

## Eclipse Draws Hundreds at Boca Library

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As I'm writing this, the Great American Eclipse has just passed, and first thing's first: We're still here. Despite the prognostications of some, the apocalypse has been postponed yet again. So we have that going for us, which is nice.

I experienced this one-in-a-lifetime communal gathering at Boca's Spanish River Library, one of the city's three public venues still giving away glasses the day of the eclipse. It felt like a be-in for science nerds, or at least science nerds for a day, a place where all our cultural and political divisions were covered like the sun. We stood together in unified awe, hundreds of paper lenses pointed skyward.



However, only those who queued up early enough received glasses. By the time I arrived, at a few minutes before 1, library representatives were already urging people to go home, or to share with others: The venue's 300 pairs of complimentary shades were already spoken for, and the event hadn't even officially started.

The line snaked around the building, filled with throngs of sweaty pilgrims arriving by car, bike and foot. It was another manic Monday, in other words; what normally would have been a sleepy weekday afternoon resembled an airport on a holiday weekend.

Luckily, my wife and I bought our glasses weeks before. We just wanted to enjoy the atmosphere, the crowds and the perks of watching the eclipse at a public event, which in this case included free water, pink lemonade and protein bars. As the families piled onto the lake-view pavilion, many arrived with supplies and munitions—umbrellas doubling as parasols, insulated coolers full of beverages, tripod cameras and MacGuyvered duct-tape and cardboard solutions for savvy viewers who missed out on glasses.



By 1:10, the sun was a mostly complete amber orb, the moon a looming foreign object just beginning to invade its space. Over the next two hours, it slowly consumed the sun, which at times resembled a partially devoured medallion of marmalade, then the Pac-Man heroine, then the DreamWorks crescent. At 2:45, we finally felt the sun's brutal warmth subside a bit. The air crackled with anticipation for our 80 percent of totality, just minutes away. Library staff handed out pinhole-cut pieces of paper, which reflected tiny, flickering crescents everywhere.

Just like at New Year's, there was a countdown to our fullest totality, at 3 o'clock, by which time the enormous sun looked like half a parentheses. Cue the cheers. And then, it was over—been there, seen that, let's beat the traffic, etc. It's the South Florida way.

I felt the same. Not being in the path of totality, we didn't experience the eclipse like the most hardcore stargazers did, such as the 250 Japanese tourists in Oregon I learned about on CNN, who planned their eclipse vacation in 2011. We didn't get to enjoy some of the more disconcerting effects of the phenomenon; none of the animals around the lake acted differently, and it never got dark.

But we can all say we went through an eclipse, hopefully with our retinas healthy. The next one is in April 2024. Time to start the clock.



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As the A&E editor of bocamag.com, I offer reviews, previews, interviews, news reports and musings on all things arty and entertainment-y in Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade counties.