

Great American Eclipse 2017

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Columbus Public Library joins the countdown to the Total Solar Eclipse! The library staff is ready to assist with maps and optimum viewing times and locations in our area for the Total Solar Eclipse that will occur midday on August 21, 2017. Millions of people will be able to see the moon totally block the view of the sun.

Why is it referred to as the “Great American Eclipse?” This celestial event is viewable across the continental U.S. for the first time in almost 40 years, with Central Nebraska providing some great locations to observe it. This eclipse will be the most-viewed ever due to: media attention; extensive highway systems that have many viewing locations and allow for easy access between big and small cities; and the expected weather should be advantageous for a good viewing experience. This is the first time since 1918 that a total eclipse will be visible on both the East and West Coasts of the United States. The next visible eclipse in the U.S. will be in Montana and North Dakota on August 23, 2044; another total eclipse will occur in 2045 and 2078.

What misconceptions surround an eclipse? There was a time when people did not understand what they were witnessing and found the celestial event very frightening, and some civilizations made sense of it through mythology. Other misconceptions that may still exist: something very eventful is about to happen, food being prepared at the time may become poisonous, and expectant mothers should stay inside because unborn children could be harmed.

What can happen during the phases of an eclipse? Shadows may look different or sharper; absence of distinguishable breezes; birds may roost and stop chirping; bats and fireflies may come out; the temperature can drop about 10 degrees; the horizon may consist of colors of a sunset; and a sense of intense stillness. To completely appreciate this event, it will be important for eclipse viewers to be considerate of others by completely focusing on the passing of a quick two and a half minutes without any accompanying noises or music.

How to view a solar eclipse? Wear “eclipse glasses.” The Columbus Public Library will have 200 pairs of eclipse glasses available as summer reading prizes beginning July 10. Never look directly at the sun without protective eyewear; sunglasses do not provide enough protection. If you are located in the path of totality, it is safe to take off the eclipse glasses and view while the Sun is completely obscured. A recommendation for photographers is to not view the eclipse through a camera viewfinder during the partial eclipse phases unless using a specialty filter.

There is so much to learn about the upcoming total solar eclipse. Be sure to check with the library staff for guidance and resources; and perhaps listen to some of the free Total Solar Eclipse podcasts that are available through sources like iTunes.

NASA Countdown <https://eclipse2017.nasa.gov/>

Streaming Video of Solar Eclipse <https://www.nasa.gov/eclipselive>