

Offered Title: The Eclipse is Coming... To Texas Too!

Eclipse fever is reaching its peak as August 21st approaches. If you plan to experience totality and have not reserved a place along the path of totality yet, good luck. We got lucky and have a family friend living north of Nashville, TN so I can set up in his yard or nearby. An option is to just make it somewhere along the path and find a place to park. The length of totality is a little over 2 minutes so you need to know when it starts. This varies along the path.

For those of you not venturing to the path of totality, Texas will experience a nice partial eclipse so you have something to look at too. #2 below does not apply to you.

Speaking of looking...

#1 – You don't need a telescope or other optical device.

#2 – The 2+ minutes of totality is safe to view without protection. If you want to view before and after totality you will need protection to prevent damage to your eyes.

#3 – Protection for your eyes comes in various forms: Welding glasses #14 or higher, eclipse glasses (cardboard or other) with solar filters installed. There are solar filters for camera lenses, for binoculars, for telescopes and spotting scopes THAT ATTACH TO THE FRONT OF THE OPTIC! DO NOT USE A SUN OR SOLAR FILTER THAT SIMPLY SCREWS INTO THE EYEPIECE.

#4 – You can observe the eclipse in other ways such as projecting the Sun's image onto a piece of heavy paper or cardboard. Do this by making a pinhole in one piece of cardboard or plastic and projecting the Sun's image on the other. Even better, cut a hole in the projector cardboard and tape a piece of aluminum foil over the hole. Make your pinhole in the foil. The projected image should be a little sharper. You can get more sophisticated and build a viewing box/tube so the projected image is visible on a screen at the end of the box/tube. Also, you can observe shadows made by leaves for images of the Sun.

Projecting the Sun's image with an optic is another option. Small binoculars (less than 50mm) can be used to project an image. A small telescope (around 60mm) can project the Sun's image with or without an eyepiece. Some telescopes come with a projection accessory. A fun way of projection is to use what is called a Sun Funnel attached to a telescope. Search the web for sun funnel and you should see an entry at NASA. They did not invent it but have instructions. Unfortunately, magnifying lenses (spyglasses) do not work well as they focus the Sun into a very small, hot spot.

Be careful!

What's in the Sky?

Jupiter and Saturn dominate the night, Venus the early morning.

July 6: Saturn and a waxing gibbous Moon are a pretty sight in the southeast after sunset.