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Rockets and planes chase the solar eclipse – 8th April 2024

Level 4

Pilots have chased a total eclipse of the sun. It happened while people in North America looked at this rare celestial event. NASA sent high-altitude planes with special sensors and instruments to gather information from the eclipse. Pilots flew 15,240 meters high to get a view of the corona – the sun's outer surface. NASA also fired rockets into Earth's upper atmosphere to try to find out about some of the sun's mysteries.

A total solar eclipse blocks the sun, and momentarily turns day to night. Totality means the sun's corona is a million times dimmer than the sun. A solar astrophysicist explained that: "Total solar eclipses let us study and see the corona in ways that just would not be possible at any other time." Solar eclipses often confuse animals. They wake up nocturnal animals, and make birds fall silent. Motorists should slow down as visibility can change.

Level 5

Pilots chased a solar eclipse on Monday. This happened while millions of people in North America gazed into the sky to glimpse a rare celestial event - a total eclipse of the sun. The sun, moon and Earth aligned to block the view of the sun. NASA sent high-altitude WB-57 planes with special sensors and instruments to gather information from the solar event. Pilots flew 15,240 meters high to get a view of the corona – the sun's outer surface. NASA also fired rockets into Earth's upper atmosphere, known as the ionosphere, to try to find out about some of the sun's mysteries.

A total solar eclipse happens when the moon blocks the sun. This celestial event momentarily turns day to night. Totality means the sun's corona is a million times dimmer than the sun. This makes it easier for scientists to study the sun. A solar astrophysicist explained that: "Total solar eclipses let us study and see the corona in ways that just would not be possible at any other time." Solar eclipses often have confusing effects in nature. They briefly wake up nocturnal animals, and make birds and insects fall silent. Motorists should also slow down as visibility can change.

Level 6

Astronomers and pilots chased a solar eclipse across the heavens on Monday. This occurred while millions of people in Canada, the USA and Mexico gazed into the sky to catch a glimpse of a rare celestial event - a total eclipse of the sun. The sun, moon and Earth aligned to block the view of the sun's disc. NASA equipped its high-altitude WB-57 planes with special sensors and instrumentation to gather information from the unique solar event. Pilots navigated a path within the eclipse, 15,240 meters high, to get a view of the corona – the sun's outer surface. NASA also fired rockets into Earth's upper atmosphere, known as the ionosphere, to try to unravel some of the sun's greatest mysteries.

A total solar eclipse happens when the moon obscures the face of the sun from view. This celestial phenomenon momentarily turns day to night. Totality means the sun's corona becomes a million times dimmer than the sun's disc. This makes it easier for scientists to observe and study the sun. Dr Amir Caspi, a solar astrophysicist, explained that: "Total solar eclipses let us study and see the corona in ways that just would not be possible at any other time and in any other way." Solar eclipses often have confusing effects on nature. They briefly stir nocturnal creatures and make birds and insects fall silent. Motorists can also be affected and should slow down as lighting and visibility conditions change.