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News



17 January,
2019



SWOSU and Weatherford Groups Hosting Lunar Eclipse Viewing this Sunday

A viewing of this Sunday's (January 20) total lunar eclipse will be hosted by the SWOSU Physics Club and Weatherford Astronomy Club.

Wayne Trail, associate professor in the SWOSU Department of Chemistry & Physics, said the viewing will take place at the SWOSU Observatory from about 9:30-11 p.m., weather permitting. The observatory is located northeast of Weatherford on Lawter Road between Deer Creek Road and Airport Road (use Google for the address).

The eclipse can be seen starting at approximately 9:40 p.m. Totality starts around 10:40 p.m. and lasts about one hour.

A total lunar eclipse occurs when the Moon passes into the darkest part of the Earth's shadow, the *umbra*. When this happens, the Moon is on the opposite side of the Earth from the Sun, so just before the eclipse occurs, the Moon is full.

Trail said if the Earth had no atmosphere and then when the moon was fully in the umbra, it would be completely dark. However, because the Earth's atmosphere scatters and bends sunlight, some sunlight makes it to the Moon. Just as with a sunset, red light does better than blue in passing a long way through the atmosphere, so the Moon receives mostly red light and appears reddish during totality. This is why a total eclipsed Moon is often called a blood moon.

The lunar eclipse was the first solid evidence that ancient people had signifying Earth is round, according to Trail. The ancient Greeks figured out that the lunar eclipse was due to the Earth's shadow. They also noticed that the Earth's shadow is the arc of a circle on the Moon in every eclipse, whether it occurs with the Moon on the horizon or overhead.

"Whether you are interested in the science, the history, the beauty, or all three, please join us, or at least take a look," Trail said. "It'll be one of the best ones for the next decade."

Trail said for area residents to dress extra warm. There are no restrooms at the facility, and organizers ask that visitors keep food and drinks in their cars.

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