

Solar eclipse



legend and myth

PHOTO BY DAVE GIBSON

A heavenly show

This photo taken on August 21, 2017, near Wheatland, Wyoming, shows the "diamond ring" effect on either side of the total solar eclipse. Solar flares and Bailey's beads can be seen on the Sun's corona during totality.

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On average, a total solar eclipse is visible somewhere on Earth every year and a half. On April 8, 2024, a total solar eclipse will occur across a 115-mile swath traversing the contiguous United States from Texas to Maine. Although one will cross Alaska in 2033, it will be 20 years before another total solar eclipse comes along in the lower 48 states.

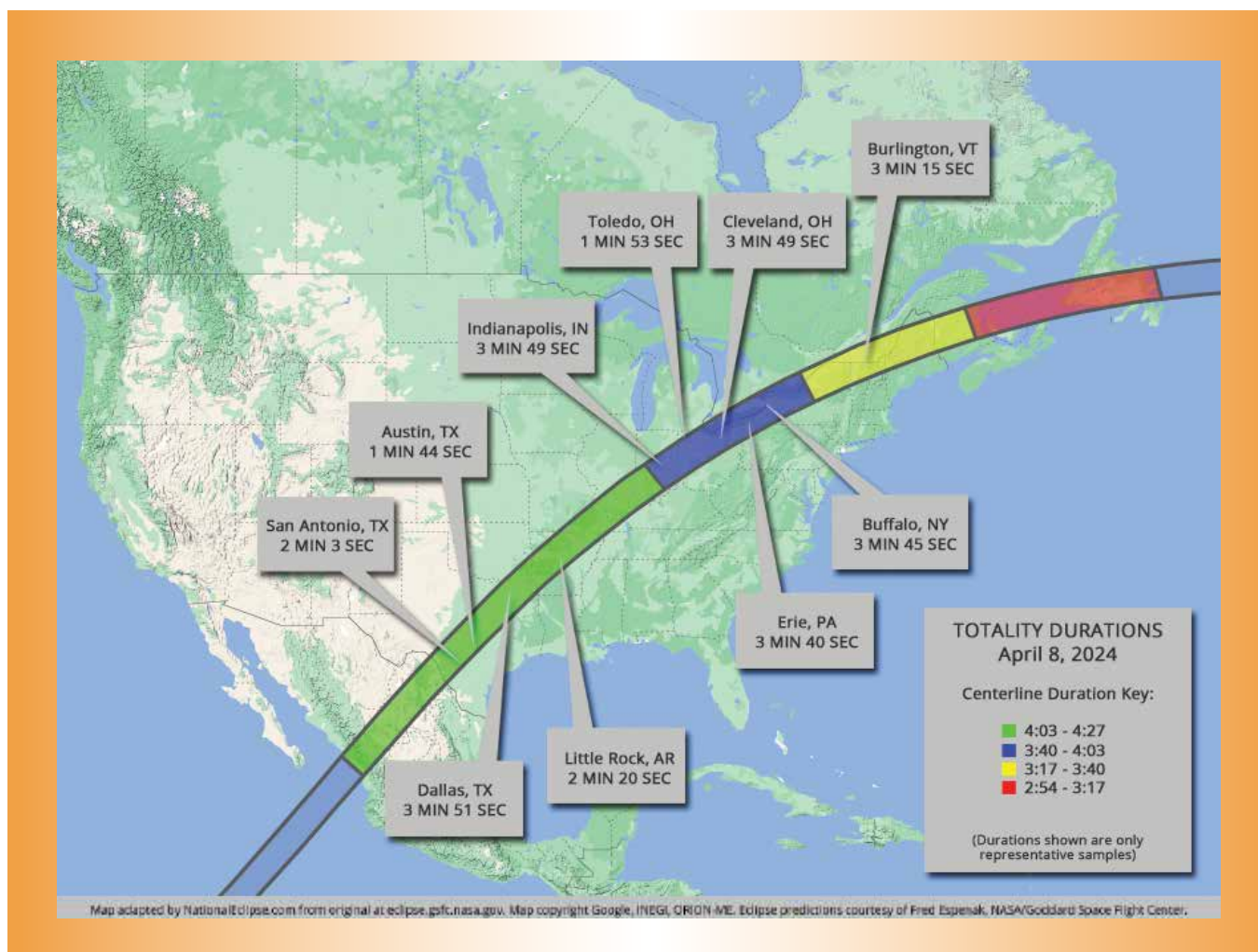
In Nederland, the eclipse will begin at 11:28 a.m., reaching its peak of 65% totality at 12:40 p.m. and ending at 1:54 p.m.

Throughout most of mankind's history, the celestial phenomenon has been considered a bad omen or a sign from gods that must be appeased. "Sun god angry," if you will.

Many legends associated with solar eclipses involve animals. In Norse mythology, it was wolves Hati and Skoll eating the Sun. To some Native American people, a bear. The Chinese saw it as a dragon. For the Inca, a puma. And in the case of ancient Vietnamese, a giant frog was the culprit. Banging on drums and making loud noises or playing music would drive the attackers away.

In Hindu mythology, demon Rahu sought to drink the nectar of the gods to achieve immortality. Disguised as a woman at a banquet the gods were attending, he managed to sneak a sip but was decapitated by Vishu before being able to ingest it. His immortal head perpetually chases the Sun and tries to swallow it but the Sun is released since he has no throat.

Solar eclipses weren't always good for one's health. Incans made



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offerings and sometimes performed human sacrifices after an eclipse to satisfy their Sun god Inti. It is believed that Chinese astronomers Hsi and Ho were beheaded by Emperor Zhong Kang for failing to predict the total solar eclipse of October 22, 2134 BCE.

Humans were at fault for the Batammaliba of Togo and Benin when their fighting had spread to the Sun and Moon. First mothers Puka Puka and Kuiyecoke convinced the people to make peace. Old feuds and grievances were settled and the Sun returned.

The word "eclipse" is derived from the ancient Greek word ekleipsis. It means "abandonment." According to Greek historian Herodotus, in a battle between the Lydians and the Medes in 585 BCE combatants laid down their arms and ceased the war during a total solar eclipse, interpreting the event as a sign of God's displeasure. In Transylvanian folklore, an eclipse was thought to be God turning his back on the world in disgust over humanity's corruption.

Not all eclipse superstition is rooted in disharmony. The Tlingit

of North America and some Australian Aboriginal tribes saw the Sun and Moon as a married couple. When they converged during a total solar eclipse, the stars and planets revealed in the darkened sky were their children. For the Fon of West Africa, the male Sun rules the day and the female Moon controls the night. They are in love, but seldom meet. When they finally do, they modestly turn off the light.

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