

NCRAL blotter

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

[Alan Sheidler](#), PAC, Chairman
[Jim Dole](#), PSF, Vice Chairman
[Roy Gustafson](#), PAC, Secretary-Treasurer
[John Attewell](#), RAC, Regional Rep. to the A.L.
[Carl Wenning](#), TCAA, Publications Editor
[Paul Levesque](#), PAC, Associate Editor
[Josef Chlachula](#), RAC, Web Administrator

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March 2026

- ★ Regional Chair Alan Sheidler hosted an informational Zoom presentation on Sunday, February 15, covering topics of interest to the NCRAL membership. The agenda included information on the Region and Newsletter Editor awards and mini-grants, an open officer position (Secretary-Treasurer), and details about NCRAL 2026, which will be hosted by Cedar Amateur Astronomers on May 15-17. The direct link to the video is <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvYXxXpOwRY>. The video is now available in the NCRAL repository on our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@NCR-AL>
- ★ We are still accepting nominations for the **NCRAL Region** and **Newsletter Editor Awards** and applications for the Region's two mini-grants. These awards will be presented at NCRAL 2026, so nominations and applications are due by April 15. Visit <https://ncral.org/awards/> for details.
- ★ After a long period of honorable and dedicated service to the North Central Region's membership, **Secretary-Treasurer** Roy Gustafson (PAC) has indicated his desire to step down. We thank Roy for his many contributions. We are now seeking one or more candidates to run for the position of Secretary-Treasurer. If you are so inclined, please contact NCRAL Chair Alan Sheidler, and we will add your name to the ballot.
- ★ In May 2026, Cedar Amateur Astronomers will host the annual conference of the North Central Region of the Astronomical League in Cedar Rapids. Students, educators, and STEM learners from K-12 and beyond are invited to attend! Registration for NCRAL 2026 is now open.
[Watch the NCRAL 2026 YouTube video!](#)
CAA leaders Gordon Baustian, Chris Kardos, or both will participate in the **AL Live** on March 6.
- ★ Having served as NCRAL's newsletter editor since 2016, Carl Wenning will step down from this position after the publication of both this issue of **NCRAL blotter** and the Spring 2026 issue of **Northern Lights**. NCRAL Chair Alan Sheidler has named Paul Levesque of the Popular Astronomy Club to succeed Carl. Paul may be contacted via email at levesque5562@att.net.



EASTERN IOWA COSMIC CONFERENCE

A three-day prestigious celebration of science featuring the 2026 NCRAL Conference, hands-on STEM activities, special speakers, and more!

May 15-17, 2026

DoubleTree by Hilton Cedar Rapids Convention Complex – Cedar Rapids, IA

ncral2026.org



Registration is Open!

It's time to register for ALCON 2026 in Cincinnati!

- ★ **ALCON 2026**, hosted by the Cincinnati Astronomical Society, will be held in Covington, Kentucky, from August 12-15. There will also be a post-convention event at a new private observatory 90 minutes west of Cincinnati. Visit the [convention website](#) today for details. Registration is now open.
- ★ The *Milwaukee Astronomical Society* has volunteered to host **NCRAL 2027**. In keeping with NCRAL tradition, the Milwaukee group will present a “formal proposal” at the Region’s NCRAL 2026 annual business meeting in Cedar Rapids next May. The assembled membership will then vote on whether to accept the proposal.
- ★ **Illinois Dark Skies Star Party**: The Sangamon Astronomical Society (SAS) will again host the IDSSP from October 8-10, 2026, at Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish & Wildlife Area, 25 miles northwest of Springfield, Illinois. You are invited to join the gathering this year. Details are still being finalized, but mark the dates on your calendar so you don’t miss the event. More information will be available soon on the SAS website at www.sas-sky.org.
- ★ **Affiliate leaders**, please send the dates and details of your affiliate’s star parties and other special events to Josef Chlachula (NCRAL webmaster) so he can post them on the NCRAL website [events page](#). If you’d like any additional information shared, please email carlwenning@gmail.com so it can be included in the March issue of *Northern Lights*.
- ★ Is your club part of the [NASA Night Sky Network](#)? If not, your club might want to consider [applying for membership](#). Among the many benefits are periodic Zoom-based webinars, the latest of which can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QIW0VseJLCQ>
- ★ Regarding updates, the NCRAL leadership is once again asking our regional affiliates’ leadership—**particularly presidents and ALCors**—to keep the lines of communication open by updating their clubs’ records. Names of presidents, ALCors, and editors, along with their contact information, will be used to update the [affiliates page](#) on the NCRAL website. Since affiliates typically hold elections around this time of year, please send any leadership changes to Chair Alan Sheidler.

- ★ Remember that NCRAL now has an [official YouTube page](#). Regional webmaster Josef Chlachula has been interviewing the NCRAL leadership and affiliate leaders. These Zoom-based recordings will introduce them to the Regional membership. NCRAL also has a [Facebook page](#), which Sara Sheidler of PAC regularly updates. It features many posts from around the Region and currently has about 540 followers. Don't miss it!
- ★ See Josef Chlachula interview Cedar Amateur Astronomers' **Chris Kardos** on the NCRAL YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFoEg9RRXg>



NCRAL 2026 Update

Gordon Baustian, co-chair of the NCRAL 2026 Planning Committee

As I write this, we are 77 days away from NCRAL 2026. We have received a very positive response since our conference website and registration opened on the evening of January 30, 2026. We sold out our block of conference rooms at the DoubleTree venue within 72 hours! However, no worries. We have secured additional conference rate rooms at nearby Hilton hotels. The additional conference room sites and reservation links have been added to the conference website, along with alternative sites for those who prefer something different.

The registration sign-up has also been very strong. I believe this reflects the outstanding lineup of plenary speakers and the activities planned for the conference. The response to the Sunday tour offerings has also been very strong. We are requesting that individuals sign up for the various tours to provide us with an indication of interest and help plan the logistics for the tours.

If you have not yet signed up, please do so as soon as possible by visiting <https://ncral2026.org>. You will find more information and details on the website. This now includes the opportunity to order NCRAL apparel in advance, which will be available at hotel registration upon your arrival.

Feel free to email me with any questions: gordonbaustian@gmail.com

Green Bank Star Quest XXI

The annual four-day Green Bank Star Quest XXI will be held July 15-18, 2026. It is the nation's largest star party, combining optical and radio astronomy. Held at the Green Bank National Radio Observatory in Green Bank, West Virginia, the event takes place in a rural location with dark skies envied by many other astronomers. Green Bank Observatory graciously allows us to host this star party at their facility, which provides the infrastructure to continue events and lectures even in inclement weather.

For anyone interested in attending, a registration form is available on our website. The option to pay via PayPal is also available on our website at <http://www.greenbankstarquest.org/>.

Our club can also be contacted by mail at Central Appalachian Astronomy Club, PO Box 211, Grafton, WV 26354, or via our club's website at <http://www.caacwv.com/contact.htm>. You can also contact the event coordinator, our club's vice president, John Taylor, at (304) 265-5514.

Central Appalachian Astronomy Club, WV

March 6, 2026 7:00PM EST

ALCON
2026
CINCINNATI

LIVE 2026!!



John Goss

*"In Celebration of
Global Astronomy Month:
Projects and Activities
from your
ASTRONOMICAL LEAGUE"*



*with
host*

Terry Mann

also

**Chuck Allen,
Don Knabb,
Bryan Simpson,
Scott Roberts,
and David Levy**

Projects & Activities

- Navigating the Night Sky
- Lunar Explorations
- Binocular Double Stars
- Binocular Open Clusters
- In the Footsteps of Galileo
- Solar System Tasks

**Watch Live Stream or Recorded:
[Explorescientific.com/live](https://explorescientific.com/live), or
www.facebook.com/Astronomical.League**



Astronomical.League

ALCon 2026:

**hosted by the Cincinnati Astronomical Society at the
Marriott RiverCenter, Covington, KY, August 12–15, 2026**