

Eclipse prediction [Digest urth.v028.n051]

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 11 Oct 1999

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John Bishop — 11 Oct 1999, 13:37

_Sky_and_Telescope_ had a big write-up on the October 1998

(I think it was '98, but it might have been '97) lunar eclipse, as it was almost exactly a repeat of the one Columbus used. It would have been the October 1998 (1997) issue.

It makes much more sense that you could use a lunar eclipse this way, as they are far more commonly experienced (they are both more common and more visible). In the Columbus case the eclipse was almost perfect for aweing natives: the Moon rose full and bright, then it dimmed and went dark and red for a while, and finally got bright again. They also last longer than solar eclipses, but they do have much less of an impact: you see the Moon get dark, but where you are nothing changes.

I watched the repeat last year and it _was_ neat.

As the magazine noted, this only works when the audience is astronomically naive, as many early peoples knew of lunar eclipses and know that they are expected in a pattern which repeats every 19 years. It also depends on clear skies--the Connecticut Yankee was lucky that it wasn't raining heavily ("Untie me or I will turn off the sun!" "What sun?").

-John Bishop