

The June 2024 Chippewa Valley Astronomy Update



Caption: Hobbs Observatory at Beaver Creek Reserve is shown in 2021 with Comet Leonard in the sky. The CVAS astronomy club hosts public nights at the observatory.

Image credit: William Childs, a CVAS member

CVAS Astronomy Club invites new members

Essay by Lauren Likkell

Stargazers in the Chippewa Valley find companions to share their enjoyment of the night sky by joining the Chippewa Valley Astronomical Society (“CVAS”). CVAS members have a range of interests including casual stargazing, backyard telescope use, and astronomical image processing. The most active areas of the club are astrophotography, the radio astronomy group, and sharing knowledge and enjoyment of the night sky with the public.

A partnership with Beaver Creek Reserve provides CVAS members access to Hobbs Observatory, and CVAS in turn hosts nights for the public to visit. Hobbs Observatory is at Beaver Creek Reserve, across the road from the Nature Center, between the Youth Camp and the Citizen Science Center. Hobbs Observatory has two telescope domes, a lecture room, and field for stargazing. The first telescope dome was built in 1980 and houses a huge 24” telescope. In 1989 the lecture room and second dome (it houses a 14” telescope) were built.

CVAS hosts public access to Hobbs Observatory so astronomy buffs and local families can enjoy this hidden gem, on most clear Saturdays May through October. Stargazing and telescope viewing begins when it gets dark. The CVAS volunteers love sharing the excitement of astronomy and often set up their own telescope to complement the Hobbs telescopes. Visitors enjoy seeing viewing cosmic objects, seeing constellations, and learning more about astronomy. Sometimes fireflies, auroras, bats, owls, or whip-poor-wills round out the experience.

CVAS presents public astronomy talks at BCR (Beaver Creek Reserve) on the third Saturday of most months, in the classroom at Hobbs Observatory. Aimed at adults, these draw 25-40 people with a mix of CVAS members, BCR members, and the public. The presentation this month (June 15, 2024) explores Earth's history of being struck by cosmic debris. Stargazing and telescope viewing is offered after the presentations, even in the cold months of November and January – March.

Near the August new moon, about 75 astronomy enthusiasts gather for Northwoods Starfest for activities and two nights of observing in the field at Hobbs Observatory. This regional star party is the largest CVAS event, and is aimed at more serious astronomy enthusiasts. It is the only CVAS event that costs money to attend, and the registration fee includes cabin/tent camping at BCR's Youth Camp, two meals and midnight snacks, and invited speakers.

Another annual CVAS outreach event is "Astronomy Day" on the first Saturday of May. Interactive displays highlight the electromagnetic spectrum via spectroscopes, IR imaging, UV fluorescence, and a radio telescope. About 200 people enjoy the displays and planetarium shows. The UWEC Physics and Astronomy department supports the event, which is held on the university campus.

You are invited to join CVAS, and then you can receive emails about club events and outreach opportunities, and share and admire astro-photos. Or just visit Hobbs Observatory for a Saturday telescope night or 3rd Saturday presentation -- check the schedule updates on the events calendar at cvastro.org. See you some clear Saturday night at Hobbs Observatory!

--Lauren Likkel is a member of the Chippewa Valley Astronomical Society