

## NCRAL REGION REPORT

July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020  
Carl J. Wenning, Regional Chair (2017-2021)

### Region's Executive Officers:

**Chair** (second 2-year term expires 2021)

Carl J. Wenning (Twin City Amateur Astronomers)  
21 Grandview Drive  
Normal, IL 61761  
Mobile: 309-830-4085  
[carlwenning@gmail.com](mailto:carlwenning@gmail.com)

**Vice Chair** (first 2-year term expires 2021)

Bill Davidson (Rochester Astronomy Club)  
3705 Halling Place SW  
Rochester, MN 55902  
(507) 273-6220  
[rochesterskies@outlook.com](mailto:rochesterskies@outlook.com)

**Secretary/Treasurer** (2-year term expired May 2020, extended 1 year to 2021 due to pandemic)

Roy Gustafson (Popular Astronomy Club)  
11 Deer Run Road  
Orion, Illinois 61273  
Mobile: 309-781-4368  
Home: 309-526-3592  
[astroroy46@gmail.com](mailto:astroroy46@gmail.com)

**Regional Representative** (3-year term expired May 2020, extended 1 year to 2021 due to pandemic)

Bill Davidson (Rochester Astronomy Club)  
3705 Halling Place SW  
Rochester, MN 55902  
(507) 273-6220  
[rochesterskies@outlook.com](mailto:rochesterskies@outlook.com)

### Financial Report:

Initial Balances: \$8,799.18 (July 1, 2019)  
Final Balance: \$8,758.03 (June 30, 2020)  
Difference: \$41.15 (decrease)

### Response to Coronavirus Pandemic:

- All Region-sponsored events were canceled due to the pandemic.
- The Region's annual convention, NCRA 2020, was rescheduled to spring 2022.
- The Region continued with its awards programs despite COVID-19. Awards that would have been made at the NCRA 2020 convention were announced online. A YouTube video can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8g3oZVX6uss>. Presentations of the Region's awards will be made formally at the NCRA 2021 convention.
- A number of affiliates continued to hold regular membership meetings, give public presentations, and conduct business using online communications.

**Regional Awards:**

- Lee Green of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers (Illinois) received the *2020 NCRAL Region Award* in recognition of his service to amateur astronomy.
- Edith Auchter of Northwest Suburban Astronomers (Illinois) received the *2020 NCRAL Newsletter Editor Award* for producing *Celestial Log*.
- The Twin City Amateur Astronomers (Illinois) received the inaugural *NCRAL Mini Grant for Affiliate Recruitment* (\$250). Their mission is to work with a nascent Illinois State University Astronomy Club in cooperation with the ISU Planetarium to train a new generation of amateur astronomers, encourage presentation of sky lectures in the planetarium, promote and support sidewalk amateur astronomy viewing sessions on campus, and to become members of the Astronomical League.
- There were no applicants for this year's *NCRAL Mini Grant for Membership Recruitment and Retention*. Both mini grants treat NCRAL affiliates as incubators of innovative ideas to support the hobby of amateur astronomy. Successful activities have the potential of influencing the Region and the whole of the Astronomical League. Grant outcomes are fully documented in the Region's **Northern Lights** newsletter.

**Region Administrative Updates:**

- Because elections could not be held at NCRAL 2020 due to its cancellation, Regional Chair Carl Wenning made the command decisions to reappoint on an interim basis the current Secretary/Treasurer and Regional Representative. Positions will be voted on during NCRAL 2021.
- The Region has confirmed hosts for NCRAL conventions through 2023.
- The Region completed its fourth consecutive year of publishing quarterly issues of **Northern Lights**, the Region's newsletter. Back issues are accessible on the Region's website at <https://ncral.wordpress.com/newsletter-archive/>
- NCRAL awarded its first *Seasonal Messier Mini Marathon* observing program certificates and pins for the autumn observing season. Additional completion occurred during winter and spring.
- NCRAL has drafted a *Deep Sky Astronomical Bucket List* observing program. It features over 200 "must be seen" clusters, nebulae, galaxies, supernova remnants, and quasars – ostensibly the best of the best in the night sky. Variants of this observing program are in the offing. The *Deep Sky Astronomical Bucket List* observing program will not be forwarded to the AL for approval at the national level due to the fact that it duplicates to a significant degree two approved AL programs (Messier and Caldwell) that have different observing and recording criteria.
- NCRAL has produced a one-page document titled, *The Benefits of NCRAL Membership*, that explains why clubs should affiliate with or remain affiliated with the Astronomical League and by default the North Central Region.

**Electronic Communications:**

- The Region utilizes a self-subscribed email list for disseminating the **Northern Lights** newsletter and other communications. Some 420 of the Region's approximately 1,850 members are subscribed. See <https://goo.gl/gS8SF>
- The Region maintains an active Facebook page in which celestial events and accomplishments worthy of note are listed regularly. See <https://www.facebook.com/northcentralregionastronomicalleague/>
- The Region maintains an extensive and ever-expanding website that is regularly updated. See [www.ncral.wordpress.com](http://www.ncral.wordpress.com)

**NCRAL Affiliate and Member Accomplishments:**

- The Twin City Amateur Astronomers successfully completed an inaugural NCRAL mini-grant program for membership recruitment and retention. This gained the club more than two dozen new members. The project and outcomes were fully described Autumn 2019 and Winter 2020 issue of **Northern Lights**.
- The Northwest Suburban Astronomers successfully hosted an online *Virtual Astronomy Day* on Saturday, May 2, 2020.
- Two Regional authors had a total of four articles published in the Astronomical League's **Reflector** magazine during the past four quarters:
  - Sara Sheidler, Popular Astronomy Club, *NCRAL Report* (From Around the League), September 2019.
  - Dave Tosteson, Chicago City, Minnesota, *Gravitational Lenses*, December 2019.
  - Dave Tosteson, Chicago City, Minnesota, *Meet the New Boss*, March 2020.
  - Dave Tosteson, Chicago City, Minnesota, *The Elements of Surprise: The Neutron Star Merger of GW 170817*, June 2020.

- Numerous affiliate members earned AL observing club pins and certificates.
- The Twin City Amateur Astronomers have made available to the NCRAL membership ten of their *Guides to Amateur Astronomy* that are freely available for download at <http://tcaa.us/TCAAGuides.aspx>.
  - Guide #1 – *Introduction to Amateur Astronomy* (56 pages)
  - Guide #2 – *TCAA Membership and Benefits* (16 pages)
  - Guide #3 – *Astronomy as a Hobby* (14 pages)
  - Guide #4 – *The Art of Sky Interpretation* (16 pages)
  - Guide #5 – *Coordinating Public Viewing Sessions* (5 pages)
  - Guide #6 – *Have a Successful Observing Session* (7 pages)
  - Guide #7 – *Buying Binoculars and Telescopes* (15 pages)
  - Guide #8 – *Optimizing Deep Sky Observations* (11 pages)
  - Guide #9 – *Astrophotography 101* (draft, 3 pages)
  - Guide #10 – *Introduction to Spherical Astronomy* (42 pages)

#### **Star Parties & Club Events:**

- Several statewide star parties scheduled within the region during the first half of 2020 were cancelled due to the Coronavirus pandemic.
- In the main, most if not all affiliate-sponsored public club events were cancelled due to the pandemic. Several events for autumn are still pending, but these star parties are not sponsored by the Region.

#### **Objectives for 2020-2021:**

The current objectives for 2020-2021 is to increase individual memberships in NCRAL-affiliated clubs, societies, and associations, to promote the regional affiliate's involvement in NCRAL events, and increase the number of astronomy clubs participating in the Astronomical League and, by default, the Region.

- Continue development of two *Astronomical Bucket List* observing programs (Deep Sky & Stellar) for NCRAL membership only.
- To obtain, if possible, independent Federal 501(c)(3) non-profit status so that contributions to the North Central Region will be tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

Respectfully submitted,



Carl J. Wenning  
NCRAL Chair (2017-2021)