

# The High Desert Observer

October 2023

Special Eclipse Edition!



## This Month's Meeting - Oct 22nd

IN-PERSON & Zoom, Friday at 7 p.m.  
Mesilla Valley Radio Clubhouse  
6609 Jefferson Ave. Las Cruces, NM

At the corner of Wilt and Jefferson -- take the Porter exit from US 70, about 5 miles east from the I-25 interchange. Go south on Porter until you come to Jefferson. From there, turn left and go to the corner of Jefferson and Wilt. The meeting will also be available to members via Zoom.

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## Tombaugh Lecture Series

### Speaker for the Month

**Vannessa F. Gressieux**

Program Coordinator at the Mt Lemmon SkyCenter  
and the Richard F. Caris Mirror Lab



## History and Function of the Richard F. Caris Mirror Lab

Vannessa will help us explore the history and function of the Richard F Caris Mirror Lab, where her team creates the world's largest continuous telescope optic segments.

In addition to her administrative role at the SkyCenter and the Richard F Caris Mirror Lab, Vannessa has an active part in the Tucson science communication and outreach community, serving as ambassador to NASA JPL Solar System and OSIRIS-REx. Vannessa helps support students through her work with the ASEMS (Arizona Science Engineering Mathematics Scholars).

Vannessa encourages everyone to look up!

## From the President Tim Kostelecky

I can think of no sights in astronomy that stir the soul as much as viewing a solar eclipse (a naked-eye comet comes close). Having never seen an annular eclipse before, my expectations as Sandy and I headed to Roswell last week were not especially high...it's not totality, after all. No darkness, no solar corona, no diamond ring, no Bailey's beads, and no stars and planets visible. I've seen plenty of partial eclipses before, and this was likely to be much the same. Fascinating indeed, with some crazy lighting and shadow effects, but not the drama of totality. Boy was I surprised! With the benefit of an ASLC H-alpha solar telescope, I saw the progression of the moon "swallowing" the sun along with some fine prominences visible, as one particularly large flair was hanging on the horn of the partial sun. But as I watched the annularity begin through the solar scope, I was delighted to see the sun peeking through the lunar valleys on the emerging edge — a version of Bailey's beads that was exquisite. Then as mid-



eclipse arrived, I watched the spectacle through my solar glasses. That's when I was awestruck with the rare and dazzling sight of this dance between the moon and sun, forming this extraordinary ring.

A group of us from ASLC, namely Ranimo Bush, Ed Montes, Rich Richins, and myself along my crew, Sandy and Dillon, decided to witness the eclipse far from the madding crowd in a smaller Roswell city park. We attracted the attention of some local residents there, and were also accompanied by some fellow eclipse enthusiasts from Oklahoma and Massachusetts, all of whom appreciated our insights and enthusiasm. Great event!



# Cosmic Campground Update

- Rich Richins

## by Rich Richins

I drove back from the Flagstaff area recently and 'The Google' decided to route me down US 180 past the Cosmic Campground. It had been several years since I'd last camped there, so I went in to have a look. I was impressed! The camp has been much improved during the past half dozen years. If you're not familiar with it - the Cosmic Campground is a primitive campground operated by the US Forest Service. The campground turnoff is located about 8.5 miles north of Alma, NM on highway 180. Elevation: 5364'. It's a half mile drive on a decent gravel road to get to in to the main section of the campground. Along the gravel road are numerous undeveloped areas that can be used for dispersed camping.

Near the southern end of the road, there is now a loop with six developed, drive-in campsites, each with a tent pad, a picnic table and a fire ring (shown in the annotated satellite image). The drive-in areas are each 60' long - plenty of room for an RV. The main camping/viewing area is surrounded by a fence with a couple of cattle guards in place to help keep our bovine friends (and their little gifts) a safe

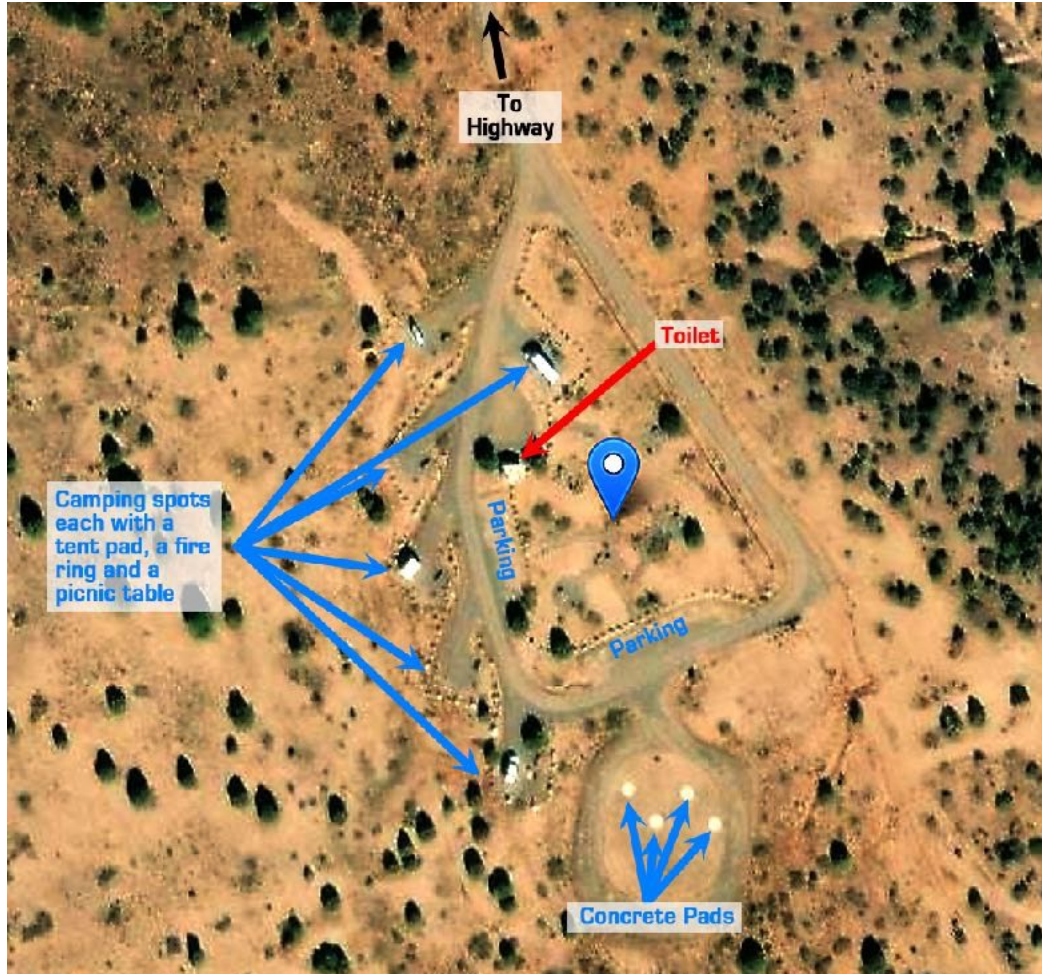
distance from mounts and eyepieces and stuff. Additional dispersed camping spots can be found along the road that continues thru the developed camping area.

Four concrete slabs are located at the southern end of the campground and there are plans to install more. The slabs are for your telescopes. You can drive up to the slabs to load/unload your equipment, but you're then requested to move your vehicle over to one of the parking areas. There are grills and additional picnic tables scattered around the camp. There's also now a 2nd vault toilet - the new one is located near the pull-in camping sites.

Being a rural primitive camp, you get to supply your own power and water, but of course rural is a good thing here. The entirety of Catron county only boasts around 3,700 residents and it's the largest county in the state. The nearest town of any size (Reserve, pop. 301) is a half-hour drive. Silver City (in neighboring Grant County) is well over an hour away with its light dome hidden behind mountains. It's so dark, the campground was designated an International Dark Sky Sanctuary by the

International DarkSky Assn. Cosmic Camp was, in fact, the first location to receive that notable distinction.

I was impressed enough with my brief visit that I decided to drive back and camp there a couple of weeks later (October 10-13). The place was hopping. Most (or all) of the improved spots were taken by 4pm each day; several more campers decided to disperse camp (some by choice).



Astronomers were imaging at the pads two of the nights. I chose to camp in one of the improved sites (pictured). I had so much room that I offered to share my site with a guy in a class C the final night.

The Bortle 0 skies were simply spectacular; I spent the three nights imaging IC1795, the fish head nebula.



Hopefully, I've piqued your interest in the campground. ASLC has done some group trips to the camp a few times, but not for some years. It might be time to revisit the place as a club. Fwiw - If you look for the camp on Google, you may not see the recent improvements - the satellite map used by Google when I last checked is at least a couple of years old. USGS Earth Explorer, the primary source for the satellite image, has a more recent image.



Fish Head Nebula - Captured by Rich during his recent visit to Cosmic Campground

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**ASLC Board of Directors**

		board@aslc-nm.org
President:	Tim Kostelecky	president@aslc-nm.org
Vice President:	Ranimo Bush	vp@acslc-nm.org
Treasurer:	Patricia Conley	treasurer@aslc-nm.org
Secretary:	John McCullough	secretary@aslc-nm.org
Director:	Mark Gorman	director1@aslc-nm.org
Director:	Steve Barkes	director2@aslc-nm.org
Past Pres:	Ed Montes	PastPres2@aslc-nm.org

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**Committee Chairs**

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Education:	Rich Richins	education@aslc-nm.org
Loaner Program:	Tim Kostelecky	LoanerScopes@aslc-nm.org
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HDO Editor:	Tim Kostelecky	HDO@aslc-nm.org

## Monthly Meeting Minutes

### September 2023

#### John McCullough - Secretary

Minutes, September 2023 ASLC Monthly Meeting

Call to Order:

Tim Kostelecky, President, Astronomical Society of Las Cruces (ASLC, the Society), called the September 2023 meeting to order at 7:00 pm on 25 September 2023 at the Mesilla Valley Radio Clubhouse. There were fourteen (14) members, spouses, and guests in attendance, as well as eleven (11) attendees via Zoom at the start of the meeting.

Tim welcomed the group to tonight's meeting and announced that the minutes from the August 2023 meeting (thanks to John McCullough, Secretary) were published in the September 2023 issue of the Society newsletter, the High Desert Observer (HDO). Tim asked if there were any required additions, deletions, or corrections to the minutes as submitted. There being none, a motion to accept the August 2023 minutes as submitted was offered by Jane Himes and seconded by Mark Gorman. There being no objections, the motion was passed by acclamation.

Presentation:

Tonight's Tombaugh Series speaker was Dr. Chris Churchill, Professor of Astronomy at New Mexico State University (NMSU). His topic was "Quasars: Unveiling the History of the Universe in the Shadows Cast by The Most Distant Blackholes". Quasars, which are massive voracious black holes formed in the early days of the universe, completely revolutionized the astronomical sciences. Quasars were discovered only 60 years ago. Once they were understood to reside at cosmic distance, they became the tool by which we first learned to directly probe the deepest recesses of the cosmos. Dr. Churchill took us

through the stories of their discovery and the stories of each of the revolutionary moments that changed human understanding, such as the surprising "cosmic web," the tangled 3-dimensional spider-web structure of the universe. Quasar science has been so promising and enticing that it has been a driving force in the invention of the greatest telescopes ever built, including the Hubble Space Telescope and the James Webb Space Telescope. Dr. Churchill covered some of the most exciting discoveries of Hubble and those expected from the James Webb. He also talked about the extreme telescopes of the not-to-distant future... so that the revolutions can continue.

Tim welcomed several guests and new members. Greg Naughton is a computer programmer who has recently moved back to Las Cruces from the Dallas area.

Officer/Committee Reports:

Treasurer:

Trish Conley, Treasurer, reported net income of \$1952 for the year (+\$60.61 for the month).

Outreach:

Stephen Wood, outreach coordinator, reported on recent and upcoming events.

There were approximately one hundred (100) attendees at the Moon Gaze event on the Plaza de Las Cruces on 26 August. Saturn was a crowd favorite. The Leasburg Dam State Park (LDSP) event on 09 September had about thirty (30) people on hand. The next Moon Gaze will be 23 September and the next LDSP event will be 07 October. Girl Scouts have reserved LDSP for a camporee that weekend. They would like the Society to set up a table and present information that day. They would also like an eclipse presentation on 14 October at LDSP for the annular event. The semiannual "International Observe the Moon Night" and Moon Gaze will be 21 October. A star party at White Sands National Park will be either 10 or 13 November.

Contact Stephen if you can support any or all events.

#### ASLCWest:

Mike Nuss, ASLCWest coordinator, reported public outreach programs resumed at Rockhound and City of Rocks State Parks on 0809 September.

#### Nominating Committee:

Ed Montes, committee chairman, reported the slate of candidate nominations for officers and directors for 2024.

President: Tim Kostelecky  
 Director at Large #1: Mark Gorman  
 Vice President: Rani Bush  
 Director at Large #2: Tracy Stuart  
 Treasurer: Trish Conley  
 Secretary: John McCullough

Although nominations remain open, alternate candidates must be submitted to the committee immediately. Writeins are optional but must meet certain criteria in accordance with the ByLaws. Ballots will be sent out prior to the October/Annual Meeting.

#### Old Business:

Renaissance ArtsFaire 2024 – This year's Faire will be 0405 November, the first weekend of November, at Young Park. The necessary applications have been submitted and the fees paid. Trish Conley needs to confirm telescopes for viewing and pictures for donations. Members can support by helping with booth setup or take down or by helping man the booth in costume during Faire hours. Trish has sign-up sheets for volunteers. This is a major annual public event for the Society.

Note: The LDSP monthly event nominally scheduled for that weekend will be rescheduled for 11 November.

There was no additional old business offered for discussion.

#### New Business/Announcements:

2023 Holiday Party – This year's party will be 16 December at Tim Kostelecky's home.  
 Annual Meeting – The ASLC Annual Meeting will be the October 2023 monthly meeting.  
 November Meeting – The November meeting will be held 17 November to not conflict with the

### The Astronomical Society of Las Cruces

**(ASLC)** is dedicated to expanding public awareness and understanding of the wonders of the universe. ASLC holds frequent observing sessions and star parties, providing opportunities to work on Society and public educational projects.

Members receive electronic delivery of The High Desert Observer, our monthly newsletter, plus membership in the Astronomical League including their quarterly publication, Reflector, available in either paper or digital format. ASLC members are also entitled to a discount on a subscription to Sky and Telescope magazine.

Annual Individual Dues are \$36; Family \$42; Student (Full Time) \$24. Dues are payable in January and partial year prorated for new members. Please contact our Treasurer, Patricia Conley, [treasurer@aslc-nm.org](mailto:treasurer@aslc-nm.org) for further information.

### Coming Events

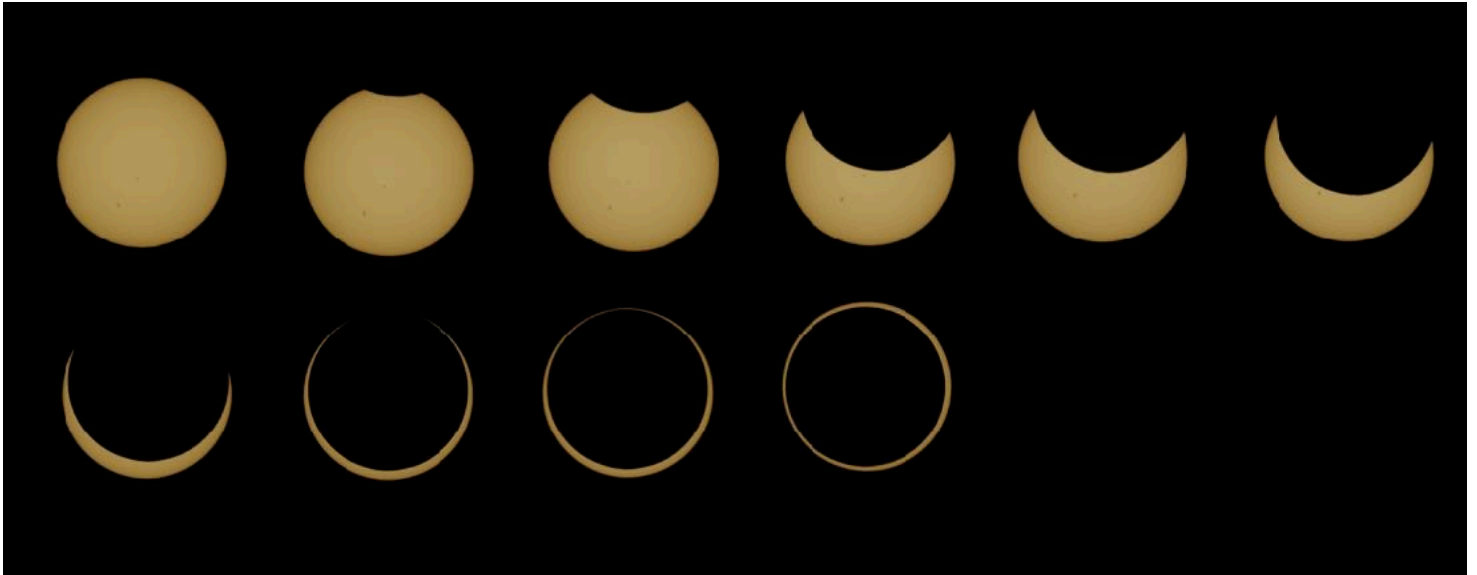
Monthly, on an evening close to the first-quarter moon, ASLC hosts a public "MoonGaze" observing session in Las Cruces. We also hold periodic special evening sessions at Tombaugh Observatory on the NMSU campus.

Also monthly, the ASLC welcomes public viewing at the Walter Haas Observatory in Leasburg Dam State Park, located just 20 miles north of Las Cruces. Our 16-inch Meade LX200 telescope at this site is used to observe under rather dark skies.

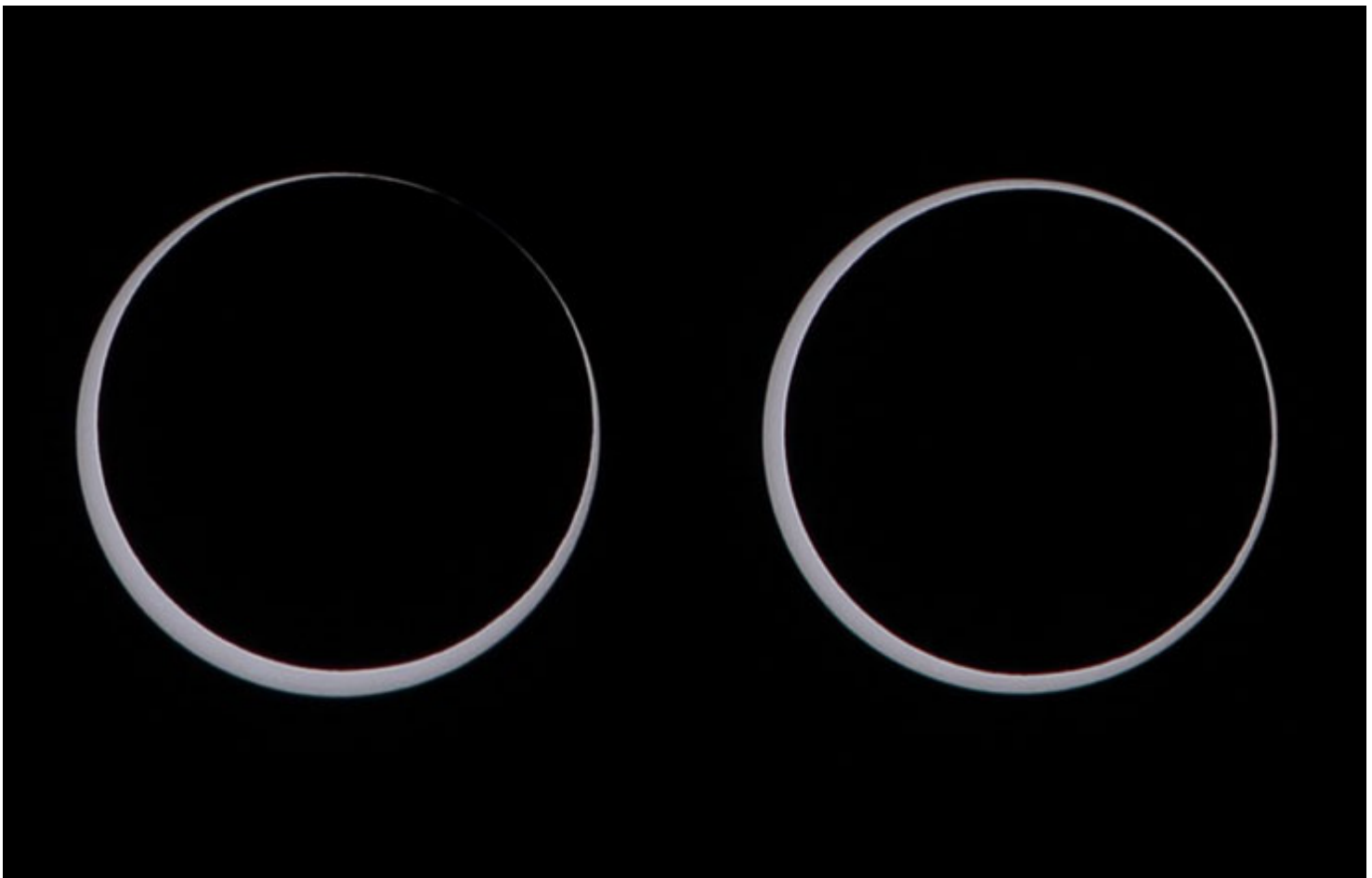
Keep updated on the dates, times, and locations through this [link](#) with additional information available at our website [www.aslc-nm.org](http://www.aslc-nm.org) as well as our [Facebook](#) page.

## Member Images

### Annular Eclipse Progression - Jeff Johnson in Roswell



### Eclipse Bailey's Beads, and "Totality" - Steve Barkes in Aztec NM

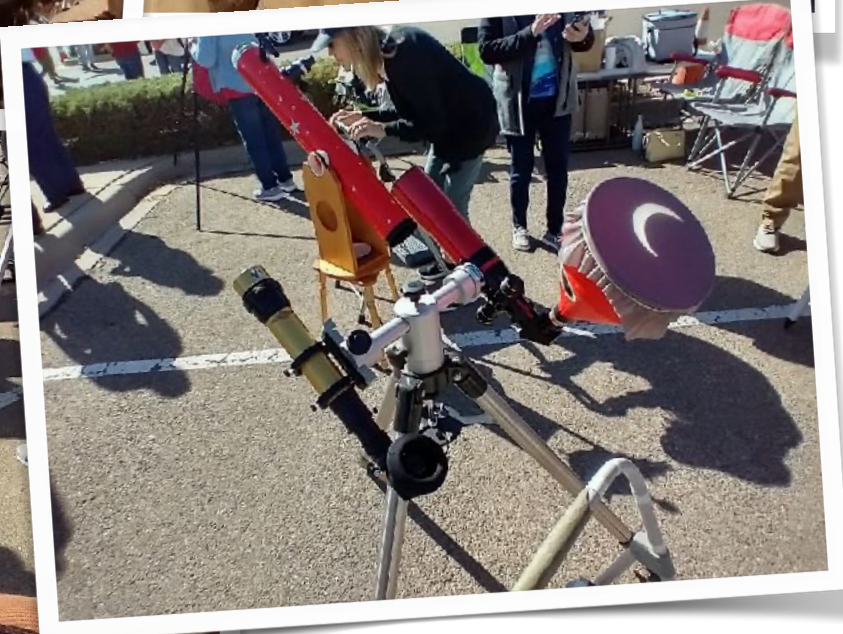




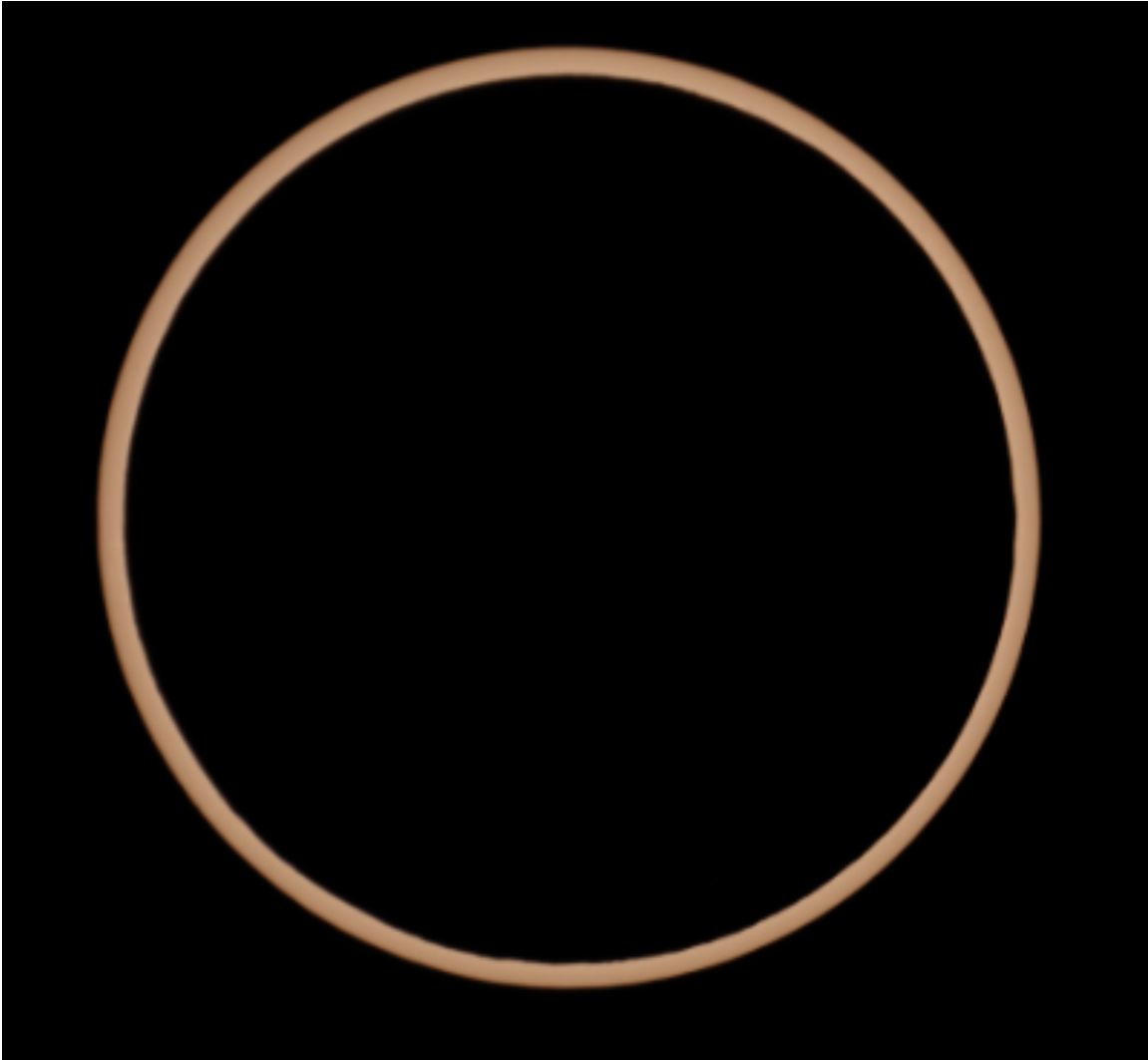
## Eclipse “Tree Rings” in Roswell - Tim Kostelecky



## Scenes from the Roswell Convention Center - Nils Allen



## Max-Eclipse from Midland TX - Bert Stevens



The weather forecasts were becoming more pessimistic for Hobbs, so I opted to observe from Midland, TX. The sky was perfectly clear, though we did have a bit of wind from the north-northeast.

I did a series with a Meade ETX-125AT and a Canon 6D in the parking lot of the Hampton Inn Midland, about four miles off the centerline. This is the image from maximum eclipse.

## Bailey's Beads from Roswell - Dave Doctor

