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and Tom O'TooleECLIPSE DARKENS STRIP OF HEMISPHERE

A narrow band of darkness swept across the northern hemisphere yesterday as the moon passed in front of the sun and totally blocked its light from the earth for as much as 2-1/2 minutes.

The one hundred and thirteen - mile - wide band of total eclipse began at 3:32 p.m. E. D. T. at Sakhalin Island north of Japan and raced at 2,000 miles an hour across northern Alaska and Canada until it ended over the Atlantic ocean just south of the Azores at 5:45 p.m. E. D. T. when the moon passed the sun in the sky.

In all, the eclipse lasted two hours and 13 minutes across the hemisphere.

In Washington, where the eclipse reached 72% of totality at 4:43 p.m., it looked as if someone had taken a huge bite out of the sun - leaving only a sliver along its upper left quadrant.

Most residents ignored the event, making their way home as if nothing was happening.

In Fairbanks Alaska, where the eclipse reached 91% of totality, the sun was reduced to a tiny crescent and light dimmed as if was about to set. Elsewhere in the continental U. S. the eclipse ranged from 90% in Boston to 14% on San Francisco.

"Unless you knew it, you would just think it was getting a little dark - a decrease in light from the sun," said Dr. Franklin Branley, Chairman of the Hayden Planitarium in New York City.

Along the line of total eclipse, though, the effect was breathtaking.

At Pugwash, Nova Scotia, where millionaire industrialist Cyrus Eaton was host of a "watch in" for scientists, educators and journalists, the moon was seen taking its first bite out of the sun at 3:33 p. m. E. D. T. The bite was fingernail in size and came out of the southeast quadrant of the sun.

In less than an hour, the sun itself was the size of a fingernail, the temperature had dropped from 90 to 78 degrees, and a kind of twilight darkness had fallen across the Northumberland Straits that divide Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island to the north.

"This is just the way the sun might look if you were standing on the planet Jupiter at high noon," said Cornell University's Frank Drake, one of the most reknowned U. S. astronomers. "You'd get just this kind of light on Jupiter at noontime."

At 4:30 p. m., just after Drake spoke, the skies grew suddenly darker, the way they do just before a thunderstorm. The wind died to almost a whisper, lights came on in a house across Pugwash Harbor from where Cyrus Eaton lives, and seabirds scurried toward land.

Six minutes later, the sun was just a sliver of light behind the black disc of the new moon. It was almost dark at the Eaton lodge, but now reds and pinks could be seen in the distant west where the sun still shone making it look like a premature sunset.

At 4:37 p. m. the moon covered the sun completely and one last sun bead lingered on the left lip of the moon, shining like a diamond on a ring of light. Seconds later, the diamond bead was gone and the sun pearl-white corona burst into view around the black disc of the moon, out to a distance of more than a million miles from the now-hidden sun.