

Full lunar eclipse delights Americas, first of year

April 15 2014, by Marcia Dunn



As the moon completely crosses the earth's shadow, the first of four total lunar eclipses, called the Blood Moon, occur in Whittier, Ca., USA on Tuesday, April 15, 2014. (AP Photo/Nick Ut)

Sky-gazers in North and South America were treated to a full lunar eclipse—at least those fortunate enough to have clear skies.

The moon was eclipsed by the Earth's shadow early Tuesday, beginning around 1 a.m. EDT (0500 GMT) for 5½ hours. The total phase of the eclipse lasted just 78 minutes.

For some, the moon appeared red-orange because of all the sunsets and sunrises shimmering from Earth, thus the name "blood moon."

It's the first of four eclipses this year and the first of four total lunar eclipses this year and next. The latter is a rare lineup; the next so-called tetrad of total lunar [eclipses](#) won't occur until 2032-2033. In the meantime, get ready for a [solar eclipse](#) in two weeks.

NASA got good news Tuesday: Its moon-orbiting spacecraft, LADEE (LA'-dee) survived the eclipse. Scientists had feared LADEE might freeze up in the cold darkness.

"Keep little LADEE in your prayers as you gaze up at the beautiful eclipsing moon late Monday night!" NASA wrote on its LADEE website prior to the eclipse.

The end is near, however, for plucky, little LADEE.

The spacecraft is circling the moon ever lower and, by Monday, is expected to crash as planned into the back side of the moon, far from any historic artifacts from the Apollo era.



An airliner crosses the moon's path, Monday, April 14, 2014, above Whittier, Calif., approximately one hour before a total lunar eclipse. Then, on April 29, the Southern Hemisphere will be treated to a rare type of solar eclipse. In all, four eclipses will occur this year, two lunar and two solar. (AP Photo/Nick Ut)

LADEE—short for Lunar Atmosphere and Dust Environment Explorer—was not designed to withstand a prolonged eclipse. It completed its science-collecting mission in March and has been on overtime ever since.

NASA launched LADEE last September from Virginia.



The moon turns an orange hue during a total lunar eclipse on Tuesday, April 15, 2014, in the sky above Phoenix. On April 29, the Southern Hemisphere will be treated to a type of solar eclipse. In all, four eclipses will occur this year, two lunar and two solar. (AP Photo/Ross D. Franklin)



The Earth's shadow is cast over the surface of the moon as a total lunar eclipse is seen through a Magnolia tree top in the sky over Tyler, Texas at 2:57 CDT on Tuesday morning, April 15, 2014. (AP Photo/Dr. Scott M. Lieberman)



This photo shows the Earth's shadow cast over the surface of the moon as a total lunar eclipse over the Chabot Space and Science Center observatory in Oakland, Calif., Tuesday, April 15, 2014. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu)



This eight picture combo shows a total lunar eclipse over Panama City, Panama, early Tuesday, April 15, 2014. Tuesday's eclipse is the first of four total lunar eclipses that will take place between 2014 to 2015. (AP Photo/Arnulfo Franco)

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Citation: Full lunar eclipse delights Americas, first of year (2014, April 15) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-04-full-lunar-eclipse-americas-year.html>

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