

Amphitheater event draws into thousands, provides great venue for eclipse watch

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ALTON - While not in the 70 mile line of complete totality during Monday's nationwide solar eclipse, hundreds gathered at the Liberty Bank Riverfront Amphitheater in Alton to enjoy the eclipse.

Food, live music, free eclipse glasses and even a bubble truck were at the amphitheater alongside a crowd of hundreds who gathered to view the cosmic national event. Alton enjoyed a nearly complete covering of the sun by the moon, which cast strange shadows and gave eerie daytime lighting across the area.

"I'm surprised by the amount of people who showed up at our riverfront," Alton Mayor Brant Walker said. "I want to thank Hayner Public Library for sponsoring this with the Alton CVB. They sponsored it, and it was put on by our parks and rec department. It was a great turnout for a great time with a great band."

"The solar eclipse made everything look like a 70s zombie movie," local musician Biff K'narly posted on Facebook.

Many of the eclipse viewers at the amphitheater were staring at the sun as it slowly got covered through free glasses provided by the Alton Convention and Visitors Bureau.

"It looked absolutely radical," Alton resident Ashlan Wilkins said from the shade of the amphitheater.

Some viewers in Waterloo were able to see the complete totality, however, people from around the world gathered in Carbondale, which experienced two minutes and 40 seconds of totality - the longest experienced throughout the country.

Many social media posts from that area reveal a sky roughly as dark as twilight in the Carbondale skies around 1:20 p.m.

Alton experienced its peak eclipse around 1:18. Occasional clouds darkened the eclipse and blocked it from view, but it was mostly visible during the entire eclipse, which began just before noon when the moon's shadow was cast over the face of the sun.

"We had between 2,500 and 3,000 people," Stawar said. "We gave away 2,300 pairs of glasses, and 420 Marquette students came with their own pairs. Everything held out through the totality, or the 99.4 percent totality we had here. Everyone cheered, and then 10 minutes later, there was a downpour that cleared everyone out. It was a great time with no major incidents."

Stawar said all the hotels around town were completely filled with both people traveling to Carbondale and people planning to stay in Alton.







