

THE 2024 TOTAL ECLIPSE

Eclipse is a powerful word. The moon is usually the much weaker body, compared to the sun. Yes, it causes great tides on earth, poets to write of life and loss, lovers to come together in the quiet of the night, and trees to cast shadows at midnight. Then the sun awakens, driving the moon into obscurity. The sun eclipses the moon everyday. Maybe that's why when the moon totally blots out the sun during the day, eclipses it, even for just a precious few minutes, we all stare in wonder.

Our family in the East gathered together this eighth of April to witness such a magical event. We all left my house about 1:30 PM for a half hour walk to a cliff on Clark Mountain, that looked out on Whiteface Mountain. Our son, his wife, and their two dogs, two grandsons and their dates, my cousin Julie and her significant other. Settling on the cliff surface, in chairs we lugged up, along with food and drink, we remarked on the beautiful, sunny afternoon.

My thoughts were filled with gratitude: family together, a total eclipse right over my house, and sunny weather in April. As the moon began to take bites out of the sun, we placed our eclipse glasses on and settled into quiet observation, broken by occasional photo shoots of each of us.

My lasting impressions of the event was family, dimming light, falling temperature, darkness, corona, and brightening. Even when only a sliver of the sun remained, the amount of light was startling. The temperature was slowly falling, but totality brought dark and cold. Removing the eclipse glasses we stared at the corona, where red and pink flares erupted from the boundaries of the sun. Whiteface did not disappear completely. Snow on ski slopes reflected some of the light from the western and southern sky, where totality did not occur. The green moss and lichen on the slanted rock surface, actually became a deeper green as the light dimmed. Birds no longer sang, insects came out to bite, the smell of moisture became stronger, and the cold air on skin felt out of place. I felt small. An insignificant blip on the act of the heavens.

Facing the eclipse of my life in the not to distant future, I am grateful for such a unique experience. Our lives are so brief, our perspectives so skewed by looking inwards, our moment in the sun, to be eclipsed forever. Maybe our corona will be the memories of us by those we leave behind.

(added by Dennis B. author, Joe)