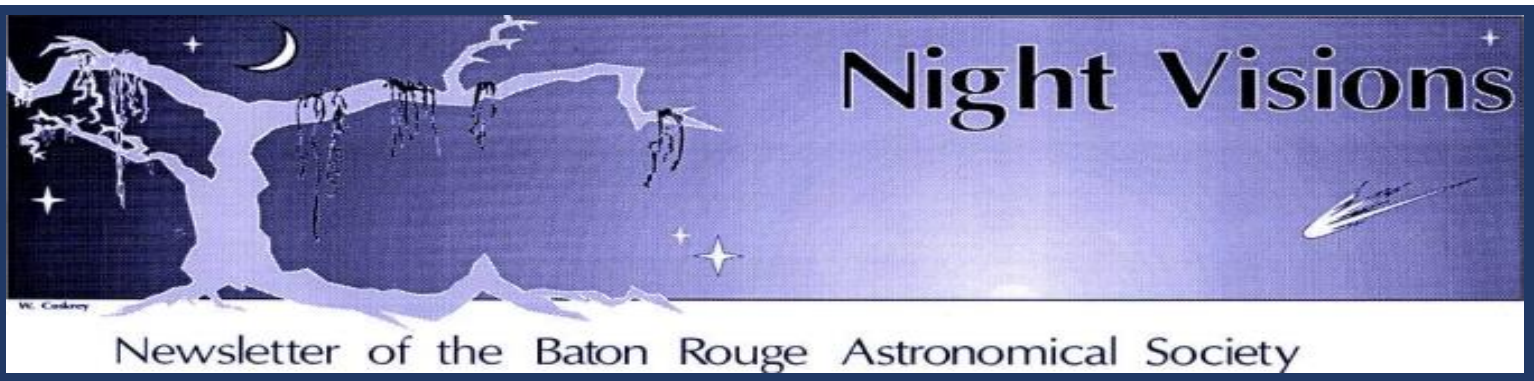


August 2025

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

https://meet.jit.si/brasmeet

Calendar:

- 30 July, 5:30PM: BRAS Planning meeting at the Chimes
- 30 July, 7PM: LSU's Astronomy on Tap at the Varsity
- 3 August, 12AM: Attempt to catch the transit of Titan at Landolt Observatory
- 11 August, 7PM: BRAS general meeting at HRPO
- 27 August, 7PM: LSU's Astronomy on Tap at the Varsity
- 2 September, 6PM: Sidewalk Astronomy at Perkins Rowe
- 11 September, 4PM: Holden High School Family Math/Science Night
- 30 September, 6PM: Sidewalk Astronomy at Perkins Rowe

Index:

Vice President's Word

Hi Everyone,

I hope you've been finding ways to keep cool so far this Summer. Unfortunately, we've had so much rain and clouds that there hasn't been a whole lot of opportunity to get out for some views of that beautiful Summer sky. Summer's not over yet, though, so don't give up hope!

Let me begin by mentioning that we hope you'll be able to join us for our August monthly meeting on **Monday, August 11th at 7pm at the Highland Road Park Observatory**. We'll be hearing from our local Solar System Ambassador and HRPO Education specialist, Amy Northrup. Of course, weather permitting, we'll stick around afterwards to try to get some observing done.

Our last meeting was fantastic and we had lots of new faces and a slew of familiar faces that hadn't been out in some time. Tammy W. gave us a great recap of the recent AstroCon [aka, ALCON] out in Bryce Canyon and if it didn't make you want to jump at attending the convention next year, I'd be surprised.

Following the presentation, I gave a quick overview of how to record your observations at the telescope to complete observing clubs offered by the Astronomical League. We were lucky enough to have some cloudless sky by the time it got dark so we took out a couple of telescopes for some observing. Our after-meeting observing sessions have been a lot of fun and I hope some more members will consider hanging around despite it being late on a Monday night.

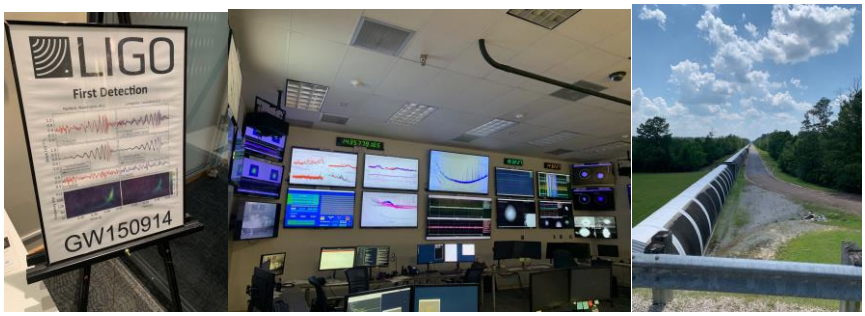
In general club news, my wife and I visited LIGO on their Science Saturday in July. All of the educational staff we used to have great relationships with have sadly retired these days and the future of the facility (especially the Science Saturdays) is uncertain with the latest Federal budget. With that in mind, I'd recommend to everyone that you take advantage of being able to visit this historic place sometime this year just in case we lose that opportunity. (They're still on schedule to operate normally for the rest of 2025.) I'm going to propose that we target **Saturday, October 4th** as a club excursion. Maybe even plan a little picnic in the pavilion out there. Keep an eye out for more information. Regardless of whether or not you could make the October excursion, you'll have opportunities August-December for sure. They have their Science Saturdays the first Saturday of the month from 10am-4pm.
Finally, you should have this in time to see we have our quarterly business meeting on Wednesday, July 30th. In order to piggyback onto Astronomy on Tap that evening, we'll have our meeting at The Chimes by LSU campus. We'll plan to start discussing club stuff at 5:30pm. You don't have to RSVP, but if you let me know you plan to attend, we'll be sure to save a seat for you!

I hope you have a great month and that we see you out and about soon!!

Clear Skies,

Ben Toman

Vice President



Scenes from LIGO, Livingston: the initial detection, the control room, and one of the detector arms.

Outreach Report

Hi Everyone,

Even though it's the slow days of Summer, we are still getting out there in the community to help bring some astro knowledge to our neighbors. Of course, in September we'll start getting back to our Sidewalk Astronomy endeavors and the STEM nights will start hitting us up so it's best to get some rest while we can!

Our last outing actually happened at the very end of June so it didn't make last month's newsletter. It was our participation at Dino Days at the Louisiana Art and Science Museum. We had an excellent time and there were TONS of kids there with their families. We always have a great time working with the folks at the LASM and I know they are incredibly appreciative of our participation.

Thanks so much to Scott, Annette, Chad, Coy and Ben for their volunteer efforts this past month.

As far as new outreach stuff, I'll be contacting the folks out at LIGO to see about us setting up some solar telescopes on their remaining Science Saturdays for 2025. Keep an eye out for some volunteer request emails!

Finally, here are the first couple of Sidewalk Astronomy dates for Perkins Rowe this Fall. I'll get more out as I get them set.

As always, please let me know if you'd like to help out. It's been great having some new faces with us and I'd like to see even more. Come on out and join us. You won't regret it!

Clear Skies,

Ben Toman

Outreach Chairperson

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, September 2nd

6pm-9pm

Sidewalk Astronomy at Perkins Rowe

Thursday, September 11th

4:30pm-6:30pm

Holden High School Family Math/Science Night (Livingston Parish)

Tuesday, September 30th

6pm-9pm

Sidewalk Astronomy at Perkins Rowe

Dino Days: Top, Chad teaches people the difference between a meteorite and a meteor-wrong.

Top Middle, Annette takes patrons on a spin around the solar system while Chris (background—not with us) looks at shiny rocks.

Bottom Middle, Ben tries not to lose his marbles while explaining Einsteinian gravity.

Bottom, Chad, Scott, and Annette work the table.

Unseen: Coy, working the solar scope outside.

Nowhere, Roz. Again. Does she even care about the children?

Secretary's Summary

July Meeting: 31 People in attendance

- Ben gave an update on Don's summer trip
- There is an outreach at Country Day summer camp scheduled for the end of the month
- Ben spoke about his recent trip to LIGO: it's a great place to go and all members are encouraged to take a trip down to one of their free open houses. See Ligo.caltech.edu for upcoming dates.
- Sidewalk astronomy will pick back up at Perkins' Rowe in September
- Tammy talked about her trip to ALCON
- Susan spoke of her trip to the newly renovated Lowell Observatory and Meteor Crater
- Ben gave a brief explanation of how to do AL observing programs
- It was announced that LSU's Astronomy on tap has been standardized to 7PM at the Varsity on the last Wednesday of each month through November.
- The quarterly planning meeting is set for 30 July at the Chimes, before LSU's Astronomy on Tap event (please let Ben know if you want to attend so he can get a large enough table)
- A raffle for the C8 was had, again, after the previous winner decided not to accept. Our winner was Troy Brown

Congratulations to Troy for winning the summer raffle of a classic Celestron 8" Optical Tube.

Observatory Notes

HIGHLAND ROAD PARK OBSERVATORY

August 2025 Public Schedule

A GALAXY OF GAMES

Friday 1 August from 5pm to 9pm

For ages twelve and older. Drinks.

This one-time-only open house will showcase those non-electronic tabletop challenges that incorporate an astronomy or STEM theme!

SCIENCE ACADEMY

Saturdays from 10am to 12pm.

for Cadets aged eight to twelve / $5 per Cadet per week ($6 if out-of-parish)

advanced registration via WebTrac strongly recommended

[activity #231320] / parents may stay with or leave Cadet

Four Cadet minimum and sixteen Cadets maximum per session.

2 August = “Dwarf Planets”

9 August = “ISS Expedition 11”

16 August = “Ten Mysteries”

23 August = “Airplane Design”

EVENING SKY VIEWING

for ages six and older / no admission fee

Saturdays (2, 9, 23 and 30 August) from 7:30pm to 10pm

Fridays (8, 15 and 22 August) from 8:30pm to 10pm

Friday 29 August from 9pm to 10:30pm

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.

FRIDAY NIGHT LECTURE SERIES

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

8 August = "Sirius and Canopus" The two brightest stars in the night sky cannot both be seen if your location is too far north on the North American continent. Baton Rougeans know them as a guiding pair—the gatekeepers between the winter and spring skies.

15 August = "Current Status of Spaceflight" We all are following the progress of the James Webb, Kepler, Psyche and of course Artemis. What delays are coming, and why? Which ones are on schedule? Center Supervisor James DeOliveira presents.

22 August = "The Viking Landers" Fifty years ago these machines departed with a singular goal: to once and for all describe the basic sea level environment of Mars. The 1970s were a sensation of Solar System exploration!

BATON ROUGE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY MEETING

Monday 11 August from 7pm to 9pm

for ages fourteen and older / no admission fee

PERSEID METEOR SHOWER

Tuesday 12 August from 10pm to 2am

for ages six and older / no admission fee

Visitors must adhere to all rules.

The Perseids are one of the major meteor showers of the year, caused by debris left from the passings of Comet Swift-Tuttle. Come learn about meteors and let's see if we can spot some "earthgrazers". Although telescopes aren't needed for the Perseids, we'll have a telescope available from until midnight for leisurely gazing at other celestial objects. But look fast for the meteors; Perseid meteoroids hit our atmosphere traveling about sixty kilometers a second! If you're lucky, you may see a fireball…

SOLAR VIEWING SPECIAL SESSION

Wednesday 13 August from 11:45am to 2:45pm

for ages six and older / no admission fee

Weather permitting, viewing of the 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.

PLUS NIGHT: "Here in the Milky Way"

Saturday 16 August from 7pm to 10pm

for ages six and older / no admission fee / binocular recommended

During Plus Nights and extra features are available to the public…

*The well-known marshmallow roast takes place at the campfire ring (weather-depending).

*Seven to ten of HRPO's collection of over fifty physical science demonstrations will be on hand to perplex and amaze. Which demos will it be?

*An unaided eye sky tour takes place, showing the public major features of the sky for that month.

*Filters are inserted into the viewing mechanisms, to show patrons "hidden" details of the Moon, Mars and Jupiter (when they are available).

*Reveal your age, and be shown any "birth stars" in the sky at that time.

DISPLAY PREMIERE: The Writings and Collections of Thomas Detman

Friday 29 August from 6pm to 9pm

for ages twelve and older / no admission fee

HRPO is pleased to present a wealth of materials from the late Thomas R. Detman. With intriguing insights into the professional world of CME and solar wind research, the collection is a one-of-a-kind display at our location.

[*This display will be available for viewing after this night during Solar Viewing sessions through the end of November.*]

SOLAR VIEWING

Saturday 30 August from 11:30am to 2:30pm

for ages six and older / no admission fee

Weather permitting, viewing of the 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. Protective clothing and sunscreen are recommended.

STEM EXPANSION: "Aerospace Engineering I"

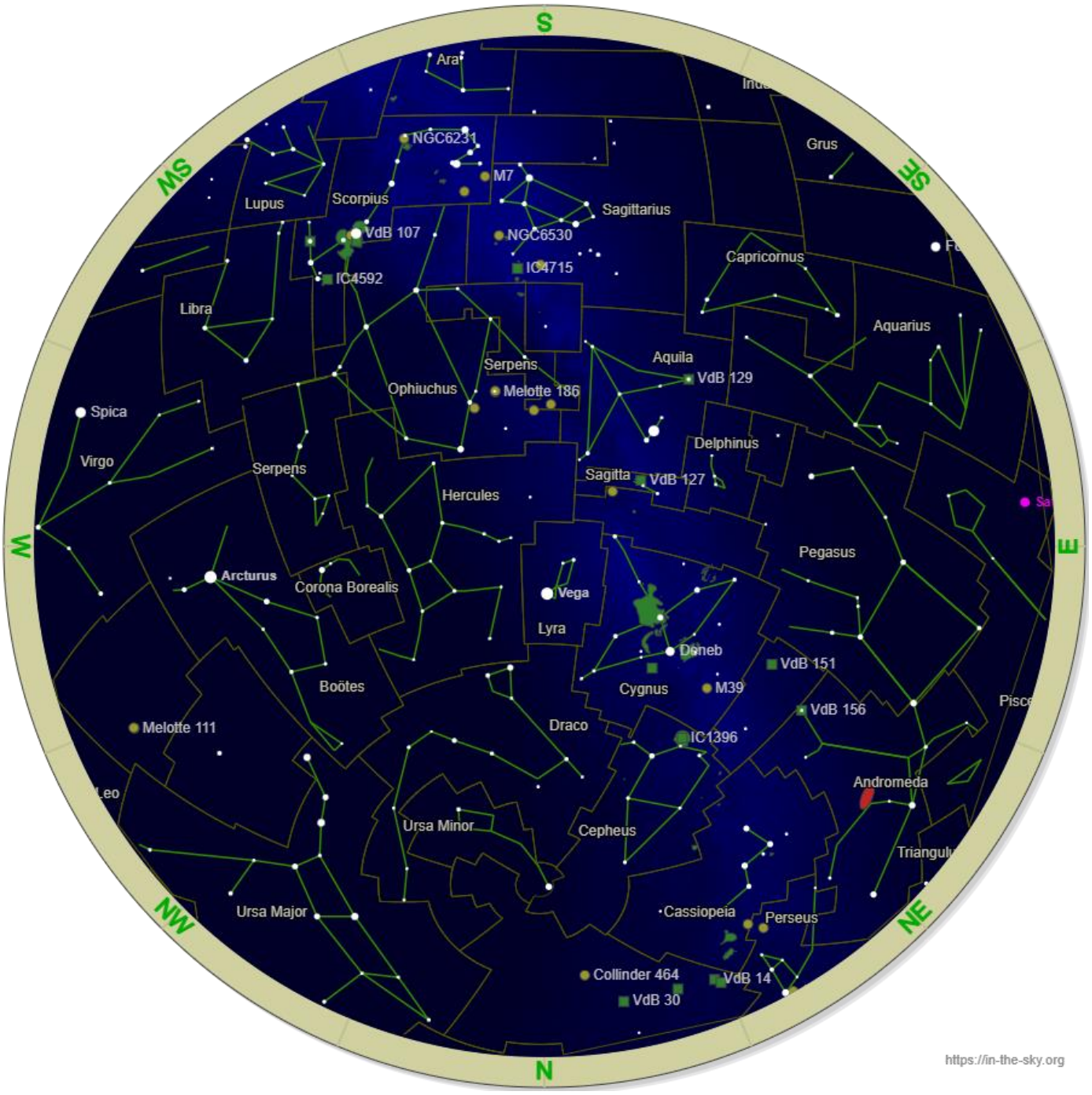
Saturday 30 August from 2:30pm to 6:30pm

for ages twelve to sixteen. / $15 each per in-parish registrant; $18 each per out-of-parish registrant. Advanced registration via WebTrac required [activity #231321]. 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.

Far out science: observatory volunteers were invited to watch as Dr. Penny attempts to catch asteroid Quaoar's moon Weywot transit as part of a request from a student at University of Central Florida.

Sky Map



Map set for 15 August 2025 at 10PM in Baton Rouge.

Quick Picks—Events for August

- Fri 1 **First Quarter Moon**
- Fri 1 **Moon** Apogee at 404,164 km.
- Sun 3 Antares 0.6°N of **Moon**
- Sat 9 **Full Moon**
- Tue 12 **Saturn** 4.0°S of **Moon**
- Tue 12 Perseid Meteor Shower
- Thu 14 **Moon** Perigee at 369,287 km.
- Sat 16 **Last Quarter Moon**
- Sat 16 Pleiades 0.9°S of **Moon**
- Mon 18 **Mercury** 2.6°S of Beehive
- Tue 19 **Mercury** at Greatest Western Elongation - 18.60°
- Tue 19 **Jupiter** 4.8°S of **Moon**
- Wed 20 **Venus** 7.1°S of Pollux
- Wed 20 **Venus** 4.9°S of **Moon**
- Wed 20 Pollux 2.4°N of **Moon**
- Thu 21 Beehive 2.0°S of **Moon**
- Thu 21 **Mercury** 3.7°S of **Moon**
- Sat 23 **New Moon**
- Tue 26 **Mars** 2.8°N of **Moon**
- Wed 27 **Mercury** at Perihelion
- Wed 27 Spica 1.1°N of **Moon**
- Fri 29 **Moon** Apogee at 404,552 km.
- Sun 31 **First Quarter Moon**
- Sun 31 Antares 0.7°N of **Moon**
- Sun 31 **Venus** 1.4°S of Beehive

Check Stellarium.com for local times and separations.

Looking up

August's Night Sky Notes: The Great Rift

By Dave Prosper
Updated by Kat Troche

Summer skies bring glorious views of our own Milky Way galaxy to observers blessed with dark skies. For many city dwellers, their first sight of the Milky Way comes during trips to rural areas - so if you are traveling away from city lights, do yourself a favor and look up!

To observe the Milky Way, you need clear, dark skies and enough time to adapt your eyes to the dark. Photos of the Milky Way are breathtaking, but they usually show far more detail and color than the human eye can see – that's the beauty and quietly deceptive nature of long exposure photography. For Northern Hemisphere observers, the most prominent portion of the Milky Way rises in the southeast as marked by the constellations Scorpius and Sagittarius. Take note that, even in dark skies, the Milky Way isn't easily visible until it rises a bit above the horizon, and the thick, turbulent air obscures the view. The Milky Way is huge, but it is also rather faint, and our eyes need time to truly adjust to the dark and see it in any detail. Avoid bright lights as they will ruin your night vision. It's best to attempt to view the Milky Way when the Moon is at a new or crescent phase; a full Moon will wash out any potential views.

The Vera C. Rubin Observatory, located at Cerro Pachón, Chile, under the Milky Way. The bright halo of gas and stars on the left side of the image highlights the very center of the Milky Way galaxy. The dark path that cuts through this center is known as the Great Rift, because it gives the appearance that the Milky Way has been split in half. Image Credit: RubinObs/NOIRLab/SLAC/NSF/DOE/AURA/B. Quint

Keeping your eyes dark-adapted is especially important if you want to not only see the haze of the Milky Way, but also the dark lane cutting into that haze, stretching from the Summer Triangle to Sagittarius. This dark detail is known as the Great Rift, and is seen more readily in very dark skies, especially dark, dry skies found in high desert regions. What exactly is the Great Rift? You are looking at massive clouds of galactic dust lying between Earth and the interior of the Milky Way.

Other "dark nebulae" of cosmic clouds pepper the Milky Way, including the famed Coalsack, found in the Southern Hemisphere constellation of Crux. Many cultures celebrate these dark clouds in their traditional stories along with the constellations and the Milky Way. One such story tells of a Yacana the Llama, and her baby, wandering along a river that crossed the sky – the Milky Way. The bright stars Alpha and Beta Centauri serve as the llama's eyes, with the dark sections representing the bodies of mother and baby, with the baby below the mother, nursing.

In the activity, "Our Place In Our Galaxy", if the Milky Way were shrunk down to the size of North America, our solar system would be about the size of a quarter. At that scale, Polaris - which is about 433 light years distant from us - would be 11 miles away. Image Credit: Astronomical Society of the Pacific

Where exactly is our solar system within the Milky Way? Is there a way to get a sense of scale? The "Our Place in Our Galaxy" activity can help you do just that, with only birdseed, a coin, and your imagination. You can also discover the amazing science NASA is doing to understand our galaxy – and our place in it - in the Galaxies section of NASA's Universe page.

Originally posted by Dave Prosper: June 2021

Last Updated by Kat Troche: July 2025

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