

# NCRAL blotter

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

[Alan Sheidler](#), PAC, Chairman

[Eric Claeys](#), NAA, Vice Chairman

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

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- ★ The summer 2025 edition of **Northern Lights** was disseminated four days before the summer solstice. If your affiliate's members are not on the email notification list, they should realize that current and back issues can be found in the archives of the [NCRAL website](#).
- ★ NCRAL's annual **Region Report** summarizes the past year's events and is provided annually to the Astronomical League leadership for review. The current and prior issues written by regional chairs each June can be found on the [NCRAL website under Reports](#). In addition to our quarterly newsletter and monthly blotter, these constitute the historical record for the Region.
- ★ **Back issues wanted.** When the current editor of this Region's newsletter began writing the current series in 2006, he was informed that this was the second of a series of newsletters. The Region has no online records of this earlier publication. One of our Regional members wants to develop a more comprehensive treatment of NCRAL's history. If you have any back issues with our newsletter or organization records, please share what you have with the Region's leadership.
- ★ Affiliate leaders and members-at-large should keep abreast of **What's Happening** in the Astronomical League. Each month, updates are posted on the [landing page of the A.L. website](#). ALCors should check this page for regular updates to share with their affiliates' members.
- ★ **Cedar Amateur Astronomers Announce *Mission Possible*, NCRAL's Eastern Iowa Cosmic Conference for 2026**

Cedar Amateur Astronomers are actively planning the 2026 Eastern Iowa Cosmic Conference *Mission Possible*, which will be held in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The date and venue are already set for May 15-17 at the DoubleTree by Hilton. The format will be similar to previous conferences but with some exciting changes. We've heard your requests to add round tables, workshops, or panel discussions to enhance the overall experience. Challenge accepted.

Plans include exciting new speakers and topics, fun surprises, and social activities. We are working with local businesses to provide options for those who want to bring spouses or family. The weekend will kick off Friday night at the Eastern Iowa Observatory and Learning Center with food, talks, tours of interactive displays and exhibits, and, of course, observing through an exciting array of research-grade equipment.

Saturday will be filled with groundbreaking speakers, the business meeting, awards banquet, astro-photography contest, door prizes, and some social activities mixed in. We are also working on several astro-themed destinations for early arrivers on Friday or before you hit the road on Sunday. Mark your calendar for May 15 - 17, 2026, and look for updates in upcoming issues of the **NCRAL blotter**. CAA is kicking it up a notch, so you won't want to miss this one.

- ★ The North Central Region has a convention host for NCRAL 2026 and a tentative host for NCRAL 2027. We are now looking for **convention hosts for NCRAL 2028 and beyond**. It's never too early to plan to host an NCRAL Regional convention. Planning at least two years in advance provides an opportunity to learn from other affiliates' planning and hosting experiences.

Whether or not your club has ever hosted an NCRAL Regional convention, please consider doing so. While hosting a regional convention is a lot of work, it can be rewarding – even fun. It allows you to highlight your group's facilities and accomplishments, build club camaraderie, and personally get to know interesting guest speakers. You can also use such an event to grow your club's membership. Please make your reservations for a future year now (4, 5, or 6 years in advance) so you have plenty of time to think about them and plan the event. No affiliate (or group of affiliates) is too big or small to host.

Remember, NCRAL has its own [Convention Planning Guidelines](#). Look for the link at the bottom of the page. Please get in touch with the NCRAL Chair, Alan Sheidler, at [adsheidler@gmail.com](mailto:adsheidler@gmail.com) should you have any questions or wish to pitch your affiliate for hosting a future NCRAL convention.

- ★ **NCRAL Speakers Bureau** has been *updated with new speakers and offerings*. We now have some 30 speakers and many more topics. New entries have been placed at the end of the document. Check it out on the [NCRAL website](#) and contact the folks there for high-quality talks.
- ★ Doug Reynolds of the TCAA has just written a comprehensive guide for **archiving and backing up all astrophotography data**, from real-time session syncing to long-term cold storage and cloud redundancy. This guide includes examples of folder structure, scripts to automate backups, a spreadsheet template to understand data, and a complete walkthrough of the process, tools, and reasoning. While this guide is aimed at astrophotography, it is more than relevant for any photography or data. You may access this guide at <https://astroaf.space/ultimate-archive-backup-for-astrophotography/>
- ★ **Contributions to Northern Lights:** Have you ever considered writing an article for inclusion in the Region's **Northern Lights** newsletter? The Region is vibrant, and many noteworthy local events are happening. Authors are encouraged to submit stories for inclusion in **Northern Lights** and news items for the **NCRAL blotter**. We are now looking for items to be included in the coming editions. Contact the editor, [Carl Wenning](#), with your inquiries and submissions.
- ★ The number of NCRAL members who have subscribed to the **Northern Lights** email notification list has recently grown to 600, up from 525 just a few months ago. Now, one-fourth of our 2,400 members are receiving direct notification of its availability. Affiliate leaders, please continue to promote subscriptions for this significant benefit of membership. Direct members to the following URL to subscribe: <https://tinyurl.com/NCRAL>

