

June 2026

Meetings at Highland Road Park Observatory and online through YouTube

### **Calendar:**

- 3 June, 10AM: Kenilworth Science and Technology Academy
- 6 June, 10AM: LIGO Science Saturday
- 8 June:
  - 9AM: Little Lambs Day Camp
  - 7PM: BRAS Monthly meeting
- 15 June, 3PM: Whealdon Estates Senior Living
- 24 June, 7PM: LSU's Astronomy on Tap at Pastime Lounge
- 25 June: LSU's REU student showcase and Star Party at Landolt Observatory
- 26 June, 9AM: Gateway Preschool
- 27 June, 10AM: Dino Days at LASM
- ?, 3:30PM: Job Challenge Program in Carville, LA

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# President's Message

Hi Everyone,

Can you believe it's June already? Time seems to be flying by right now, at least to me. Of course, this means we're entering another Louisiana Summer with all of its challenges for us amateur astronomers.

The Summer night sky has a lot of excellent targets for viewing, but it means dealing with later nights because of the later sunsets, hot and humid conditions and mosquitos that threaten to carry you away. However, we do live in Louisiana so most of us have learned how to mitigate the heat and the bugs. All you need now is the motivation to get outside to do some actual observing.

Not to sound like a broken record, but for some great motivation and ideas for observing sessions, you really should take a look at some of the Astronomical League observing clubs. You could try the Lunar Club (of which WE have a shorter version, too!) as something that wouldn't always require super late nights. Maybe try one of the Binocular observing clubs if you don't have the time to set up your full telescope rig. Or maybe you'll be taking a vacation to a place with some darker skies but you just can't take along a scope OR have binoculars? In that case, you could try something as easy as the Meteor Observing club where you just devote an hour or so to gazing up at the sky watching for shooting stars. No equipment needed!

The point is, there's no time like the present to get out and look at our night sky. There is plenty to see and you don't even need any equipment to see lots of cool things.

Finally, if you happen to get any cool pictures of your astronomical endeavors whether it's astrophotography or just visiting a NASA facility, send them along to us and we'll share them in future newsletters.

Have a great start of Summer and I hope to see you out and about!

Clear Skies,

Ben Toman

President



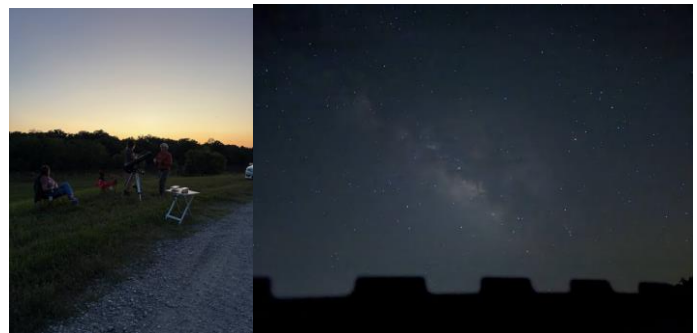
From the May Meeting: Ben sets up a practical demonstration on the scale distances of the solar system.

## Vice President's Word

I'm always a little surprised by June: for some reason, it somewhat feels like the new year is just settling in but in reality, we're already halfway through. A big thanks to those who showed up during the torrential downpour during the meeting last month: it was only after I made it home that I found an email from the Observatory suggesting it might be best to postpone the meeting due to the risk of flooding. But we managed an enthralling meeting for all of that, with Ben introducing some of the newer club members to exactly what it is we do during our outreaches. I've said before that Ben is probably the most dedicated member of the club to the astronomical education of the community, and he demonstrates that every chance he's given.

Another thanks to those who showed up to our impromptu observing session out on the levee last month. It might have been a short night overall, but that's just what June is all about on this side of the equator. And hopefully it scratched an itch for those who couldn't make it out to the Spring Scrimmage. We even got the chance to do a little dark site outreach for about half a dozen passers-by, and I have to say, yea, it's pretty cool letting somebody see a galaxy like the whirlpool that they've heard about before without telling them to just squint and use their imagination. If nothing else, we've demonstrated the system to call for observers worked as intended, and hopefully, we'll find a clear moonless night again, eventually. Which, after a week of rain with another one coming up in the forecast, seems like a far way dream.

This coming meeting we're going to be stretching the old brain using some of that truly heavy astrophysics we all love so much. One of our members' sons, Dr. Chis Akers, has agreed to speak with the club about Black Holes and Quantum Gravity, which as I understand it is one of our best chances of getting ourselves out of a singularity.



Waiting for dark: members met on the levee to get in some mid-week stargazing. Last look: a final look through the sunroof before heading back to the city.



Pack 125 Star Wars night: Ben introduces us to the pack and Scott and Ben keep the peace as scouts take turn checking out the setting sun.

# Outreach Report

Hi Everyone,

Just when it felt like we were slowing down to enter the Summer season, things have picked right up again. We had a decently busy May with a Port Hudson visit, another full day at the Bluebonnet Swamp and Nature Center and a fun Astronomy Day event at the Louisiana Art & Science Museum.

We were down a few of our regular volunteers for various reasons, but we had a couple of new faces helping us out and it made all the difference. So, a big thank you to all of our volunteers this past month including Roz, Scott, Chad, Abigail, Tanya, Susan and Ben. We're making an impact in the community, for sure!

Everyone that braved the weather and came out to the last meeting got a small taste of what happens at some of our outreach events. It's really easy and we always have a lot of fun. I hope you'll take a look at the list of events below and let me know if you'd like to come help out with any. We have plenty of opportunities so far so feel free to take that leap and come join us out there!

Clear Skies,

Ben Toman

Outreach Chairperson



From the Bluebonnet swamp: Top: Susan and Ben tackle questions from the kids, Tanya and Roz talk about the scale of the solar system. Bottom: Susan readies herself for the next wave, Scott talks sunspots, and random Owl reminds us we're just visiting.

**Upcoming Outreach Events**

**June 3rd**

10am-11am

Kenilworth Science and Technology Academy STEM camp

(I will be giving a presentation on the Solar System and doing the pocket solar system activity with the kids. If someone wants to come along

as an extra set of hands, you are welcome!)

**June 6th**

10am-4pm

Science Saturday at LIGO

(Demos, activities, Solar observing)

**Monday, June 8th**

9am-11am

Little Lambs Day Camp in Lafayette

**Monday, June 15th**

3pm-4pm

Whealdon Estates Senior Living

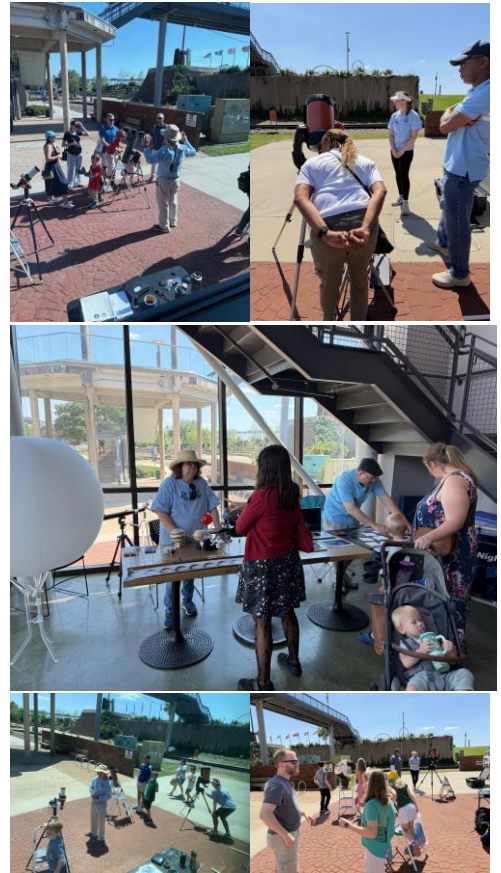
(I will be giving a presentation to residents. If someone wants to come along

as an extra set of hands, you are welcome!)

**Friday, June 26th**

9am-11:30am

Gateway Preschool in Prairieville



At LASM's Astronomy Day. Top, the outside team: Scott and Abigail offer various views of the sun and bright planets. Middle, the inside team: Roz and Ben explain some of our physical models. Bottom, honorable mention: club members Steve and Trey bring their children to check out the solar scopes so they get the chance to see what amateur astronomers do to support the club.

**Saturday, June 27th**

10am-2pm

Dino Days at the Louisiana Art & Science Museum

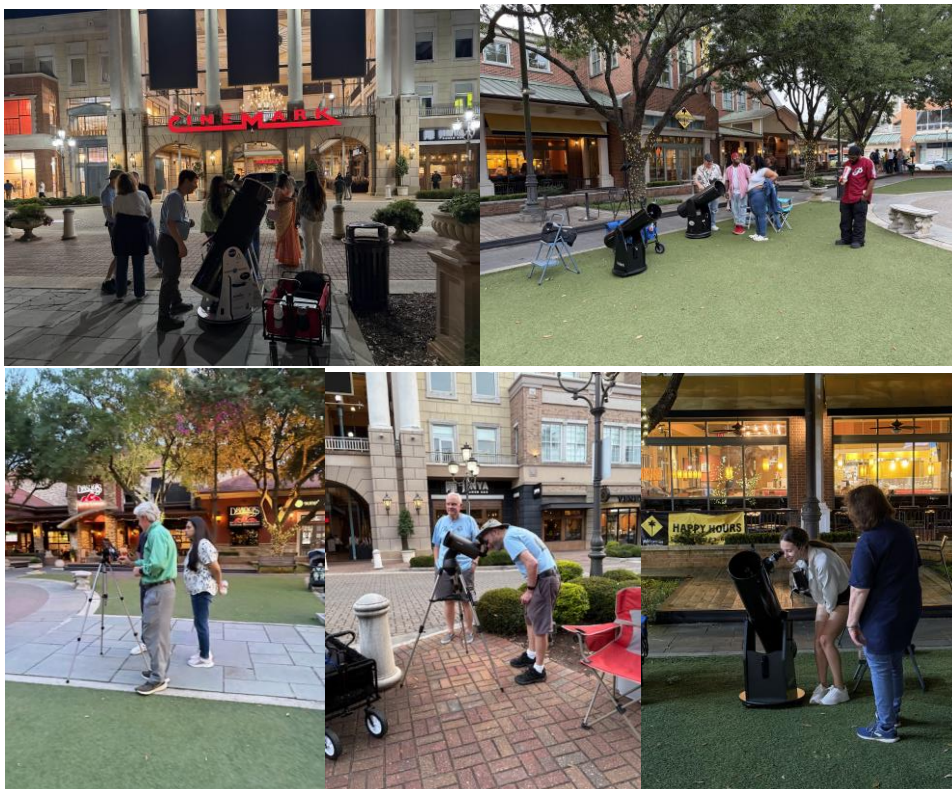
(Demos, activities and Solar observing)

**TBD**

3:30pm-5pm

Job Challenge Program at Gillis Long Center in Carville

(They've invited us to a new session. It will be on a weekday and likely at this time.)



Perkin's Rowe: Top: Coy and Ben break out the large scopes to wow the crowd. Bottom, Scott man's the Seestar, Chad and Jim share a view, and Roz shows off the moon.

# Secretary's Summary

Due to heavy rain only 14 people attended in person.

President Ben Toman announced that this was the first meeting streamed only on YouTube.

New Members Tanya Ayala and Charlie Carson were welcomed.

The main program was on kits and tools the club has for outreach events.

- Solar System Scale Models: Planets-on-sticks showing the relative scale of the planets and sun.
- Solar System in YourPocket: Hands-on activities where participants fold a paper tape to represent distances (Sun to Pluto). This is a very good illustration for kids and adults of the distance scale of the solar system.
- Star Formation & Supernova Demo: Uses ping-pong balls (outer layers) and tennis balls (core) to simulate a supernova explosion and nebula formation.
- Celestial Globe: Clear plastic globe with Earth at the center and stars on the outer sphere. Viewers look through the transparent globe to see a correctly oriented night sky. Includes a date dial to show current star positions.
- Seasonal Orrery / Earth Model: Illuminated model demonstrating how axial tilt creates seasons.
- Electromagnetic Spectrum & Filters: Discussion of viewing objects (e.g., Crab Nebula) across different wavelengths (visible, UV, X-ray, etc.).
- Basic Optics Demo: Bamboo sticks and lenses to illustrate how telescopes focus light.

These props are especially effective at grabbing attention from passersby and simplifying complex concepts for elementary to middle-school audiences.

A Sign-up sheet for upcoming outreach events was circulated:

Two very nice 2026 NASA Calendars were free-raffled.

Jim Akers, substituting for Secretary Chad Jasper.



Rainy Day at Port Hudson: Chad and Roz show off our solar system models, Scott breaks out our rock collection, and Ben tells students about the consequences of not having a space program when an asteroid hits.

# Observatory Notes

*{HRPO is closed on 19 June.}*

## THE DAYLIGHT DETOUR

*Friday 5 June from 6pm to 9pm.*

*No admission fee. For ages six and older.*

Whether it's taking advantage of a prorated BRAS membership; getting the status of all current NASA, LSU and HRPO plans; obtaining the latest information on asteroid Apophis, and comets Kopff and Tsuchinshan; learning HRPO history or taking stock of which celestial events are on their way—this “alternate route” (planned due to Daylight Time) is your stop!

## EVENING SKY VIEWING

*for ages six and older / no admission fee*

*Friday 5 June from 9:30pm to 11pm*

*Saturday 6 June from 8:30pm to 11pm*

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)*

*advanced registration via [WebTrac](#) strongly recommended*

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

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

6 June = “Mercury”

13 June = “Baton Rouge, 1697-1752”

## BATON ROUGE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY MEETING

*Monday 8 June from 7pm to 9pm*

*for ages fourteen and older / no admission fee*

AMERICAN STEM: A QUARTER-MILLENNIAL CELEBRATION

*Fridays from 5:45pm to 9:45pm*

*for ages twelve and older / no admission fee*

*Part VI: 12 June [2026-2076]*

The great Constitutional Republic experiment has been going strong for 250 years. In addition to incalculable gifts in the areas of human rights and the arts, the United States educational and capitalist and social systems (and our international partnerships) have generated enormous accomplishments in STEM fields.

*[This series will follow the Community Discussion format rather than the Lecture format.]*

QUADRUPLE CONJUNCTION

*Wednesday 17 June from 7:45pm to 9:45pm at Burbank Soccer Complex*

*for ages six and older / no admission fee*

This will be an amazing lineup. From the horizon Mercury, Jupiter, Venus and the waxing crescent Moon will be visible!

STEM EXPANSION: “Stellar Astronomy”

*Saturday 20 June 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.

FORCES OF NATURE CAMP

*22 June to 26 June / 8am to 5pm daily. For ages eleven to thirteen.*

*\$125 per EBR-parish camper / \$150 per other-parish camper*

*[Cost covers entire session; limit thirty per session.]*

This one-week-only session focuses on the four forces of nature: the weak nuclear force, the strong nuclear force, gravity and the electromagnetic spectrum (gamma rays, x-rays, ultraviolet, color, infrared, microwaves and radio). Campers will investigate the spacecraft and instruments studying these forces, perform indoor and outdoor experiments demonstrating the presence of these forces in our lives and build basic devices connected to these inquiry! There will be special guests throughout the week to explain the process for obtaining an Amateur Radio Service license. Parents may register in person at HRPO or online at Webtrac. The activity number is 231180.

NATURAL SKY TASK FORCE PUBLIC INPUT MEETING

Thursday 25 June from 5:15pm to 6:45pm

for ages twelve and older / no admission fee

The purpose of these gatherings is to network and share results of separate efforts to reduce light pollution in the HRPO service area, and to share advice on improving efforts to reduce light pollution in the HRPO service area.

#### AMERICAN RADIO RELAY LEAGUE FIELD DAY

Saturday 27 June from 2pm to 10pm / For ages six and older. No admission fee.

One section of the electromagnetic spectrum gets all the love, as tens of thousands of “hams” ascend to the radio waves with “phone” (voice) and CW (Morse) in this exciting contact contest that stretches from coast to coast! Get on the GOTA station and make your own contact! Ham radio is awesome for parents and kids alike.

#### THE EDGE OF NIGHT (Summer)

Thursday 2 July from 8pm to 10pm

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

It’s not light, it’s not dark. It’s that special time called twilight, and HRPO wants to introduce you to it! Are all sections of the sky the same shade of blue? Which stars are seen first? Are Mercury and Venus or the Moon out? Is that moving object a plane, a satellite or space debris? How much actual darkness should I expect in a light-polluted city when twilight has passed? There is no other time like twilight. Bring it into your life!

#### LUNAR EXPLORERS CAMP

27 July to 31 July / 8am to 5pm daily. For ages eleven to thirteen.

\$125 per EBR-parish camper / \$150 per other-parish camper

[Cost covers entire session; limit thirty per session.]

This one-week-only session focuses on past accomplishments and future goals related to our sole natural satellite! There will be simulated moondust, overviews of transcripts and audio from actual Moon landings, and previews of actual human beings headed back to the Moon, then on the Mars. Parents may register in person at HRPO or online at Webtrac. The activity number is 231180.

# Sky Map



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

Map centered on 15 June at 10PM

# Quick Picks—Events for June

- Sun 7 [Venus](#) 4.6°S of Pollux
- Mon 8 [Last Quarter Moon](#)
- Wed 10 [Saturn](#) 6.2°S of [Moon](#)
- Fri 12 [Mars](#) 5.6°S of [Moon](#)
- Sat 13 Pleiades 1.0°S of [Moon](#)
- Sun 14 [Moon](#) Perigee at 357,196 km.
- Sun 14 [New Moon](#)
- Mon 15 [Mercury](#) at Greatest Eastern Elongation - 24.50°
- Tue 16 [Mercury](#) 2.6°S of [Moon](#)
- Tue 16 Pollux 3.6°N of [Moon](#)
- Wed 17 [Jupiter](#) 2.5°S of [Moon](#)
- Wed 17 Occultation of [Venus](#) by the Moon
- Wed 17 Beehive 0.6°S of [Moon](#)
- Thu 18 [Mercury](#) 5.8°S of Pollux
- Fri 19 Regulus 0.3°N of [Moon](#)
- Fri 19 [Venus](#) 0.4°N of Beehive
- Sun 21 Summer Solstice
- Sun 21 [First Quarter Moon](#)
- Tue 23 Spica 2.2°N of [Moon](#)
- Thu 25 [Mercury](#) 3.8° of [Jupiter](#)
- Sat 27 Antares 0.5°N of [Moon](#)
- Sun 28 [Moon](#) Apogee at 406,267 km.
- Sun 28 [Mars](#) 4.3°S of Pleiades
- Mon 29 [Full Moon](#)

From Telescopius.com. Events are non-local: check Stellarium.com for local times.

## Looking up

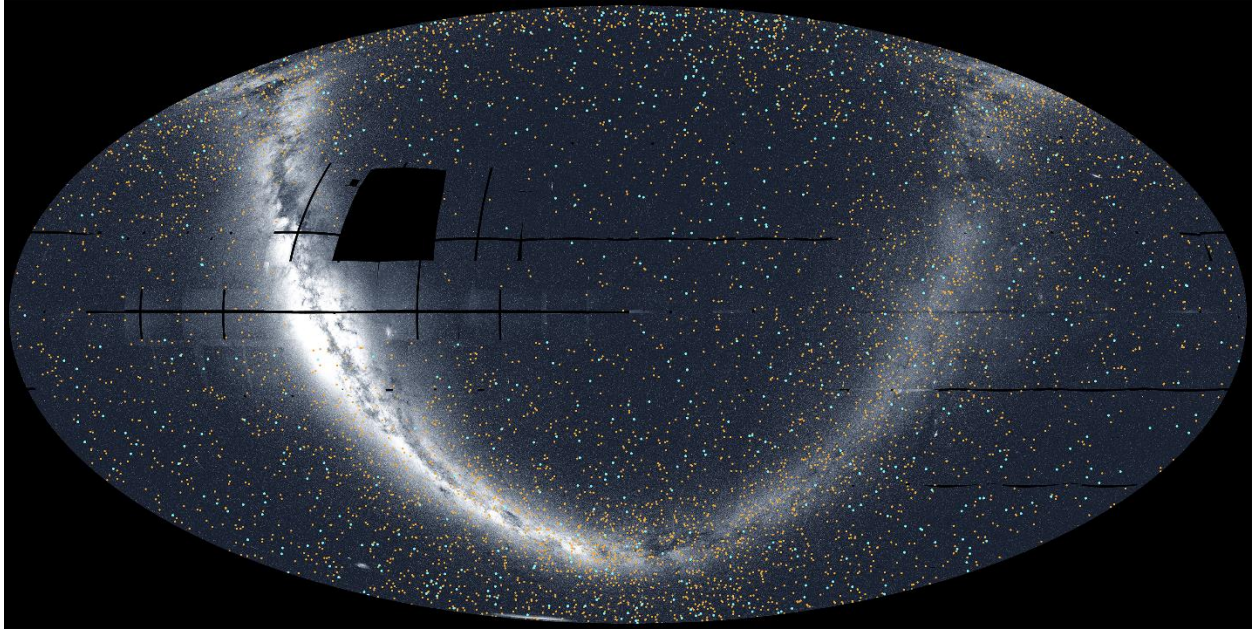
# NASA's Planet-Hunting TESS Reveals Dazzling Night Sky

NASA's TESS (Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite) has released its most complete view of the starry sky to date, filling in gaps from previous observations. Nearly 6,000 colored dots scattered across the image show the locations of either confirmed or candidate exoplanets — worlds beyond our solar system — identified by the mission as of September 2025 at the end of TESS's second extended mission.

“Over the last eight years, TESS has become a fire hose of exoplanet science,” said Rebekah Hounsell, a TESS associate project scientist at the [University of Maryland Baltimore County](#) and [NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center](#) in Greenbelt, Maryland. “It's helped us find planets of all different sizes, from tiny Mercury-like ones to those larger than Jupiter. Some of them are even in the habitable zone, where liquid water might be possible on the surface, an important factor in our search for life beyond Earth.”

The [TESS mission](#) scans a wide swath of the sky, called a sector, for about a month at a time using its four cameras. These long stares allow the spacecraft to track the brightness changes of tens of thousands of stars, looking for variations in their light that might come from orbiting planets.

Researchers assembled an all-sky mosaic made of 96 sectors observed between April 2018, when TESS began its work, and September 2025.



This view of the whole sky was constructed from 96 TESS sectors. By the end of September 2025, when the last image of this mosaic was captured, TESS had discovered 679 exoplanets (blue dots) and 5,165 candidates (orange dots). The glowing arc running through the center is the plane of the Milky Way. The Large Magellanic Cloud can be seen along the bottom edge just left of center. Black areas within the oval indicate regions TESS has not yet imaged.

NASA/MIT/TESS and Veselin Kostov (University of Maryland College Park)

[Download high-resolution images from NASA's Scientific Visualization Studio.](#)

The blue dots in the image mark the locations of nearly 700 confirmed planets, as of September 9. This menagerie includes worlds that may be [covered by volcanoes](#), are being [destroyed by their stars](#), or [orbit two stars](#) — experiencing double sunrises and sunsets each day. The orange dots represent more than 5,000 candidate planets that are awaiting verification.

To date, scientists have [confirmed](#) over 6,270 [exoplanets](#) using missions like TESS, NASA’s retired [Kepler Space Telescope](#), and other facilities.

Also captured in the mosaic is the bright plane of our Milky Way galaxy, seen as a glowing arc through the center. The bright white ovals in the lower left are the Large and Small Magellanic Clouds. These satellite galaxies are located 160,000 and 200,000 light-years away, respectively.

“The more we dig into the large TESS dataset, especially using automated algorithms, the more surprises we find,” said Allison Youngblood, the TESS project scientist at NASA Goddard. “In addition to planets, TESS has helped us study [rivers of young stars](#), observe [dynamic galactic behavior](#), and monitor asteroids near Earth. As TESS fills in more of the night sky, there’s no knowing what it might see next.”

*You could discover the next exoplanet! Join the [Planet Hunters TESS](#) citizen science project, and you’ll learn how to read light curves — plots of light data from distant stars — to find telltale signals from orbiting exoplanets.*

By [Jeanette Kazmierczak](#)

[NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center](#), Greenbelt, Md.

## Contact Information

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

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

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