

# NCRAL blotter

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

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

[Carl Wenning](#), TCAA, *Northern Lights* Editor

[Jeffrey Setzer](#), NCSF, NCRAL Webmaster

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- ★ Mark your calendars for the 2025 NCRAL Conference, which will take place April 25-27. Bring your astronomy craving to the Minneapolis area and gather with other enthusiasts for an exciting weekend. The conference, themed “First Light: New Frontiers, New People,” will be held at the Minneapolis Marriot Southwest, 5801 Opus Parkway, Minnetonka, MN. ***This convention is limited to 90 attendees, and registration ends on April 4th. Regardless, additional registrations will be accepted without penalty after the deadline date if there is room!***



Guests arriving Friday can join us at the nearby Eagle Lake Observatory for a Star-B-Q with the help of our friends at the Minnesota Astronomical Society (MAS). The evening will include good food, some discussions by MAS members, a talk by Greg Bragg (on the state of the astronomy industry), tours of the observatory, and weather permitting, some viewing!

Saturday will begin at 8:00 AM with a door prize drawing followed by the NCRAL business meeting. There are [plentiful door prizes](#)! Then we get into the meat of the conference with a day of presentations by our guest speakers. (See page 2 of this publication for details.)

Your reservation fee is only \$154 for the whole convention (plus a \$5 convenience fee if using a credit card). That's quite a deal for a Friday/Saturday/Sunday convention in this day and age. Your registration fee includes a sumptuous dinner and awards banquet on Saturday evening. Visit the conference's fantastic [website](#) to make reservations and book your room. The website also contains additional information on the speakers and synopses of their presentations.

***Astronomy magazine has graciously donated artwork that formerly hung in the walls of their building. This artwork is up for [silent auction](#) at the 2025 NCRAL conference. Own a piece of astronomy history!***

Attendees may also visit the fascinating [Bell Museum Planetarium](#) in St. Paul. The planetarium-only tickets will be discounted to \$4 for NCRAL 2025 attendees on April 27th. If you have questions about any aspect of NCRAL 2025, email the event leaders at [NCRALConference@gmail.com](mailto:NCRALConference@gmail.com). See you in April!

- ★ **CALL FOR NOMINATIONS:** Three leadership positions must be filled at the NCRAL 2025 business meeting: Chair, Vice Chair, and Regional Rep. We have candidates willing to run for Chair and Regional Rep., but there are no candidates for Vice Chair. If you would like to self-nominate or nominate others, please send your suggestion(s) to current NCRAL Chair [Alan Sheidler](#).



# NCRAL 2025 Conference

April 25 & 26, 2025  
Minneapolis Marriott Southwest,  
Minnetonka, MN



Registration: <https://ncral2025.org/register/>

## Speakers!

**John Rummel:**  
*Can the Milky Way  
Cast a Shadow?*



**Lawrence Rudnick:**  
*Game Changers in the  
Radio Sky*



**Mike Benson:**  
*Astrophotography,  
My Journey*



**Bob King:**  
*NASA's Planned NEO Surveyor Hunts Killer Asteroids*

**Clem Pryke:**  
*Studying the Universe  
from the Bottom of the  
World*



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



**Greg Bragg:**  
*State of the  
Astronomy Industry*



## A Galaxy of Sponsors!



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- ★ If attendees seek a roommate for the NCRAL 2025 gathering, email [Carl Wenning](#), who will happily coordinate networking so attendees can make arrangements to share expenses. At this time, there is one known conference hotel room sharing opening for a male.
- ★ **NCRAL Speakers Bureau** has been *updated with new speakers and offerings*. New entries have been placed at the end of the document. Check it out and contact folks listed there for high-quality talks.
- ★ With the start of observing season fast approaching, it's time to **review and update the NCRAL website**. Among the most important updates is the 2025 *Calendar of Events*: <https://ncral.wordpress.com/events/>. Also, is your **affiliate contact information** up to date on the NCRAL website? Over time, contact information for [affiliates listed on the Region's website](#) becomes outdated. Please visit the NCRAL website and verify the accuracy of your information. If incorrect, please provide the correct information to NCRAL Regional Chair Alan Sheidler at [adsheidler@gmail.com](mailto:adsheidler@gmail.com).
- ★ **Messier Observing Activities:** Now that spring has sprung, the weather is more commodious to evening observing. Please remind your members that the Region distributes observing awards for the completion of a variety of Messier Marathon observing activities throughout the year. The seasonal mini-marathons are of greatest interest to most observers, who view 27 or 28 M-objects over a single evening. Assisted with "goto" technology, most observers can complete these activities in about an hour. Spring is the best time to view galaxies in the evening sky now that the Milky Way is on the horizon shortly after sunset and deep space is exposed. Information about our various marathons can be found on the NCRAL website. Mini-marathons are an excellent motivator for observers. The TCAA membership has already received several dozen awards for participating in these programs.
- ★ **Three nominations** for the coveted NCRAL Region Award and one nomination for the Newsletter Editor Award have been received as of the March 31 deadline. The elected leadership of the Region will now select the award winners. To be among the first to find out who our award winners are, be certain to attend NCRAL 2025, where the awards will be announced and presented at the Saturday evening banquet.



- ★ **AstroCon 2025**, set against the breathtaking backdrop of **Bryce Canyon National Park** in late June, promises an unforgettable experience for astronomy enthusiasts of all levels. This premier gathering of amateur and professional astronomers will feature **engaging keynote speakers, hands-on workshops, and exclusive nighttime observing sessions** under some of the darkest skies in North America.

Attendees will have the chance to explore **cutting-edge astrophotography techniques, telescope technology, and deep-sky observing strategies** while networking with leading experts in the field.



Bryce Canyon's unique high-elevation location and minimal light pollution make it an ideal setting for **stargazing, planetary observation, and immersive celestial experiences.**

Whether you're a seasoned observer or a newcomer eager to explore the cosmos, **AstroCon 2025** offers a rare opportunity to connect with fellow enthusiasts, gain new insights, and witness the wonders of the universe like never before.

To learn more, visit the [AstroCon 2025 website](#) for registration, events, and lodging details.

- ★ Our **Northern Lights** newsletter has just completed its tenth year of publication. The current round of newsletters started in the summer of 2016 and has been published seasonally ever since. This means we now have had 10 years of newsletters, 40 issues, 666 pages, 362,000 words, and 1,750,000 characters! Still, there are only 525 registered subscribers out of a Regional membership of 2,300 members. That is, only 23% of those eligible subscribers opt to do so. Back issues of the newsletter (as well as the **NCRAL blotter**, now approaching the end of its second year) are on the [NCRAL website](#), as is an index of feature articles. The Regional leadership encourages affiliate leaders to promote free subscriptions to **Northern Lights**. How to subscribe is included in every issue of the newsletter.
- ★ Did you know that the Twin City Amateur Astronomers have compiled *TCAA Guide #11 – Recruiting and Retaining Astronomy Club Members*. This Guide is a compilation of a dozen articles published in **Northern Lights** over the past decade. This publication is an invaluable aid to those who will follow its prescriptions. For instance, the TCAA has been following this guide's recommendations and has seen its membership grow recently to its highest membership since its founding in 1960. All eleven Guides are available from the [TCAA website](#).
- ★ **Reflector** magazine is now available for download from the Astronomical League website. The publication has been available in both print and digital versions for several years. As with most things about the Astronomical League, this information has been communicated through ALCors to member societies. Due to problems with the printer, the March 2025 issue is available in digital format only. It may be retrieved from the [Reflector archive](#).

Future issues will be printed and mailed as before, starting with the June 2025 issue.

It is important to know how the process works in order to receive printed copies. Individual clubs each send the AL their membership rosters four times per year to keep the League updated on their current list of members. Each member's preferred delivery preference for the **Reflector can be included in this data**, but data needs to be communicated to the League, by the club, and on the club's rosters. The responsibility for communicating this information rests squarely on the shoulders of ALCors.

- ★ The **Astronomical League Correspondent** (ALCor) maintains regular communications between the club and the Astronomical League. The ALCor, working with their club officials, provides accurate and up-to-date membership lists to the Astronomical League quarterly (every January, April, July, and October) to disseminate **Reflector** magazine. A detailed list of ALCor duties the AL defines is available at: <https://www.astroleague.org/alcor-information-home-page/>