

## A Typical Saturday Evening Public Viewing Session

- Lecture about the featured object or topic. This 20- to 30-minute presentation, held in the FGNS lecture hall, includes images of and details about the featured sky object or topic as well as information about other interesting objects that might be viewed that evening.
- Sky tour using a laser pointer. After our lecture, we step out under the stars to point out the major constellations and planets and, if appropriate, designate the location of the featured celestial object for the evening.
- Telescope viewing session. We use a variety of telescopes at ground level to observe the wonders of the heavens. The Sugar Grove and Prairie Sky Observatories will both be open. Visit them to see what's happening inside.

### Things to Know

- Programs will be held even if the sky is overcast; active rain, however, will cause a cancellation of the event. On cloudy evenings, the presentation will be given and tours of the Sugar Grove and/or Prairie Sky observatories will be available. Additionally, various images taken by TCAA astrophotographers might be shared via computer display in one of the observatories.
- Please dress warmly during cooler months and on windy nights. These are outdoor events; only the lecture hall and restrooms are heated.
- Please be very careful when driving into and out of the Funks Grove Nature Spaces parking lot. At times, there are people, including small children, walking from place to place in the dark. Please park so that your vehicle's headlights are aimed away from the telescopes.
- You may bring along a flashlight if you wish but be certain to cover the lens with a red filter so that observers' dark adaptation isn't adversely affected. Please aim your flashlight at the ground only. Also, please leave pets at home.



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# 2026 FAMILY FRIENDLY PUBLIC VIEWING SESSIONS



AT FUNKS GROVE NATURE SPACES

## TCAA PUBLIC VIEWING SESSIONS FOR 2026

Date (Sat.)	Start-End Time	Sunset
★ April 18	8:15 PM ~ 10:15 PM	7:35 PM CDT
★ May 23	9:00 PM ~ 11:00 PM	8:13 PM CDT
★ June 13	9:00 PM ~ 11:00 PM	8:27 PM CDT
★ July 25	9:00 PM ~ 11:00 PM	8:18 PM CDT
★ August 22	8:30 PM ~ 10:30 PM	7:43 PM CDT
★ September 19	7:30 PM ~ 9:30 PM	6:58 PM CDT
★ October 17	7:00 PM ~ 9:00 PM	6:13 PM CDT

These are free, family-friendly events, subject to cancellation due to stormy weather. Confirm an evening's event before driving long distances. If you are uncertain if a session will be held, check for updates on Facebook (TCAA) or text 309-830-4085 after 6 PM.

If you are unfamiliar with Funks Grove Nature Spaces (formerly known as Sugar Grove Nature Center), we suggest arriving shortly after sunset. Our location is dark at night as there are no lights. Also, it takes about 20 minutes for your eyes to adapt to the dark.

### Directions to Funks Grove Nature Spaces

Use your phone to scan the QR code below for driving directions.



## Featured Sky Object or Topic by Month

During 2026, our public viewing session talks will showcase one or more celestial objects or topics each month. A TCAA member will give a short PowerPoint presentation and follow up with telescopic viewing if the sky is clear. If the sky is overcast, we will have open houses at our two observatories so you can inspect our many telescopes, camera systems, and other resources.

**April – Lyrid Meteor Shower:** What are meteor showers, and how do we know when they occur? Come learn when, where, and how to observe them.

**May – Starlight:** Learn what starlight tells us about the universe as well as the ways astronomers measure starlight.

**June – Dark Matter:** How do we detect Dark Matter? It's invisible, and we don't know what it is. So how do we know it's there?

**July – Messier Objects:** Charles Messier was a French astronomer who published an astronomical catalogue consisting of 103 nebulae and star clusters. Learn about this 18<sup>th</sup>-century astronomer and his catalogue that features some of the greatest showpieces in the night sky.

**August – Lunar Eclipses:** A partial lunar eclipse will be visible across North America on August 28. How do lunar eclipses occur, how often do they occur, and what types of lunar eclipses are there?

**September – White Dwarfs and Planetary Nebulae:** Planetary nebulae have nothing to do with planets. They are gaseous clouds that cloak dead white dwarf stars. Come learn about white dwarf stars and their beautiful nebular cloaks.

**October – Saturn and Neptune:** We see Saturn's rings from different angles. Why is this so? What are Saturn's rings made of, and why are they so bright? Dark, cold, and whipped by supersonic winds, ice giant Neptune is more than 30 times as far from the Sun as Earth.