

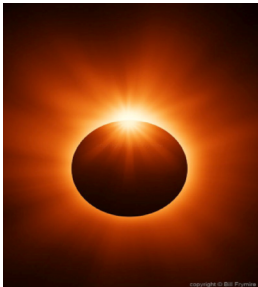
the NATURALIST CORNER

Brought to you by Peggy Potts
Coastal Master Naturalist
August 2017

As a graduate of the Coastal Master Naturalist Program offered through the Clemson University Cooperative Extension, I would like to share my excitement and enthusiasm about the many wonders of nature that can be enjoyed and experienced in the lowcountry. Through this monthly column, I will share my observations, sightings, and characteristics about a variety of nature topics, such as common insects, migrating birds and butterflies, wildflowers and plants and more. Basically, anything in nature is fair game to learn about and explore.

I also encourage you to share your observations and experiences so that we can learn about our natural world together. Please feel free to send in pictures and/or information of anything you find interesting by emailing me, Peggy Potts, at ppotts@charlestoncounty.org.

The Eclipse and its Impact on Animals

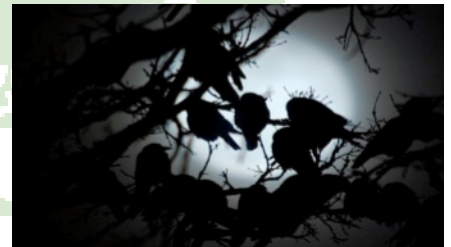


We are all waiting in anticipation for the solar eclipse that will cross our paths during the midday around 2:30 p.m. on August 21, 2017. It's when the Moon will pass directly in between the Earth and the Sun. The full eclipse will last for more than 2 minutes. It is such a rare occasion that people from all over the world are traveling to parts of the country along the path of the eclipse where it can best be viewed. The Charleston area is one of those communities in its path.

As humans wait in excitement for this historic event, one wonders how the eclipse will effect the behaviors of our animal friends. The lowering of the lights during a solar eclipse may imply to animals that it's dusk rather than the middle of the day and that it's time for bed. However, for most animals it seems their internal clocks tell them otherwise. Most reports indicate that during an eclipse, animals seem to rely on their internal clocks rather than the external changes in the environment. However, it's been reported that birds tend to be more sensitive. During past eclipses many birds acted confused and nervous and were seen flying to their roosts. It was also reported that that during a 1991 total eclipse in Mexico, orb weaving spiders were seen taking down their webs, as they do every night, and zebra-tailed lizards also turned in for the night. Observations of fish during previous solar eclipses indicate that the fish become sluggish and settle deeper in the water as they would at night. After the eclipse, the fish rose to the top of the water again and carried on with their normal activities. Some reports of previous eclipses also confirmed that nocturnal animals become more active and daytime animals more sleepy.

Due to the many conflicting reports on this issue, it might be an interesting experiment to observe your own pets. Study their behavior during the same time period of the scheduled eclipse each day leading up to the eclipse. Compare your observations with how they behave during the actual eclipse.

Because solar eclipses are so rare, sharing your animal activity observations with scientists can be very valuable.



(To hear the podcast of this article go to charlestoncountygreenbelt.org under "Resources")

Charleston County Greenbelt Program

Charleston will be the last large city in the path to see the 2017 eclipse. The shadow of the eclipse is said to take its leave of American soil just southeast of McClellanville at the tip of the Cape Romain Wildlife Preserve. The Greenbelt Program provided funding for property in this preserve—Dupre Island, which is accessible by boat. For a list of all greenbelt properties, visit the Greenbelt website at <http://charlestoncountygreenbelt.org> and follow us on Instagram and the County's Facebook page. Don't forget you can earn "Lifestyle Loot" through the Wellness Program when you visit a Greenbelt site and post pictures using #ccgreenbelt.