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'A fantastic sky show' expected early Tuesday morning with total lunar eclipse

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Posted: Sunday, April 13, 2014 9:09 pm

Dan Santella | The Monitor Follow @DanRSantella



Posted on Apr 13, 2014 by Dan Santella

EDINBURG — Rio Grande Valley night owls and astronomers will have extra motivation for staying awake and looking up

early Tuesday morning.

A total lunar eclipse, described as a "bloody red full moon," will grace the Valley sky between 2:15 and 3:25 a.m. Tuesday, said Hyun-chul Lee, chair of the Astronomy and Planetarium Planning Committee within the University of Texas-Pan American's physics and geology department. The whole process will begin at 1 a.m. and end about 4:30, he said.

Lee described the sun, earth and moon's arrangement as "perfect" during the lunar eclipse.

"The full moon will be blocked by the earth's shadow," he explained.

The most recent such eclipse visible in the Valley happened the evening of Dec. 21, 2010, Lee said. To see another total lunar eclipse in this region like the one coming Tuesday morning, stargazers will have to wait until Jan. 21, 2019, he said.



Nathan Lambrecht

McAlLEN, TX - 21 Dec 2010 - The stages of the total Lunar eclipse are seen in a composite photograph of images taken from after midnight to just after 2:00 am Tuesday morning, Dec. 21, 2010. Photo by Nathan Lambrecht/nlambrecht@themonitor.com



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Before and after the red moon makes its appearance, Lee said that a "white, normal full moon" will emerge late Monday and early Tuesday.

Lee said that any viewing spot works, "as long as you can see the full moon high in the southern sky in the middle of night."

"The clear sky is essential!" he said via email.

To that point, the National Weather Services' office in Brownsville had less than ideal news. On Friday afternoon, meteorologist Joseph Tomaselli said that visibility could be clearer north of Hidalgo County, listing the Falfurrias area as an example. On Friday, he foresaw "more clouds than clear skies" early Tuesday morning above McAllen and Edinburg.

On Sunday evening, meteorologist Erin Billings of NWS Brownsville echoed a similar forecast.

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"We're definitely not looking at clear skies," she said.

Nevertheless, there's some hope for area astronomers, with Billings predicting windows of visibility.

Lee said that no telescope will be necessary to enjoy what he called "a fantastic sky show."

"Your naked eye will be enough," he said.

dsantella@themonitor.com

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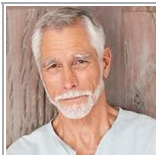
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