



# Space lovers in for treat next week with Mercury Transit at City of Alton Heartland Prairie

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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**GODFREY** – People who are space lovers are in for a rare celestial event next week at the **City of Alton Heartland Prairie**.

**The Nature Institute (TNI)** and friends invite the community to watch an upcoming rare, celestial event: the **Mercury Transit** from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Monday, May 9, at the City of Alton Heartland Prairie.

The City of Alton Heartland Prairie is located at the City of Alton's Heartland Prairie, located on the north side of Gordon Moore Park at 4550 College Ave. in Alton.

The transition will start around 6:12 a.m. and guests can continue to watch with on-site astronomical enthusiasts until 1 p.m. This event is family-friendly, free and open to the public.

“The Mercury Transit takes place as the planet crosses paths with the sun,” **Amy Curry of the Nature Institute** said. “Due to Mercury's position in the solar system, it passes between the sun and Earth, which causes a black dot on the sun's face. This dot will be visible to the majority of the planet on May 9. The last transition of Mercury happened in 2006 and the next date will not occur until 2019. “

Curry explained that Mercury is a small planet and it will not be seen with the naked eye. The Mercury Transit Viewing Party will help those interested in seeing this phenomenon by viewing it through equipment. Local amateur astronomers Steve Sands and Eddie Agha will be present with several telescopes and knowledge to offer facts for those in attendance.

TNI continues to host monthly Astronomy Association Meetings on the third Thursday of every month. The next date is at 8 p.m. Thursday, May 19.

“Host Agha will lead a talk about the current astronomical events and then take the group outside to view the night sky,” Curry said. “These events are free and open to the public and take place at TNI, located at 2213 South Levis Lane in Godfrey.”

The Nature Institute is a conservation and environmental organization with a mission of raising awareness of the natural world through preservation, restoration and education. TNI owns over 450 acres of protected land, much of which have hiking trails. These hiking trails are open to the public every day from dawn to dusk. To learn more about TNI and other upcoming events, visit: [www.TheNatureInstitute.org](http://www.TheNatureInstitute.org).