

# Night Visions

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Astronomical Society

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

**October 2012**

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Summer is over and the relatively cooler months are setting in here in Baton Rouge. Hopefully they will also bring some clear nights so we can start to enjoy the night sky again. It's been a pretty rough summer for observing for most of us. We had lots of clouds, rain and far too many biting insects, but if you happened to get out during one of the rare clear nights, I hope you were able to enjoy some good views.

Just a reminder and follow up from our last meeting, the Deep South Regional Stargaze is coming up November 7th-11th. This is the 30th year of the star party and as Barry Simon informed us, that makes it the second oldest start party around next to the Texas Star Party. You can find more information on the BRAS Forum or email me and I can point you in the right direction.

We have another really nice set of binoculars that we will be using as a big raffle prize. The Orion Mini-Giant 9x63 binos are going to make a great prize for someone. One of the great things about these binos is the long eye relief of 23mm which should allow anyone to enjoy the full field of view without even having to remove any corrective lenses. The tickets will be \$5 each, or 6 for \$25 and you don't need to be present to win. We will hold the drawing at the December meeting so start buying your tickets.

I hope to see you all out at the meeting Monday, October 8th at 7PM at the HRPO as we will be having a special guest speaker. (More details about that can be found elsewhere in this newsletter, I'm sure.) As always, feel free to bring along a friend or co-worker. Our meetings are always free and open to the public.

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

## **NOTES FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT**

Our next BRAS meeting is on Monday, October 8th, 7 PM at the Observatory. That is an interesting date because it is also the first date that skydiving adventurer Felix Baumgartner may attempt his record-breaking 120,000 foot jump from the edge of space. If the jump goes as planned, he will attempt to surpass the speed of sound during freefall, becoming the first human ever to break the sound barrier without a plane. Go to the Red Bull Stratos Facebook page and "Join" the event to get updates and announcements of the exact time of the jump. The jump will be broadcast live over the Red Bull Stratos website.

By now you have heard about our guest speaker at our next BRAS meeting, Dr. Keith Comeaux of JPL, so I won't say any more. Considering how much interest he will generate, I propose we keep the BRAS business to a minimum to allow our guest speaker to begin his presentation and allow enough time afterward for questions. Also, I ask that you be at your most welcoming to the guests that night. I think it is possible we may have as many guests as BRAS members. I know I have a couple of guests who have committed to attending. If each of us has a guest, that will double our numbers. Plus, I think we will see some BRAS members who usually do not attend the meetings. Any way, it promises to be a very exciting night. I can't wait to see you there.

Merrill Hess  
BRAS Vice President

## OUTREACH

Astronomy Belt Loop station: This is a station where the scouts will come through and learn about the basic terms in astronomy (terms like planet, asteroid, star, etc), and do some drawing activities to earn the Astronomy Belt Loop (whatever that might be). The station needs to be manned during a morning shift and an afternoon shift. The morning shift is 8AM to 11:30AM, and the afternoon shift is 1:30PM to 4:30PM. Both shifts come with a jambalaya lunch. It would be great to have two people per shift, but anything beyond that can certainly be used. I know I already have some volunteers, and I appreciate that, but more can be used. To reiterate, volunteering for this station only entails a knowledge of basic terms of astronomy or a love of kids. If you don't feel qualified to handle the astronomical terms/presentation of that information, you can help out at the drawing station for sure. We will be augmented/supported by parental volunteers where needed.

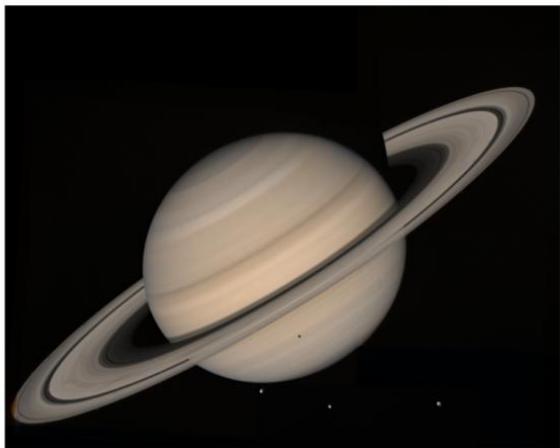
The nighttime event (i.e. stargazing) is fully covered at this point, but, as with the daytime event, if you want to get out there with your telescope, feel free. If you haven't already told me that you will be there with a scope, though, please let me know.

This is a great chance for some new volunteers to get out and get their hands dirty with some outreach. Personally, unless I'm under super dark skies at a star party, outreach is my favorite thing about being part of a club and being an amateur astronomer. Additionally, you can count any hours at this event towards the Astronomical League Outreach Club.

The Deep South Regional Star Gaze is open for registration as well. The applications were included in last month's newsletter. If you didn't get one, misplaced it, etc... feel free to contact [outreach@brastro.org](mailto:outreach@brastro.org) and we can send you one.

Last, but not least – 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!



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All events start at 7PM

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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

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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.

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## **MESSAGE FROM THE HRPO**

### **CONSTRUCTION ON OBSERVATORY GROUNDS**

Many BRAS members are already aware of the current renovations occuring at HRPO. The most noticeable of these is the entire upgrading of the main building's "outside", doors and windows excepted. The original siding was thin, one-piece material that would be replaced as a side (mainly facing the south) would get Sun-warped. The new siding is made of actual planks, and should be sturdy and extend time between replacements.

Also, BREC CIP is installing a new sign at our entrance. This sign will have brick pillars and will match the motif of other new signs in Highland Road Park. Its location will block the marquee sign from the view of any who approach HRPO from Siegen Lane. Brandon and I are assessing the possibility of razing the marquee and installing a marquee area along the bottom half of the new sign.

Finally, the small sign that patrons see as they negotiate the loop will also be new. Wally Pursell has designed a draft which provides space for all three partner logos and the facility's full name.

### **FRIDAY NIGHT LECTURE SERIES**

all start at 7:30pm

5 October: "Great World Wide Star Count"

12 October: "Variable Stars"

19 October: "Wonders of the Fall Sky"

26 October: "Uranus and Neptune"

### **CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS: ON SITE**

\*Saturday, 27 October from 6pm to 11pm. Four additional volunteers in addition to regular BRAS compliment. Spooky Spectrum. Marshmallow roast, demo and clock tables; setup and takedown. Easy; training provided.

### **LIGHT POLLUTION NOTES**

Issue #85-86 of Nightscape includes an article that has a ranking of worst to best lighting for so-called "Parks and Protected Areas", with metal halide and mercury vapor at one end of the list and yellow/amber LED and low-pressure sodium vapor at the other end.

Per Erin Anding's request, HRPO now has for sale a dozen copies of the children's book There Once was a Night Full of Stars by Bob Crelin and Amie Ziner. It's a cute volume and a good gift for a kid.

## **TREASURER'S NOTES**

The end of the year is fast approaching, and so is the time to renew your membership in BRAS! Don't miss out on all the fun – feel free to renew your membership at any time. Everyone's membership will be up for renewal on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013. Why not beat the holiday rush and renew today? Costs are still the same, and individual memberships are \$20.

As a club, we are eligible for a discount on Astronomy magazine. You'll save \$11 on a 2 year subscription. The rates are:

1 year for \$34.00

2 years for \$60.00

If you'd like to participate in this offer, let me know. I have to have your payments collected and in the mail to the publisher by October 15<sup>th</sup>. If you will be at the meeting on Monday, feel free to sign up there. I'll have all the necessary paperwork there. If you won't be at the meeting, but would like to participate, let me know as soon as possible via email or phone and we can make the arrangements.

Geoff Michelli  
BRAS Treasurer

## **PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES**

- Ben Toman mentioned the new siding being put on the observatory.
- Trevor McGuire talked about the upcoming outreach program. He said the first event, at the Lamar Dixon Expo Center, would be held just before the October meeting.
- Ben said the club would give away 3 donated telescopes to anyone interested.
- Geoff Michelli said the club had bought a pair of binoculars from Orion to be raffled off. He also said there were a few Astronomy calendars left for \$10 each; and subscriptions for Astronomy magazine are available for \$34.00 each.
- The treasurer's report was read.
- Chris Kersey reported that his supervisor will come to the observatory and review the problems with the lighting.
- Introductions were made.
- Merrill Hess asked members to recount their memories of Neil Armstrong and the first Moon landing.
- Barry Simon of the Ponchartrain Astronomical Society gave a talk on the history of the Deep South Regional Stargaze, to be held November 4th through the 11th.
- John Murphy gave a talk on the design and construction of telescope dew shields and heaters.