



# starry nights



January, February, March 2005

Volume 24, Issue 1

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## Monthly Meeting Changes

The board discussed the attendance of the regular meetings and decided to cancel the regular meetings for the months of June, July (the picnic) and August. This past year the August and December meetings were cancelled and will be again this year. The August meeting was traditionally set aside for the Perseid meteor shower. Since the regular meetings normally start at 7:00 and it doesn't get dark until about 10:00, it was decided that it was pointless to stand around for several hours until it got dark. Plus, staying out late on a weekday was difficult for most people. The Perseid meteor shower topic was moved to the closest observatory session instead. The December meeting was cancelled due to low attendance, since everyone is pretty much busy that time of year.

The reason for canceling the June, July and August meetings was due to the same reason as the December meeting—low attendance. Many of us are busy in the summer and this will help lighten the burden of the meeting scheduler for obtaining speakers.

Note that the observatory schedule has not changed, and we will still go all year. Observatory sessions are where we meet the most newcomers to the hobby and it was felt that this outreach should be available as often as possible.



## At the Observatory - 2004

Date	Weather	Attendance
Friday, January 16	27°, overcast	0 people
Friday, January 30	3°, clear	0 people (cancelled)
Friday, February 13	27°, partly cloudy, then clear	10 people
Friday, February 27	31°, clear then hazy	25 people
Friday, March 12	29°, partly cloudy	10 people
Friday, March 26	43°, drizzle/light rain	0 people
Friday, April 9	42°, hazy	14 people
Friday, April 23	49°, clear	35 people
Friday, May 14	50°, overcast	0 people
Friday, May 21	50°, rain/thunderstorms	0 people
Friday, June 11	55°, light rain	0 people
Friday, June 25	65°, partly cloudy, then overcast	8 people
Friday, July 9	67°, overcast	0 people
Friday, July 23	62°, hazy then partly cloudy	25 people
Friday, August 13	61°, mostly cloudy	0 people
Friday, August 20	61°, clear/hazy	14 people
Friday, September 10	66°, hazy then clear	45 people
Friday, September 24	68°, hazy	9 people
Friday, October 8	66°, hazy	9 people + Lex (Joe's dog)
Friday, October 22	55°, overcast	0 people
Friday, November 5	49°, hazy, then clear	13 people
Friday, November 19	51°, rain	0 people
Friday, December 3	29°, clear	14 people
Friday, December 17	26°, clear	9 people

We finished off the year having observing opportunities for only about half of the scheduled dates. Milwaukee Magazine included us in their June issue in "10 Places to Go" which helped add to the attendance a little. Novice Night was a popular night where we helped several beginners get started out in the hobby.

We are at the beginning of another year full of observing opportunities. With comet Machholz at its brightest in the sky in January and visible to us for a few more months, and the major planets returning to the sky, it is going to be a busy year for observing.

Saturn will be in the sky until May. Jupiter will be in the sky from April until August. Mars will make another close pass to Earth on October 29<sup>th</sup> and will be visible in the evening starting in November. This pass will be 25% farther away than its closest approach in 2003, but it will be much higher in the sky by 32 degrees). It will only be 4.9 arc seconds smaller in apparent diameter.

Tim Grunewald  
Observatory Director



## Winter Observing Tips

In the winter, observing can be challenging and I don't mean looking for the faint fuzzies. When the temperature drops below the freezing mark it can take the fun out of observing. But winter observing can be enjoyable, as there are objects that are only viewable during this time of year. Deep sky objects like the Great Nebula in Orion, the Pleiades and the Double Cluster are best viewed in the winter. So the following tips will help you deal with the cold:

1. Keep your scope cooled down. The temperature differences between the house and the outside can get up to 50°. This means that it is going to take your telescope longer to cool down. When your scope is not cooled down, it will be hard to focus due to turbulent air caused by the temperature difference. To aid in getting your scope cooled down quickly, store it in the garage or a storage shed. The temperature will only be about 10° warmer than the outside temperature.
2. Dress warmly. The temperature usually drops about 20° after sunset. Dress in loose fitting layers and cover your extremities like your head and hands. Helpful items are hoods, long underwear, snow pants, wool socks and insulated boots. Another help if you don't have insulated boots is to stand on a piece of Styrofoam, which will insulate your feet from the cold ground.
3. Drink warm liquids. Having a cup of hot cocoa, hot cider or coffee can help keep you warm. Having a Thermos on hand will keep it hot for several hours. Note that alcohol will not keep you warm as it actually accelerates the loss of body heat by dilating blood vessels.
4. Bring a portable heater. Having a propane heater can help in keeping your hands warm. But remember to keep it far enough away from you so that you don't accidentally bump into it.
5. Keep the batteries charged. Cold temperatures can drain the power out of batteries. The smaller the battery, the more the battery is affected. Also, having a car battery charger handy can be a lifesaver if your car won't start after a long winter night's observing. And make sure the cell phone batteries are fully charged before heading out.

--Tim Grunewald



## American Science and Surplus Discount

As another benefit to being a member of the Wehr Astronomical Society, American Science and Surplus has decided to offer us a discount. The discount will be 5% for astronomy related products and a 10% discount on the purchase of telescopes for all 2005 members who display their membership card.

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(Your newsletter article could be here!)

E-mail your articles to  
newslettereditor@wehrastr.org



# SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

FOR

## The Wehr Astronomical Society

<http://www.wehrastro.org>

### Regular Meetings

(Free and Open to the Public)



**January 11, 2005**

Wehr Nature Center

Michael Bakich, Associate Editor from Astronomy Magazine will present a program on "Hands-On Astronomy Product Roundup," accessories, eyepieces, telescopes (small), software, books, and new products. Amateur astronomers always enjoy seeing what's available.



**February 8, 2005**

Wehr Nature Center

Dave DeRemer, from the Horiwitz Planetarium in Waukesha will present a program on the new Planetarium which will open soon.



**March 8, 2005**

Wehr Nature Center

Jay Wichmann will present a program with the updates of the Cassini Spacecraft near Saturn and the information on the probe which will be deployed to Titan, Saturn's moon.

### Observatory Activities

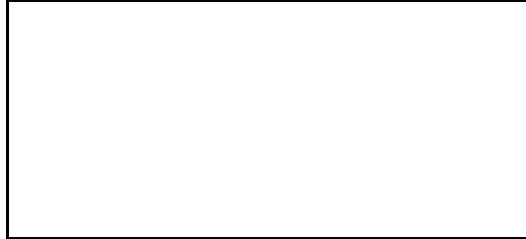
(Free and Open to the Public)

January 14	7:00	Observing the Moon and deep sky objects. See a crescent moon and the brighter deep sky objects. See Saturn (closest to Earth January 13th).
January 28	7:00	Deep sky objects. Locate Taurus the Bull and the Pleiades. See Saturn.
February 11	7:00	Observing the Moon and deep sky objects. See a thin crescent moon and the brighter deep sky objects. See Saturn.
February 25	7:00	Deep sky objects. Locate Orion the Hunter and the Great Nebula. See Saturn.
March 4	7:00	Deep sky observing. Locate Cancer the Crab and the Beehive Cluster. See Saturn.
March 18	7:00	Observing the Moon and deep sky objects. See a gibbous moon and the brighter deep sky objects. See Saturn.

Note: All observatory dates fall on a Friday, and are held at Froemming Park, on 51<sup>st</sup> Street between Ryan Rd. and Puetz Rd.



**WEHR ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY, INC.**  
**9701 WEST COLLEGE AVE.**  
**FRANKLIN, WI 53132**



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\* Signifies the position is available and the name represents the acting volunteer. Contact a board member if you are interested in the position.

## *Starrynights*

**The official newsletter of the Wehr  
Astronomical Society.**

We are a group of amateur astronomers organized to promote the study of astronomy and further public and members' interest in astronomy. We have been serving the Milwaukee area since 1981 and welcome the public to our meetings. Our aim is to give guidance and information to those who want help in the pursuit of stargazing.

Back issues of starrynights can be requested or downloaded from our website at: [www.wehrastr.org](http://www.wehrastr.org)