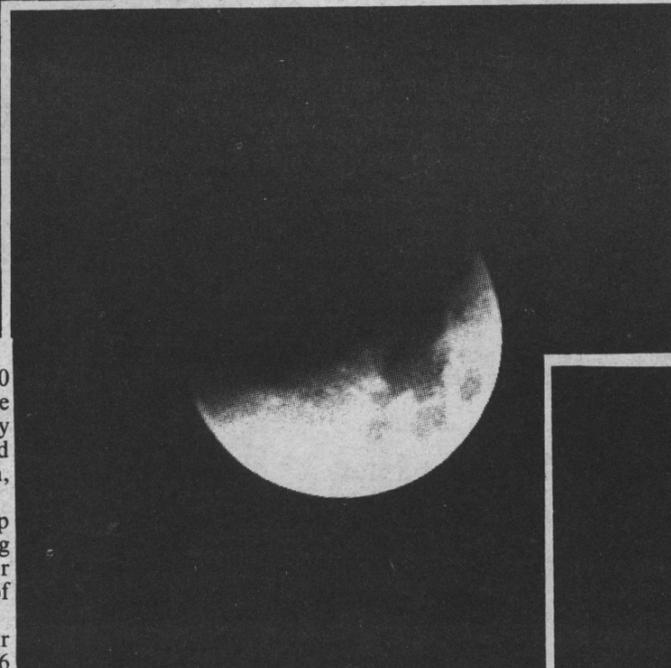
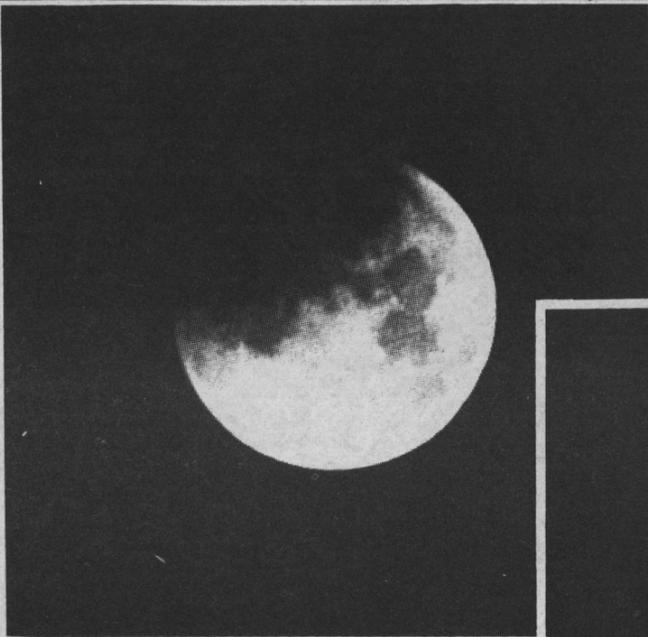


The night the moon turned red...

Luna fever strikes!



Photos by Russ Sampson

Experience by Keith Krause



Four a.m., September 6...There are about 200 people huddled and clustered in small groups outside the Queen Elizabeth Planetarium peering intently through camera viewfinders, binoculars and telescopes. The occasion — a total eclipse of the moon, visible throughout Western Canada.

A lunar eclipse occurs when the earth lines up between the sun and the moon, its shadow falling directly on the moon's surface. The result is that a lunar eclipse always occurs at full moon, in the early hours of the morning.

Unlike the rapid passing of a solar eclipse, a lunar eclipse is a slow event. Totality was, in this case, 46 minutes long. During totality, the moon turns a deep red, the color resulting from the simultaneous sunsets and sunrises occurring on earth.

Lunar eclipses are also comparatively rare events; the last one visible from Edmonton occurred in 1972. The next eclipse will be in 1982.

The partial phases of the eclipse were also long, lasting over one hour before and after totality. During the partial eclipse, the moon slowly faded from its full brilliance as the shadow moved from top to bottom. Shaded portions were a deep blue color, with the edge of the shadow ranging from red to yellow. When totally eclipsed, the reddish moon also appeared spherical and three-dimensional, rather than flat.

The people gathered at the Planetarium to witness the event were there at the invitation of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC). RASC members hosted a public "Star-night", assembling their telescopes and equipment, for public viewing. These ranged from small homemade telescopes, to large (14" mirror) commercial instruments.

And then we all went home....

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