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Stargazing event to be presented at Emiquon's Thompson Lake

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UIS Emiquon Field Station to host early morning event

SPRINGFIELD - "Asteroids and Thompson Lake," an early morning stargazing event, will be held beginning at 3:30 a.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 13, on recently restored Thompson Lake at The Nature Conservancy's Emiquon Preserve. The Preserve is located between Havana and Lewistown.

The program is free and open to the public and is presented by the University of Illinois at Springfield's Emiquon Field Station in cooperation with the Nature Conservancy.

The event will take advantage of the peak display of the Perseids Meteor Shower, the annual mid-August display of "falling stars."

As morning light washes out the meteor shower, participants can experience the awakening of the marsh as a wide variety of wetland plants and animals begin their day, according to a spokesman.

John Martin, UIS assistant professor of Astronomy/Physics, will help guide sky-watchers as they view the meteor shower. Michael Lemke, associate professor of Biology and director of UIS' Emiquon Field Station, will be available to share information regarding the station and associated wetland ecological research. Nature Conservancy staff will be on hand to discuss the Emiquon project, which is transforming more than 7,000 acres along the Illinois River from farmland to its natural floodplain state.

Participants should gather at 3:30 a.m. at the lakeside entrance to Thompson Lake, located directly off Illinois Rts. 97/78, approximately one-half mile north of the Dickson Mounds turnoff. A sign will be posted at the entrance.

Everyone entering the property will be asked to sign a liability waiver. Participants younger than 18 must be accompanied by a responsible adult and must have their waiver signed by a parent or legal guardian.

Visitors who plan to witness the event from shore are encouraged to bring lawn chairs or blankets. Experienced boaters may bring canoes, kayaks, or row boats to watch from the water; however motor boats are prohibited.

If the sky is overcast on August 13, the alternate date will be Saturday, Aug. 16.

For further information, call The Nature Conservancy office at 309/547-2730 or send an e-mail to dhedrick@tnc.org.