

Grab glasses, catch solar eclipse excitement in August



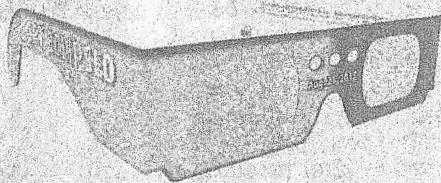
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THE SKY GUY

The big event for this month is the solar eclipse on Monday, Aug. 21. While the Tallahassee area will not see a total eclipse, folks will be able to see almost 90 percent of the sun covered by the moon.

The Tallahassee Astronomical Society and the Challenger Learning Center will be setting up telescopes on Kleman Plaza for viewing beginning at 1 p.m. and ending just after 4 p.m. The eclipse begins just after 1 p.m. and ends just after 4 p.m. with maximum coverage around 2:40 p.m. The Challenger has activities planned for inside the Center. All solar eclipse activities and special planetarium shows are provided free of charge.

We encourage you to visit us close to the maximum coverage at 2:40 p.m. if you can't make the whole event.



JOE RONDONE/DEMOCRAT

Wear special solar glasses to watch the eclipse. Some will be available at the Challenger Learning Center, and you can also buy them at stores including Lowe's.

Never, ever look directly at the sun without protection. You must use filters or glasses specifically made for viewing the sun. You can also make a pin-hole camera or use the projection method with binoculars (look these up on the internet). There are a limited number of solar glasses available at the Challenger box office for \$1 or free with a CLC membership (645-7796). We also have a limited number of solar glasses for the day of the eclipse.

Morning sky: Venus rises 3 hours before the sun in August and is very bright. You can't miss her in the morning sky. If you have a telescope she will be almost full.

Evening sky: Jupiter is getting closer to the sun, setting before midnight but is still well placed in the southwest for viewing in the early evening. Even with a pair of binoculars, you can usually see the planet and its four Galilean moons. Saturn is also placed for early evening viewing. Saturn's rings are tilted almost as far as they go so this is a great time to view the ringed planet. Both Uranus and Neptune are visible, but you need a good sky chart to locate them.

Mars and Mercury are not visible this month.

Friday: Moon above Jupiter.

2nd: Moon above right of Saturn.

5th: Tallahassee Astronomical Society's free (\$1 donation requested) planetarium show at the Downtown Digital Dome Theatre and Planetarium at the Challenger Learning Center (not recommended for children under 5). Doors close at 10 am sharp so get there by 9:45

am. Seating is limited — we have been turning folks away.

11th-13th: Perseid meteor shower peaks. Moon will rise will somewhat interfere with viewing.

16th: Moon very near bright star Aldebaran in Taurus the Bull in the early morning hours.

19th: Thin crescent moon lower left of Venus before sunrise.

21st: Solar eclipse begins just after 1 p.m. and ends a little after 4 p.m. Maximum coverage at 2:40 p.m. Tallahassee Astronomical Society monthly meeting at the Challenger Learning Center beginning at 6:30 p.m.

25th: Moon, Jupiter and bright star Spica in Virgo form triangle just after sunset.

29th: Moon above and right of Saturn.

30th: Moon above and left of Saturn. Check out the TAS events calendar at www.stargazers.org.

Ken Kopczynski is president of the Tallahassee Astronomical Society, a local group of amateur astronomers.