

## North Star Newsletter

July 2011

Volume XI No. 7

### NHAC General Meeting

June 24, 2011

#### NOVICE PROGRAM

“NHACs Telescope Loaner Program“

By Aaron Clevenson

6:30 - 7:15 in CLA 221, The Cosmic Forum

#### MAIN PRESENTATION

Beginning at 7:30 in CLA Teaching Theater, featuring:

- NHAC news and announcements
- “What’s Up Doc?” by Aaron Clevenson

#### FEATURED SPEAKER

Professor John Wakefield



#### Welcome to the Dark Side – Dark Energy and Dark Matter

*“We’ll discuss a bit of the story leading to the discovery of Dark Energy, namely the accelerating universe. Discuss the implications of critical density and the role of Dark Energy and Dark Matter, and the mystery of the nature of both Dark Entities. I am hopeful to have a lively discussion.” -Prof. Wakefield*

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The Deadline for submissions for the August 2011 newsletter  
is July 15, 2011.

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# THANK YOU!

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Before the club's last General Meeting, club member Brad Hurley addressed the do's and don'ts of binocular observing during the Novice program in the Cosmic Forum.

Bill Leach presented facts and fiction in astronomy at the club's May General Meeting. Leach offered members the serious and the humorous sides of astronomy knowledge and lore. With photos, slides, and hula hoops, he demonstrated what is, and what isn't, true about the universe.



Remember to check out the North Houston Astronomy Club  
Facebook and Twitter pages:



<http://www.facebook.com/NorthHoustonAstronomyClub>



[http://www.twitter.com/NHAC\\_Info](http://www.twitter.com/NHAC_Info)



## News and Tidbits

### Welcome New Members!

★ JOANNA TINE  
★ KEVIN MORGAN  
★ SCOTT, FREEDOM AND FIONA WILLIAMS

### Did You Go to the Texas Star Party?

Send in your photos and stories to share in the August newsletter! You may send your submissions to Jamie at [newsletter@astronomyclub.org](mailto:newsletter@astronomyclub.org)

### HB 2857 Signed Into Law

On June 17th Governor Perry signed HB 2857 which will regulate outdoor lighting for the counties and towns near the McDonald Observatory in West Texas. The lighting regulation spans a 57-mile radius of the observatory, (excluding existing outdoor lighting or lighting under construction by Jan. 1, 2012). A dark sky victory for West Texas!

### Upcoming Star Parties

The **Okie-Tex Star Party** will be held September 24 - October 2, 2011 at Camp Billy Joe in the Black Mesa Area of Oklahoma. For more informaton and registration go to their website at: [www.okie-tex.com/index.php](http://www.okie-tex.com/index.php)

The 28th Annual **Eldorado Star Party** will be held October 24 - 30, 2011 at the X Bar Ranch Nature Retreat in Eldorado, Texas. For more information and registration go to their website at [www.texasstarparty.org/eldorado.html](http://www.texasstarparty.org/eldorado.html)

### Got a Favorite Piece of Equipment?

If you have a favorite piece of equipment, a novel way of solving a problem, or a shortcut for making observing easier, bring it to the monthly meeting for the **"Show-And-Tell"** segment. Each presentation should take about 3 - 5 minutes and all ideas are welcome. Please submit your idea to Program Committee Chair, George Marsden at [program@astronomyclub.org](mailto:program@astronomyclub.org) before the next meeting so that he can reserve a spot for your presentation.

### Special Club Rate Magazine Subscriptions

Club rates for personal subscriptions to ASTRONOMY and SKY & TELESCOPE magazines save about 25% over the normal subscription costs. Each magazine has its own procedure to subscribe based upon initiating the order through the club treasurer.

For ASTRONOMY magazine, write your check to NHAC (or pay in cash) for \$34 (or \$60 for 2 years). The Treasurer then validates your membership by writing a club check for the same amount to the magazine and sending them your address. Renewals must also be processed through the club. Please save your renewal documents for this process.

For SKY & TELESCOPE, pay the club \$33 (or \$32.95 if by check). As above, we write a club check to validate your membership and start your subscription. SKY & TELESCOPE renewals are processed directly by the subscriber.

*Be sure to include a clearly printed name and address sheet for any new subscriptions.*



## Inaugural O'Brien Star Party - June 11, 2011

Several NHAC members came out for the star party and BBQ that was held at the O'Brien site in Montgomery on June 11th. There was tons of food, a bunch of telescopes, a gorgeous moon, and even a few cows! It was a fabulous event. Many thanks go to Bill Leach for organizing the meal and bringing the brisket, and of course a huge thank you goes to the O'Brien family for sharing their amazing site with us! Thanks as well to all the members and guests who contributed food and helped with the meal. What a great night!

If you would like to use this site in the future, please read the use policy on the NHAC web page (click on the "Star Party!" link from the Home page), and please follow this process:

- Tim and Wanda O'Brien and their family are our hosts. They are on Netslyder, the email list server.
- To request use of the site, send an email out on Netslyder to: [NHAC@mail.netslyder.net](mailto:NHAC@mail.netslyder.net)
- Requests must be made more than 24 hours in advance.
- Wanda or Tim will reply on Netslyder to let you know it is ok.
- Other members are welcome to also attend that night. Once approved, another request is not necessary at that point.
- The site is open to members and their guests (only when the member is present).

If you have any questions, please contact Aaron Clevenson, directly, at [aaron@clevenson.org](mailto:aaron@clevenson.org)



# AL Observing Program Highlight: The Moon

By: Aaron Clevenson, VP Education



Are you looking for an introductory level observing program? Something with objects that are fairly easy to locate? Something that might not take an entire year to complete? The Lunar Programs are for you. The AL has two levels: Lunar, and Lunar II. We will focus on the initial Lunar Observing Program.

The objective of the program is to find 100 features on the moon. Observations are done at different phases of the moon to take advantage of the longer shadows near the terminator (the line between light and dark). A few do require getting up in the morning to observe morning crescents. The objects observed are mostly craters and marea. There are some special requirements around observing very young crescents and very old crescents. And there are observations of special objects like mountains, crater rays, and valleys. You also get to look for the Man in the Moon, the Woman in the Moon, the Rabbit in the Moon (my favorite), and the Cow Jumping Over the Moon. The only thing you need to record is the date and time when you observed the feature. I recommend that you also note observing location, seeing, and transparency.

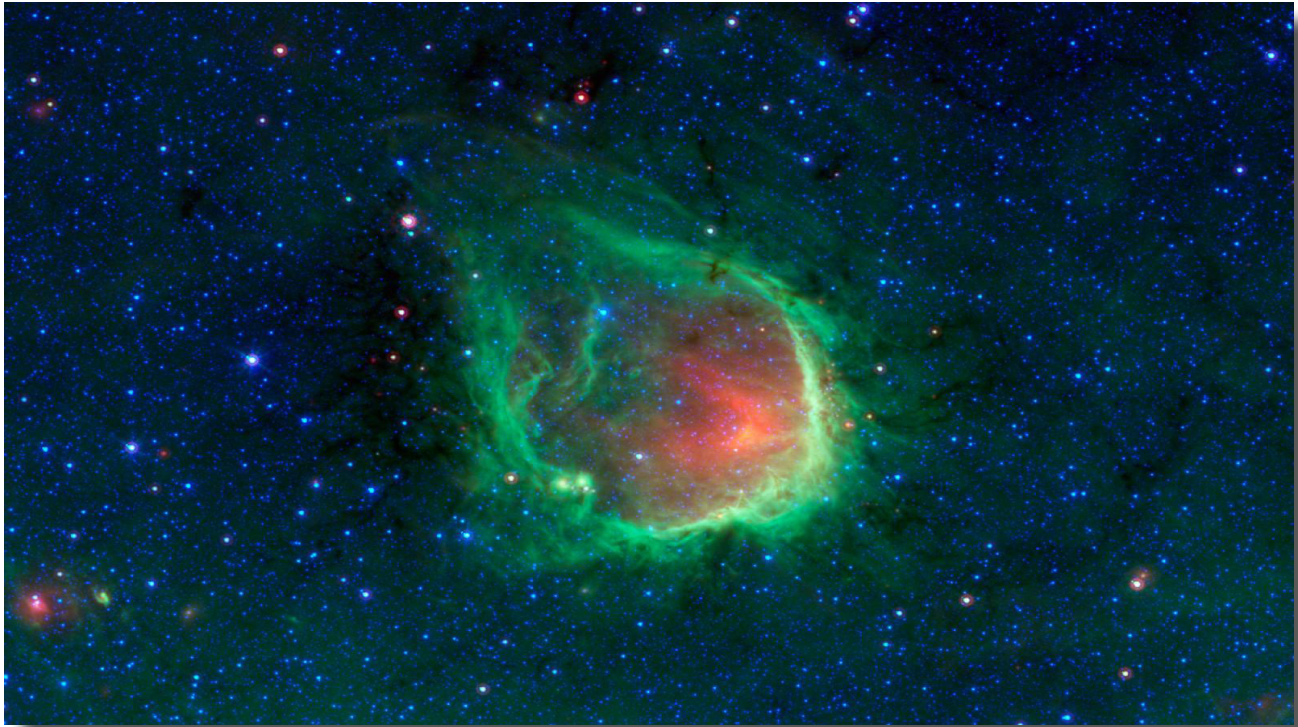
The equipment you will need are your eyes, binoculars, and a small telescope. Perhaps the most critical part of the equipment is a good very detailed lunar map. These can be found on the internet and in books. My favorite book is the *Norton Star Atlas*. It has very good images of the moon, and lots of other useful information and star charts. Unfortunately, the current version is out of print. So check those used book stores! My favorite tool on the internet is <http://www.lunarpublic.com/atlas/index.shtml>.

Become a LUNatic and earn the Lunar Observing certificate and pin. For more information, contact your Observing Chair pro-tem, Aaron Clevenson, at [aaron@clevenson.org](mailto:aaron@clevenson.org)



# A Green Ring Fit for a Superhero

by Whitney Clavin



*Image Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech*

June 15, 2011

This glowing emerald nebula seen by NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope is reminiscent of the glowing ring wielded by the superhero Green Lantern. In the comic books, the diminutive Guardians of the Planet "Oa" forged his power ring, but astronomers believe rings like this are actually sculpted by the powerful light of giant "O" stars. O stars are the most massive type of star known to exist.

Named RCW 120 by astronomers, this region of hot gas and glowing dust can be found in the murky clouds encircled by the tail of the constellation Scorpius. The green ring of dust is actually glowing in infrared colors that our eyes cannot see, but show up brightly when viewed by Spitzer's infrared detectors. At the center of this ring are a couple of giant stars whose intense ultraviolet light carved out the bubble, though they blend in with the other stars when viewed in infrared.

Rings like this are so common in Spitzer's observations that astronomers have even enlisted the help of the public to help find and catalog them all. Anyone interested in joining the search as a citizen scientist can visit "The Milky Way Project," part of the "Zooniverse" of public astronomy projects, at <http://www.milkywayproject.org/>.

The flat plane of our galaxy is located toward the bottom of the picture, and the ring is slightly above the plane. The green haze seen at the bottom of the image is the diffuse glow of dust from the galactic plane.

*NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, Calif., manages the Spitzer Space Telescope mission for NASA's Science Mission Directorate, Washington. Science operations are conducted at the Spitzer Science Center at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena. Caltech manages JPL for NASA. For more information about Spitzer, visit <http://spitzer.caltech.edu/> and <http://www.nasa.gov/spitzer>*



# NHAC Monthly Star Parties

## Come on out for Socializing and Stargazing!

Mark these dates on your calendar for future NHAC Star Parties at The White Eagle Lodge (WEL):

July 2, 2011

October 22, 2011

July 30, 2011

November 26, 2011

August 27, 2011

December 17, 2011

September 24, 2011

*\*These dates are tentative and subject to change.*

Rules and Directions are available online at [www.astronomyclub.org](http://www.astronomyclub.org)



# The Insperity Observatory at Humble ISD



*The Administaff/Insperity Observatory at Humble ISD, 2505 S. Houston Ave., Humble, TX 77396 281-641-STAR*

## Upcoming Public Nights at the Observatory\*

July 8, 2011 @ 8:30 pm  
August 12, 2011 @ 8:00 pm  
September 9, 2011 @ 7:30 pm  
October 14, 2011 @ 7:00 pm  
November 11, 2011 @ 5:28 am

*\*Dates and times are subject to change.*

# Refreshment Committee Chairman Needed

**Your hungry club members need YOU! Yes, YOU!!**

Have you been thinking about getting more involved with the club, but weren't quite sure what to do? Well, this would be a great way to help out! We are looking for someone to be in charge of the meeting refreshments each month.

Your job would be to see that the refreshments are ordered, picked up and delivered to the meeting each month. They would need to be set up prior to the meeting and taken down after the meeting. You would also need to see that all of the necessary utensils were kept on hand.

As Chairman, you may choose to delegate this monthly, or handle it yourself with a few bodyguards. :)



*Position:* Available immediately

*Salary:* We will pay you on Tuesday for the hamburger today

*Satisfaction:* Priceless

Contact [board@astronomy.club.org](mailto:board@astronomy.club.org)

**We need YOU!!  
Step on up!!**



## About NHAC

The North Houston Astronomy Club (NHAC), was formed for educational and scientific purposes, for people of all races, creeds, ethnic backgrounds and sex, for the primary purpose of developing and implementing programs designed to increase the awareness and knowledge of astronomy, especially for those living near the north side of Houston Texas.

NHAC is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing the opportunity for all individuals to pursue the science of astronomy, by observing in a dark-sky site, learning the latest technology, and sharing their knowledge and experience. Thus, our “Observe-Learn-Share” motto.

*North Houston Astronomy Club is Sponsored by:*



## Membership Benefits

- Loaner telescopes
- Borrow from the NHAC “Library”
- Observe from Dark Sky Observing Sites
- Learn from experienced amateur astronomers
- Share your knowledge at club hosted picnics and star parties
- Discount magazine subscriptions (contact our Treasurer)
- Includes membership in the Astronomical League
- The quarterly Astronomical League magazine “Reflector”
- Eligibility for NHAC Executive Board

[www.astronomyclub.org](http://www.astronomyclub.org)  
[www.nhac.info](http://www.nhac.info)

## North Houston Astronomy Club

c/o Bill Leach

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[www.nhac.info](http://www.nhac.info)

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Observe - Learn - Share

