

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Astronomical Society

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March 2013

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**Our next meeting will be held on Monday, March 11th
at the Highland Road Park Observatory.
13800 Highland Road
Baton Rouge, LA 70810**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hi Everyone,

I hope you all had a chance to see the article in The Advocate on Monday, February 18th. A story on light pollution including interviews with myself and Christopher Kersey ran on the front page! We were hoping to get some media attention when we sent out our announcement about the first Good Lighting Award, but we never dreamed it would be on the front page. I'm also happy to report that the NPR show, All Things Considered, ran a piece this past weekend on light pollution. What used to seem like a daunting, uphill battle is starting to show some signs of support from lots of areas of the community. If things keep going at this pace, we'll be enjoying darker skies in the Baton Rouge area in the near future.

Another note on the light pollution front, club member Briar Richard was able to get out to the new Women's Hospital on Airline Hwy to take some pictures of the lighting fixtures they have in place. He said it was amazing just how little light was being put out by the hospital. His photos seem to confirm the hospital as a great candidate for our next Good Lighting Award.

The Hodges Gardens Star Party is only a week away. I hope you've made your plans to join us for what is always a great time with friends, old and new, and beautiful dark skies. Cabin space may no longer be available, but you can still probably find hotel space in Leesville (about a 30 minute drive) and there is plenty of camping space.

Finally, make sure you try to get out to the Burbank Soccer Complex to view Comet PANSTARRS. Scopes will be out there March 8th-12th and March 17th-21st. You can visit the HRPO Calendar of Events online to get exact viewing times. It's been awhile since we've seen a comet around here, so don't miss this chance!

I hope you will all join us at our monthly meeting Monday, March 11th at 7PM at the HRPO. As always, bring a friend. Our meetings are always FREE and open to the public.

Clear Skies,
Ben Toman
BRAS President

NOTES FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

I'll make this short and sweet. Our speaker for this month's meeting is Peter Diener, Research Assistant Professor of Physics, from LSU. His topic is titled "Einstein's Legacy: Black Holes and Gravity Waves."

Professor Diener and fellow Professor Parampreet Singh are the recent recipients of a \$250,000 John Templeton Foundation grant "for a potentially breakthrough proposal hoping to answer questions about the earliest state of the universe." Their work is already generating a lot of excitement in the physics community.

Geoffrey Clayton of LSU, has been elected a council member of the American Astronomical Society. Congratulations, Geoff!

Merrill Hess
BRAS Vice President

OBSERVING NOTES

Constellation of the Month: Cancer - The Crab

Position in the sky

Right Ascension: 9 Hours Declination: +20 Degrees

Named Stars

Cnc alpha – Acubens	Mag. 4.3	8 58 29.2,	+11 528
Cnc beta – Al Tarf	Mag. 3.5	8 16 39.9,	+9 11 08
Cnc gamma–Asellus Borealis	Mag. 4.7	8 43 17.1,	+21 28 7
Cnc delta – Asellus Australis	Mag. 3.9	8 44 41.1,	+18 9 15
Cnc zeta – Tegmeni	a and b	Mag. 5.1	8 12 12.
	c and d	Mag. 6.02	

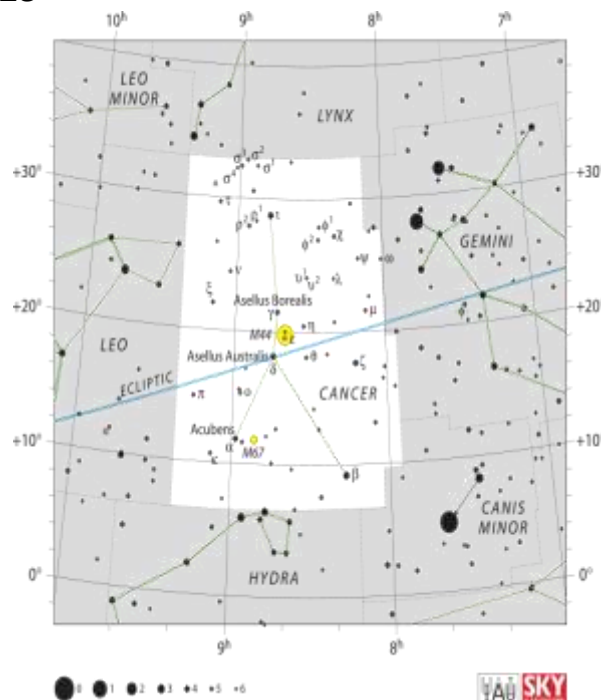
Deep Sky Objects

M44 (NGC 2632) , Praesepe or the “Beehive” 8 37 5, +19 52

M67 (NGC 2682) 8 48 3, +12 00 1.8 deg. W of Cnc alpha

NGC 2775 (Caldwell 48) 9 07 7, + 07 15

Cancer has over 89 Double and Multiple stars, 28 Variable Stars , and 9 Star Clusters, Nebulae, and Galaxies



In Greek Mythology, the crab emerged from the Lerna Swamp, where Heracles was fighting a multi-headed monster called the Hydra. The crab added its own attack by biting Heracles on the foot. Heracles angrily stamped on the crab, crushing it. For its modest contribution, the Goddess Hera, an enemy of Heracles, put the crab among the stars of the Zodiac. Fittingly enough for such a minor character, it is the faintest of the Zodiacal constellations, with no star brighter than fourth magnitude.

Comet C/2011 L4 (Panstarrs) will reach perihelion on March 9, peaking at perhaps 0 or -1 magnitude. It will not be easy to spot until a few days later. On March 12, look due west a half hour after sunset to the slender crescent Moon hanging some 8 deg. above the horizon. The comet's head, or coma, lies just 4 deg. to the left of the Moon. You will probably have to wait for twilight to deepen and may need binoculars to see the coma. If the comet develops a tail, March 13 will be the night. The waxing crescent Moon then lies in line with the gas tail.

Jupiter shines at magnitude -2.3 on March 1. On March 17, two of Jupiter's moons, Io and Europa, pull a disappearing act. Europa slips behind Jupiter's western limb at 10:51 PM EST, followed by Io at 12:13 AM EST. For the next 68 minutes, Jupiter appears to have only 2 moons.

On March 1, Ganymede transits Jupiter starting at 9:46 PM EST, and Europa starts its own transit 17 minutes later. On March 2/3, Io transits Jupiter, starting on the eastern limb at 10:04 PM EST, followed by its shadow at 11:22 PM EST. Io exits Jupiter's disc at 12:14 AM EST, while its shadow lingers 79 minutes later.

The dwarf Planet Ceres passes less than 1 deg. from the bright star EL NATH (beta Tauri) and will appear as the first “star” south of beta. It will look like a dot through a backyard telescope, but it glows at magnitude 8.3 as it slices past beta during March's first ten days.

OUTREACH

There's one more Sidewalk Astronomy event left this year. Let us know if you'd like to help out. We'll be at the CC's Coffee on Jefferson Hwy.

SIDEWALK ASTRONOMY



Come see the moon,
planets, binary stars,
galaxies, and more,
all for free!



All events start at 7PM

October 25th	CC's on Perkins
November 20th	CC's on Jefferson
December 18th	CC's on Perkins
January 22nd	CC's on Jefferson
February 19th	CC's on Perkins
March 19th	CC's on Jefferson

In the event of a rainy or cloudy night, we will automatically postpone the event to the following Tuesday.
If that night is also rainy or cloudy, that event will be cancelled.

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MESSAGE FROM THE HRPO

FRIDAY NIGHT LECTURE SERIES

all start at 7:30pm

8 March: "Viewing Comets"

22 March: "Journeys to the Moon"

29 March: "Dating the Crucifixion"

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS: ON SITE

*Friday, 8 March from 7:30pm to 8:30pm. *Two volunteers.* "**Viewing Comets**". Brief, five-minute presentations to the public concerning personal choices in attempting to view Comet PanSTARRS.

*various twilights, from 8 March to 21 March. *Four to seven volunteers throughout the time period.* **Comet PanSTARRS Viewing.** Assistance with running telescopes at Burbank Soccer Complex during the low-altitude apparition of PanSTARRS. Specific times are listed in the "Comets" section of the BRAS Forum.

*Saturday, 23 March from 6pm to 10pm. *One additional volunteer in addition to regular BRAS compliment.* **Evening Sky Viewing Plus.** Spooky Spectrum. Marshmallow roast, demo and clock tables; setup and takedown. Easy; training provided.

*Saturday, 20 April from 3pm to 11pm. *Twelve to twenty volunteers.* **International Astronomy Day.** Staffing rides, information booth, ticket booth, front desk, entry gate, solar telescope, nighttime telescope and other stations. Moderate difficulty; training provided beforehand. 2013 is make-or-break time for IAD. This will be HRPO's seventh consecutive IAD event, and we hope to get 800 participants.

LIGHT POLLUTION NOTES

On 18 February the Baton Rouge *Advocate* ran on its front page an article about light pollution penned by Steven Ward (with pictures by Heather McClelland). It seems the article created a great deal of interest in the issue.

On 19 February, Erin Anding and I separately attended a public meeting of Better Block BR, set up to exchange ideas for the betterment of the Midtown/Government Street area. We each were able to promote efficient lighting. I met Ingolf Partenheimer, the city's Chief Traffic Engineering, who was quoted in the *Advocate* article as stating he was willing to work with local amateur astronomers.

On 21 February, Stephen Boeker and Trevor McGuire attended the BREC public meeting at the Central Community Library concerning the potential creation of a community park in that area. Boeker and McGuire used the opportunity to point out the benefits of lighting any new park with efficient fixtures.

Hannah, a senior at Central High School, gave as the final task of her Senior Project a presentation on light pollution to the Central City Council on 26 February. She was nervous but effective and thorough. It was well-received; several people in the audience were nodding heads in agreement with a number of points she made. After, one citizen asked for Hannah's contact information to discuss the possibility of creating a light pollution committee for that area. Also, a local councilman asked Hannah's assistance in assessing Central's current lighting ordinance. Congratulations, Hannah!

MOON WATCHER AWARD: BRAS' FIRST OBSERVING CERTIFICATE

The Moon Watcher Award is tailored for those who are interested in learning the major, basic features of the near side of Moon. It is recommended for members aged fourteen and older. The observing list consists of ten unaided-eye features, thirty binocular features and three exercises. One must obtain forty of the forty-six possible points to earn the Award. To obtain complete guidelines and the observing lists, email observatory@brec.org.

NEW SOLAR TELESCOPE AT HRPO

There has been a change in plans for the premiere of the new Coronado Solar Max II. Its premiere will be at 3pm on International Astronomy Day. "First light" has been offered to Director of Special Facilities Brandon Smith.

PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

- 7:09 Meeting begins
- 7:10 Ben talks about Good Lighting Award. Woman's Hospital on Airline Hwy potential future candidate.
- 7:13 Locally hosted online star party at Astronomy Magazine forum discussed.
- 7:15 Times for comet PanSTARRS observing set. More assistance needed for Hodges Gardens dates. See BRAS website for more info.
- 7:18 Don is selling his Deep South Star Party award scope. Wants \$1500 dollars for it.
- 7:19 Hodges Gardens Star Party discussed.
- 7:23 Trevor talks about upcoming outreach events. Requests help at Various events.
- 7:30 Deep Sky Binocular Award given to Trevor.
- 7:32 Brad's Australia visit talk begins. Four observing awards given to Brad.
- 8:51 Talk ends.
- 8:52 Upcoming events discussed.
- 8:55 Meeting adjourned.