

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Astronomical Society

www.braastro.org

March 2012

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**The March meeting will be held at 7:00 at the Highland Road Park Observatory on March 12th.
We will learn about the Milky Way Galaxy from Trevor McGuire.**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hey Everyone,

As you know, the Hodges Gardens Star Party is coming up March 21st-25th. Anyone that has been to it before can tell you it is a beautiful place to enjoy the night sky. I know several members will be making a return visit this year, but I want to encourage all of you who may have never been to a star party to come out and see what it's all about. The state park itself allows camping and there is a reasonable hotel right across the street from the park entrance. We are pretty strict on the ban on white light after dark on the observing field, but other than that you'll find it is a very casual, relaxed atmosphere. I hope you will get a chance to come join us up there.

On a different subject, please take a look at the requests that we have for outreach events and let us know if you are able to help out with any of them. Last month's newsletter contained several events and we had few (or no) replies. Remember, you don't have to be an expert in astronomy to help out with these events and often times they are the best ways for you to improve your knowledge bit by bit assisting another member in some activity. If you would like to help out at any of the events, let us know as soon as you can so we know what activities we can plan.

Finally, I'd like to thank Art Barrios for his work this past couple of weeks trying to clear up some issues with our dark sky site. Things are not yet concrete, but it looks like we will still be able to use the area at the levee we have been using for the past several years. (The area has recently been posted as "Private Property" enforced by the Atchafalaya Levee District.) Regardless of the favorable outcome, I thought I would just plant the seed that it might be nice to find an even better dark sky site in the future. Proximity to Baton Rouge is important. We don't want it too close that the sky is not dark enough, but it would be good to have it close enough that people would want to go out to use it for an evening easily. (I know, sounds easier than it is.) If you happen to know of anyone that has some land that they would not mind us using on occasion for our stargazing purposes, let us know.

We've been having great attendance at our meetings and I hope we can keep that up. We had a great raffle at the last meeting with a nice pair of new binoculars donated by Geoff Michelli that brought in \$98. We are going to try to have some nice raffle items like that at more meetings. Have a great March and I hope to see you at the meeting next Monday, out at the HRPO some weekend, or at the star party!

Clear Skies,
Ben Toman
BRAS President

NOTES FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Our next BRAS is fast approaching, Monday, March 12th. Our feature presentation will be on the Milky Way galaxy by Trevor McGuire. Trevor presented this talk on a recent Friday night. I didn't get to see it but I heard it was very good.

Our April meeting may be in a different location that has a large screen for video. More on that later. Later, perhaps in July or August, I would like to do a meeting on Internet astronomy, that is, valuable astronomy resources on the Web, especially interactive sites or sites where amateurs can contribute to scientific research. Send me the links of sites you find useful and a synopsis of why the site would be of value to others. I would like to have 3 - 5 sites for the meeting, depending upon how detailed they are. If we get enough submissions, maybe we could use them during other meetings.

And last, we have been researching some more enticing raffle prizes for the BRAS meetings. Our first prize is on order and may arrive in time for Monday's meeting. It is a Celestron 15 X 70 binocular, like the ones Trevor owns. We will run this raffle over several meetings to ensure we raise enough money to pay for the binoculars. We hope to raise some cash above the cost, so we can use the extra toward something that costs a bit more. If this project is successful, and we are able to raise enough cash through it, we hope to put some more high-end astronomical equipment or other goodies up for raffle in the future. Baby steps for now. So, please give me some ideas on what you think would be some good prizes that would appeal to most members of the club.



-Merrill Hess
BRAS Vice President

MESSAGE FROM HRPO

FEBRUARY AT HRPO

February 2012 was a good month at HRPO. The attendance was comparable to that of last February, and the website hits were higher than that of last February.

Thanks to Muralidar Chakravarthi, Trevor McGuire, Geoff Michelli and John Nagle for their assistance at the final Learn to Use Your Telescope course on the 25th.

FRIDAY NIGHT LECTURE SERIES

all start at 7:30pm

16 March: "Into the Neutron Star!" [Rob Hynes]

23 March: "Journeys to the Moon" [Chris you-know-who]

30 March: "The Sinking of the Titanic" [Amy Brouillette]

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS: ON SITE

*Saturday, 31 March from 6pm to 10pm. *One additional volunteer in addition to regular BRAS compliment.* Evening Sky Viewing Plus. Marshmallow roast, demo and clock tables. Easy; training provided.

*Saturday, 28 April from 3pm to 11pm. *Twelve to fifteen volunteers for three- to six-hour shifts.* International Astronomy Day; need I say more?

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS: OUTREACH

*Saturday, 31 March from 9:30am to 5pm at Baton Rouge Zoo. *Three to four volunteers for three- to four-hour shifts.* This is the Zoo's annual Zippity Zoo Fest. A large event. Solar viewing and science demos.

*Sunday, 1 April from 11am to 5pm at West Baton Rouge Soccer Complex. *Two or three volunteers for two- or three-hour shifts.* Kite Fest Louisiane is an extremely cool event. I don't know who across the river created it, but kudos to them. HRPO went in 2010 but couldn't go last year due to a scheduling conflict. They allow the public to fly their own kites, so if you have one bring it and you can fly it either before or after your shift.

*Sunday, 22 April from 11am to 5pm, probably at Old State Capitol. *Two or three volunteers for two- or three-hour shifts.* I say probably, since that is where the Earth Day coordinators usually put us. If the location changes I'll pass the word. Do I really need to tell anyone what Louisiana Earth Day is? I thought not.

HRPO VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD

As certain mix-ups between HRPO and BREC HQ led to some questions about volunteers which took a while to answer, the winner of the Frank Conrad Volunteer of the Year Award for 2011 will be announced at the March BRAS meeting.

LIGHT POLLUTION NOTES

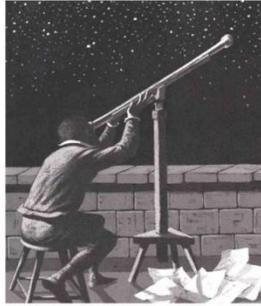
A horrendous light-in-all-directions fixture has been installed on a bathroom building down the hill by the archery range. I am putting in a work request to cap both that light and HRPO's porch light.

The Special Facilities Division of BREC's Department of Recreation has stated that it would pass along HRPO's request to cap/shield all park system lighting to the Planning and Engineering Division. I have yet to hear anything from BREC HQ. BRAS is in the process of composing a letter to be signed at the March meeting. The letter will be sent to BREC's Planning and Engineering.

OUTREACH

SIDEWALK ASTRONOMY

Come see the wonders of the night sky for free!



All events start at sundown

October 4th	CC's on Jefferson
November 1st	Millerville Best Buy
December 6th	CC's on Jefferson
January 31st	Millerville Best Buy
February 28th	CC's on Jefferson
March 27th	Millerville Best Buy

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Trevor McGuire has worked out a plan of outreach with CC's Coffee on Jefferson Highway and Best Buy on Millerville Road where we can have telescopes setup at these two locations. We may need some volunteers to operate a scope or talk to the public at these various times so if you are available and interested in having a good time, talk to Trevor or let me know and we will try to fit you in.

There's one last event that will be held (weather permitting) on March 27th. Come join in and help show the public what it's like to look up.

PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

- 7:17 Meeting begins
- 7:18 Trevor discusses small telescope event. Looking for volunteers.
- 7:22 Trevor discusses canceled high school Astronomy class. Starts petition to get it reinstated.
- 7:25 Telescopes to be set up at Sicilian festival
- 7:25 Merrill talks about “surplussale.com”
- 7:29 Members introduce themselves
- 7:30 Brad’s talk begins
- 8:57 Talk finishes
- 9:01 Raffle starts
- 9:08 Meeting adjourned

Rory Bentley
BRAS Secretary



OBSERVING NOTES

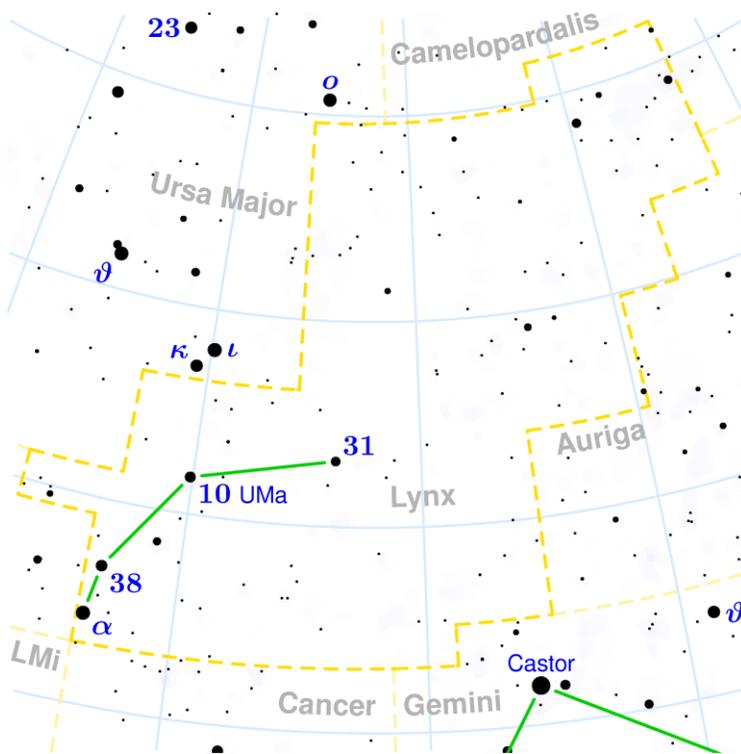
Constellation of the Month

Lynx: The Lynx

This small unassuming constellation was cataloged in 1687 by the Polish born astronomer Johannes Hevelius. Lynx contains several dim stars that form a sort of zig zag arc located between the constellations of Ursa Major and Auriga. Other astronomers marveled at the ability of Hevelius to catalog very dim stars and even wrote that he had the “eyes of a lynx”. Hevelius seemed to be trying to live up to that reputation by cataloging this dim and difficult to see constellation which contains only one star brighter than fourth magnitude.

Lynx fills a relatively blank area of the sky that is somewhat large – larger than the area of the constellation Gemini. Its most notable deep sky object is the Intergalactic Tramp or Wanderer NGC 2419, a globular cluster discovered by William Herschel in 1788. This star cluster is one of the most distant known of its kind, and appears to be in a long elliptical orbit around our galaxy, with one rotation taking three billion years.

Star Chart



Position in the Sky

Right Ascension: 8 hours Declination: 45 degrees

Named Stars

Alsciaukat

Deep Sky Objects

NGC 2419 (globular cluster)

February Meteor Showers: February Leonids

Duration: March 1st to April 15th

Peak: End of March

Radiant: Constellation Virgo

Right Ascension: 13 hours

Declination: -4 degrees

Expected Rate: 5/hr

Origin: Asteroid 1998 SJ70

BRAS Dark Sky Site Viewing Dates

February 21st and 28th

For more information check out the BRAS website at <http://www.braastro.org>

Art Barrios

BRAS Observing Chairman

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TREASURER'S NOTES

The following memberships are up for renewal.

Rodney Bell	Alice & Dan Lastrapes
Peggy Bohn	Corey Luth
Karen Cashio	Art Newman
Harold Fozzard	J.A. Rummmler
Jonathan Glover	Michael Russo Mohammed Shafi
Tyler Guidry	Syed
Harlan Hansel	Forrest Smith
Kevin Hunter	Kristin Troxclair
Oneal Isaac	Stephen Turri
Prasad Kalghati	Robin & Bill Walter

If you have already sent in your membership renewal, Thank You!

If you still need to send it in, you can find the membership form on our website by [clicking here](#).

Last month, I made a plea for anyone receiving the newsletter via US Postal Mail to consider receiving it in the future via email. I've had a few people make the switch and I'd like to say thanks.

If anyone else would like to receive the newsletter via email, please let me know!

-Geoff Michelli
BRAS Treasurer