



NCRAL blotter

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Monthly Tidbits from NCRAL Officers, A.L. Representative and Appointees

[Alan Sheidler](#), PAC, Chairman

[Bill Davidson](#), RAC, Vice Chairman

[Roy Gustafson](#), PAC, Secretary-Treasurer

[John Attewell](#), RAC, Regional Rep. to the A.L.

[Carl Wenning](#), TCAA, *Northern Lights* Editor

[Jeffrey Setzer](#), NCSF, NCRAL Webmaster

September 2024

- ★ The North Central Region is now voting on amendments to the NCRAL bylaws. The proposals for the amended bylaws may be downloaded [here](#). Each affiliate will have one vote, and each affiliate's president should communicate their affiliate's decision about accepting the Bylaws as proposed. We call for an "up or down vote" (Yes, accept; No, reject). Please send your vote to Vice Chair Bill Davidson at rochesterskies@outlook.com. If your affiliate votes to reject, please comment on any points of contention so they may be reconsidered. Approval will require a simple majority of votes cast. The deadline for receipt of votes is September 15, 2024. Voting results will be announced in the Autumn 2024 issue of *Northern Lights*."
- ★ Do you or your affiliate have anything to contribute to the Autumn 2024 issue of the NCRAL quarterly newsletter ***Northern Lights***? It can be an article, a picture, an announcement – anything of potential interest to the membership of the Region. Email your contribution to our editor, Carl Wenning, at al.north.central.region@gmail.com. Contribution deadline is September 15. NCRAL reserves the right to edit all submissions for accuracy, brevity, and suitability.
- ★ Please remind your affiliate's membership to sign up for the NCRAL ***Northern Lights*** newsletter before the next issue is disseminated on the September equinox. Only about 500 of the Region's 2,200 members (~23%) currently receive notification of its availability via official email. Sign up at the following URL: <https://tinyurl.com/NCRAL>
- ★ An NCRAL steering committee will manage the Regional convention next year as we do not have an affiliate willing to serve as a host until 2026. The steering committee seeks a volunteer to serve as webmaster for the NCRAL 2025 convention. We need a tech-savvy person who can create a website to handle information about the convention and take online reservations. Contact NCRAL Chair Alan Sheidler if you or anyone you know is willing to assist.
- ★ **ALCON 2025 ANNOUNCEMENT:** "The 2025 Astronomical League convention will be held June 25 - 28, 2025, at Bryce Canyon, Utah. The committee has been working hard to plan a convention that will be "ASTRONOMICAL"!! They hope to have the 2025 website up and running soon. Watch for updates and keep these dates open on your calendars!"
- ★ **T Coronae Borealis** (T CrB) is known as the "Blaze Star" for its specular thermonuclear outbursts that tend to occur about every 78 years. T CrB is a binary star system consisting of a red giant star and a white dwarf. The white dwarf, like a vampire, cannibalizes gas from its companion, and over time, the white dwarf accumulates hydrogen gas from the red giant. When the amount of gas reaches a critical amount, a stupendous thermonuclear reaction occurs on the surface of the white dwarf. The resulting explosion causes the system's brightness to increase by a factor of 1,600 (8 magnitudes). There is an A.L. observing

challenge relating to this nova. Check it out at the following URL: <https://www.astroleague.org/all-observing-challenge-special-observing-award/>

- ★ Since 2002, the Sangamon Astronomical Society has hosted the Illinois Dark Skies Star Party at Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish and Wildlife Area, Illinois' largest recreational site. You are invited to join SAS for the 2024 edition of the IDSSP, Oct. 3-5. It's an observer-oriented event at a great facility offering acres of land for observing. You can camp right at your observing site. However, an extensive camping facility is adjacent to the event site, including onsite electricity, water, sewer for campers, and self-contained R.V.s. Special astronomy talks are planned with accredited presenters. The IDSSP also has quality food services, or you can bring your food. For details and registration, www.sas-sky.org.
- ★ 2024 Iowa Star Party! Some of the darkest skies in Iowa will again be the home for this year's Iowa Star Party from Thursday, October 3 through Sunday, October 6. The party will be in the picturesque Whiterock Conservancy near Coon Rapids. The Conservancy is a 5,500-acre land trust with over 40 miles of trails for walkers, hikers, runners, mountain bikers, equestrians, and paddlers. In addition to trails, Whiterock offers accommodations, camping, fishing, stargazing, and many other outdoor activities. The Conservancy has carved out a large star field with plenty of room for nearby parking and dark star gazing. The program is hosted by the Ames Area Amateur Astronomers and co-sponsored by the Des Moines Astronomical Society. The Conservancy is slightly over an hour west of Des Moines and Ames. Accommodations include tent camping, R.V. campsites, lodging rooms at the Oakridge Guesthouse, and two nearby motels. For paid registrants, a banquet and guest speaker will be held on Saturday evening before stargazing. The public is invited (free) to the star field on Saturday evening for stargazing and interactions with amateur astronomers and their many telescopes. Registrations can be made at www.iowastarparty.com/ispregistration.php
- ★ Through the vision of the Horkheimer Charitable Fund, the Astronomical League offers a free Library Telescope to a lucky Astronomical League club in each of the ten A.L. regions and to a Member-at-Large. This year, at ALCon 2024, the Twin City Amateur Astronomers were designated to receive this year's Library Telescope Program telescope. The telescope, a 4.5" aperture reflector valued at about \$200, and 8-24mm Zoom eyepiece, valued at \$100, will go to the Vespasian Warner Public Library in Clinton, Illinois.
- ★ On June 13, 2024, the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh administration made an unexpected announcement: the closure of the UW Fox Cities campus, slated for June 2025. This campus is home to the Barlow Planetarium, the Weis Earth Science Museum, and the Communication Arts Center—three vital entities notably absent from the University's announcement and whose futures now hang in the balance. This decision, made without public input, threatens to dismantle key educational and cultural institutions that have been cornerstones of inspiration in the Fox Cities for decades. The future of the planetarium, museum, and arts center is unknown. The Northeast Wisconsin Stargazers (NEWSTAR) Board of Directors has gone on public record opposing the possible closure of these facilities. If you want to know more or keep up with this event, please contact NEWSTAR at info@new-star.org.
- ★ **Next Regional Convention:** An NCRAL steering committee will manage the regional convention next year because we do not have an affiliate willing to host until 2026. The committee has been meeting bimonthly throughout this summer to organize initial plans. This group wants to recruit new members into the amateur astronomy community and highlight new ideas and discoveries. Accordingly, the conference theme will be *First Light: New Frontiers, New People*, and half a dozen speakers have already been recruited. The conference location will be in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. The exact site has yet to be determined. The committee welcomes John Martin from The Rochester Astronomy Club as conference webmaster and technical expert. Stay tuned for other requests for help from the steering committee as planning continues. Contact NCRAL Chair Al Sheidler for answers to any questions you might have.