



P E R T H O B S E R V A T O R Y

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MEDIA ALERT

release date: Friday, 08 August 2008

Partial Eclipse of the Moon on 17th August

Late night star viewers are due for an unusual visual treat, weather permitting, in the early hours of Sunday 17th August.

The Full Moon will rise on Saturday evening and be partially eclipsed from a couple of hours after midnight.

"The eclipse should be interesting to view even though it is not total and during mid eclipse a small crescent section of the Moon will still be visible", said Government Astronomer for WA, Dr James Biggs.

"Lunar eclipses arise from the alignment of the Sun, Earth and Moon, with the Moon entering the shadow cast by the Earth - for this eclipse the alignment is not quite perfect", continued Dr Biggs.

"For Perth observers the Moon rises at 5:18pm on Saturday the 16th of August and the eclipse starts at 02:23am the following morning and from this time the upper right-hand side of the Moon (as viewed from the ground) will get progressively fainter", said Dr Biggs.

At 03:36am the top of the Moon will enter the full shadow of the Earth's umbra (full shadow).

The eclipse is a maximum of 80% at mid eclipse that occurs at 05:10am.

Around this time the upper edge of the Moon may appear a copper colour owing to sunlight being refracted and filtered through the Earth's atmosphere before shining on the Moon.

The lower edge will appear as a light crescent shape, and this section will appear to grow after mid eclipse as the Moon moves further out of the umbra and into the Earth's penumbra (partial shadow).

The Moon will set in Perth at 06:54am which is just a short while after the Moon fully leaves the Earth's umbra.

"Special equipment or a special site is NOT required to view this event – it is visible all across Western Australia so long as you have a clear view of the northern and western sky", said Dr Biggs.

"Lunar eclipses are safe to view, and are best viewed with the unaided eye - but solar eclipses (where the Sun is obscured by the Moon) ARE NOT - never look at the Sun with the unaided eye or with an optical instrument", cautions Dr Biggs.

Lunar eclipses have played an important part in history. Some historical battles have been lost because of a belief by one side that a lunar eclipse was a bad omen. In 413 BCE, the Syracusan navy destroyed an Athenian fleet after its leader delayed a retreat on account of a total lunar eclipse. In 1453 the defenders of Constantinople were so frightened by a partial lunar eclipse that the fall of the city was hastened, and in 1917 Lawrence of Arabia's force was assisted in the capture of Aqaba when the town's superstitious defenders panicked during a lunar eclipse.

**For further information:
Contact Dr James Biggs,
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More information overleaf.

A view of several stages of the eclipse as viewed from Earth.

