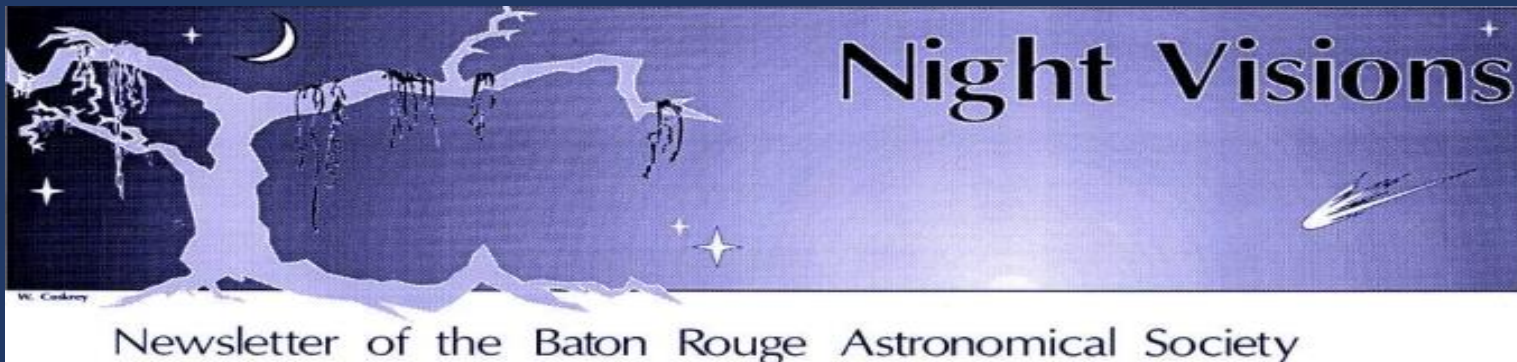




Meetings at Highland Road Park Observatory and online through YouTube

September 2026

Calendar:

- **14 September, 7PM: BRAS meeting at HRPO**
- **18 September, 3:30PM: BRAS observing Night at HRPO**
- **19 September, 8PM: Star Party at LSU's Landolt Observatory**
- **22 September, 6PM: Sidewalk Astronomy at Perkins Rowe**
- **24 September, 6PM: Innovation night at Dunham School**

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President's Message

Hi Everyone,

We've just about made it through the Summer and a return to earlier sunsets. Hopefully that coupled with some cooler weather will give us more opportunities to get outside for some real observing.

Speaking of observing, I was very happy with how we showed up at last month's meeting to give a good welcome to Barry Simon from the Pontchartrain Astronomy Society. He gave some great information about where to go to observe and what you can expect to see from different areas around here and abroad. He also let us know about the upcoming Deep South Star Gaze (DSSG) at the Feliciana Retreat Center coming up this October.

Two things related to that:

1. Here is the address for the website to get all the info you need about the DSSG. dssg.boards.net As Barry said, pay very close attention to the light restrictions and rules. They are pretty serious about it and for good reason. Some people come from far away for this event and intend to do some serious observing/imaging. These rules and restrictions are nothing you need to be afraid of and will probably seem to be mostly common sense. A little bit of preparation will make sure you are in compliance. It's really not too difficult.

2. Barry has provided his talk in PDF form so it will contain most of that info he had about the quality of the sky in the area. If you are interested in having a copy emailed to you, just let me know!

We've also had a good response to our BRAS Skill Inventory Survey. We're starting to get a good idea of what topics are interesting to you regarding amateur astronomy and we're in the process of planning some activities with that in mind. If you haven't already filled out a survey, you can find it on our website (brastro.org) in the "Documents" section. It is clearly labeled "BRAS Skill Inventory" and can be filled out quickly right online and it is automatically sent to us. The more we hear from y'all, the better we'll know how to provide good content for the membership.

That's it from me for this newsletter. I hope to see you all out at our next meeting on Monday, September 14th. It's been great to see so many chairs filled each month so let's keep it up!

Clear Skies,

Ben Toman

Vice President's Word

After a nice little break it's time to get back into the swing of things. September is always a great time to start going outside again and with the equinox coming up fast the nights are getting longer and longer, and starting again at a more and more reasonable hour—even if it is still about an hour later than it should be thanks to Daylight time. It should still be dark enough in by eight o'clock that we can return to doing observing at HRPO after our monthly meetings, which had just started to take off when the axis started to tilt the other way.

For those of you who can't stay out quite that late on a weeknight, we're going to try to have one weekend session per season where the club can take over the observatory for the night; a time just for us to bring out our equipment to do some stargazing with all of the creature comforts of our own observatory. The next one of these will be taking place on Friday, the 18th of September where we've opted to split the evening with BREC for part of the night. While they will have their normal Friday night lecture (featuring Amy Northrop's tour of the fall sky, and I do recommend members take that in) at 7:30, we'll be able to set up our gear after the talk and share the facility with patrons until 10, when we'll have full reign for the rest of the night.

That's two opportunities to view from HRPO in the span of one week. We're still setting up the Fall viewing schedule, and we'll let you know when we have dates for that.

For those looking for a more remote viewing site, a quick reminder (one of many in this newsletter) that the Deep South Stargaze in Norwood Louisiana is early this year, starting on the 10th of October. Rooms fill up fast, so if you are interested, you might want to jump on registration as soon as you can. This will also save you a few bucks with the early bird discount.

And of course, the monthly star parties at LSU will start back up again with the first being Saturday the 19th, which is also International Observe the Moon night for those of you who practice. So, go get a good look at a slightly gibbous moon from a classic 11.5" doublet atop Nicholson Hall.

For those of you who want even more chances to observe, consider joining our GroupMe list and hopefully we can luck out on the weather. We've so far had two successful last-minute outings, including one last second trip taken in August where I finally achieved every child's goal of seeing Pluto visually. That, a few comets, the end of the Perseids, a few imaged targets, and a slew of old familiar summer objects really made it worth the rushed trip, even if things got hectic when the machines revolted. Oh, and I did mention the view of the Milky Way didn't I? Because it was putting on quite the show as well.

Our speaker for the month is scheduled to be Amy Northrop, who is one of our local NASA Solar System Ambassadors. She'll be there to update us all on what, hopefully, should have been the successful launch of the much anticipated Nancy Grace Roman Telescope (which is slated for launch in a couple of days as of writing) as well as to give us some more information about its mission and what we hope to achieve. Again, Amy is a great speaker and we're glad to have her, so come join in.

Outreach Report

Hi Everyone,

What started out as a nice month off turned into a few last minute outreach opportunities for us this past month. I have to say, I'm pretty proud that we could pull these off. Let me explain...

Last year, we were contacted by one of the Country Day schools in town to come out for some astronomy outreach with their preschool aged kids during their Summer session. We modified what we do to try to fit that age group and it went over quite well. So well, in fact, that the school asked us to come out again this Summer!

With more experience dealing with this age group under our belts, and some volunteers that enjoy working with small children (most importantly!), we gave another stellar performance. A little too good, I guess, because we were immediately contacted by the other 2 Country Day schools wanting to set up visits at their locations.

All 3 schools were incredibly appreciative to have us. (I was told that they have a hard time getting groups to come out, especially science type groups, because most people either don't know HOW or just don't WANT to work with such young kids.)

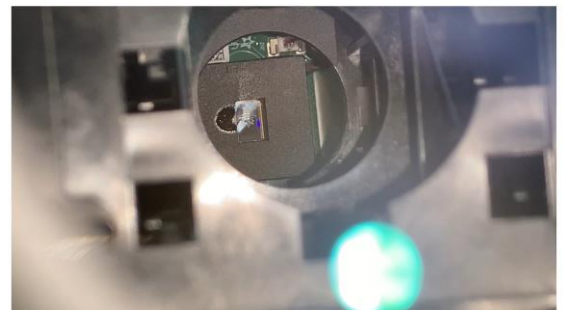
Tremendous thanks to our volunteers for these events: Roz, Jilyana and Anyalina, Chad and Ben. We couldn't have done it without their help.

On a side note, I am currently learning first hand about ZWO's product support for Seestars because, unfortunately, a little set of curious hands removed the Solar filter from my Seestar at one of these events. (We thought it was in a secure area, but that area turned out to be occupied briefly by a class out for recess!) Less than 10 minutes of exposure burned a hole in the sensor board and completely destroyed the sensor. Fortunately, the support has been great so far and my Seestar is currently in their hands and being repaired for a very reasonable price. I'm hoping it comes back even better than it was before!

Now, on the horizon, we have the return of Sidewalk Astronomy at Perkins Rowe and we are also starting to field requests for upcoming Family/STEM nights. We'd love to see our regulars AND some more new faces out and about at some of these events so take a look below and let me know if you'd like to come help out. We have a pretty good time!

Clear Skies,

Ben Toman



Can't See Stars: Ben learns first-hand why we suggest adult supervision and why they put a warning about making sure you have the solar filter installed before doing solar viewing on every telescope.

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, September 22nd

6pm-9pm

Sidewalk Astronomy at Perkins Rowe

Thursday, September 24th

6pm-?

Dunham School's Innovation Night

(Demos/exhibits- 2 or more people needed)

Tuesday, October 20th

6pm-9pm

Sidewalk Astronomy at Perkins Rowe

Thursday, December 10th

5:30pm-?

Iberville Elementary Family STEM Night

(Demos, exhibits, possible telescope viewing)

Thursday, January 14th 2027

5pm-6:30pm

MSA West Academy STEM Night

(Demos, exhibits, possible telescope viewing)



From Country Day Preschool: Top, Ben begins his famous solar system dance. Middle, Jilyana and Anyalina play with gravity. Bottom, Roz and Chad take a walk around the solar system.

Secretary's Summary

There were 34 people in attendance at the August meeting.

Our guest speaker was Barry Simon, President of the Pontchartrain Astronomical Society.

Barry shared information about what to observe in the night sky and what observing tactics to use depending on how dark the sky is on the Bortle scale. He displayed some light pollution maps and provided a list of some of the best Bortle 1 sites. It is important to pay attention to the moon phase when scheduling visits to a dark sky site, as being there during a new moon ensures the darkest possible skies for stargazing.

Barry provided a good preview of the upcoming 44th annual Deep South Star Gaze to be held at the Feliciana Retreat Center in Norwood, Louisiana October 10-15, 2026. It is the oldest continuously held annual star party in the southeastern United States.

Although the event has been held at a few different locations over the year, the Felicia Retreat Center is the best location providing housing for over 100 people. There are very strict light rules in place, so make sure to read up on those before you go.

For more information or to register for the Deep South Star Gaze, please visit:

<https://dssg.boards.net>

Following Barry's presentation, BRAS member Jim Akers talked about a new club initiative, BRAS Member Engagement. To provide more resources for new and veteran members, we've started an info sheet for members to complete. By taking inventory of our members' skills and keeping the list updated and available, we can develop a database of who knows what, who wants to know what, and who is willing to share their knowledge with others.

More experienced and knowledgeable members can become mentors, sponsoring new members and helping them accomplish their goals for joining the club through teaching and camaraderie.

By identifying our members' expertise, we can also encourage them to share their knowledge through presentations at club meetings, creating a pipeline of topics and presenters.

A new info sheet is now available on the BRAS website. Click on "BRAS Links" in the top left corner, then scroll down and click "Documents." Then click "BRAS Skills Inventory."

Thanks to Jim Akers for his initiative in this endeavor.

Observatory Notes

FRIDAY NIGHT LECTURE SERIES

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

4 September = “The Roman Telescope” Constructed to help solve long-standing mysteries in astrophysics, the NGR Telescope will

11 September = “The Martian Apparition” It’s happening! The Red Planet is rising earlier—getting bigger and brighter until it’s wonderful opposition in February.

18 September = “Wonders of the Fall Sky” BREC Education Program Specialist Amy Northrop will take the audience on a fascinating tour of Baton Rouge’s upcoming fall season. She’ll highlight the celestial gems that will sparkle throughout those three months—gems visitors will be able to see live if they continue to visit HRPO!

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 #331320] / parents may stay with or leave Cadet

Four Cadet minimum and sixteen Cadets maximum per session.

5 September = “Planetary Missions Named For...”

12 September = “Uranus and Neptune”

19 September = “The Spooky Session”

EVENING SKY VIEWING

for ages six and older / no admission fee

Fridays (4, 11, 18 September) from 8:30pm to 10pm

Saturdays (5 and 19 September) 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.

PLUS NIGHT: “The Icy Outposts”

Saturday 12 September 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-dependent).

*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.

BATON ROUGE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY MEETING

Monday 14 September from 7pm to 9pm

for ages fourteen and older / no admission fee

NEPTUNIAN OPPOSITION

Friday 25 September from 9:30pm to 11:30pm

Neptune is rising as the Sun is setting. The Earth and Neptune are now the closest they will be to each other this year! Weather permitting viewing of Neptune will take place.

SOLAR VIEWING

Saturday 26 September from 12pm to 2pm

for ages six and older / no admission fee

Weather permitting, viewing of the Sun’s image in four different manners—transferred onto a white surface, directly with optical light, directly in hydrogen-alpha wavelength and directly via Calcium K wavelength—will take place. Protective clothing and sunscreen are recommended.

STEM EXPANSION: “Astronomy for Personalized Advancement”

Saturday 26 September 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 #331321]. 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.

FULL MOON VIEWING

Saturday 26 September from 7:45pm to 10:45pm

for all ages / no admission fee

Bring the family to learn the origins of the Moon, why it keeps the same “face” toward Earth and what astonishing features can be spied during its Full phase.

NATURAL SKY TASK FORCE PUBLIC INPUT MEETING

Monday 28 September 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.

Sky Map



All times centered at 10PM on 15 September.

Quick Picks—Events for September

- Tue 1 [Venus](#) 1.2°S of Spica
- Thu 3 Pleiades 1.2°S of [Moon](#)
- Fri 4 [Last Quarter Moon](#)
- Sun 6 [Mars](#) 3.0°S of [Moon](#)
- Sun 6 [Moon](#) Perigee at 368,255 km.
- Mon 7 Pollux 3.6°N of [Moon](#)
- Mon 7 Beehive 0.5°S of [Moon](#)
- Tue 8 Occultation of [Jupiter](#) by the Moon
- Thu 10 [New Moon](#)
- Sun 13 Spica 2.4°N of [Moon](#)
- Mon 14 Occultation of [Venus](#) by the Moon
- Wed 16 [Mars](#) 5.8°S of Pollux
- Thu 17 Antares 0.6°N of [Moon](#)
- Fri 18 [First Quarter Moon](#)
- Fri 18 [Moon](#) Apogee at 404,217 km.
- Tue 22 Autumnal Equinox
- Fri 25 [Neptune](#) at Opposition
- Fri 25 [Mercury](#) 0.8°N of Spica
- Sat 26 [Full Moon](#)
- Wed 30 Pleiades 1.1°S of [Moon](#)

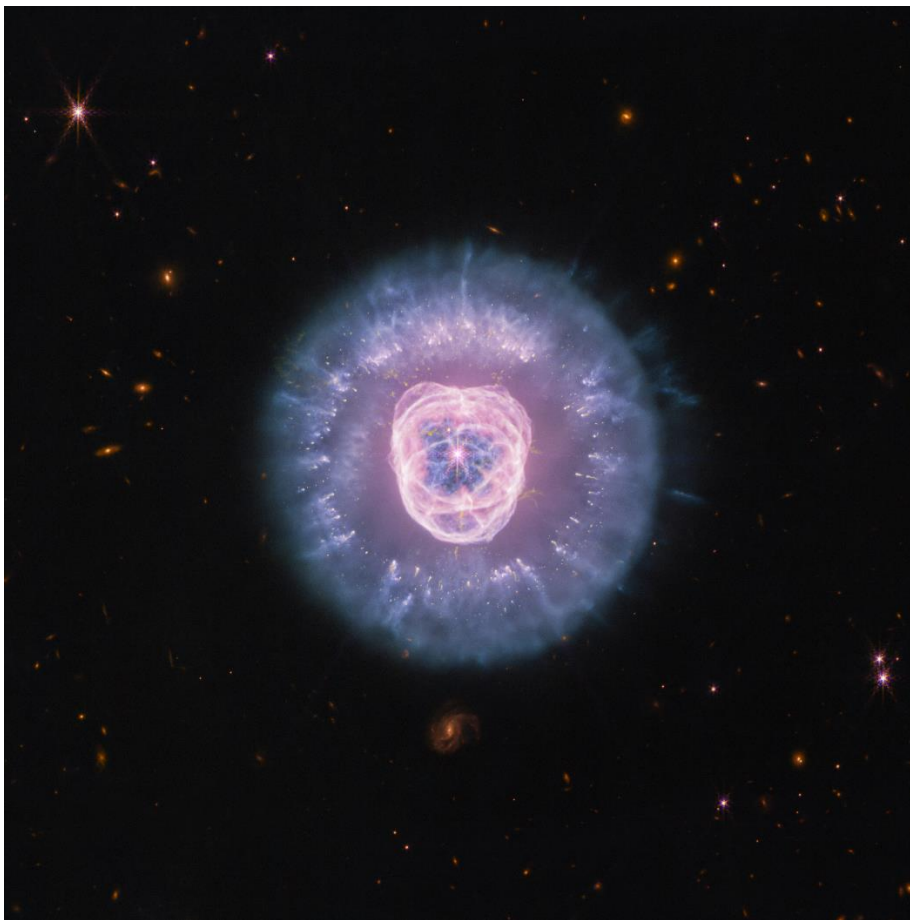
All events non-local. Check Stellarium.com for exact details.

Looking up

Lion Nebula Roars to Life With NASA's Webb

Observing across the starry “plains” of space, NASA’s James Webb Space Telescope has taken new images of NGC 2392, nicknamed the Lion Nebula. NASA’s Hubble Space Telescope previously viewed this [planetary nebula](#) in 2000, [imaging the lion face-shaped target](#) in visible light and revealing features such as the “mane” of hazy, comet-shaped objects. Now Webb has captured a clearer, more detailed view of the Lion Nebula due to its high-resolution imaging.

Lion Nebula (NIRCam and MIRI Image)



NASA’s James Webb Space Telescope imaged the planetary nebula NGC 2392, the Lion Nebula, using the observatory’s NIRCam and MIRI instruments. The central star’s remains are responsible for the nebula’s structure, including a lion face-shaped bubble of ionized gas and dust “mane.”

Image: NASA, ESA, CSA, STScI; Image Processing: Alyssa Pagan (STScI)

At first glance the nebula's overall structure in Webb's infrared images, with both the [NIRCam \(Near Infrared Camera\)](#) and [MIRI \(Mid Infrared Instrument\)](#) instruments, may look quite similar to Hubble's earlier visible-light view. However, Webb's infrared vision highlights features like compact clumps of dust and a haze of ionized gas. It's taken several thousand years for this collection of gas and dust to reach its current shape, and the nebula's components continue to be altered.

The source of these constant changes and the reason for the Lion Nebula's distinct appearance is located at the center: the remains of a dying star. Though it looks like the button nose of the lion, its energy and radiation are powering the intricate structures seen here.

Lion Nebula (MIRI Image)



NASA's James Webb Space Telescope's mid-infrared image of planetary nebula NGC 2392, nicknamed the Lion Nebula, highlights the varying dust structures. Some dust is being destroyed by the dying central star's radiation, while some dust filaments manage to survive.

Image: NASA, ESA, CSA, STScI; Image Processing: Alyssa Pagan (STScI)

Massive stars undergo [supernova explosions](#) at the end of their lives, but these kinds of events are few and far in between. Most of the universe's stars have lower masses, like the one belonging to NGC 2392. When a lower-mass star can no longer sustain itself with nuclear reactions in its core, the star becomes unstable and pulsates, losing its mass by shedding its outer layers, which then turn into shells of gas and dust called a planetary nebula. (Stars at this life stage are responsible for producing much of the universe's observable dust.) The star's radiation drives the ejected material away, leaving behind the very hot stellar core, also known as a [white dwarf](#).

In the Lion Nebula's case, the death of the oxygen-rich central star has left behind a white dwarf that is “cooking” everything from the inside and producing a bubble of ionized gas as it does. The gas bubble, which forms the lion's face, is expanding over time and destroying dust that is in its path. Understanding why the swept-up gas has a complex structure of rings and shells, a common feature in planetary nebulae, is an ongoing endeavor.

The mane of the lion is the interior of a dust shell that is being illuminated by the white dwarf at the center. The tufts of hair, which look like cometary tails of material, are compact clumps of dust that have survived the stellar core's radiation and protect the material that lies behind them.

Webb's imagery “freezes” this planetary nebula in time, though the star's death, and its tumultuous effects, go on. NGC 2392 will continue to undergo changes as its gas and dust migrate away from the stellar core. Astronomers estimate the lion will eventually disperse in approximately 10,000 years — a relatively short period in astronomical terms.

The James Webb Space Telescope is the world's premier space science observatory. Webb is solving mysteries in our solar system, looking beyond to distant worlds around other stars, and probing the mysterious structures and origins of our universe and our place in it. Webb is an

international program led by NASA with its partners, ESA (European Space Agency) and CSA (Canadian Space Agency).

To learn more about Webb, visit:

<https://science.nasa.gov/webb>

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