

NCRAL blotter

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

[Alan Sheidler](#), PAC, Chairman

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

[Roy Gustafson](#), PAC, Secretary-Treasurer

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March 2025

- ★ 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. *It is limited to 90 attendees, and registration ends on April 4th.*



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. Then we get into the meat of the conference with a day of presentations by our guest speakers:

- Evan Skillman, professor, University of Minnesota
- Mike Benson, accomplished astro-photographer
- Clem Pryke, professor from the University of Minnesota
- John Rummel of the Madison Astronomical Society
- Bob King of *Sky & Telescope* magazine
- Keynote speaker, Lawrence Rudnick, professor Emeritus, University of Minnesota.

Your reservation fee includes the banquet dinner 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.

Attendees may also visit the fascinating Bell Museum planetarium in St. Paul that weekend using a discount code that will be made available to conference attendees. If you have questions, email the planning committee at NCRALConference@gmail.com. See you in April! *Alan Sheidler*

- ★ It’s not too late 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. *Currently, we have two nominations for the Region Award and one for Newsletter Editor*

Award. 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 one month from now. Your efforts are genuinely appreciated.

- ★ **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.
- ★ Please remember that several **NCRAL leadership positions** are open. Votes will be taken at the NCRAL convention on April 26th. The roles and duties for each office are fully described in the [Region's Bylaws](#). Consider making nominations for the following positions:
 - NCRAL CHAIR (2025-2027)
 - NCRAL VICE-CHAIR (2025-2027)
 - REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE (2025-2028)
- ★ 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*, found here: <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.
- ★ **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.
- ★ **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.
- ★ **Astronomical League's Downloadable Certificates** web page is <https://www.astroleague.org/downloadable-certificates/>. Remember to start observing for the current challenge and complete your monthly observations to go for the gold...
- ★ **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. Save the dates for now and watch for updates.





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?*



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

Lawrence Rudnick:
*Game Changers in the
Radio Sky*



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

Mike Benson:
*Astrophotography,
My Journey*



Greg Bragg:
*State of the
Astronomy Industry*



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

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