

May 2024

Meetings at Highland Road Park Observatory and online through YouTube and Jitsi

<https://meet.jit.si/brasmeet>

## **Calendar:**

- 13 May
  - 6PM—Light Pollution Committee
  - 7PM—General Meeting
- 14 May: 7PM Sidewalk Astronomy at Perkins Rowe
- 18 May: International Astronomy Day
- 30 May: 10AM-1PM Summer Reading Kickoff at Goodwood Library

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## Vice-President's Word

Hi Everyone,

Thanks again to everyone that shared their eclipse stories at the April meeting! It seems like we were all extremely fortunate and everyone that travelled to see totality found success. It made for a really great meeting, indeed.

The May meeting (**Monday, May 13th at 7pm at the Highland Road Park Observatory**) will take a bit of a hands-on approach for our monthly program. You may have heard us talk about the Astronomical League's Observing Clubs, and maybe you remember seeing some of our members receive certificates and pins for completing them. This month, we will take the first part of the meeting to learn about the many observing clubs that are offered and details on where to find the information, how to choose one to start and what you need to do to complete them. They really are a fantastic way to get yourself doing some observing and there are clubs for all levels of experience AND all levels of sky quality. (So you don't HAVE to be in perfectly dark skies to do all of them.)

After we've taken a short time learning about the Observing Clubs, we'll finish that portion and prepare to put this knowledge to work. We'll take out some telescopes and walk through some of the practical steps of recording your observations as we do them. (This would be a great time for you to get started on one or more clubs. The Moon will be near 1st quarter so there will be plenty of things to tick off of the Lunar Observing Club list, and we should be able to easily pick out some Messier objects that could get you started in the Messier Club.

If we can get some clear sky, this should be a fun meeting and will give everyone an opportunity to actually get out and get some scope time. If you are a complete novice, this would be a great time to get some lessons from more experienced members. We'll show you how to use these telescopes and start getting you some hands-on experience with amateur astronomy!

Finally, I wanted to include this picture from our last visit to Baton Rouge Community College. Scott and I assessed and updated their telescope and then trained a few people from their science department on the operation of the telescope. We also donated several eclipse glasses and some other materials with which they could enjoy the upcoming partial eclipse. (Of course, I've heard that Baton Rouge was pretty much clouded out for it, but it's the thought that counts!) Now that we have a good working relationship with them, we're talking about finding a good time to do some observing outreach on campus at some point.

I hope to see you all out there for the May meeting!

Clear Skies,  
Ben Toman  
Vice-President



Ben and Scott helping Baton Rouge Community College prep the for the Eclipse.

# Outreach Report

Hi Everyone,

We had a fun month of outreach at a more relaxed pace than March, so that was nice. Even though it seemed like it was a slower month, we still completed 4 separate events and reached over 200 people! (That doesn't include any impromptu outreach that happened at various locations throughout totality for the recent eclipse. I've heard from several members that ended up in outreach type situations while waiting for totality. We're not shy about talking about our hobby, haha!)

So, apart from the impromptu eclipse day outreach, we had the following: Presentation on Eclipses at The Claiborne (retirement community), School Days Event at Port Hudson Historic Site, and Sidewalk Astronomy at both Perkins Rowe and the Ascension Parish Library in Gonzales. Many thanks to Roz, Chris and Annette, Scott, Susan, Don and Ben for making these happen. We had a lot of happy community members having a fun time talking with us, looking through telescopes and learning more about our cosmos.

We've got another relatively easy month for May. It'll start off with our final Sidewalk Astronomy at Perkins Rowe before taking the Summer hiatus. Next will be International Astronomy Day at the Observatory and then the Summer Reading Kick-off event for the Main Library.

During these slower Summer months, we'll also take some time to rekindle our Outreach training sessions. These are just casual get togethers where we discuss/learn how to use the outreach materials we've received from the Night Sky Network. If you've ever been too shy to come to an outreach event because you didn't think you'd know what to do, this is a great time for you to fix that! You'll see just how easy it is and maybe learn some fun facts along the way. We'll make an announcement at the next meeting concerning the date/time (usually it's on a Sunday afternoon) and then make an additional announcement via email.

In the meantime, take a look at the list below and let me know if you can help us out with any of these events. They are always a fun time so I hope you'll consider coming out for one or more!

Clear Skies,  
Ben Toman  
Outreach Chairperson



Ben teaching Eclipse facts to members of the Claiborne Retirement Community



NIGHT VISIONS



Chris, Annette, Susan, Roz, Ben, and Scott set up for School Days at Port Hudson. Such well-behaved students, and we have no idea why.





They didn't tell us why they kept a large alligator behind the museum but he, too, looked well behaved. And well fed!

## **Upcoming Events**

### **Tuesday, May 14th**

7pm-9pm

Sidewalk Astronomy at Perkins Rowe

### **Saturday, May 18th**

3pm-11pm

International Astronomy Day

Highland Road Park Observatory

(NOTE: If you are interested in volunteering for this event, please contact Chris Kersey at the Observatory. All BREC volunteers must complete paperwork and background checks first.)

### **Thursday, May 30th**

10am-1pm

Summer Reading Kick-off and STEM Event

Main Library on Goodwood

(Solar observing and demo table)

## Secretary's report of past meeting

15 April Meeting: 27 people in attendance, 3 online

The focus of the meeting was telling tales of the eclipse from the week before. Members shared stories of the trials, tribulations, ecstatic joys and just plain fortuitous circumstances that led to them experiencing one of the greatest spectacles on Earth, the likes of which will not be seen again in the continental United States for some 20 years. Some chose not to go.

A raffle was held.

The \$5 tickets for the classic Celestron 8" is still going on, attend a meeting to purchase tickets.



This scope could be yours for just \$5!\*

\*and some luck.

# Observatory Notes

## **FRIDAY NIGHT LECTURE SERIES**

*7:30pm / for ages fourteen and older / no admission fee*

3 May = “Zodiac Dreams” What really is the Zodiac, and how many constellations does it have? Due to some news stories, internet videos and op-ed pieces you might be confused—but don't worry. We'll set the record straight, showing exactly what's going on, what people have thought about the Zodiac throughout the years, and what it all means for our culture and day-to-day-life!

10 May = “Apollo 10 Fifty-Fifth Anniversary” The Apollo 10 astronauts (Thomas Stafford, Eugene Cernan and John Young) tested all aspects of what would be the system to put us on the Moon—except the actual landing. Former BREC Center Supervisor Tom Northrop continues HRPO's countdown to accomplishment of one of the greatest engineering and exploration goals in mankind's history...

24 May = “Hephaestus One” Originally presenting these visuals as a portion of a thesis defense, Francis Dinh will ask the audience “if beauty can exist on the Moon through architecture”. This event will be the first of its kind for HRPO's public.

31 May = “The Three-Mile Island Incident” Though in all probability no one received a serious amount of harm from this accident, it colored the entire discussion since for nuclear power in the United States. We're opening a time capsule!

## **EVENING SKY VIEWING**

*for ages six and older / no admission fee*

*Fridays (3, 10 24 and 31 May from 8:30pm to 10pm)*

*Saturdays (4, 11 and 25 May) from 7:30pm to 10pm)*

HRPO houses a 50-cm reflector, a 40-cm reflector and several smaller telescopes to bring the majesty of the night sky to the public. Trained operators, sharing duties via a rotating roster, work throughout the year in shifts. Each operator has a pre-planned list of objects to highlight. However, requests will be taken if there is time and if all present have viewed the previous target.

### **SCIENCE ACADEMY**

*Saturdays from 10am to 12pm.*

*for Cadets aged eight to twelve / \$5 per Cadet per week (\$6 if out-of-parish Friday 10 May from 12pm to 2pm*

*for ages six and older / no admission fee*

Weather permitting, viewing of the)

*walk-ins welcome, but advanced registration via [WebTrac](#) strongly recommended*

*[activity #531990] / parents may stay with or leave Cadet*

*Four Cadet minimum and sixteen Cadets maximum per session.*

4 May = “ISS Expedition 6”

11 May = “Amazing Alchemy”

### **SOLAR VIEWING SPECIAL SESSION**

Sun’s image in three different manners—transferred onto a white surface, directly with safely-filtered optical light, and directly in safely-filtered hydrogen-alpha wavelength—will take place for two hours. Protective clothing and sunscreen are recommended.



**INTERNATIONAL ASTRONOMY DAY**

Saturday 18 May from 3pm to 11pm / No admission fee. For all ages.

The greatest IAD event in the region returns! Once again, expected visitors include the Baton Rouge Amateur Radio Club, the Baton Rouge Gem and Mineral Society, the Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport, the Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center, the Baton Rouge Zoo, the Civil Air Patrol, the East Baton Rouge Parish Library, the St. George Fire District and LIGO. A Scope-on-a-Rope session, a deep-sky tour, a lunar tour, solar viewing and a chemistry demonstration will also take place. Don't forget the Renaissance Sundial! Mark your calendar and don't miss it!

**STEM EXPANSION: "Aerospace Engineering II"**

Saturday 25 May from 3:30pm to 7:30pm

for ages twelve to sixteen. / \$15 each per in-parish registrant; \$18 each per out-of-parish registrant. Advanced registration via [WebTrac](#) required [activity #531993]. Registrant is Part I is not a prerequisite.

This program offers advanced topics, topic extensions and all-new games and activities to an older crowd. Certificates will be earned, and a section of archived experiments, some not seen in over fifteen years (and some *never* performed on site) take place. There are also giveaways and door prizes.

# Sky Map



<https://in-the-sky.org>

Map centered on 15 May 2024 at 10PM

For an interactive sky map, go to <https://in-the-sky.org>

## Quick Picks—Events for May 2024

- Wed 1 [Last Quarter Moon](#)
- Fri 3 Occultation of [Saturn](#) by the Moon
- Sat 4 Eta-Aquarid Meteor Shower
- Sat 4 Occultation of [Mars](#) by the Moon
- Sun 5 [Moon](#) Perigee at 363,166 km.
- Mon 6 [Mercury](#) 3.8°S of [Moon](#)
- Tue 7 [New Moon](#)
- Wed 8 [Mars](#) at Perihelion
- Thu 9 [Mercury](#) at Greatest Western Elongation - 26.40°
- Sun 12 Pollux 1.6°N of [Moon](#)
- Mon 13 [Uranus](#) in Conjunction with the Sun
- Mon 13 Beehive 3.4°S of [Moon](#)
- Wed 15 [First Quarter Moon](#)
- Wed 15 Regulus 3.5°S of [Moon](#)
- Fri 17 [Moon](#) Apogee at 404,641 km.
- Sat 18 [Jupiter](#) in Conjunction with the Sun
- Mon 20 Spica 1.4°S of [Moon](#)
- Thu 23 [Full Moon](#)
- Thu 23 Antares 0.4°S of [Moon](#)
- Thu 30 [Last Quarter Moon](#)
- Fri 31 Occultation of [Saturn](#) by the Moon

Events from Telescopius.com



## Looking up



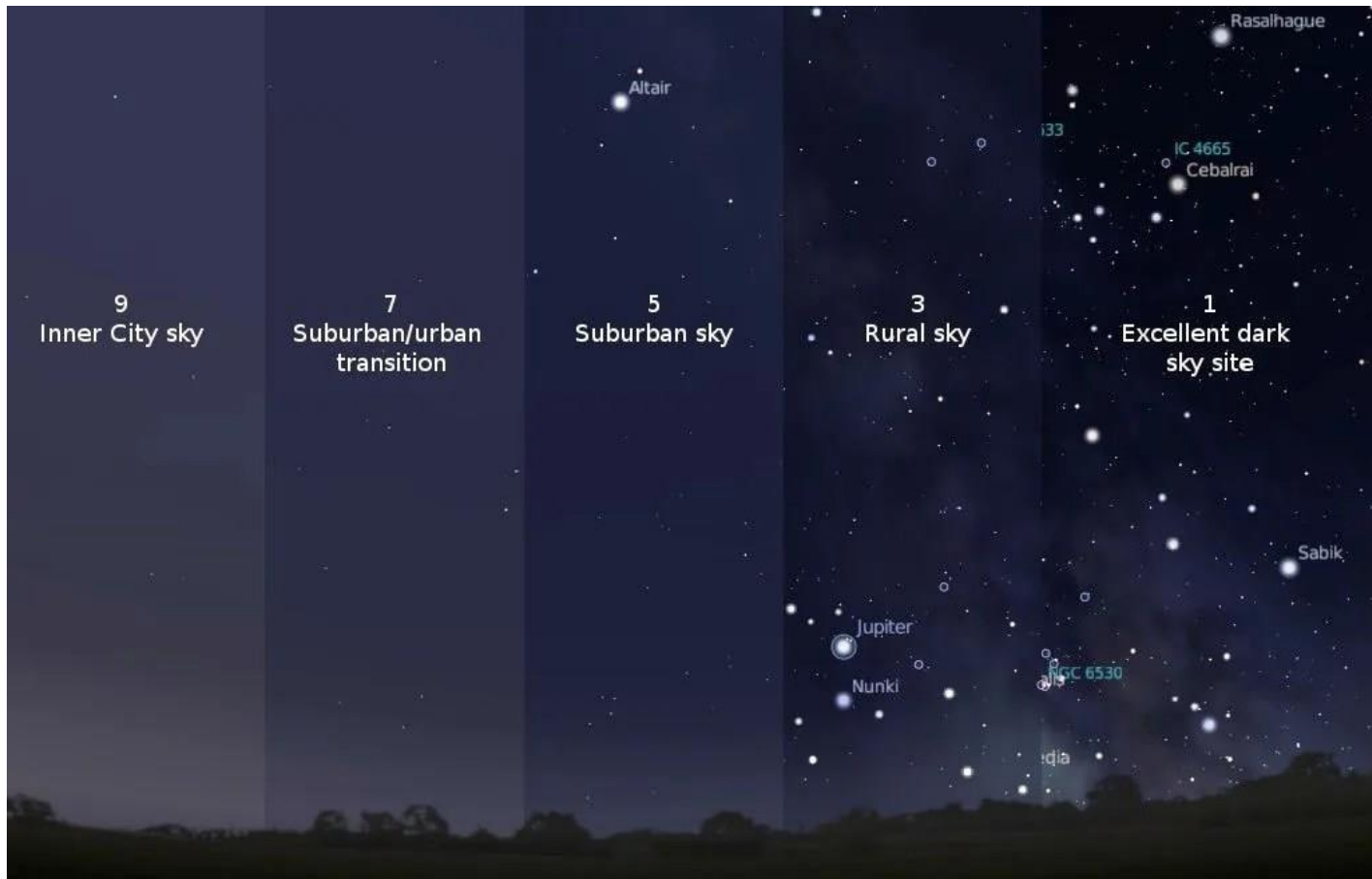
### May's Night Sky Notes: Stargazing for Beginners

By Kat Troche

Millions were able to experience the solar eclipse on April 8, 2024, inspiring folks to become amateur astronomers – hooray! Now that you've been 'bitten by the bug', and you've decided to [join your local astronomy club](#), here are some stargazing tips!

#### The Bortle Scale

Before you can stargaze, you'll want to find a site with dark skies. It's helpful learn what your [Bortle scale](#) is. But *what is* the Bortle scale? The Bortle scale is a numeric scale from 1-9, with 1 being darkest and 9 being extremely light polluted; that rates your night sky's darkness. For example, New York City would be a Bortle 9, whereas Cherry Springs State Park in Pennsylvania is a Bortle 2.



The Bortle scale helps amateur astronomers and stargazers to know how much light pollution is in the sky where they observe. Credit: International Dark Sky Association

Determining the Bortle scale of your night sky will help narrow down what you can expect to see after sunset. Of course, other factors such as weather (clouds namely) will impact seeing conditions, so plan ahead. Find Bortle ratings near you here: [www.lightpollutionmap.info](http://www.lightpollutionmap.info)

## No Equipment? No Problem!

There's plenty to see with your eyes alone. Get familiar with the night sky by studying star maps in books, or with a planisphere. These are great to begin identifying the overall shapes of constellations, and what is visible during various months.



A full view of the northern hemisphere night sky in mid-May. Credit: Stellarium Web.

Interactive sky maps, such as [Stellarium Web](#), work well with mobile and desktop browsers, and are also great for learning the constellations in your hemisphere. There are also several astronomy apps on the market today that work with the GPS of your smartphone to give an accurate map of the night sky.



[Keep track of Moon phases](#). Both the interactive sky maps and apps will also let you know when planets and our Moon are out! This is especially important because if you are trying to look for bright deep sky objects, like the Andromeda Galaxy or the Perseus Double Cluster, you want to *avoid* the Moon as much as possible. Moonlight in a dark sky area will be as bright as a streetlight, so plan accordingly! And if the Moon is out, check out this Skywatcher's Guide to the Moon: [bit.ly/MoonHandout](http://bit.ly/MoonHandout)

### Put On That Red Light

If you're looking at your phone, you won't be able to see as much. Our eyes take approximately 30 minutes to get dark sky adapted, and a bright light can ruin our night vision temporarily. The easiest way to stay dark sky adapted is to avoid any bright lights from car headlights or your smartphone. To avoid this, simply use red lights, such as a red flashlight or headlamp. **The reason:** white light constricts the pupils of your eyes, making it hard to see in the dark, whereas red light allows your pupils to stay dilated for longer. Most smartphones come with adaptability shortcuts that allow you to make your screen red, but if you don't have that feature, use red cellophane on your screen and flashlight.

## Classifieds

- We are in need of a new webmaster to make periodic changes to the website to make sure the information is accurate and up-to-date.
- We are welcoming volunteers to assist with outreaches of all kinds, both classroom and observational.

Contact one of the officers if you are interested.

# Contact Information

President-----Don Weinell [president.brastro@gmail.com](mailto:president.brastro@gmail.com)

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Secretary-----Scott Cadwallader [secretary.brastro@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.brastro@gmail.com)

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Web: <http://www.brastro.org>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCS3Xkk1t7C9IRnB8GKrt9MQ>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Baton-Rouge-Astronomical-Society-122591151112271/>

Reddit: <https://www.reddit.com/r/BRAstro/>

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