

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Education Outreach (3)

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USING NATURAL PHENOMENA TO INTEREST THE PUBLIC IN SPACE

Abstract

Naturally occurring phenomena in the sky attract the attention of the public. Such phenomena can be used to interest the public in the moon and the sun, leading further to interest in the planets and the stars and subsequently to interest in space science and technology.

On 26 January 2009, there was an annular eclipse of the sun and on 9 February 2009, there was a lunar eclipse.

The total eclipse of the sun on 22 July 2009 would be visible in Singapore as a partial eclipse.

The lunar eclipse on 31 December 2009 should also attract public attention.

The occurrences of such phenomena in the sky provide opportunities for the organization of activities related to space.

Those enthusiastic about space can be gathered to observe together the celestial phenomena and to discuss about space.

Public lectures can be organized such as for example, on the origins of the eclipses, arising from the nature of the orbit of the moon round the earth and the orbit of the earth round the sun.

In the past, a public lecture had been organized explaining the reasons for Pluto to be no longer considered as a planet. This lecture was given by the chairperson of the Committee of the International Astronomical Union that decided on the issue.

Another public lecture was on the extremely high precision in the measurements of frequencies received from Pulsars. This lecture was given by the eminent astronomer who first detected signals from Pulsars.

The presence of clouds can be a major obstacle in attempts to observe phenomena in the sky. The limitations imposed by the atmosphere in observations of space phenomena from the earth's surface, highlight the need for observations from artificial satellites outside of the atmosphere.

The public can then be led to become interested in the science and technology of space flights—astronautics.