

NCRAL blotter

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

[Alan Sheidler](#), PAC, Chairman

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

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

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

[Carl Wenning](#), TCAA, Publications Editor

[Josef Chlachula](#), RAC, Web Administrator

September 2025

- ★ INVITATION TO ASTRONOMERS IN THE NCRAL REGION: September 4th, 2025; 2:30 a.m.-3:00 a.m. CDT. **TITAN SHADOW TRANSIT.** Our NCRAL webmaster, Josef Chlachula, will start a Zoom meeting at 2:30 a.m. CDT on Thursday, September 4th, to allow interested observers from around the region to join in and view the transit/or share telescopic views. The Zoom meeting will be time-limited to 30 minutes, so don't miss this opportunity. Several of us connected on Zoom for the prior two shadow transits. WE NEED OBSERVERS WITH TELESCOPES AND CLEAR SKIES TO JOIN US, AS MANY OF US WILL PROBABLY HAVE CLOUDS (again!). THIS MAY BE THE LAST TIME WE EVER SEE THIS. The Zoom link has been published on the [NCRAL website](#).
- ★ Many opportunities for observing and fellowship abound within NCRAL. Over the next few weeks, the following events will be held. Please take advantage of all the events that our member clubs have to offer!
 - **Illinois Dark Skies Star Party 2025** – The Sangamon Astronomical Society (Springfield, IL) will host the Illinois Dark Skies Star Party **September 18 – 20**. The event will be held at the Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish & Wildlife Area in west central Illinois. Detailed information and registration are available on their [website](#).
 - **Northwoods Starfest 2025** – The annual Northwoods Starfest will occur on **September 19-21** at Hobbs Observatory in Fall Creek, WI. See the Chippewa Valley Astronomical Society [website](#) for details.
 - **Iowa Star Party 2025** – The Iowa Star Party will be held on **October 16 – 19** at the Whiterock Resort in Coon Rapids, IA. Visit their [website](#) for more information.

★ NCRAL 2026, *Mission Possible*, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, May 15-17

Discussions continue for all phases of the NCRAL 2026 Conference, called the *Eastern Iowa Cosmic Conference*, to be held at the Double Tree by Hilton in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, beginning May 15th, 2026.

Three of the six speaker slots have already been confirmed. The University of Iowa will provide Professor Jasper Halekas, one of the developers of instruments aboard the Parker Solar Probe mission, and Professor Allison Jaynes, who has made significant contributions to the Aurora and TRACERS missions. The third speaker so far is Sean Walker, associate editor and contributor to *Sky & Telescope* magazine! Walker is also involved in the MDW Hydrogen-Alpha Sky Survey.

The *Cedar Amateur Astronomers* planning committee has developed a logo for the conference and has prepared a promotional video that can be found through this link: <http://bit.ly/4n7j0f>

Ongoing discussions include events on Friday night at the Eastern Iowa Observatory and Learning Center, as well as bonus activities our guests can visit before heading home on Sunday. Among those destinations are the Collins Aerospace Museum, the University of Iowa Astronomy and Physics Lab, the NRAO telescope site, and a



tour of the new astronomical clock tower located at the Czech and Slovak Museum, which mirrors the original clock in Prague.

The development of the conference website is still in progress and will be available soon. Look for more updates next month and start making plans for your unforgettable visit to Cedar Rapids, May 15-17, 2026!

- ★ Affiliate leaders and members-at-large should keep abreast of ***what's happening*** in the Astronomical League. Each month, six or more updates are posted on the [A.L. website's landing page](#). ALCors should check this page regularly for updates to share with their affiliates' members. (Recently, *What's Happening*, the ALCor newsletter, has been sent out to the AL membership.)
- ★ **Astronomy and Cataracts?** An important article came to the attention of your editor recently that deals with streaking of stellar images caused by cataract surgery. Joe Comiskey of the Kalamazoo Astronomical Society (Michigan, GLRAL) drew your editor's attention to this vital document. Check out this helpful and informative document at https://www.jerryoltion.com/Cataracts_and_Astronomers.pdf
- ★ AL President Chuck Allen has asked former NCRAL Chair Carl Wenning (2017-2023) to develop a ***Handbook for Regional Leadership*** so that other sections can follow in the footsteps of our comparatively successful region. The 16-page *Handbook* contains an introduction, preface, 2.5-page executive summary, and more than two dozen questions with answers. It is intended for elected regional leaders and appointees such as newsletter editors and website managers. The document contains numerous hyperlinks that provide detailed information and examples, many of which point to the exemplary work of NCRAL. The document is now under review at the highest levels of the AL leadership. Current NCRAL Chair Alan Sheidler and AL President Chuck Allen have contributed valuable insights for the improvement of this document.
- ★ AL President Chuck Allen recently wrote your editor, "Willie Rainwater has resigned as ad manager for *Reflector*. We need to pull out all the stops to get a replacement. Kristine is putting an article in the *Reflector* calling for volunteers." Chuck has requested that an announcement also appear in the NCRAL Blotter Leadership Bulletin and the *Northern Lights* newsletter for NCRAL members—details to follow.
- ★ The Autumn 2025 issue of ***Northern Lights*** will be disseminated soon – on or very near the date of the autumn equinox. This will be a large and significant issue, offering a wealth of interesting and helpful information. To receive notification of the newsletter's availability, be sure to sign up on the NCRAL email distribution list. 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. Visit the following case-sensitive URL today to add your information to our database at <https://tinyurl.com/NCRAL> so that you won't miss future communications.
- ★ **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.
- ★ **Astronomical Equipment for Sale:** The Twin City Amateur Astronomers are divesting themselves of a considerable amount of unused and unwanted astronomical equipment. They will soon have available for sale 33 items, with additional items becoming available soon. Items range from a 24" AG Optical f/11 reflector on a *Software Bisque Taurus 600* yoke mount, to a *Celestron EdgeHD 11" SCT*, to a 50mm *Lunt H α* telescope, to *SBIG* and *Canon* cameras and a variety of planetary video and guide cameras, to *Flat-Man* field flats, to eyepieces and Barlow lenses, to 42" telescope piers, to you name it. Reserve sale prices start at 25% to 40% off original pricing. Many items are in "like new condition" and everything will be sold as "used" and on an "as is" basis. Club members have first right of refusal, but unsold items will be available for bidding and purchase by non-club members shortly after October 1st. Contact Carl Wenning at carlwenning@gmail.com to view the materials list and learn more about the bidding and acquisition process.

★ Note from the AL's Mitch Glaze: The **RASC 2026 Observer's Handbooks** (USA version) and **2026 RASC Calendars** are available for PRE-ORDER on the League Sales web store at <https://store.astroleague.org/>. League Sales sells these items each fall at a great price with our members in mind.

Stock typically arrives in late November and is usually shipped to customers in December, in time for the holidays/Christmas. We suggest ordering early to ensure availability. We order a limited number of these items, and once they are sold (or pre-sold), we will not be able to obtain any more.

If your group or club wants to place a group order, you will find versions of the RASC Calendar for 6+ units and for the *RASC Handbook* for 10+ units, both on the League Sales web store. BE SURE TO LOOK FOR THE DIFFERENT ITEMS ON OUR WEB STORE -- THE SINGLE COPY ITEM AND THE BULK QUANTITY ITEM (10+ Handbooks or 6+ Calendars). Those will save you a bit on the per-unit cost and will also receive free shipping on the order.

Ordering from the Astronomical League saves you from paying import fees and shipping costs from Canada, and the Astronomical League has the best prices around on these great items. Shipping costs on small orders shipped directly from Canada have increased significantly this year; ordering through the Astronomical League will save you money!

★ **CONGRATULATIONS to Alan Sheidler!**

NCRAL Chair Alan Sheidler has received *Sangamon Astronomical Society's Donald C. Jardine Service to Amateur Astronomy Award*. This award is given to individuals who demonstrate qualities that encourage interest and appreciation of astronomy, provide guidance to those seeking further advancement, and offer leadership within their support group.

"...Your efforts in public outreach, mentoring other amateur astronomers, leading the Popular Astronomy Club, and your role as [Chair] of the NCRAL involve time, effort, communication skills, and self-motivation. These activities align with the criteria for this award. The award consists of a plaque featuring Don Jardine's likeness, the year of the award, your name, and a brief statement recognizing your contributions to promoting astronomy in the Midwest..."

Congratulations, Alan!

