

NCRAL blotter

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April 2026

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.

[Paul Levesque](#), PAC, Publications Editor

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

- ★ We are still accepting nominations for the NCRAL Region and Newsletter Editor Awards, as well as applications for the Region's two mini-grants. These awards will be presented at NCRAL 2026, so all nominations and applications must be submitted by April 15. Visit <https://ncral.org/awards/> for more details.
- ★ Roy Gustafson has announced his retirement as Secretary-Treasurer for the region. This position does not require a significant time commitment. If you're interested, please contact Alan Sheidler for more information. We will vote on Roy's replacement at the NCRAL Business meeting on May 16 at the Eastern Iowa Cosmic Conference.
- ★ At the time of my writing, we are [six weeks] from the start of the Eastern Iowa Cosmic Conference (EICC) and NCRAL 2026. We have had an outstanding response to registration for Track 1 and our tours. We have exceeded expectations and our dreams. I think this is due to the outstanding lineup of speakers and topics, plus the wonderful venue here in Cedar Rapids. Even with our stellar group of speakers, I am very excited to share that last Friday, I learned that another NASA Astrophysicist will likely be joining our lineup! More to come once the details are confirmed. Please take advantage of the opportunity to purchase your very cool EICC apparel on the conference website ahead of time; it will be waiting for you here in Cedar Rapids when you arrive. The deadline for orders is April 19, 2026. It is not too late to register! Join us May 15, 16, and 17, 2026, by registering today at <https://ncral2026.org>. We have plenty of room, plenty of food and plenty to see and do while you are here. Feel free to contact me or post questions through our conference website.



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**

Gordon Baustian

CAA Vice-president

Co-Chair of the EICC Planning Committee

- ★ Ryan French, a scientist at the Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics (LASP) at the University of Colorado Boulder, has been named the 2026 Shapley Lecturer by the American Astronomical Society. **French has been paired with the Cedar Amateur Astronomers** in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and will present at a joint gathering of the North Central Region of the Astronomical League Conference and the Eastern Iowa Cosmic Conference, scheduled for May 15-17, 2026. Learn more about Ryan through this [AAS promotional link](#).



Registration is Open!

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

- ★ **ALCON 2026**, hosted by the Cincinnati Astronomical Society, will take place 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.
- ★ ALCors, take note! The main responsibility of an affiliate's Astronomical League Correspondent (ALCor) is to keep communication open between the AL and the affiliate. About once a month, the AL publishes updates through *What's Up in the AL* on the League's website. In the March issue, this newsletter mentions NCRAL and MSRAL conferences, along with the upcoming AL convention. Review this information and share it with your members. Here is the link to the March issue.
[Whats-Up-with-Astro-League-March-20-2026.pdf](#)
- ★ **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 our new editor, Paul Levesque, at levesque5562@att.net, so he can include your information in the June issue of *Northern Lights*.
- ★ Regarding updates, the NCRAL leadership once again requests that our regional affiliates' leaders—particularly presidents and ALCors—keep communication open by updating their clubs' records. Names of presidents, ALCors, and editors, along with their contact details, will be used to update the [affiliates page](#) on the NCRAL website. Since affiliates usually hold elections around this time of year, please send any leadership changes to Chair Alan Sheidler.

- ★ **NCRAL History** - Did you know that Stephen Peters (Marquette Amateur Astronomers, recently dissolved) is the NCRAL Historian and has records dating back to 1947? Neither did we, including Regional chairs, until nearly two decades ago! Having just learned this, NCRAL Chair Alan Sheidler is now seeking historical records for the region. If you have any records or photos of past conferences, old *Northern Lights* newsletters (before the current series, which is kept on the Region's website), etc., please contact Alan. The 80th Anniversary of NCRAL will be in 2027, and we hope to gather as much information as possible since regional history will be part of the theme.

- ★ Having served as NCRAL's newsletter editor since 2016 and retiring only last month, Carl Wenning prepared this issue of the **blotter** by special request. Paul Leveque, who will be editing future issues, can be reached via email at levesque5562@att.net.