

# PAS-Times



The newsletter of the Pontchartrain Astronomy Society  
*visit us online [www.astronola.org](http://www.astronola.org)*

April 2021  
Volume 62, Issue 4



**Next PAS General Meeting**  
**Friday, April 23rd - 7:30pm**  
**Zoom meeting due to COVID-19**

**M20 - Trifid Nebula**  
**by PAS President**  
**Philip Wollenberg**

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## President's Message

By: Philip Wollenberg

Fellow Astronomers,

My favorite time of the year has arrived in New Orleans. Darkness falls later in the evening allowing us to enjoy the cool dry evenings after a long day at work. It also allows ample time to setup your scope before darkness hits. If we are double lucky, a nice breeze off the lake or Mississippi keeps the mosquitos away. New Orleans is quite ahead on vaccines with most of our neighborhoods at a 40%+ or higher vaccination rate. I have now received my second dose. This is good news for us as it has allowed the city to begin to relax restrictions, and hopefully, it means that UNO will reopen the campus to visitors like the PAS soon.

In April as Virgo and Leo rise in the eastern sky showing off all their magnificent galaxies, we get our last looks at Orion's nebulae and the many beautiful star clusters in Auriga. As the evening progresses into night, you can begin to observe the Great Hercules Cluster, M13, and the Ring Nebula, M57, near Vega. This is also the best time to view some of the most beautiful galaxies like Bode's Nebulae M81/82, Whirlpool Galaxy M51, Pinwheel Galaxy M101, and the Sombrero Galaxy M104. For the meteor lovers, the Lyrid shower will peak on April 21-22 overnight and usually brings around 15 meteors/hour (the peak will be early in the morning around 4am). You can see them by looking towards Vega in dark skies.

Clear skies,  
 Philip Wollenberg  
 PAS President 2021

## Deep South Spring Scrimmage – 2021 by Barry Simon

The Spring Scrimmage this year will run for a total of 5 nights from Tuesday, May 4th to Sunday, May 9th. As we had requests for a longer run and as Sunday, May 9th is Mother's Day we are starting on a Tuesday this year as some may be leaving on Saturday to make it home for Mother's Day.





## Secretary's Report March 2021 General Meeting By: Jeff Best

March 26th, 2021

18-participants were in attendance for our 11th virtual meeting via ZOOM and our 3rd FaceBook live broadcast

See our FaceBook page for a full video replay of the meeting.

Philip Wollenberg opened the meeting at 7:30 pm, welcomed everyone

- Presented list of the 2021 PAS Officers & began with officer's reports

- Mike Danielson

- Looking for presenters for future meetings

- If interested contact Mike Danielson at [pas1vp@astronola.org](mailto:pas1vp@astronola.org)

- Jeff Best

- Still working on setting up tree cutting at SPMOS

- Weather & work priorities continue to delay plans for use of small BobCat

- Planning an Astronomy presentation for children of the Tricord Club on 4/17 in Metairie

- Member Steve Harrison discussed the possibility of another Outreach event for an urban youth group in MS sometime in May. More information & detail forthcoming.

- Philip Wollenberg

- April's In-town Start Party is scheduled for 4/16/21 weather permitting

- Refer to our webpage or FaceBook page for status as date approaches

- March star party was held 3/13 & had 3-attendees

- Phil also presented the Virtual targets Review

- As discussed in January, Phil has an Apprentice membership to slooh.com

- Provides access to Six telescopes, including a solar telescope,

- at the Institute of Astrophysics of the Canary Islands,

- and four telescopes near Santiago, Chile

- Reviewed photos of the Messier Marathon

- Email Philip at [paspres@astronola.org](mailto:paspres@astronola.org) with target suggestions for next month

- Program Speaker: Philip Richardson

- Presented discussion on NASA's mission planning & selection of the Mars sites where the Perseverance Rover will be looking for the presence of life.

- Meeting adjourned at approx 9:10 pm

- Next Meeting: April 23rd @ 7:30 pm

# Watch the Lion: Celestial Wonders in Leo

## By David Prosper

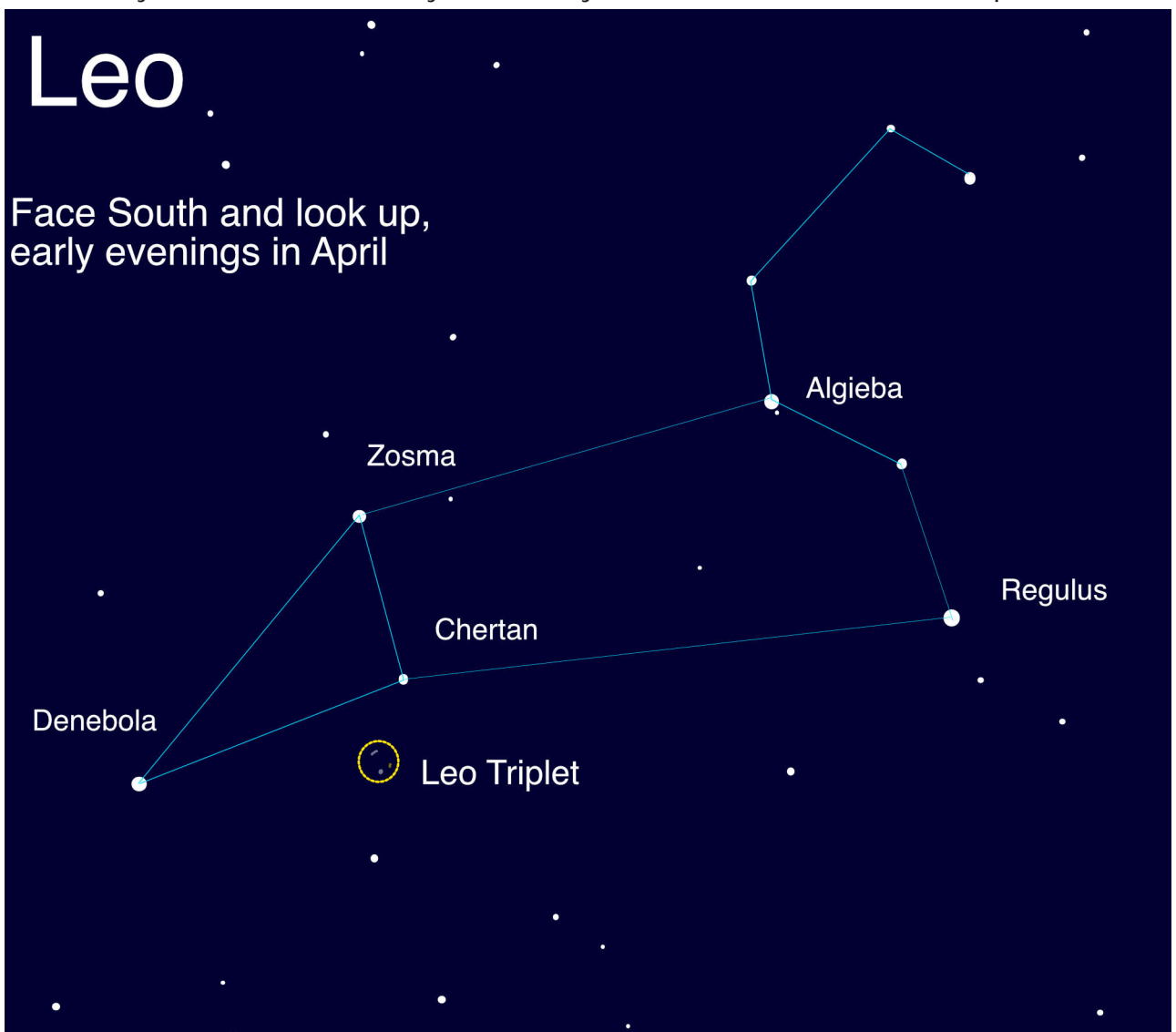
Leo is a prominent sight for stargazers in April. Its famous sickle, punctuated by the bright star Regulus, draws many a beginning stargazer's eyes, inviting deeper looks into some of Leo's celestial delights, including a great double star and a famous galactic trio.



Leo's distinctive forward sickle, or "reverse question mark," is easy to spot as it climbs the skies in the southeast after sunset. If you are having a difficult time spotting the sickle, look for bright Sirius and Procyon - featured in last month's article - and complete a triangle by drawing two lines to the east, joining at the bright star Regulus, the "period" in the reverse question mark. Trailing them is a trio of bright stars forming an isosceles triangle, the brightest star in that formation named Denebola. Connecting these two patterns together forms the constellation of Leo the Lion, with the forward-facing sickle being the lion's head and mane, and the rear triangle its hindquarters. Can you see this mighty feline? It might help to imagine Leo proudly sitting up and staring straight ahead, like a celestial Sphinx.

If you peer deeper into Leo with a small telescope or binoculars, you'll find a notable double star! Look in the sickle of Leo for its second-brightest star, Algieba - also called Gamma Leonis. This star splits into two bright yellow stars with even a small magnification - you can make this "split" with binoculars, but it's more apparent with a telescope. Compare the color and intensity of these two stars - do you notice any differences? There are other multiple star systems in Leo -

spend a few minutes scanning with your instrument of choice, and see what you discover.



*The stars of Leo: note that you may see more or less stars, depending on your sky quality. The brightness of the Leo Triplet has been exaggerated for the purposes of the illustration - you can't see them with your unaided eye.*

One of the most famous sights in Leo is the "Leo Triplet": three galaxies that appear to be close together. They are indeed gravitationally bound to one another, around 30 million light years away! You'll need a telescope to spot them, and use an eyepiece with a wide field of view to see all three galaxies at once! Look below the star Chertan to find these galaxies. Compare and contrast the appearance of each galaxy - while they are all spiral galaxies, each one is tilted at different angles to our point of view! Do they all look like spiral galaxies to you?

April is Citizen Science Month, and there are some fun Leo-related activities you can participate in! If you enjoy comparing the Triplets, the "Galaxy Zoo" project ([galaxyzoo.org](http://galaxyzoo.org)) could use your eyes to help classify different galaxies from sky survey data! Looking at Leo itself can even help measure light pollution: the Globe at Night project ([globeatnight.org](http://globeatnight.org)) uses Leo as their target constellation for sky quality observations from the Northern Hemisphere for their April campaign, running from April 3-12. Find and participate in many more NASA community science programs at [science.nasa.gov/citizenscience](http://science.nasa.gov/citizenscience). Happy observing!



Your view of the three galaxies in the Leo Triplet won't look as amazing as this image taken by the VLT Survey Telescope, unless you have a telescope with a mirror 8 feet or more in diameter! Still, even a small telescope will help your eyes pick up these three galaxies as "faint fuzzies": objects that seem blurry against a background of pinpoint stars. Let your eyes relax and experiment with observing these galaxies by looking slightly away from them. Instead of looking directly at them; this is called averted vision, a handy technique that can help you see details in fainter, more nebulous objects.

Image Credit: ESO, INAF-VST, OmegaCAM; Acknowledgement: OmegaCen, Astro-WISE, Kapteyn I.

This article is distributed by NASA Night Sky Network  
The Night Sky Network program supports astronomy clubs across the USA dedicated to astronomy outreach.  
Visit [nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov](http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov) to find local clubs, events, and more!





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Photos by Barry Simon

As it has been for years, the Spring Scrimmage is informal - no registration fee (although there is a registration form online). There are no planned programs and meal service will be limited. The Spring Scrimmage is even more laid back than the fall Deep South Star Gaze and the attendance is lower. Typical Spring Scrimmage attendance is about 20 to 30. While there is no registration fee, we do have a form that needs to be completed if you plan on attending and there are costs. Costs primarily is for lodging at the White Horse Christian Retreat Camp. Bunk space is available and those with rv's or campers can stay in those. Some may elect to tent camp. There is also a day use fee for those who plan on coming up to visit and observe and then leave on the same day (night). I have so far received confirmation/payment from 11 people who plan on attending. As registrations come in I assign registrants to the appropriate bunk house (if staying in one). On the registration form all attendees are asked to indicate if they have had their COVID vaccination yet. Those that have are assigned to the newer (and nicer) bunk house where I can safely fill each half of that bunk house to it's capacity of 7 registrants per side (14 total). This bunk house also has it's own bathroom with 3 showers, 4 wash basins and 3 toilets. For those that have not had their vaccination and who request bunk space, you will be assigned to a bunk house for those who have not had vaccinations. I will not fill these bunk houses all the way, as I am trying to spread you out. These bunk houses do not have their own bathroom. You will have to use the separate bath house.

There are some smaller bunk rooms to which I have assigned couples who have already registered. None of these rooms are still available. Feel free to request one and if one opens up due to a cancellation I will notify you in the order that registrations are received. For any staying in a bunk - bring your own bedding including pillows. In the bathroom you will need to bring your towel, wash cloth, soap, etc. For those in rv's, campers and tents - You should have a place to plug in. I suspect we would be on our own for food. Carol can do a snack bar in the evening - hamburgers, sandwiches, chips, etc. Pay as you go. If numbers are high enough we may be able to purchase a more complete dinner. Prepare to fend for yourselves for other meals. There are restaurant options nearby. Cost of bunks and rv space are \$35 per night. We will have access to the main building and we do have a cell phone signal and we will have internet, plus the good skies and low horizons of White Horse. For the Deep South Star Gaze last November we had a registration of 55 and to the best of my knowledge no one in attendance contracted or spread COVID. While we are not requiring mask wearing please wear one if you are comfortable with it. Let's keep everyone safe. We especially recommend wearing a mask in the main building. If you are sick please stay home. Note - the large, large majority of star parties around the US were cancelled in 2020. Again in 2021 many have cancelled primarily due to state regulations at state parks concerning attendance limits and due to concerns at whatever venue they were scheduled to be held. I suspect this will continue for awhile. We will have room to spread out and enjoy the sky at White Horse. Once again, one of the great wonders of the spring sky is the great globular cluster - Omega Centaurus which is well seen from White Horse as we have low horizons. Our skies are Bortle 4, but very close to the Bortle 3 boundary, so for the eastern United States, our skies are dark. Note - be aware that there is a "Day Use Fee" for those just coming up for the day and evening. This gives you access to the main building, the bath house, a place to set up equipment and if a plug is still available, a place to plug in. There will be windows of opportunity to depart at night. Light rules will still be in force and if you are planning on departing at night you cannot set up equipment on the Arena Field. All fees collected are turned over to the White Horse Christian Retreat Camp. If interested and likely able to attend for one or more nights, please let me know. See the registration form online. Barry Simon, Director - Deep South Star Gaze/Deep South Spring Scrimmage

## Upcoming Events

**PAS General Meeting** Friday, April 23rd. Virtual online due to COVID-19  
**DSSG Spring Scrimmage** Tentative on May 6th - May 9th Camp White Horse

Visit the PAS website and forum for COVID-19 info, virtual meeting information and outreach updates....

# www.astronola.org

### On the Cover

**M20 - Trifid Nebula by Philip Wollenberg**

### On the Back Cover

Constellation Sagittarius  
from Urania's Mirror - A View of the Heaven

The PAS is a proud member of these organizations:

International Dark-Sky Association



Member



Night Sky Network



## PAS 2021 General Meetings

**ZOOM**

April 23

May 28

June 25

July 23

August 20

September 24

October 22

November 19

### May 2021 PAS-Times Deadline

Sunday, May 16th  
Please submit all things astronomical to be included in the next edition of PAS-Times to the editor at the following address:  
**pas2vp@astronola.org**

### 2021 Membership Renewal Form

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ St \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone\* \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone\* \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

\*Check here  if you DO NOT want your phone numbers published.

### Membership Dues:

(Calendar year per household) \$40.00 \_\_\_\_\_

(Calendar year per Student) \$20.00 \_\_\_\_\_

### Optional Subscriptions:

Sky & Telescope \$32.95/yr \$65.95 two years

\_\_\_ New \_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

Astronomy \$34.00/yr or \$60.00/2years

\_\_\_ New \_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

Mailed Newsletter \$20.00/yr \_\_\_\_\_

SPMOS Key Deposit \$50 \_\_\_\_\_

Only pay this if you do not have a Dorm key and want to obtain one.

Optional Donation: \_\_\_\_\_ (Tax Deductible)

Total Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

(Make check payable to PAS)

Mail to:

Pontchartrain Astronomy Society, Inc.

16082 Lake Ramsey Rd.

Covington, LA 70435

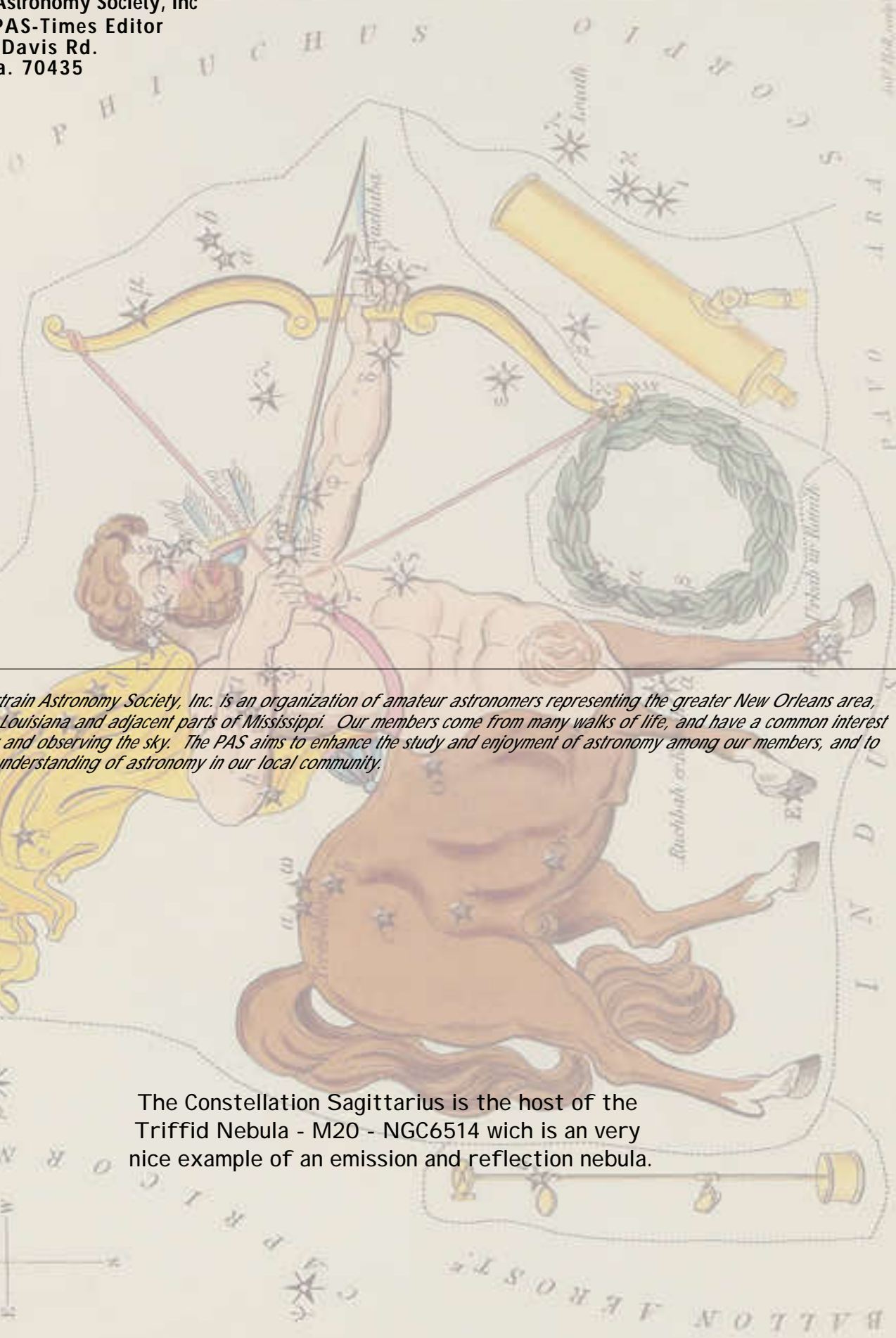
Members can also renew their membership and pay dues on the website. Here is the link: <http://astronola.org/join.php>



Pontchartrain Astronomy Society, Inc  
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SAGITTARIUS AND CORONA AUSTRALIS.

SCYTHIUS  
SOBIESKI



*The Pontchartrain Astronomy Society, Inc. is an organization of amateur astronomers representing the greater New Orleans area, southeastern Louisiana and adjacent parts of Mississippi. Our members come from many walks of life, and have a common interest in astronomy and observing the sky. The PAS aims to enhance the study and enjoyment of astronomy among our members, and to promote an understanding of astronomy in our local community.*

The Constellation Sagittarius is the host of the Trifid Nebula - M20 - NGC6514 which is a very nice example of an emission and reflection nebula.

MICROSCOPIUM AND TELESCOPIUM.