



NORTHERN LIGHTS



NORTH CENTRAL REGION OF THE ASTRONOMICAL LEAGUE

Summer 2025 - Volume 10, Number 1

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CHAIR'S MESSAGE

This year's regional conference has come and gone, and is one to remember. We didn't have a host club for NCRAL 2025. Still, under the skillful leadership of John Attewell and Randy Hemann (both from the Rochester Astronomy Club), the conference committee put together and conducted an excellent conference. You can read more about the conference below in this issue of the *Northern Lights*. But I wanted to say a special "thanks" to the Rochester Astronomy Club, whose members did most of the heavy lifting for this year's conference. I would also like to thank members of the Minnesota Astronomical Society who opened the Eagle Lake Observatory for a fantastic observing session on the Friday evening before the conference. I lost count of the number of telescopes in use at the observatory for conference attendees to observe and get into the proper mindset for an excellent and enjoyable conference the following day. MAS members also set up Ha

and white light scopes for solar observing at the conference center so attendees could catch glimpses of the sun during breaks between speakers.

If you couldn't attend NCRAL 2025, you might consider attending next year's conference, which the Cedar Amateur Astronomers will host. NCRAL 2026 is planned for May 15-17 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The theme will be *Mission Possible*. Next year's event is not to be missed, so pencil this into your calendar now and stay tuned as CAA solidifies the agenda.

During this year's NCRAL business meeting at the conference, an election of officers was held, during which **Al Sheidler** (Popular Astronomy Club) and **John Attewell** (Rochester Astronomy Club) were re-elected to their current positions of Chair and Regional Representative, respectively. **Eric Claeys** (Naperville Astronomical Association) was elected Vice Chair, replacing **William Davidson** (Rochester Astronomy Club), who had to step down due to term limits. Many thanks to Bill for his service as vice chair. Welcome Eric!

We now have a new webmaster for the NCRAL website. **Josef Chlachula** (Rochester Astronomy Club) was appointed to serve as NCRAL webmaster, replacing **Jeff Setzer** (Northern Cross Science Foundation), who decided to step down after doing a great job maintaining the Region's website. Jeff created the NCRAL website and served as its administrator for 7 years. If you have not visited the NCRAL website, follow this link and take a few moments to appreciate the fine work of our web admins—<https://ncral.wordpress.com/> Congratulations to Josef, and many thanks to Jeff.

I am also very pleased to announce that the *Quad Cities Astronomical Society* has joined the AL,

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becoming one of 36 clubs in our Region. You can read more about QCAS in the nearby article by QCAS VP **Jim Rutenbeck**.

The North Central Region has a lot to celebrate. We have excellent clubs, wonderful annual

conferences, and a growing membership. All we need now is clear skies! Keep looking up!

Alan Sheidler
NCRAL Chair

TREASURER'S REPORT – APRIL 1, 2025, THROUGH JUNE 30, 2025

ROY GUSTAFSON, NCRAL TREASURER

Check #	Date	Description	Amount	Deposit	Balance
	01-Apr-25	Balance brought forward			\$5,122.17
1038	21-Apr-25	James VandeBerg (Newsletter Editor Award)	\$50.00		\$5,072.17
1039	21-Apr-25	Jeff Setzer (Website)	\$96.00		\$4,976.17
1040	26-Apr-25	Carl Wenning (Region Award plaque)	\$82.00		\$4,894.17
	30-Apr-25				\$4,894.17
	14-May-25	Reimbursement to NCRAL (Rochester Astronomy Club)		\$3,068.50	\$7,962.67
	14-May-25	Donation match (anonymous)		\$50.00	\$8,012.67
	31-May-25				\$8,012.67
1041	03-Jun-25	Roy Gustafson (stock pins, shipping, and certificates)	\$75.55		\$7,937.12
	30-Jun-25				\$7,937.12

Net Change: **(\$227.37)**

MINUTES OF NCRAL COUNCIL & GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Southwest Marriott, Minnetonka, Minnesota

April 26, 2025

COUNCIL MEETING: President Al Sheidler called the NCRAL annual Council meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. Roy Gustafson, treasurer, conducted a roll call and reported that 10 out of 35 affiliates had members in attendance, so a quorum was present. The minutes from last year had been published in the *Northern Lights* newsletter, so they were not read aloud.

Al gave his Chair's report. He reported that eight members received Astronomical League outreach awards, and 37 completed the AL observing awards. Thirteen members were given the NCRAL Mini-Messier awards, and 5 completed the Messier Marathon. NCRAL members had five articles published in the AL *Reflector* newsletter. Eighteen clubs currently publish

newsletters. Sixty-seven libraries now have library telescopes in the NCRAL region.

Treasurer Roy Gustafson reported a balance of \$8,162.49 at the beginning of the fiscal year (July 1, 2024) and a current balance of \$4,894.17.

Regional Rep John Attewell said the NCRAL website has a master list of all club webpages; look under Affiliates.

Al reported that Carl Wenning publishes the NCRAL newsletter (*Northern Lights*) quarterly. There are 525 subscribers, and the back issues are on our website. Carl also sends out the *blotter* monthly to affiliate leaders, who should share it with their members.

Al thanked the Minnesota Astronomical Society for opening the classroom for evening talks and hosting an

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observing session for NCRAL 2025 attendees Friday night at Eagle Lake Observatory. He also thanked the Friday night speakers. Al thanked the Rochester Astronomical Society for the “lion’s share of the work” organizing the convention. He also thanked the Minnesota Astronomical Society, Cedar Amateur Astronomers, Milwaukee Astronomical Society, Naperville Astronomical Association, and the Popular Astronomy Club for their help with the Convention.

Al reminded the members to utilize our website’s Speakers’ Bureau list when looking for a speaker for club meetings. There are now 30 names on the list. He said to let him know if you have a recommendation to add to the Speaker’s list. NCRAL currently has more than 2400 members in 35 clubs. The newest affiliate is the Madison Astronomical Society. Al thanked his wife, Sarah, for all her help and our Facebook presence – we have 481 followers. Al then broke down Conference attendee distribution, with the Rochester Astronomy Club, the Minnesota Astronomical Society, and the Popular Astronomy Club making up about half of all attendees.

Webmaster Jeff Setzer reported that the website was up-to-date. All the clubs’ information is listed. He asked the members to keep him updated. He suggested maybe registering our domain as NCRAL.org.

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING: There was no old business.

Under new business, Tom Weber, president of Cedar Amateur Astronomers, discussed the 2026 NCRAL convention, which will be held in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Their theme is *Mission Possible*. After viewing a short video showing the highlights of what they are planning, a vote was taken, and unanimous approval was given to proceed with their proposal. The tentative date for NCRAL 2026 is May 15-17. We should bring our green laser pointers to help set a new Guinness World record. There were no volunteers for future conferences. Carl Wenning has written an *NCRAL Convention Planning Guide* for hosts. It is posted on the [NCRAL website](#).

An election was held for the offices of Chair, Vice Chair, and Regional Representative. Al Sheidler was re-elected Chair, and John Attewell was re-elected Regional Representative. Eric Claeys from Naperville Astronomical Association was elected Vice-Chair, replacing William Davidson, who had to step down due to term limits.

We were reminded there was a swap meeting in the boardroom. It was moved and seconded to adjourn at 9:25 a.m.

Ray Gustafson
Secretary/Treasurer

QUAD CITIES ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY JOINS AL, NCRAL

Editor’s Note: **Jim Rutenbeck**, the Quad Cities Astronomical Society (QCAS) Vice President and ALCOR, submitted the following write-up about QCAS.



The QCAS is located in Davenport, Iowa. In conjunction with St. Ambrose University, the club maintains the Menke Observatory and an observing field at Scott County’s Wapsi River Education Center, which is located northwest of Davenport.

Equipment includes a 30-inch Dobsonian reflector, a 20-inch Newtonian, a 6.5-inch Explore Scientific refractor on an Astro-Physics Mach 1 mount, and a 10-inch Ritchey-Cretien telescope. The observatories are

on a hard-surfaced road with an air-conditioned classroom and restrooms. The QCAS holds the two-day Eastern Iowa Star Party each September.

The QCAS was founded in 1980 in response to the Davenport Parks and Recreation Department and St. Ambrose University’s request for help with public telescope viewing. The QCAS’s mission is to stimulate an interest in the science of astronomy within the Quad Cities area.

The membership conducts educational astronomy programs at the observatory, including hands-on use of telescopes and other astronomical equipment. Public viewing is held each month.

Members and activities are shared with the Popular Astronomy Club. Additional information can be found at our website: <https://qcastro.org>. The QCAS is pleased to become part of the Astronomical League.

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Craig Cox, a Quad Cities Astronomical Society member, took this image of Messier 51 – The Whirlpool Galaxy. Camera settings: Celestron 9.25 edge HD SCT scope F/10, ZWO asi2600mc color camera, iOptron Cem60 mount, Optolong L-pro filter, and 46x300s subs. Taken 5/6/202. Process-Astro Pixel Processor and PixInsight.

EASTERN IOWA STAR PARTY 2025

The Quad Cities Astronomical Society (QCAS) and the Popular Astronomy Club invite you to the 40th Eastern Iowa Star Party. The event is scheduled for August 22 - 24 and will be held at the Wapsi River Education Center, located about five miles north of Dixon, IA.

St. Ambrose University and the QCAS operate four observatories housing five telescopes and a classroom with modern restrooms, heat, and AC. Attendees may park and sleep next to their equipment on the observing grounds surrounding the observatories. There are a limited number of concrete pads with power outlets in some of the buildings. Bring a battery or power cord for your astronomical equipment. There are no showers, water hook-ups, or electrical outlets for RVs.

Water, coffee, and hot chocolate will be available for a donation part of the night. Food can be ordered from the American Legion in Dixon, Iowa. Please do not keep pets in the buildings or on the observing fields at night.

There is no star party fee or formal registration, but if you plan to attend, please email John Baker at johnbsys@aol.com.

WREEC Coordinates: N41° 46', W90° 47'. **WREEC Directions:** The star party site can be reached from Interstate 80. Proceed on Interstate 80 to the Walcott, IA exit. At this exit, proceed north on County Road Y40 for eight miles to Dixon, IA. County Road Y40 comes to a T intersection in Dixon with County Road Y4E. When you reach this intersection, proceed left (west) and go approximately one and a half miles until you come to a sign directing you to WREEC.

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CEDAR AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS PRESENT NCRAL 2026: *MISSION POSSIBLE*



Mark your calendar for the NCRAL's Eastern Iowa Cosmic Conference, *Mission Possible*, May 15-17, 2026, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Host Cedar Amateur Astronomers promise a stellar weekend of astronomy. CAA is planning a conference to remember.

The conference committee has been planning for several months, but we're just getting started. The committee has booked the DoubleTree Hilton right downtown to put amateur astronomers within walking distance of shops, restaurants, and activities, so bring the family.

We'll tap into area organizations for many of our speakers. Expect to hear from Collins Aerospace engineers, perhaps those who worked on Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo missions. You'll want to hear from University of Iowa professors who designed and built instruments launched aboard NASA probes and vehicles. We'll schedule additional presentations about some of your other favorite astronomy topics.

Our committee has listened to members' suggestions and plans to include a variety of sessions, including panel discussions, workshops, and roundtables.

Visit the Eastern Iowa Observatory & Learning Center on Friday night for food, speakers, and observing. The EIOLC isn't just any observatory; our learning center houses museum-quality displays, interactive exhibits, and an array of research-grade telescopes.

Expect fun surprises throughout the weekend in addition to conference standards, such as door prizes, an astrophotography contest, a social mixer, and a banquet. As a bonus, if you arrive early Friday or before you leave town on Sunday, you'll have the opportunity to visit several unique astro-themed destinations.

Look for updates on next spring's *Mission Possible* conference in future editions of ***Northern Lights***.

NCRAL By the Numbers

Data modified from notes taken from the Chair's Report at NCRAL 2025:

- ★ 36 affiliates: Iowa (6), Illinois (14), Michigan (1), Minnesota (3), Wisconsin (12). There are no affiliates in either North Dakota or South Dakota.
- ★ 2,413 affiliate members + members at large: Iowa (350+5), Illinois (772+15), Michigan (17+3), Minnesota (783+3), North Dakota (0+1), South Dakota (0+2), and Wisconsin (449+13).
- ★ Affiliates with members in attendance at NCRAL 2025: Rochester Astronomy Club, Minnesota Astronomical Society, Popular Astronomy Club, Northern Cross Science Foundation, Milwaukee Astronomical Society, Twin City Amateur Astronomers, Naperville Astronomical Association, Cedar Amateur Astronomers, Northwest Suburban Astronomers, Northeast Wisconsin Stargazers, Neville Public Museum Astronomical Society, Madison Astronomical Society, Des Moines Astronomical Society, Chippewa Valley Astronomical Society.
- ★ In nine years of publication, NCRAL's ***Northern Lights*** newsletter has had 36 quarterly issues, approximately 600 pages, 325,000 words, and 1,500,000 characters.
- ★ The ***NCRAL blotter*** has had 22 monthly issues disseminated.

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NCRAL 2025: ANOTHER ONE FOR THE Books!

~ by Alan Sheidler (PAC) & Carl Wenning (TCAA) ~



Attendees of the NCRAL 2025 Convention outside the Minneapolis Marriott Southwest (Image credit: Alan Sheidler)

This year's regional conference has come and gone, and it is one to remember. A committee of members from the Rochester Astronomy Club, the Minnesota Astronomical Society, the Cedar Amateur Astronomers, the Milwaukee Astronomical Society, the Naperville Astronomical Association, and the Popular Astronomy Club managed the conference. Thanks to the skillful leadership of the conference co-chairs, John Attewell and Randy Hemann (both from the Rochester Astronomy Club), the committee did a fantastic job bringing the conference to fruition.

NCRAL 2025 was held April 25-26 at the Minneapolis Marriott Southwest, with activities concluding Sunday at the Bell Museum Planetarium.

The event began with an open house and Star-B-Q at Eagle Lake Observatory, about 30 miles west of the convention center. Lynne Hemann (RAC) headed up the food preparation for the Star-B-Q, which was held at the Baylor Regional Park pavilion, a short walk from the Eagle Lake Observatory. Lynne's beautifully decorated, space-themed cookies were "out of this world!"

After supper, the Minnesota Astronomical Society opened its classroom for presentations. Minnesota Astronomical Society member Ron Schmit spoke about

the club's history and invited speaker Greg Bragg to talk about the status of marketing in amateur astronomy.

Following the presentations, MAS members operated the observatory's impressive array of telescopes, providing views of Jupiter, Mars, the Whirlpool Galaxy, Mizar, and many other objects. In addition, numerous personal scopes were set up in the nearby observing field, providing beautiful views for conference attendees underneath pristinely clear skies. It could not have been better!

Saturday's formal convention events were preceded by the annual business meeting. Following various reports, elections were held. Alan Sheidler (PAC) was returned to a second two-year term as Chair, and John Attewell (RAC) was returned for a 3-year term as Representative to the Astronomical League. Eric Claeys (Naperville Astronomical Association) was elected to his first two-year term as Vice Chair.

After the business meeting, attendees enjoyed interesting and enjoyable presentations starting mid-morning on Saturday:

- Evan Skillman – *Using the Large Binocular Telescope to Measure the Primordial Helium Abundance*

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- Mike Benson – *Astrophotography, My Journey*
- Clem Pryke – *Studying the Beginning of the Universe from the Bottom of the World*
- John Rummel – *Can the Milky Way Cast a Shadow?*
- Bob King – *NASA's Planned NEO Surveyor Hunts Down Killer Asteroids*

At the beginning of the business meeting and speaker presentations, door prizes were drawn using John Martin's (RAC) fancy "Wheel of Fortune" roulette wheel. We had approximately 20 door prizes totaling some \$1,300 in value.

Afternoon breaks featured white light and H_α views of the sun, provided by Alan Touchberry and Suresh Sreenivasan (members of the MAS).

After a lively social hour, attendees assembled for the evening banquet, after which Lawrence Rudnick, our keynote speaker, described *Game Changers in the Radio Sky*.

After the keynote address, Chuck Allen (AL President) announced the astrophotography contest results. There were four division winners and a grand prize winner of the show. Chuck, ably assisted by AL Vice Chair Terry Mann, presented these awards.

Gerry Kocken (Neville Public Museum Astronomical Society), Craig Cox (Quad Cities Astronomical Society), Matt Ryno (Milwaukee Astronomical Society), Mark Weber (Northern Cross Science Foundation), Scott Roffers (Northeast Wisconsin Stargazers), and Lee Keith (Milwaukee Astronomical Society) all were winners in the astrophotography contest. Scott Roffers and Lee Keith tied for best-in-show winners. Congratulations!

Then, the regional awards were presented. The Region's newsletter editor award was given to James VandeBerg for the Des Moines Astronomical Society's *Starlight Journal*. Being recognized with the NCRAL's prestigious Region Award was Bob King of the Minnesota Astronomical Society and the Arrowhead Astronomical Society (Duluth).

The silent auction results were also announced – we made \$300. Five winners each took home original 1970s artwork that formerly hung in the offices of *Astronomy* magazine. All of the artwork has appeared in that publication.

We are grateful to the sponsors who donated door prizes. Astronomy-related items, as well as numerous admission tickets, were provided by the following nine

event co-sponsors: Yerkes Observatory, Bell Museum, Science Museum of Minnesota, Armstrong Air & Space Museum, Agena AstroProducts, American Astronomical Society, Oberwerk, Lookin' Up Optics, and NCRAL itself. Matt Ryno of the Milwaukee Astronomical Society won the grand prize drawing—a Celestron Astro Master 90mm refracting telescope on an equatorial mount. The value of the door prizes and tickets exceeded \$1,300.

There were approximately 73 attendees at this year's conference, including registered attendees, spouses, and speakers. Members from 15 NCRAL affiliates, one MSRAL affiliate, and two non-AL clubs were in attendance. The Astronomical League president and vice president were also in attendance. There was an attendee from the Rochester-Mayo Planetarium, and several did not identify their affiliation.

To pull off a conference of this magnitude takes a team effort. The Rochester Astronomy Club deserves much of the credit for the success of NCRAL 2025. Success starts at the top with competent leadership. Conference Co-chairs Randy Hemann and John Attewell provided that in spades. Randy did a great job working with the hotel/conference center and coordinating the Friday evening observing session with Baylor Park and Eagles Lake Observatory (ELO). He also did a great job with the computers and AV equipment. John served as committee chairman and conference emcee. He also made sure we didn't fall behind during the presentations. John Martin (RAC) did a fantastic job with the website. Julie Gawarecki served as treasurer, which is the most critical job. Josef Chlachula (RAC) worked with the PayPal system and kept track of registrations, which is also a big job. Rochester Astronomy Club did the lion's share of the heavy lifting associated with the conduct of the conference. Sara Sheidler (PAC) did considerable work with Facebook and general communication. Al Sheidler (PAC) lined up most of the speakers and obtained many door prizes. Many thanks to members of the Minnesota Astronomical Society for supporting the Friday evening visit to ELO and for doing solar observing on Saturday afternoon at the conference center.

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The conference center at the Minneapolis Marriott Southwest in Minnetonka, MN.



Astrophotography winners Gerry Kocken (Neville Public Museum Astronomical Society), Craig Cox (Quad Cities Astronomical Society), Matt Ryno (Milwaukee Astronomical Society), Mark Weber (Northern Cross Science Foundation), Scott Roffers (Northeast Wisconsin Stargazers), and Lee Keith, (Milwaukee Astronomical Society) all were winners in the astrophotography contest. Scott Roffers and Lee Keith were both best-in-show winners.



Receiving the Region's Newsletter Editor Award was James VandeBerg from the Des Moines Astronomical Society for his outstanding service to his club, his community, and the hobby of astronomy.

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Bob King (Minnesota Astronomical Society and Arrowhead Astronomical Society) received the NCRAL Region Award for his outstanding efforts to promote the science of astronomy, public outreach, teaching, writing, and enthusiasm.



Alan Touchberry and Suresh Sreenivasan (members of the Minnesota Astronomical Society) brought their scopes to provide sun views for attendees at the conference center.



Star-B-Q at the Baylor Park pavilion.

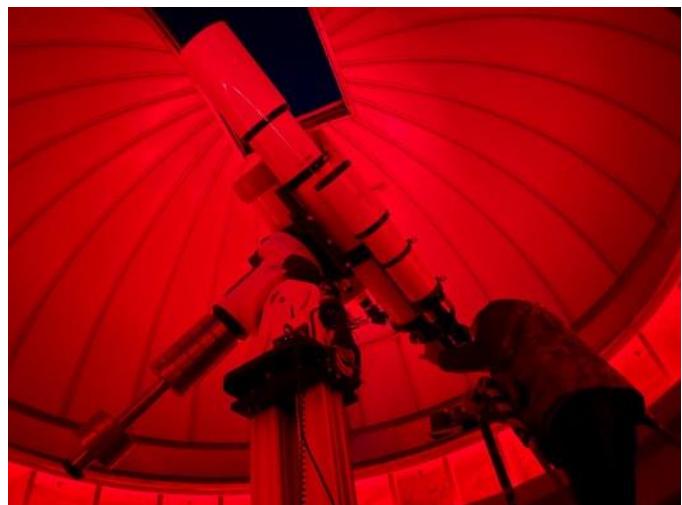


The "out of this world" cookies. They tasted as good as they looked!

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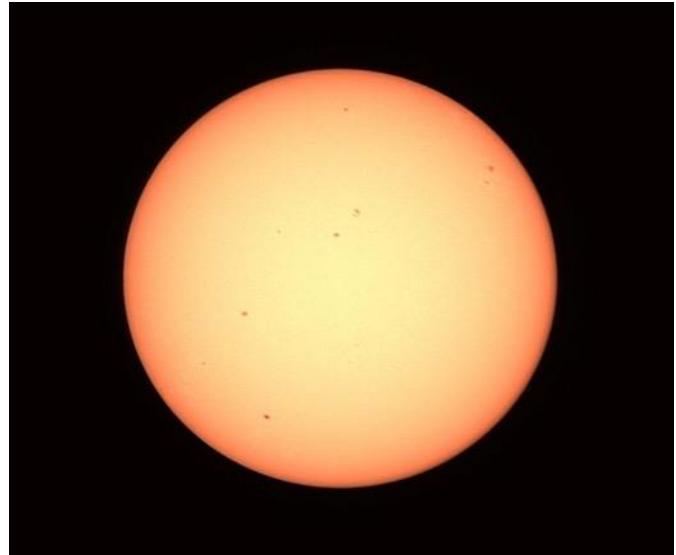
Ron Schmit (Minnesota Astronomical Society) provided a nice talk on the history of MAS and their observatories.



Eagle Lake Observatory



Observing Circle



A view of the sun in white light on the afternoon of April 26th. Alan Touchberry took this image using his Dwarf 3 Smart Telescope.



Dr. Evan Skillman kicked off the invited talks and delivered his talk to the conference attendees.

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SPEAKERS BUREAU

The leadership of the North Central Region proudly announces the beginning of this new service. The brainchild of NCRAL Chair Alan Sheidler, the NCRAL Speakers Bureau will facilitate the acquisition of professional speakers for meetings and other events for our Region's affiliates. Many individuals have indicated a willingness to serve as speakers. Most speakers are available for presentations over Zoom, though some might also be willing to attend club meetings and other events. Please contact the speaker directly through our [NCRAL Speakers Bureau listing to arrange a presentation](#). Speak with them frankly about arrangements, including accommodations, meals, travel expenses, and honorarium, if any.

AstroBits

Here are some news notes that readers might find interesting or helpful. Items appear here as bullet points because they are too short to merit separate articles. If readers have something to share and want it to appear here, email this newsletter's editor at carlwenning@gmail.com.

- ★ *What's Up With the Astronomical League*, the AL's version of *NCRAL's blotter*, is available for download [HERE](#).
- ★ Despite a generous offer of up to \$500 in matching donations by a NCRAL member, the Region received only one \$20 donation from the membership. The donation and match totaled \$40. Despite the lack of interest in this offer, the donor sweetened the pot just a bit. Thanks to our anonymous donors.
- ★ Matthew Ryno (Milwaukee Astronomical Society) reports, "I'm pleased to announce that MAS member and Sky Ridge Academy High School Junior Jericho Kuehl has been announced the winner of the Astronomical League's 2025 [Horkheimer/D'Auria Youth Service Award](#). Terry Mann, Vice President of the Astronomical League, noted to Jericho, 'Congratulations, again, on this recognition of your outstanding service to your club and your community... This was a competition involving 10 excellent nominations. This award comes with a large plaque, your award will be published in the September issue of *Reflector*, and a cash prize of \$1,000.' Congratulations Jericho!"
- ★ With our new web master, there have been several significant updates to the NCRAL website...
 - ★ [Contact information](#) for our two new affiliates: the Madison Astronomical Society and the Quad Cities Astronomical Society.
 - ★ Information about our [two recent award winners](#), Bob King (Region Award) and Jim VandeBerg (Newsletter Editor Award).
 - ★ Details about [Events for 2025](#), including several star parties.
 - ★ All [current and prior issues](#) of *Northern Lights* and *NCRAL blotter*.
 - ★ The [2024-2025 NCRAL Region Report](#) that was submitted to the Astronomical League executive committee. The annual report summarizes the past year's events and is provided annually to the Astronomical League leadership for review.
- ★ Check out **NCRAL's Facebook page** at <https://www.facebook.com/northcentralregionastronomicalleague/>
- ★ **Save the Dates!** The Illinois Dark Skies Star Party, hosted by the [Sangamon Astronomical Society](#), will take place September 18-20, 2025, at the Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish & Wildlife Area, which is located about 30 miles northwest of Springfield, Illinois.

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ADD YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS TO THE NCRAL MEMBER DATABASE

Did you know that only about 525 of our Region's 2,400 members (21%) receive this newsletter? That's less than one-quarter of the membership! Please help NCRAL get its newsletter out to the membership by encouraging fellow club members to add their email addresses to the NCRAL member database. Editors, please include this information in your affiliate's newsletter. It's one of the many benefits of belonging to the Astronomical League.

When one adds their email address to the NCRAL member database, they will receive direct notifications about the availability of ***Northern Lights***. In addition, subscribers receive important and timely announcements about Regional conventions, elections, star parties, etc. Only blind addressing (Bcc:) will be used with this email list, so others will not see subscribers' email addresses. Email addresses will never be shared with or sold.

No one will add your email address to this list, so you must do it yourself. Sign-up takes only about a minute. Resubscribe if you recently changed your email address and are not receiving our notifications. You must provide your name, email address, and astronomy club affiliation (or indicate AL membership-at-large), and let us know if you hold specific positions within your club. Go to the following case-sensitive URL to add your information to our database at <https://tinyurl.com/NCRAL> today so you won't miss critical future communications.

NCRAL SEEKING FUTURE CONVENTION HOSTS

The North Central Region has a convention host for NCRAL 2026 and a tentative host for NCRAL 2027. We are now looking for 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 the planning and hosting experiences of other affiliates.

In addition, NCRAL has its own ***Convention Planning Guide***. To download the most recent version of the *Guide* (last updated November 30, 2023), visit the following URL: <https://ncral.wordpress.com/conventions/>. Look for the link at the bottom of the page. Please get in touch with the NCRAL Chair, Alan Sheidler, at adsheidler@gmail.com should you have any questions or wish to toss your affiliate's hat into the ring for hosting a future NCRAL convention.

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.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO ***NORTHERN LIGHTS*** WELCOME!

Have you ever considered writing an article for this 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.

NOTEWORTHY! (updated from the original release of this issue)

The North Central Region members continue to shine brightly. The following NCRAL members have completed either NCRAL Messier Marathons (seasonal and/or annual) and the Astronomical League observing and award programs in recent months, and were recognized in the June 2025 issue of ***Reflector***. Congratulations to all!

★ Stephen Paveda, Spring Certificate #23, La Crosse Area Astronomical Society, Unassisted

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Solar Eclipse Observing Challenge (2024):

Tom Holman, Silver and Gold, Minnesota Astronomical Society

Hubble 35th Anniversary Special Observing Challenge:

Heidi Bjerke, Jan, Feb, Champaign-Urbana Astronomical Society

Jim Dole, Jan, Feb, Mar, Planetary Studies Foundation

Jeffery S. Moorhouse, Jan, Feb, La Crosse Area Astronomical Society

Jacob Payne, Jan, Cedar Amateur Astronomers

Miyuki Scovel, Jan, Feb, Northwest Suburban Astronomers

NASA Observing Challenge Special Observing Award -

Parker Solar Probe #2:

Ken Boquist, Popular Astronomy Club

Al Sheidler, Popular Astronomy Club

Comet Observing Program:

Jeffery S. Moorhouse, Silver, La Crosse Area Astronomical Society

Extragalactic Objects Observing Program:

Anthony J. Kroes, Gold, Minnesota Astronomical Society

Herschel II Observing Program:

Jack Fitzmier, Madison Astronomical Society

Lunar Observing Program:

Tom Holman, Imaging, Binocular, Eyes-Only, Minnesota Astronomical Society

David F. Bernes, Regular, Binocular, Eyes-Only, Minnesota Astronomical Society

Kevin Carr, Binocular, Eyes-Only, Champaign-Urbana Astronomical Society

Meteor Observing Program:

Bill Hennessy, Gold, Neville Public Museum Astronomical Society

Outreach Program:

Trena Johnson, Master, Minnesota Astronomical Society

Bill Hennessy, Outreach, Neville Public Museum Astronomical Society

Matt Caminiti, Outreach, River Bend Astronomy Club

Solar System Observing Program:

Tom Holman, Imaging, Eyes-Only, Minnesota Astronomical Society

Anthony J. Kroes, Binoculars Eyes-Only, Minnesota Astronomical Society

Sunspotter Observing Program:

Ken Boquist, Popular Astronomy Club

Two In the View Observing Program:

Ken Boquist, Gold, Popular Astronomy Club

Urban Observing Program:

Jim Zimitsch, Minnesota Astronomical Society

Variable Star Observing Program:

Gerard Jones, Minnesota Astronomical Society

Jack Fitzmier, Madison Astronomical Society

*Congratulations to all
NCRAL award winners!*



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SUMMER 2025: PLANETS CONGREGATE IN MORNING SKY

~ by Jeffrey L. Hunt ~

The major planets move into the morning sky, leaving Mars as the lone bright planet in the western evening sky, though Mercury starts the season east of the sun. Around mid-August, Mercury, Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune are west of the sun, though not visible simultaneously from Mercury's appearance during brighter twilight when the sky washes out the dimmer planets. The brighter moon challenges the view of Neptune. Because of the proximity of Uranus near the Pleiades and Neptune near Saturn, public autumn observing nights provide participants opportunities to see the solar system's remote planets.

The **Sun** reaches the ecliptic's summer solstice point on June 20th at 9:42 p.m. Central Time. At Chicago's latitude, daylight lasts 15 hours, 13 minutes; twilight, 4 hours, 24 minutes, and darkness, 4 hours, 23 minutes. The season's midpoint occurs on August 5th at 5:30 p.m.

Mercury, as the season opens, is low in the west-northwest during evening twilight. On the night of the solstice, Mercury ($m = -0.2$) is over 7° above the west-northwest horizon. While bright, use a binocular to see it.

Look for the crescent moon 3.7° to Mercury's right on June 26th and 9.6° to the planet's upper left on the next night. On this night Mercury, Moon, and Mars span 34.4° .

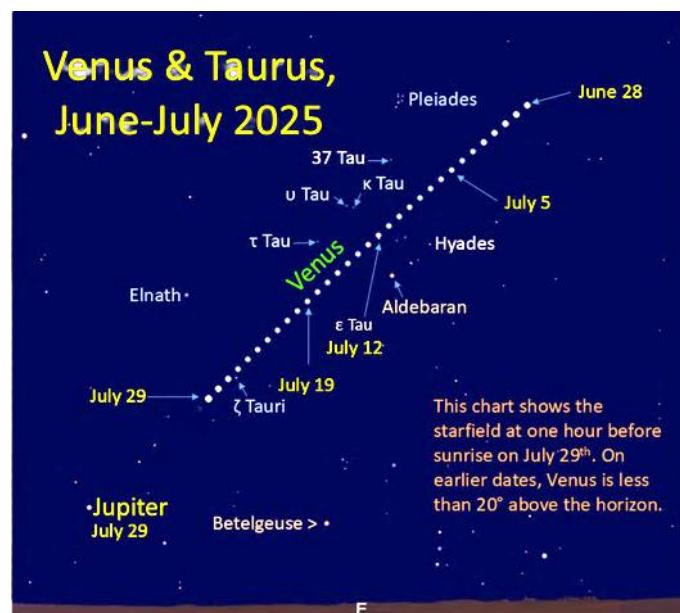
The speedy world reaches greatest elongation (25.9°) on July 4th. It fades rapidly as it overtakes Earth while sliding into evening twilight.

After passing inferior conjunction – between Earth and Sun – on July 31st, Mercury pops into the morning sky, though its visibility suffers from the season's long twilight. It reaches greatest elongation (18.6°) on August 19th. Rising 92 minutes before sunrise, Mercury ($m=0.0$) is over 7° above the horizon at 45 minutes before daybreak.

On this morning, Mercury, Venus, Moon, and Jupiter span 29.3° . With Saturn, the span is 127° . Before twilight begins, look for Uranus, near the Pleiades, and Neptune, with Saturn. Mars is the only other major planet not in this scene.

On the 21st, the crescent moon, 4% illuminated, is 4.7° to Mercury's ($m = -0.3$) upper left. Mercury skitters back into morning twilight, reaching superior conjunction on September 12th. This begins a disappointing evening apparition.

Venus moves through the rich star fields of Taurus, Orion, and Gemini during the summer. Then it crosses Cancer and enters Leo, passing Regulus near the equinox. Choose your favorite stars and, with a binocular, watch the Morning Star approach and pass them.



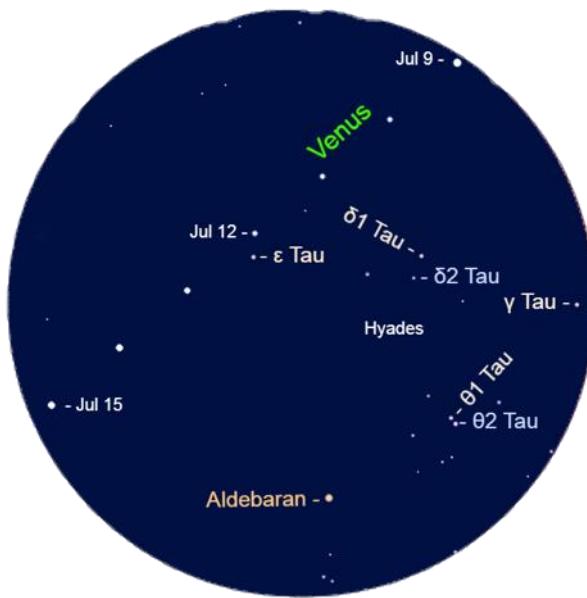
June 9-15: Through a binocular, Venus passes the "V" of Taurus.

The brilliant planet is in the eastern sky during morning twilight as the brightest starlike body in the sky.

On June 22nd, the crescent moon, 13% illuminated, is 6.8° to the upper left of the brilliant planet.

About a week after the solstice, Venus steps into Taurus, heading toward the Pleiades. On July 4th, Venus passes 2.4° to Uranus' ($m=5.9$) lower right. The next morning, the planet passes 6.6° from the Pleiades, visible to its upper left.

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Venus steps eastward in Taurus, passing the Pleiades, "V" of Taurus, and Zeta Tauri.

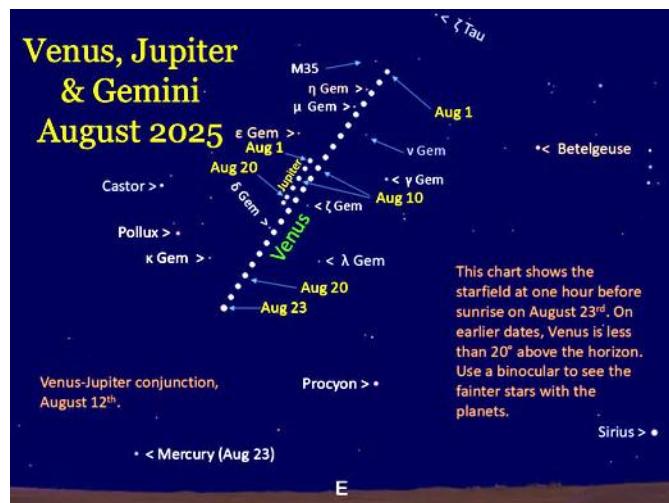
From July 9th through July 15th, Venus appears in the same binocular field with the “V” of Taurus, formed by Aldebaran (α Tau, $m = 0.8$) and the Hyades’ checkmark pattern. On the 9th, it is 1.0 Astronomical Unit from Earth and 5.7° to Aldebaran’s upper right. On the 13th, it passes 3.2° from the Bull’s brightest star.

Afterward, Venus continues eastward toward the Bull's horns, passing Tau (τ Tau, $m = 4.2$) and Iota (ι Tau, $m = 4.6$) on the way to a conjunction with Zeta (ζ Tau, $m = 3.0$) on July 26th.

By July 15th, 30 minutes before sunrise, Jupiter ($m = -1.9$) is over 5° above the east-northeast horizon and about 25° to Venus' lower left. The gap closes by about 1° each morning, leading to their August 12th conjunction.

On the 21st, Venus, about 20° up in the east-northeast, is 7.7° to the lower right of the moon, 14% illuminated. The lunar crescent is 10.9° to Aldebaran's upper left.

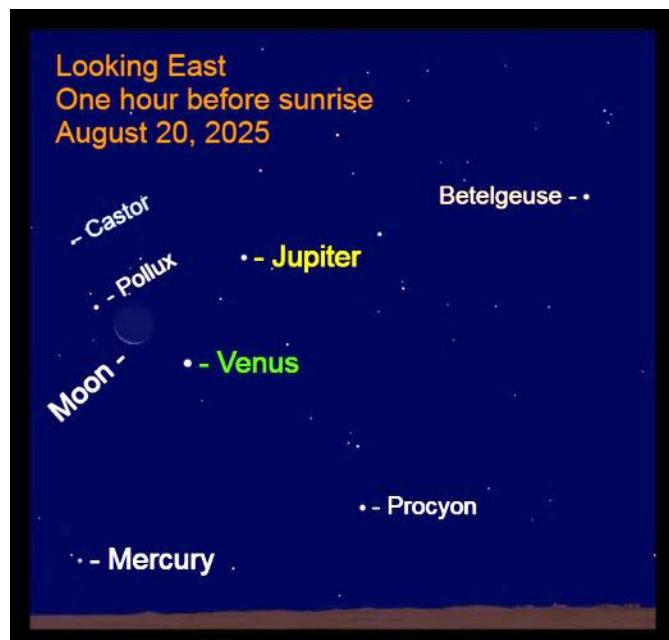
For about two weeks beginning July 26th, Venus and Messier 35 (M35, NGC 2168), near Castor's foot, appear in the same binocular field. Before passing the star cluster on August 2nd, Venus crosses Orion's club on the mornings of July 29–31.



August: Venus moves through Gemini, passing the Twins near month's end.

During early August, Venus rises nearly three hours before sunrise and then begins a slow slide toward bright morning twilight, losing 45 minutes of rising time by the equinox.

On August 12th, Venus ($m = -4.0$) passes 0.9° to Jupiter's lower right in a striking conjunction. Eight days later, on August 20th, Venus, Jupiter, and the moon span a circle 8.8° across a beautiful, wide gathering, though too large for most binoculars.



August 20: Venus, Jupiter, and the crescent moon appear in the eastern sky before sunrise.

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Venus continues through Gemini, passing a sequence of stars: Eta (η Gem, $m = 3.3$), 1 (1 Gem, $m = 4.2$), Mu (μ Gem, $m = 2.8$), Gamma (γ Gem, $m = 1.9$), Epsilon (ε Gem, $m = 3.0$), Zeta (ζ Gem, $m = 4.0$), and Delta (δ Gem, $m = 3.5$). It reaches a wide conjunction with Castor (α Gem, $m = 1.6$) on August 18th, followed by Pollux (β Gem, $m = 1.2$) on the 20th.

On the morning of the Pollux conjunction, Venus is nearly 20° up in the east. The crescent moon (9% illuminated) is between the Morning Star and Pollux, 4.4° to Venus' upper left. Look for the star Kappa Geminorum (κ Gem, $m = 3.6$), 3.6° to the upper left of the planet. Venus, Moon, and Pollux fit into a 7.2° circle, a rare close gathering of these bodies. Bright Jupiter is 8.1° to the upper right of Venus. All of these celestial bodies fit into a circle 10.2° in diameter. Venus, Moon, and Pollux gather this closely again on May 26, 2039.

On August 24th, Venus enters Cancer, heading for the Beehive star cluster (M44, NGC 2632). From August 27th through September 6th, the two are in the same binocular field. Watch Venus pass through Cancer's body—marked by Gamma (γ Cnc, $m = 4.6$), Delta (δ Cnc, $m = 3.9$), Eta (η Cnc, $m = 5.3$), and Theta (θ Cnc, $m = 5.3$). It passes the Beehive on September 1st.

During early September, Venus and Sirius (α CMa, $m = -1.5$) are about the same altitude during morning twilight, although they are over 45° apart.

On September 10th, Venus enters Leo, 11.0° to Regulus' (α Leo, $m = 1.3$) upper right. Venus passes (0.9°) to the star's upper right on the 19th. On this morning, Venus, the 5%-lit moon, and Regulus fit into a circle 1.3° across, a pretty sight through a binocular. This is a morning to photograph this close gathering and capture earthshine on the moon.

The season ends with Venus ($m = -3.9$) over 10° up in the east and 3.4° to Regulus' lower left.

The apparition continues through early winter.

Mars opens the season in Leo about 30° up in the west and 2.0° to Regulus' upper left. At magnitude 1.4, it shines at only about 8% of its peak brightness when it was closest to Earth on January 12th.

On June 28th, the Red Planet passes 0.9° to the upper right of Rho Leonis (ρ Leo, $m = 3.8$); Chertan (θ Leo, $m = 3.3$), 8.8°, on July 10th; and Denebola (β Leo, $m = 2.1$), 11.6°, on July 23rd.



September 10 to October 8: Venus moves eastward through Leo.

On the evening of June 29th, Mars, crescent Moon, 24% illuminated, and Rho fit into a circle 1.0° in diameter. At the next lunation on July 28th, the moon, 19% illuminated, is 4.1° to Mars' lower left. Use a binocular to see the crescent moon 6.1° to the lower left of Mars.

On August 6th, Mars sets at the end of evening twilight, and it is quickly becoming a binocular object as it marches eastward in Virgo. As the equinox approaches, the planet sets 10 minutes after Nautical Twilight when the sun is 12° below the horizon.

After **Jupiter** reaches solar conjunction on June 24th, it begins to climb into the morning sky. It first appears in a darker sky in the east-northeast about July 25th when Venus is 17° to the upper right and near Zeta Tauri. A month later, it is nearly 30° up in the east in the middle of Gemini, 2.2° to Delta Geminorum's (δ Gem, $m = 3.5$) upper right. By mid-September, it is over 50° up in the east-southeast during mid-twilight, 1.4° to Delta's lower left and 7.4° to the lower right of Pollux (β Gem, $m = 1.2$). Look for the moon nearby on July 23rd, August 19th and 20th, and September 16th.

Saturn and Neptune begin the season in a dim Pisces starfield. Saturn is 2.1° to the left of 29 Piscium (29 Psc, m = 5.1). On the first morning of summer, it rises over four hours before sunrise, and at the beginning of morning twilight, it is nearly 25° up in the east-southeast.

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After the ring-plane crossing during March, Saturn's rings are inclined only 3°, making the planet appear dimmer to the unaided eye than we have seen in recent years.

The Ringed Wonder treks eastward, in close proximity to Neptune ($m = 7.8$). During early July, make your first attempt to see Saturn and Neptune in the same binocular field of view. Look for them each clear morning until the gibbous moon interferes at mid-month.

At the beginning of August, Saturn is about halfway up in the south at the beginning of twilight, making the attempt to see Neptune easier, 1.1° above Saturn.

This year's *Observer's Handbook* predicts a Saturn-Neptune conjunction on June 29th in equatorial coordinates, though as measured along the ecliptic, Saturn begins to retrograde on July 13th, 0.1° in ecliptic longitude west of Neptune. The most distant planet in the modern solar system begins to retrograde on the 4th. Saturn reaches opposition on September 21st, and Neptune three nights later.

Because of its proximity to Saturn, public observing sessions in dark locations this autumn offer excellent opportunities to help visitors spot Neptune—both through a binocular and a telescope.

Uranus ($m=5.8$) is in the same binocular field with the Pleiades. At the beginning of summer, it is low in the east-northeast during mid-twilight. As the season progresses, it is higher in the sky each morning. As noted above Venus passes by on July 4th. Depending on the sky's clarity, try to see it with a binocular.

On July 15th, Uranus passes 4.6° below Alcyone (n Tau, $m = 2.8$) the brightest Pleiad. The planet and the cluster easily fit into the same binocular field. The planet is easily visible with the optical assist in suburban settings.

To demonstrate the slow revolution of the remote planets, Uranus' last conjunction with the Pleiades occurred on May 1, 1942, which was the third meeting of a triple conjunction series that began during the summer of 1941. Saturn passed Uranus on May 3rd, though only in a single conjunction. Its retrograde began before reaching Uranus in ecliptic longitude.

When the moon, 24% illuminated, occults the Pleiades on July 20th, attempt to see Uranus during this stellar eclipse.

Uranus begins to retrograde on September 6th, 4.3° to the lower left of Eta Tauri. As the season ends 4.4° from that star. As with Neptune, fall observing events present a great opportunity to display this planet.

The ninth planet in the classical solar system model, **Pluto** ($m = 14.4$), is in eastern Capricornus. It reaches opposition on July 25th. In a dark sky and with a large aperture instrument, attempt to see the planet during the evening.



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NURTURING AN ASTRONOMY CLUB: FIVE HELPFUL ADMINISTRATIVE TOOLS

~ by Carl J. Wenning, Twin City Amateur Astronomers ~

Nurturing (adjective or verb)

– *providing care, encouragement, and support to help someone or something grow, develop, or thrive.*

The Twin City Amateur Astronomers (TCAA), located in Central Illinois, have bucked trends recently regarding the “graying” of amateur astronomy. While many clubs are losing members due to disinterest, decrepitude, and death, the TCAA has turned things around by including certain nurturing aspects that many failing clubs do not appear to possess. Including these administrative practices makes it possible to turn things around even if a club is dying.

Due to various efforts by the TCAA’s leadership (especially our *Introduction to Amateur Astronomy* course), the club’s membership has recently grown to the highest level since Halley’s Comet, when we reached an all-time high membership of about 100 members in a town of about 100,000.

Today, we have active **education** programs for members and **outreach** programs for the public. We also provide **service** to the larger community of amateur astronomers by hosting regional conventions (2010, 2016, and 2023), providing the editorial work for nine years of the *Northern Lights* newsletter and two years of the *NCRAL blotter*, and one member even serving as the NCRAL Chair from 2017-2023. Many of these activities are described in [TCAA Guide #11—Recruiting and Retaining Astronomy Club Members](#). Still, that compilation of articles does not include everything that needs to be said about establishing and maintaining a thriving club.

Allow me to spotlight **five helpful administrative tools** that the TCAA leadership uses to nurture its status as a successful club. These tools are the club’s bylaws, multi-year plans, job descriptions, meeting agendas, and meeting minutes. All clubs with serious intent should effectively use these five structural instruments; each should be interconnected.

Bylaws are the written rules and procedures that govern the internal operations of an organization or group. **Multi-year plans** are strategic outlines that set goals, actions, and resource allocations over a period

longer than one year to guide an organization’s long-term direction and growth. **Job descriptions** are clear summaries that outline the duties, responsibilities, qualifications, and expectations for a specific role within an organization. **Meeting agendas** are a structured list of topics to be discussed and actions to be taken during a business meeting. **Meeting minutes** are the official written record of what was discussed, decided, and assigned during a business meeting. Properly formulated, these five documents will flow one into another to guide a club’s leadership, ensuring a successful organization. Consider how they work together to nurture a club.

- ★ **Bylaws**—A club’s bylaws are most closely associated with its AIMS. Aims are a broad direction or purpose – the overall intent – what members hope to achieve in a general sense. Aims tend to be abstract and long-term. For instance, the aims of an astronomy club might include promoting interest in the night sky, educating the public about space science, and providing opportunities for members to observe celestial events.
- ★ **Multi-Year Plans**—A club’s multi-year plan is most closely associated with the organization’s GOALS. Goals constitute more specific targets within the broader aims. It’s what a club wants to accomplish, often in a measurable or time-bound way. Goals are mid-to-long-term plans and more concrete than aims. For instance, a goal might be to recruit and retain members or grow a presence on social media. Multi-year plans are reviewed periodically to see that none of the major components of the club’s goals are being missed.
- ★ **Job Descriptions**—A club’s job descriptions for Board members, officers, and chair positions are more closely associated with OBJECTIVES. Objects outline a detailed action or step that supports a goal. Their focus is short-term and practical. The



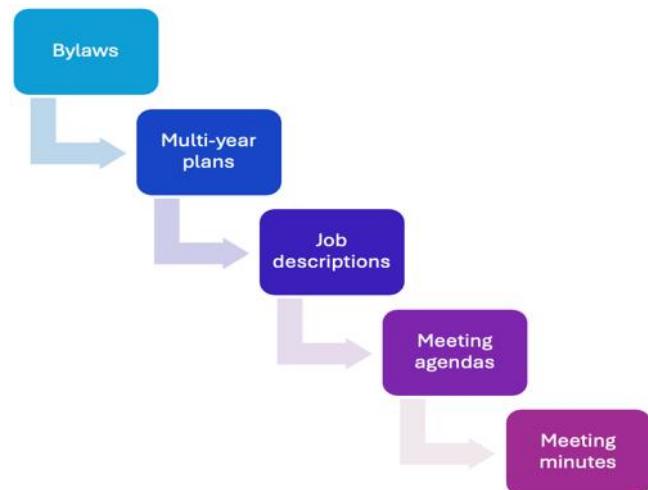
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best objectives are SMART objectives: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-based. These objectives are discussed regularly during club business meetings to ensure they are addressed.

- ★ **Meeting Agendas** – A club's meeting agendas (either board or membership) are closely associated with ACCOUNTABILITY. Accountability means being responsible for achieving a specific objective and being answerable for the outcomes, whether the objective is met or not. Ideally, Board members, officers, and chairs will report on progress toward their objectives at each meeting. Leaders should report on accomplishments/failures in relation to their objectives at each meeting. Without such reporting, there is no accountability. When leaders repeatedly state, "I have nothing to report," it indicates that they are not doing their jobs.
- ★ **Meeting Minutes** – A club's meeting minutes provide a detailed record of what was discussed at a business meeting. More than that, they provide for FOLLOWUP. They record who has agreed to do what and what is to be expected. Minutes should be disseminated for review as quickly as possible after a meeting. The record should be carefully reviewed for "items of old business" so attendees can be reminded of what they have agreed to do. It should also be reviewed before the next meeting so that those who have agreed to accomplish certain things have done them.

All documents, working in unison, will ensure accountability within an organization. Accountability matters because it ensures that leaders follow through on their responsibilities, take ownership of their actions and inactions, and contribute reliably to shared goals. Accountability builds trust, improves performance, and helps organizations function effectively.

In my experience with numerous organizations (especially the TCAA for nearly 47 years), it is much to the group's detriment when accountability is lacking. I have found that there are office holders and then "office holders." All too often, people will run for and occupy an office merely for the sake of its prestige. They serve as little more than placeholders. They are either unwilling to admit or are unaware that leadership constitutes service.



Each level of accountability flows into the next.

In service to a club's membership, Board members, officers, and chairs must own their tasks, follow through with the agreed-upon work, and report on progress or results in settings where successes and setbacks are recognized and evaluated. Without these understandings and accountability, a club will likely do nothing more than exist. It certainly will not flourish.

Leadership and Why it Matters

Accountability is part and parcel of leadership. Leadership is guiding, inspiring, and influencing others toward achieving a common goal or vision, often by setting direction, establishing plans, and empowering people to act. When focused on accountability using an organization's administrative tools, leadership encourages follow-through, builds trust and reliability, helps track progress toward goals, supports team efforts, and ensures transparency.

We are all familiar with do-nothing leadership, mere seat warmers who do no good. A club without effective leadership is like a ship without a rudder. Without effective leadership, a club is easily tossed about by every contrary wind and wave encountered. Clubs with ineffective leadership will never arrive at the desired port unless by chance.

Carl J. Wenning has been an active Twin City Amateur Astronomers member since 1978. The author will gladly provide examples of all five administrative tools described in this article. You may contact him with your request at carlwenning@gmail.com

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REGIONAL OFFICER & LEADER CONTACT INFORMATION

Chair: Alan Sheidler

Bio: Alan has been an active member of the *Popular Astronomy Club* in the Quad Cities for 30 years and has held the offices of vice president and president. He is currently serving as the director of observing. Alan has been very involved in public outreach activities and, in 2022, received the Master Level Astronomical League Outreach Award. He has also completed several AL observing programs for Double Stars, Globular Clusters, Planetary Nebulae, Venus & Mercury transits, and all four NCRAL Seasonal Messier Observing Awards. (Two-year term as Chair; currently in his second term, serving 2023-2027.)



Contact: Adsheidler@gmail.com

Vice Chair: Eric Claeys

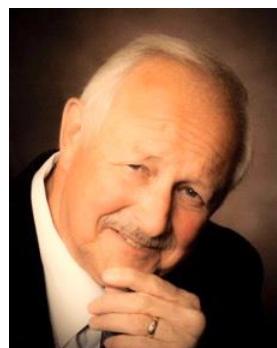
Bio: Eric's been in the *Naperville Astronomical Association* (Illinois) since 2013 and was the club's first media relations officer, where he appeared on TV and in various newspapers several times. He later was the club's webmaster. He still enjoys public outreach, especially when someone says, "Wow!" Eric received his first telescope in the 6th grade – a K-Mart "500x power" 2.5-inch scope he calls "a piece of junk." As a teenager, Eric became an Eagle Scout, and his first merit badge was Astronomy. He used his K-Mart "special" until 2014 to look at the Sun, Moon, a few planets, and occasionally the neighbors. He now owns an observatory and house in New Mexico with a 140mm refractor, a 14" SCT for astrophotography, and a 16" SCT for visual. Eric retired in 2020 from Nokia/Alcatel-Lucent/Lucent/Bell Labs as a project manager in the IT department. He's now the primary developer of the [Allsky](#) software used by over 500 people worldwide to capture wide-angle images of the sky. (Two-year term as Vice Chair; currently in his first term, 2025-2027.)



Contact: AstroEric@eccssw.com

Secretary-Treasurer: Roy Gustafson

Bio: Roy, a member of the *Popular Astronomy Club* (Quad Cities), got interested in astronomy when visiting the Adler Planetarium in Chicago in 2nd Grade. The star projected by the Zeiss Projector hooked him and started him on the path of astronomy. He has been active in outreach and has presented astronomy programs to over 20,000 people. He was awarded the **Master Outreach Award** from the Astronomical League. Roy travels with his telescopes and has observed both Transits of Venus and total solar eclipses in 2017 and 2019. Roy also taught astronomy at Black Hawk Junior College in Moline, IL. Roy retired from John Deere & Company after 32 years of service. As Secretary-Treasurer, Roy manages the Region's [observing awards program](#). (Two-year term as Secretary-Treasurer; currently in his fourth term, serving 2018-2026.)



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Regional Representative: John Attewell

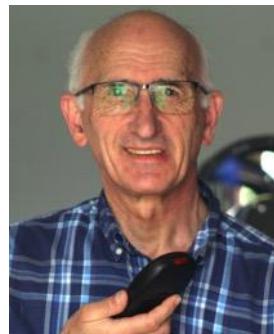
Bio: John's interest in astronomy was kindled during two great comet events – comets Hyakutake (1996) and Hale–Bopp (1997). He used a 2½-inch refractor borrowed from his brother for the next ten years, which he mounted on a rickety camera tripod. It wasn't until 2009 that he acquired a serious telescope as a gift from his family. He started attending the *Rochester Astronomy Club* meetings in 2002, becoming a member in 2006 and Vice President in 2019. In 2017, he chaired the NCRAL annual conference held at Eagle Bluff Environmental Center in Lanesboro, Minnesota, and served as NCRAL Vice Chair from 2017-2019. John's particular interest is the history of astronomy. (Three-year term as Regional Representative; currently in the second term, serving 2022-2028)



Contact: john_attewell@hotmail.com

Webmaster: Josef Chlachula (appointed position)

Bio: Josef has been an amateur astronomer since he was 14 years old when he first built a telescope with a 50mm aperture and a 1m focal length. Then, he built a 6-inch reflecting telescope. He was interested in spherical astronomy, celestial mechanics, and variable star observations. In 1988, he helped establish a two-week summer astronomy camp for children and teenagers, which has been held yearly since. Born in Czechoslovakia, he has lived in Rochester, Minnesota, since 1997. He is a member of the *Rochester Astronomy Club*, where he oversees outreach and is also one of the webmasters. He helped organize the NCRAL 2025 conference and became the NCRAL webmaster shortly after the conference ended.



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Newsletter Editor: Carl J. Wenning (appointed position)

Bio: Carl has been an avid amateur astronomer since being introduced to the night sky by his grandfather in July 1957. He has been involved with the *Twin City Amateur Astronomers* (Illinois) since September 1978, where he served as president as recently as 2024-2025. He is an ***Astronomical League Master Observer*** who spends much of his free time introducing nascent amateur astronomers to observing using his club's Celestron 11", iOptron 14", and PlaneWave 20" telescopes. Carl was first recognized for his Regional education and outreach efforts in 2007 when he received the ***NCRAL Region Award***. He served three consecutive two-year terms as NCRAL Regional Chair from 2017 to 2023. He has also served as the Region's ***Northern Lights*** newsletter editor since 2016. He has edited the ***NCRAL blotter***, a monthly newsletter for affiliate leadership, since 2023. He is now into his third year as co-instructor of the week-long, summertime *Astro Camp* at YMCA Camp Eberhart in Three Rivers, Michigan. Carl resides in Normal, Illinois.



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