Effects of the 2001 total solar eclipse on African wildlife

Paul Murdin divided his attention between the total solar eclipse of 21 June 2001 and a pod of hippos.

Eclipse photographed at ZASTI, Lusaka International Airport, Lusaka, Zambia by Aadil Desai of the Amateur Astronomers’ Association (Bombay).

Mama Pools is home to many species of geese and water birds such as egrets and herons. The roosts were downstream from my observing site. The birds usually flew upstream in the morning to feeding grounds, returning to roost at sunset. During the eclipse, several flights of birds were seen returning back towards their roosts. One flight flew downstream during totality and was seen performing a U-turn back towards their feeding grounds after the diamond ring effect proved that daylight was not yet over.

There is a lot of data from the observations and no doubt it will be some time before it is all analysed. WEZ plans to produce a research report at a later time, possibly in their magazine *Wildlife Zimbabwe*. However, in a debriefing session the day after the eclipse, WEZ members reported the following reactions to the eclipse by the African wildlife.

**Mammals**

Sleeping hippo woke and dispersed into water; showed nervousness for the rest of the afternoon and possible disruption of daily routine the following day. Impala showed no reaction until the eclipse was well under way and it was too dark to see them, but were observed to be showing nervousness and vigilance when light returned...