS OF IAD 2012

International Astronomy Day was absolutely amazing. We saw over 600 visitors. Thirteen BRAS volunteers, five HRPO employees and two apprentices came together to insure (several unforeseen troubles notwithstanding) HRPO was definitely the place to go for IAD! I appreciate all the help and I know that the 2013 IAD (on 20 April that year) will be even better.

FRIDAY NIGHT LECTURE SERIES

all start at 7:30pm

11 May: "Louisiana's First Observatory" [Merrill Hess]

18 May: "An Introduction to Saturn" [Chris guess-who]

25 May: "NASA Spinoff Technology" [Tom Northrop]

1 June: "Beliefs about UFOs" [Clinton Pettigrew]

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS: ON SITE

*Saturday, 26 May 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.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS: OUTREACH

*Tuesday, 29 May from 2:30pm to 4:30pm, Main Library (7711 Goodwood Boulevard). *One or two volunteers.*

*Tuesday, 5 June from 10am to 12pm, Central Library (11260 Joor Road). *One or two volunteers.*

*Thursday, 7 June from 10am to 12pm, River Center Library (120 St. Louis Street). *One or two volunteers.*

*Tuesday, 12 June from 2:30pm to 4:30pm, Scotlandville Library (7373 Scenic Highway). *One or two volunteers.*

All of these will basically be introductory talks about HRPO. Saturday night science demonstrations will probably accompany us.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS: TRANSIT OF VENUS

*Tuesday, 5 June from 4pm to midnight. *Four to six volunteers for two- or three-hour shifts.* This is a very important touchstone for amateur astronomy in southern Louisiana. Although the event will still be in progress as the Sun goes down, local people will be able to see the transit live for about ninety minutes to two hours, if we're lucky. I am attempting a very coordinated effort with this celestial event. I ask all BRAS members to please visit hrpo.lsu.edu on a regular basis so they can have a general idea of the HRPO plans if their friends and acquaintances inquire.

LIGHT POLLUTION NOTES

During International Astronomy Day BREC Superintendent Carolyn McKnight paid a visit, around twilight. This was her first trip to HRPO and she seemed quite impressed. Wally greeted her at the front desk. We went upstairs and Briar showed her Venus. We went into the 16OGS and Ben slewed to the Moon. Ben and I had a chance to comment on BRAS' letter of support for HRPO's lighting policy proposal. Although there is still no official word on whether BREC will officially adopt the policy changes, I understand that BREC is at this time at least installing more light-friendly fixtures and permanently shutting down "decorative" lighting which contributed to light clutter.

OUTREACH

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 to 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,

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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

- Old business: Members discussed the new lighting award. Suggestions included inspection of business or other site by 3 BRAS members; 2) before and after pictures 3) members to submit nominations on BRAS website; 4) establish standards for before and after pictures (exposure, f-stop, ASA, etc.; and 5) determining who would be eligible.
- Names of volunteers for the upcoming International Planetarium Society Conference were taken. Some training will be required for volunteers.
- It was mentioned that volunteers were needed for Astronomy Day on April 28.
- Don Wynell gave a report on the Hodges Garden Stargaze. Seventy people attended, and there were four clear nights of viewing.
- Art Barrios said that progress has been made in selecting a new dark sky site.
- Merrill said Bill Buck will be the speaker for the May meeting.
- Chris Kersey received the constellation hunter award.
- Two raffles were held. Suzanne Audifred won the Celestron 15x70 binoculars.
- The June meeting will be held on the 3rd Sunday in June.
- Meeting adjourned.

-Charles Edwards
BRAS Secretary

-Rory Bentley
BRAS Co-Secretary

OBSERVING NOTES

Constellation of the Month

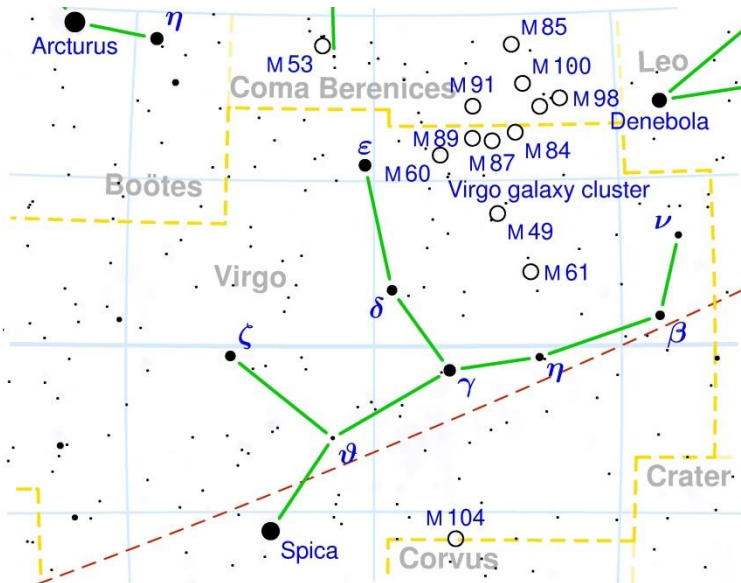
Virgo: The Virgin

Virgo is one of the largest constellations in the sky and also happens to contain a treasure trove of deep sky objects. Throughout history she has gone by several different names including Parthenos, Dike, Astreaia, Shala and Eos. Virgo is usually pictured as a winged angel sometimes holding an ear of grain. Virgo is also associated with justice and sometimes shown holding the scales of justice.

The famous Virgo Galaxy Cluster is located near the Virgo / Coma Berenices constellation border. It contains nearly 2000 member galaxies and is over 50 Mly distant.

There are also 26 known exoplanets orbiting stars in the constellation Virgo making it the constellation with the greatest number of confirmed exoplanets.

Star Chart



Position in the Sky

Right Ascension: 13 hours Declination: -4 degrees

Named Stars

Spica, Zavijah, Porrima, Auva, Vindeatrix, Heze, Zaniah, Syrma, Rijl al Awwa

Deep Sky Objects

M49 (elliptical galaxy)
M58 (spiral galaxy)
M59 (elliptical galaxy)
M60 (elliptical galaxy)
M61 (spiral galaxy)
M84 (elliptical galaxy)
M86 (elliptical galaxy)
M87 Virgo A (elliptical galaxy)
M89 (elliptical galaxy)
M90 (spiral galaxy)
M104 The Sombrero Galaxy (spiral galaxy)

May Meteor Showers: Eta Aquariids

Duration: April 29th to May 28th
Peak: May 5th
Radiant: Constellation Aquarius
Right Ascension: 23 hours
Declination: -1 degrees
Expected Rate: 65/hr
Origin: Halleys Comet

BRAS Dark Sky Site Viewing Dates

May 19th and 26th

NOTE: The location of the BRAS Dark Sky Site has changed and it is now available for use. The new site is near the old site but is now in a better location. More exciting details will be revealed during the next BRAS meeting!

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

Art Barrios
BRAS Observing Chairman
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