

NCRAL blotter

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

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[Bill Davidson](#), RAC, Vice Chairman

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★ The [NCRAL 2025 website](#) has been updated, and we are now accepting registrations! We have an impressive list of speakers for the April 25-27 conference. Check it out! Reminder: The conference is open to anyone interested in Astronomy; it is NOT limited to members of NCRAL region affiliates only.



★ **NCRAL 2025** will be held at the Minneapolis Marriott Southwest Hotel, 5801 Opus Parkway, Minnetonka, Minnesota 55343. The agenda includes an April 25th tour of Eagle Lake Observatory, Star-B-Q, and evening observing, weather permitting. April 26th will feature talks by eight presenters, the NCRAL business meeting, a banquet meal with award presentations and a keynote address, an astrophotography contest, door prizes, and vendor displays. Look for updates in recent and upcoming issues of *Northern Lights* and *Reflector*. In particular, see the [winter 2025 edition of Northern Lights](#) for details. This issue of the newsletter was released to the membership on December 26th.

★ This note reminds you that it is time for affiliate leaders to consider **nominees for NCRAL awards**. These awards recognize the contributions of your club or society members and can be a life-changing opportunity for the recipients. Your role in this process is crucial. To review the list of available awards, grants, and submission forms, please visit <https://ncral.wordpress.com/awards/>

Please take this opportunity to honor deserving members of your organization. Please send your nominations and completed forms to Bill Davidson at rochesterskies@outlook.com. The submission deadline is March 31st, less than two months from now. Your efforts are genuinely appreciated.

★ Please be reminded that several **NCRAL leadership positions** are open, and votes will be taken at the NCRAL convention on April 26th. Please consider making nominations for the following positions:

- NCRAL CHAIR (2025-2027)
- NCRAL VICE-CHAIR (2025-2027)
- REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE (2025-2028)

Roles and duties for each office are fully described in the [Region's Bylaws](#).

★ With the start of the new year, it's time to **review and update the NCRAL website**. Among the most important updates is the 2025 *Calendar of Events*, which can be found here: <https://ncral.wordpress.com/events/>

★ **NCRAL Mini-Grant Applications Are Due.** Each year, NCRAL offers affiliates two mini-grants, each up to a maximum of \$250, for membership and affiliate recruitment. Requirements and obligations can be found on the [Awards & Mini-Grants page](#) of the NCRAL website.

★ 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.

★ **Matching Donation Reminder:** Because of its affiliation with the Astronomical League, the North Central Region of the Astronomical League (NCRAL) possesses 501(c)3 non-profit status as a charitable educational organization. Donations to NCRAL are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law. Considering this fact, a generous donor has agreed to match dollar-for-dollar contributions to NCRAL between now and March 31, 2025. **The maximum total amount of this match is \$500.** So, your donation of \$50 will be worth \$100 to NCRAL and so forth. Please donate to NCRAL today by sending a check to our treasurer at the following address. In the memo line, please indicate "Donation." Make your check payable to NCRAL. Mail to: Roy Gustafson, NCRAL Treasurer, 11 Deer Run Road, Orion, IL 61273.



★ **ALCON 2025 ANNOUNCEMENT:** "The 2025 Astronomical League convention will be held June 25 - 28, 2025, at Bryce Canyon, Utah. The convention committee has been working hard to plan an event that will be "ASTRONOMICAL." The [ASTROCON 2025 website](#) is now up and running. Watch for updates. ASTROCON 2025 workshops are as follows:

- *Astrophotography/Digital Imaging*—Novice: This section provides help for those who are just getting into photography for the first time. It covers what equipment may be needed and basic photography techniques unique to astronomy.
- *Astrophotography/Digital Imaging*—Advanced: This course is for intermediate and advanced imagers who want to hone their skills and learn about the latest techniques and equipment.
- *Observing: Personal Program/Journal:* Set up your observing program, including Astronomical League Observing Programs, to consider. Starting and keeping your journal.
- *Observing: Tips & Ideas/Eyepieces/Filters:* Observing tips, including how best to use your eyes, what to wear, and equipment ideas. Understanding eyepiece selection. Using filters for visual and photographic work.
- *Observing: Charts/Books/Observing Lists:* Using star charts (digital and paper) and reference books/star atlases. Creation of observing lists for different types of objects.
- *Sketching:* This workshop will give attendees hands-on experience with drawing what you see at the eyepiece.

★ **Astronomical League's Downloadable Certificates** web page: <https://www.astroleague.org/downloadable-certificates/>. Remember to start your observing towards the challenge in January and do your observations each month to go for the gold...

★ **Save the Dates!** The *Illinois Dark Skies Star Party*, [hosted by the Sangamon Astronomical Society](#), will take place September 18-20, 2025, at the Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish & Wildlife Area.

★ Consider joining the **NASA Night Sky Network**. The [Night Sky Network](#) is a nationwide coalition of amateur astronomy clubs bringing the science, technology, and inspiration of NASA's missions to the general public. Their website states, "We share our time and telescopes to provide you with unique astronomy experiences at science museums, observatories, classrooms, and under the real night sky." Membership is free.

CALL FOR ASTRONOMICAL LEAGUE AWARD SUBMISSIONS

Applications or nominations for all League awards must be received no later than March 31, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. CDT. Award rules appear on the "Awards" page at www.astroleague.org. Submissions are incomplete until you receive an email confirming receipt from the League vice president.

LEAGUE YOUTH AWARDS

National Young Astronomer Award. U.S. citizens or U.S. school enrollees under the age of 19 who were engaged in astronomy-related research, academic scholarship, or equipment design may apply. League membership is not required. The top two winners receive expense-paid trips to the League's national convention (U.S. travel only) and Explore Scientific telescope prizes. E-mail the application, research paper, and a photo of the nominee to NYAA@astroleague.org.

Service Award. League members under the age of 19 who are engaged in service to the League or their clubs, schools, or the astronomy community may apply for the Horkheimer/Smith Youth Service Award. Club or regional officers may nominate. The winner receives a plaque, a cash prize, and an expenses-paid trip to the League's national convention (U.S. travel only). Email the application and a photo of the nominee to HorkheimerService@astroleague.org.

Imaging Award. League members under the age of 19 who engage in astronomical imaging may apply for the Horkheimer/Parker Youth Imaging Award. Club or regional officers may nominate. The winner receives a plaque. The top three finishers receive cash prizes. Emailed the application, image, and a photo of the nominee to horkheimerparker@astroleague.org.

Journalism Award. League members aged 8-14 may seek the Horkheimer/O'Meara Youth Journalism Award by submitting a 250-word science essay. The winner receives a plaque. The top three finishers receive cash prizes. Email the application, essay, and a photo of the nominee to HorkheimerJournalism@astroleague.org.

LEAGUE AWARDS

The following League awards are open to all League members regardless of age. Winners receive award plaques.

Mabel Sterns Award. Club officers may nominate their newsletter editor for the Mabel Sterns Award by emailing a copy of the club's newsletter as a PDF file or a link to an online newsletter to sternsnewsletter@astroleague.org,

along with a nomination cover letter (.pdf) that includes the nominee's name, address, and photo.

Webmaster Award. Club officers may nominate their webmaster for the Webmaster Award by emailing their club website link to WebMasterAward@astroleague.org along with a nomination cover letter (.pdf) that includes the nominee's name, address, and photo.

Williamina Fleming Imaging Awards. These awards, sponsored by Explore Scientific, are open to female League members 19 years of age or older in four categories: deep sky (>500 mm excluding Solar System), Solar System (>500 mm), rich field (201-500 mm), and wide field (200 mm or less). Email the form, a photo of the entrant, and up to three jpeg attachments not exceeding a total of 25 megabytes to flemingaward@astroleague.org

Sketching Award. Members may apply by emailing one sketch as a high-resolution jpeg file (10 megabytes maximum) along with a photo of the applicant to sketch@astroleague.org. Cash prizes are awarded to the top three winners.

CALL FOR OFFICER NOMINATIONS

Nominations for League secretary (2-year term) and executive secretary (3-year term) beginning on September 1, 2025, must be received by nominating committee chair Terry Mann at vicepresident@astroleague.org no later than March 25, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. CDT. The duties of each office appear in the League bylaws (see League website under "About Us"). Nominations should be accompanied by a background statement of 250 words indicating qualifications and/or reasons for seeking the position and a photo of the nominee, both for inclusion in the reflector and on the ballots.

LIBRARY TELESCOPE GIVEAWAY

The League's annual Library Telescope giveaway drawing will take place in July. The League gives away up to 11 Library Telescopes (4.5-inch StarBlast reflectors), one to a club in each of its ten regions and one to a member-at-large. Winners then place the telescopes with local libraries. This is an excellent recruitment tool for new and younger members for winning clubs. Applications may be found on the League website (see the link at the bottom for Library Telescope Program). Applications must be received by May 30, 2025, a month earlier than expected due to the June convention.