

# 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

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

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

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

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★ NCRAL 2025 was a success on April 25-26 in the Minneapolis metropolitan area. This was the first convention hosted by NCRAL itself, lacking as it did a host. Nonetheless, the Rochester Astronomy Club did most of the work of pulling the convention together, with the Minnesota Astronomical Society hosting the observing session at their Eagle Lake Observatory. Individual members of Cedar Amateur Astronomers, Milwaukee Astronomical Society, Naperville Astronomical Association, and Popular Astronomy Club also assisted. More than 70 individuals, including speakers, spouses, and unregistered volunteers, were present for the convention. Details about the annual gathering will appear in the Summer issue of the ***Northern Lights*** newsletter. In the meantime, here's a group photograph of our participants. Please encourage your affiliate's members to subscribe to the newsletter email list if they have not already done so. Only about 20% of all NCRAL members are subscribed.



*Attendees of the NCRAL 2025 Convention outside the Minneapolis Marriott Southwest (Image credit: Alan Sheidler)*

★ The NCRAL annual business meeting was held on the morning of April 26 in Minnetonka, MN, just outside Minneapolis. The meeting began with Chair Alan Sheidler providing an Annual Report. He spoke about outreach, observing awards, and various regional publications. He also gave an update on library telescopes in the Region and the size of the Regional Membership. He then broke down attendee distribution, with

Rochester Astronomy Club, Minnesota Astronomical Society, and Popular Astronomy Club making up about half of all attendees. Al then gave details about the Region's publications, **Northern Lights**, and **NCRAL blotter**. A proposal for the NCRAL 2026 conference was given by Tom Weber, president of Cedar Amateur Astronomers. Their theme is "Mission Possible." After viewing a short video showing highlights of what they are planning, a vote was taken, and unanimous approval was given to proceed with their proposal. The tentative date for NCRAL 2026 is May 15-17. There were no volunteers for 2027 or future conferences. We also had elections for Chair, Vice-Chair, and Regional Rep. Al Sheidler was re-elected to Chair, and John Attewell was re-elected to Regional Representative. Eric Claeys from Naperville Astronomical Association was elected Vice-Chair, replacing William Davidson, who had to step down due to term limits.

- ★ The Region has two new award winners! Bob King, of the Minnesota Astronomical Society and the Arrowhead Astronomical Society (Duluth), was recognized with the 2025 Region Award, and **James VandeBerg**, of the Des Moines Astronomical Society, was recognized with the NCRAL Newsletter Editor Award for publishing **Starlight Journal**. Details will be provided in the Summer issue of **Northern Lights**. Congratulations to our recipients!
- ★ Astrophotography awards were also given at this year's conference, which had many fine examples of astronomically themed images. Gerry Kocken (Neville Public Museum Astronomical Society), Craig Cox (Quad Cities Astronomical Society), Matt Ryno (Milwaukee Astronomical Society), Mark Weber (Northern Cross Science Foundation), Scott Roffers (Northeast Wisconsin Stargazers), and Lee Keith (Milwaukee Astronomical Society). All were winners in various categories in the astrophotography contest. Scott Roffers and Lee Keith were both best-in-show winners. Congratulations!
- ★ **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 the folks listed there for high-quality talks.
- ★ The **TCAA's Guidebook web page** was updated recently, thanks to a Cedar Amateur Astronomers member who noticed several links were broken and reported them. These broken links have been repaired. Also, did you know that the TCAA recently compiled *TCAA Guide #11 – Recruiting and Retaining Astronomy Club Members*? This Guide is a compilation of a dozen articles written by three authors and published in **Northern Lights** over the past decade. It, too, has recently been updated. All eleven TCAA Guides are available from the [TCAA website](#). A new guide, now in a draft state, will soon be added: TCAA Guide #12 – *Introduction to Astrovideography*.
- ★ The MSRAL 2025 Conference will be in Little Rock, Arkansas, June 13-15. They have a fine list of speakers and are finalizing the schedule now. Consider attending your neighbors to the west for their regional conference. The Mid-States conferences are always good. Find out more at: <https://msral2025.caasastro.org/index.php>
- ★ **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. To learn more, visit the [AstroCon 2025 website](#) for registration, events, and lodging details.



**FYI:** Did you know Carl Wenning, NCRAL's past Regional Chair (2017-2023) and *Northern Lights* editor, is an invited speaker at AstroCon 2025? Carl will describe what three years of experience with a military-grade image intensifier used with a 20" aperture telescope have taught him about observational astronomy. (You might recall how, during the summer of 2024, Carl traveled through Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin speaking on this topic.) Carl is slated to speak on Friday, June 27<sup>th</sup>, at 9:00 a.m. If in attendance, be sure to attend his presentation.

**FYI:** Carl also represents NCRAL as a judge for the *National Young Astronomer Award* this year. A.L. President Chuck Allen asked Carl to serve in this capacity. There were 12 applicants, and the selection process was highly competitive. First- and second-place awards will be presented at AstroCon 2025.