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**Authors:** Coco, Paul

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**Abstract:** Presents information on meteor showers and lunar eclipse. Details of a lunar eclipse on November 8, 2003; Information on how a total lunar eclipse occurs; Influence of constellations on the name of meteor showers.

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## Space Shows

**Spectacular meteor showers and a lunar eclipse are thrilling observers across the globe**

**Have you looked at the night sky recently?** Did you see an eerie yellow glow? How about zooming streaks of light? Maybe you even looked up and saw the moon disappear, then come back again.

Last month, skywatchers saw a total lunar eclipse, or an eclipse of the moon, and two meteor showers.

This week, another meteor shower will light up the sky. You don't even need a telescope to view these spectacular light shows. You just have to look up!

### Colorful Moon

On the night of November 8, kids and adults around the world gathered in backyards, fields, and on sidewalks to see a total lunar eclipse.

Fourth-grader Ashley Reiersen, from Pollock, South Dakota, was one of those looking up that night.

"I watched when part of the moon was covered," Ashley said. "It was weird to see a sky without a moon."

A total lunar eclipse occurs when Earth comes between the sun and the moon (see diagram). Earth's shadow falls on the moon, making it look totally covered. In a partial eclipse, only some of the moon looks covered.

Ashley's classmate, Nicole Peterson, also saw the lunar eclipse. "It got so dark without the moon. But then it got bright, like the daytime," Nicole said.

During November's eclipse, the moon appeared to be yellow-orange. This is because the moon passed through the lower edge of Earth's shadow. During sunset, when the sun's rays hit Earth's atmosphere and got refracted, or bent by the gases and dusts, the moon was in a direct line with the refracted rays. The result? The moon reflected those rays and appeared yellow-orange.

There can also be an eclipse of the sun--a solar eclipse. (see sidebar)

### [Mighty Meteors](#)

Meteor showers that streaked through the sky last month also thrilled skywatchers.

Meteors are pieces of rock or metal from space that enter the Earth's atmosphere at high speeds. These objects burn up when they enter Earth's atmosphere. As they burn, they look like bright, long streaks of light. The longer a meteor takes to burn, the longer you can see a streak. If many meteors burn up at once, it looks like it's raining fireworks!

There are several kinds of meteor showers. Last month's are called Leonids. This week, you could see a display of Geminid showers if the weather is clear where you live. The showers last until December 17. Meteor showers are named for the point in the sky where the meteors seem to come from. The Leonids look like they come from the constellation Leo. Geminids appear to start at the constellation Gemini.

Now that you know about eclipses and meteor showers keep your eyes on the sky. You never know what you might see!

### [BACK TO YOU](#)

Follow these tips for the best skywatching experience:

- Give your eyes an hour to adjust to the dark night sky.
- Watch with a group of friends. One of you might see something the other missed.

### [What's that word?](#)

**atmosphere:** (at-muss-fih-r) noun. The mixture of gases that surrounds a planet.

**constellation:** (kon-stuh-lay-shuhn) noun. A group of stars that form a shape or pattern.

PHOTO (COLOR): RAINING LIGHT Leonid meteor showers streak across the sky.

PHOTO (COLOR): MOON MAGIC Photos of the moon at different stages during the lunar eclipse.

PHOTO (COLOR): SPEEDING LIGHT Leonid meteors travel at about 44 miles per second--twice the speed of Geminids.

PHOTO (COLOR): REFRACTED RAYS In a lunar eclipse, bent light rays hit the moon and bounce back toward Earth.

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By Paul Coco

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