

NCRAL BLOTTER

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- We have just learned that Dr. Dominic Benford, Chief Technologist and Program Scientist at the Astrophysics Division, NASA Headquarters in Washington DC., will be joining us for the **NCRAL 2026** conference and will be giving a presentation on Exoplanets. Though we're down to the last minute, there's still time to register for NCRAL 2026, the annual convention of the North Central Region of the Astronomical League. NCRAL 2026 will be held in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the weekend of May 15-17. In addition to the recent inclusion of Dr. Benford, the agenda for the "Cosmic Conference" includes activities (hopefully including observing) at the Eastern Iowa Observatory and Learning Center; a series of presentations by prestigious speakers on a number of interesting topics; an astrophotography contest; the presentation of NCRAL awards; and drawings for door prizes. An optional banquet will be held on Saturday night; note that banquet orders are due by May 4. Here's the link to register and learn more: ncral2026.org. Thanks to Cedar Amateur Astronomers for hosting the convention, and thanks also to the Milwaukee Astronomical Society for agreeing to host NCRAL 2027.
- There will also be **NCRAL Business Meeting** at 8:00AM Saturday morning, May 16th as part of the 2026 Eastern Iowa Cosmic Conference. All AL members in attendance are encouraged to attend this business meeting and bring any topics for discussion.
- In preparation for next year's NCRAL 2027 conference, which will celebrate the 80th anniversary of NCRAL's founding, we would ask everyone to search for any **history documents**, photos and other information you may have about our region's past. Please see Alan Sheidler at NCRAL 2026 or drop him an email to discuss.
- You're also invited to attend **ALCON 2026**, the annual convention of the Astronomical League. ALCON 2026 is being hosted by the Cincinnati Astronomical Society and will be held across the Ohio River in Covington, Kentucky. The dates of the event are August 12-15; space is limited, so the deadline to register is June 30. You can learn more here: alcon2026.
- The Twin City Amateur Astronomers of Bloomington-Normal, Illinois, has issued the latest in its series of **guides** intended to assist astronomy clubs and their members. The guide, the 13th in the series, is titled "Imaging with Dedicated Digital Astronomy Cameras." Other guides cover a variety of topics, such as having a successful public observing session and buying telescopes and binoculars. You can view and download the guides here: TCAAGuides.
- Do you have a **star party** or other major event planned? Then please let us know by sending the dates and other details to our Webmaster, Josef Chlachula, so it can be placed on NCRAL's online events calendar. Also let Publications Editor Paul Levesque know so he can assist in publicity efforts. You can email them by clicking on the highlighted text below.
- As you may have noticed, the NCRAL Blotter has a new look and a new editor, as will **Northern Lights** when its summer issue is published. We want to hear from you! Feedback is always welcome, as are submissions on your club's activities, e.g. public outreach events celebrating Astronomy Day. Send your submissions to Publications Editor Paul Levesque by clicking on the highlighted name below. These publications belong to all NCRAL clubs and members and are intended to keep you informed and entertained – your input can make this happen!

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