

The Sun: A Star to Study in Our Backyard



for Qiang Hu's Class

Thursday, February 11

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NASA/Marshall Space Flight Center

Outline

- A bit of history
- The Sun vs. a couple of stars
 - What is a Star?
 - What is the Sun like?
- Eclipses
- Solar Eruptions
- Jets in Coronal Holes



History

Maria Mitchell: Educating Future Scientists

- Discovered a comet in 1847 at age 29
- First woman elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1848)
- First woman elected to the American Association for the Advancement of Science (1850)
- First professor hired at new Vassar College (1865)
- Co-founded the Association for the Advancement of Women (1873)



Maria Mitchell: Her Legacy - Her Students

Mary Watson Whitney -- Succeeded
M. Mitchell as Chair of Astronomy
Department and Director of Observatory
and Educator



*Mary Watson Whitney, 1847-1921, Professor of Astronomy at Vassar College,
and first President of the Alumnae Association*

Antonia Maury -- Became one of
Edward Pickering's “computers”
published in 1897 a catalogue of
stellar spectra -- first observatory
publication credited to a woman

Edward Pickering and the “Computers” at Harvard Observatory



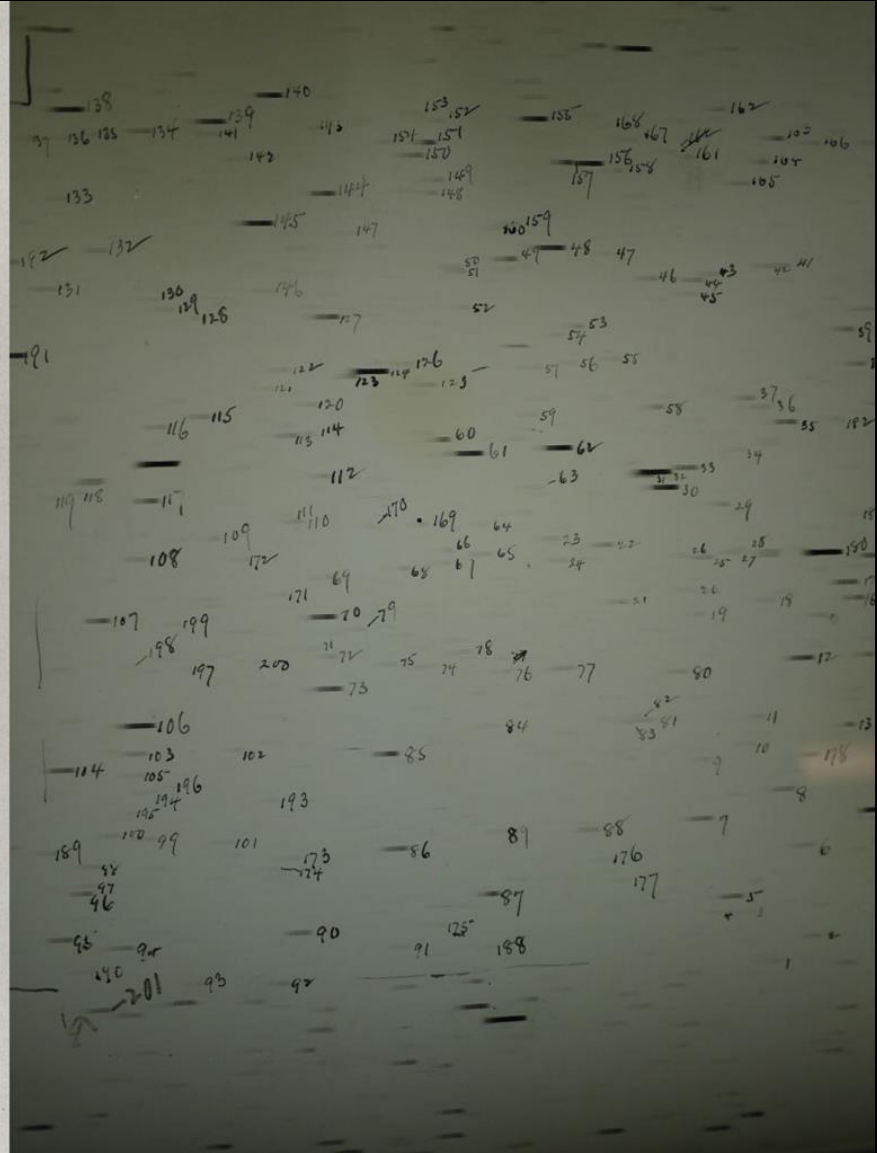
At Harvard College Observatory,
13 May, 1913

Image Credit: Licenced under Public Domain via Wikipedia
Commons - <http://commons.wikipedia.org>)



William Pickering and his “computers”
Antonia Maury on the far left with back to camera
Annie Cannon on far right

Annie Cannon and Spectral Classifications



Harvard Computers

Williamina Fleming	Office Manager and classifier of stellar spectra
Antonia Maury	Improved classification system
Annie Jump Cannon	Classified spectra of southern stars and redesigned system, developed Harvard Classification System
Cecilia Payne-Gaposhkin	Determined the relationship between stellar classes and stellar temperature and determined that the Sun is mostly hydrogen
Henrietta Swan Leavitt	Intuited that all stars in Small Magellanic Cloud are approximately at the same distance from Earth, leading to her discovery of direct relationship between period and luminosity of Cepheid variables
Anna Winlock	Made the most complete catalog of stars near north and south poles (of her time), and calculated orbits and compiled data on asteroids

The Sun vs. a Couple of Stars

What is a Star?

- Energy Production
- Differences
- H-R Diagram

What is the Sun like?

- Structure
- Surface Features
- Magnetic Fields
- The Solar Cycle
- Solar Eruptions

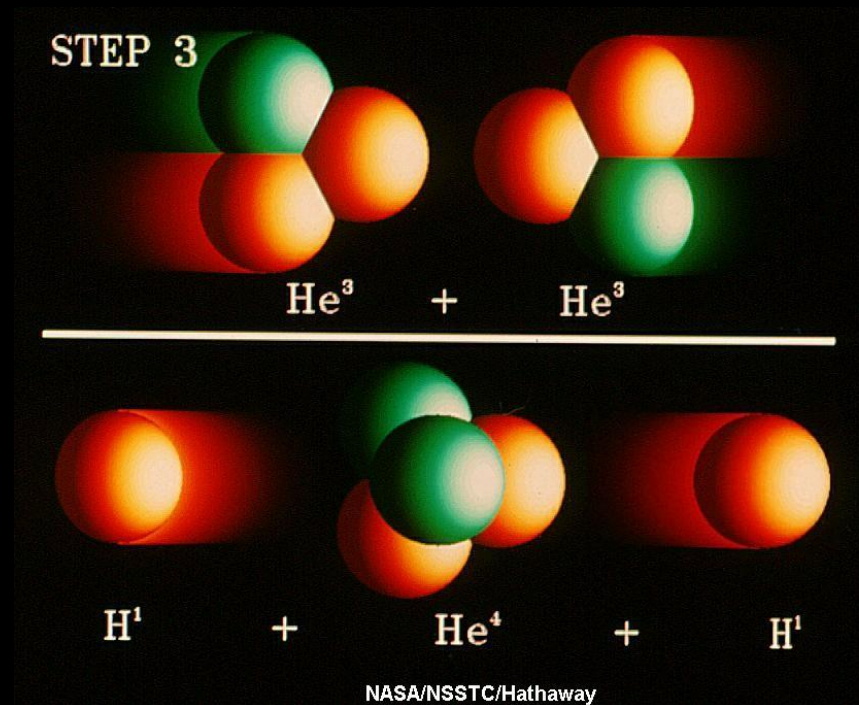
What is a Star?

What is a Star? -- Energy Production

A star is an astrophysical body that produces its own light by thermonuclear reactions in its core.

For solar-type stars, this is the proton-proton chain

1. Two protons collide, form deuterium, a positron, and a neutrino.



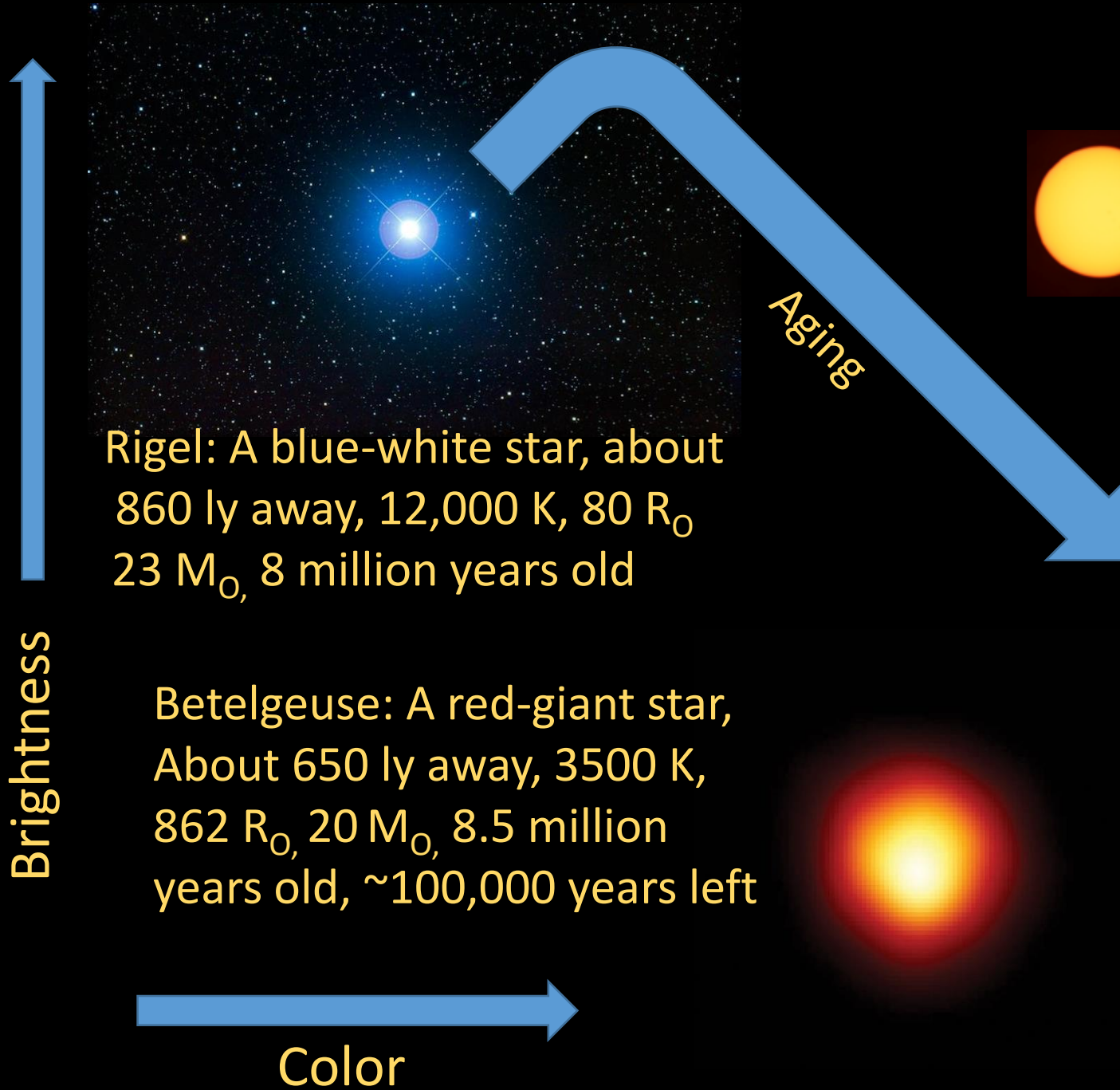
2. A proton collides with the deuterium, forming helium-3 and a gamma ray

3. Two He-3s collide to form He-4 plus two protons.

Basically, Hydrogen converts to Helium

(High-mass stars, greater than about 2 solar masses use a different procedure, the CNO cycle.)

What is a Star? -- Differences

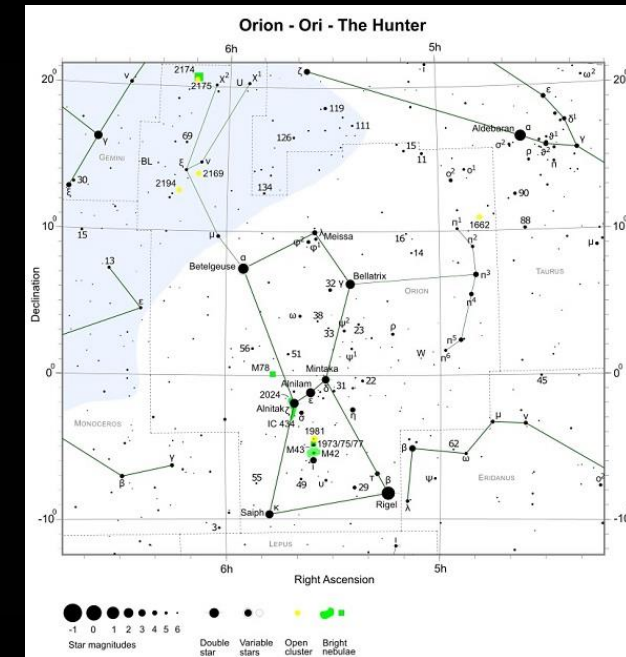


Rigel: A blue-white star, about 860 ly away, 12,000 K, 80 R_{\odot} , 23 M_{\odot} , 8 million years old

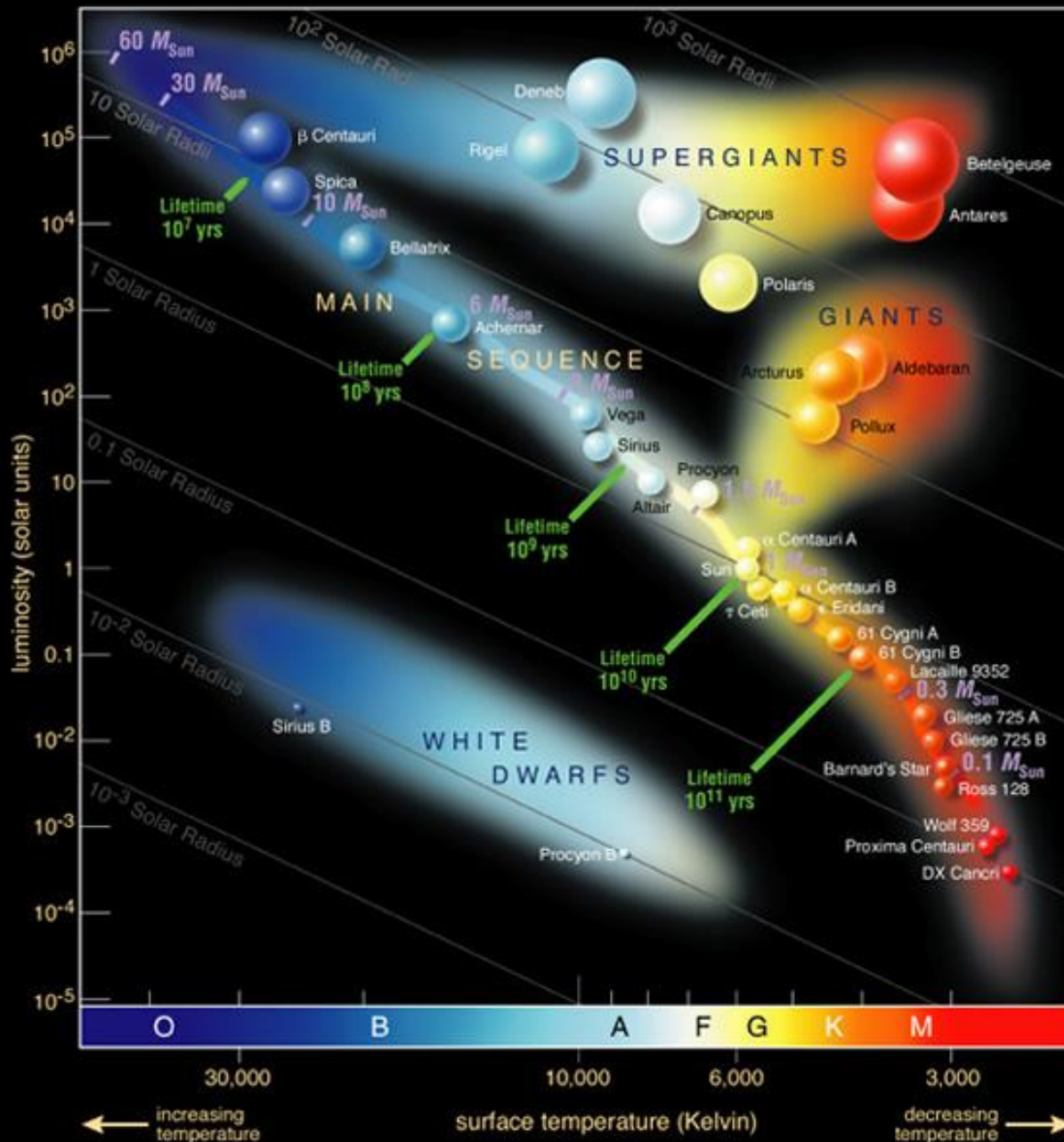
Betelgeuse: A red-giant star, About 650 ly away, 3500 K, 862 R_{\odot} , 20 M_{\odot} , 8.5 million years old, ~100,000 years left



Our Sun: A yellow star, ~8 lm away, 6000 K, ~700,000 km (432,000 mi, 2×10^{30} kg, 4.5 billion years old, ~5 billion yr left



Hertzsprung-Russell Diagram



α -Cen-A is G2,
 α -Cen-B is K1,
 Proxima (α -Cen-C) is M6,
 4.2 ly

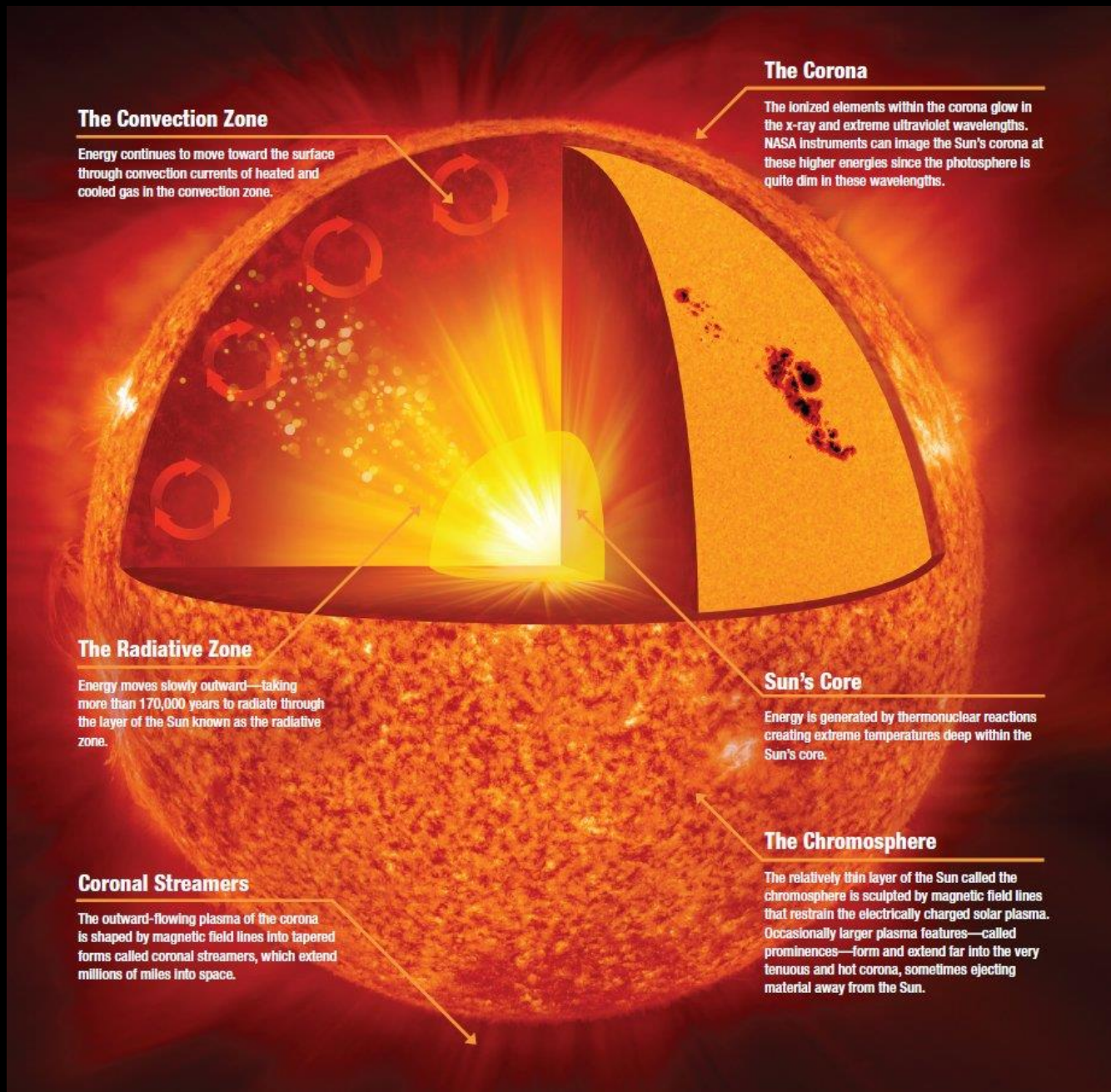
Sun is G2
 8.5 light minutes away

Betelgeuse is M2
 643 ly

Rigel is B8
 860 ly

What is the Sun like?

The Sun: Structure



The Convection Zone

Energy continues to move toward the surface through convection currents of heated and cooled gas in the convection zone.

The Corona

The ionized elements within the corona glow in the x-ray and extreme ultraviolet wavelengths. NASA instruments can image the Sun's corona at these higher energies since the photosphere is quite dim in these wavelengths.

The Radiative Zone

Energy moves slowly outward—taking more than 170,000 years to radiate through the layer of the Sun known as the radiative zone.

Sun's Core

Energy is generated by thermonuclear reactions creating extreme temperatures deep within the Sun's core.

Coronal Streamers

The outward-flowing plasma of the corona is shaped by magnetic field lines into tapered forms called coronal streamers, which extend millions of miles into space.

The Chromosphere

The relatively thin layer of the Sun called the chromosphere is sculpted by magnetic field lines that restrain the electrically charged solar plasma. Occasionally larger plasma features—called prominences—form and extend far into the very tenuous and hot corona, sometimes ejecting material away from the Sun.

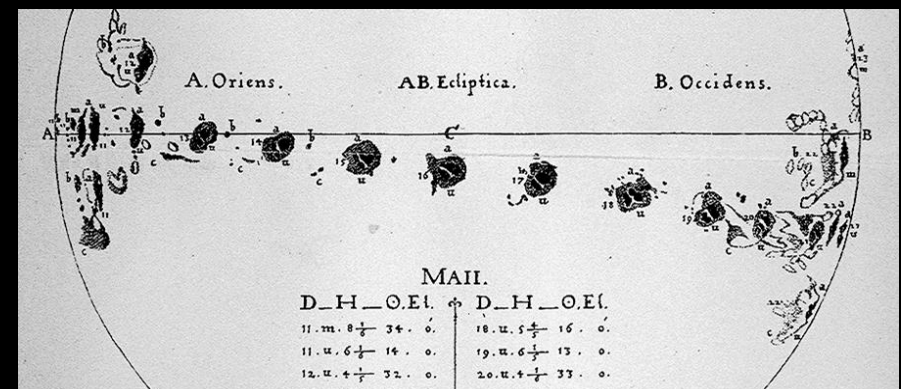
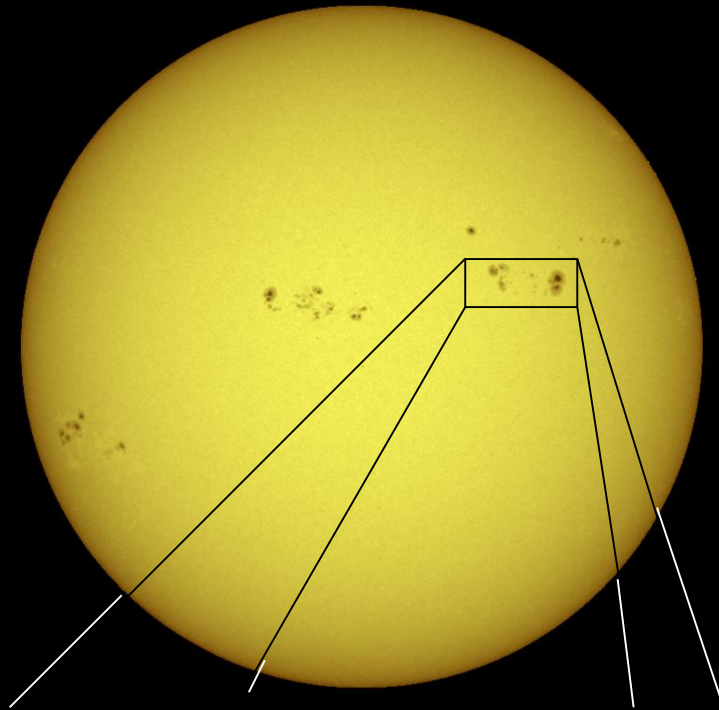
The Sun: Surface Features - Sunspots

Sunspots are regions that are cooler than their surroundings, produced by strong magnetic fields.

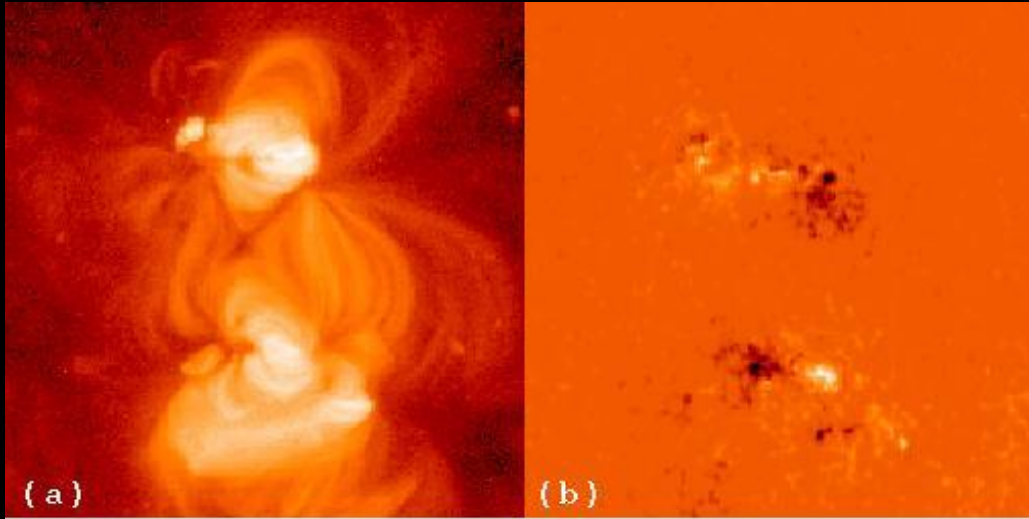
Sunspots have an Umbra surrounded by the lighter Penumbra.

Sunspots usually appear in groups, with lifetimes of days or weeks.

The earliest sunspot observations (c. 1609) indicated that the Sun rotates once in about 27 days.

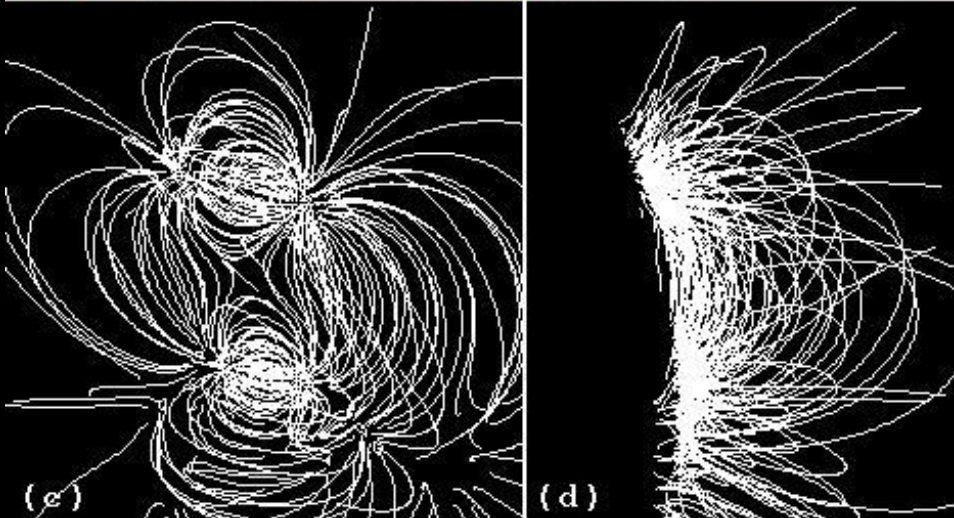


The Sun: Sunspot - Magnetic Fields



(a) Yohkoh Soft X-ray Telescope,
Corona
4 Jan, 1994 7:35 UT

(b) Line-of-Sight magnetic field
from Kitt Peak National Observatory
at 16:31 UT



(c), (d) Extrapolated Magnetic Field

The Sun: Sunspot Cycle Discovery

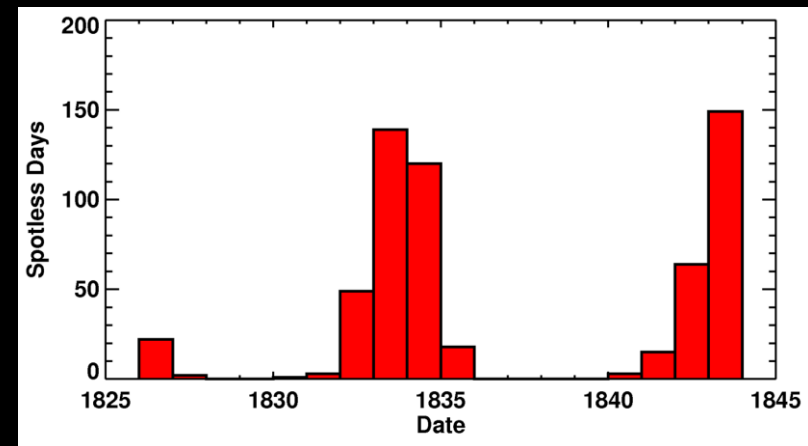
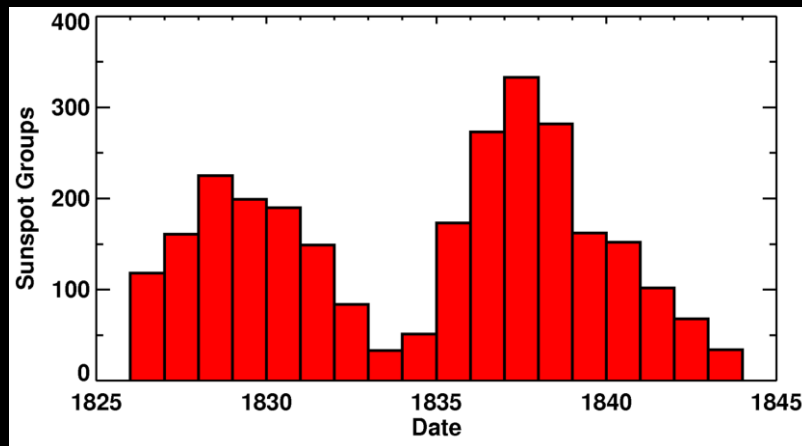
Sunspots observed > 230 years

1844 Heinrich Schwabe, amateur astronomer, Dessau, Germany

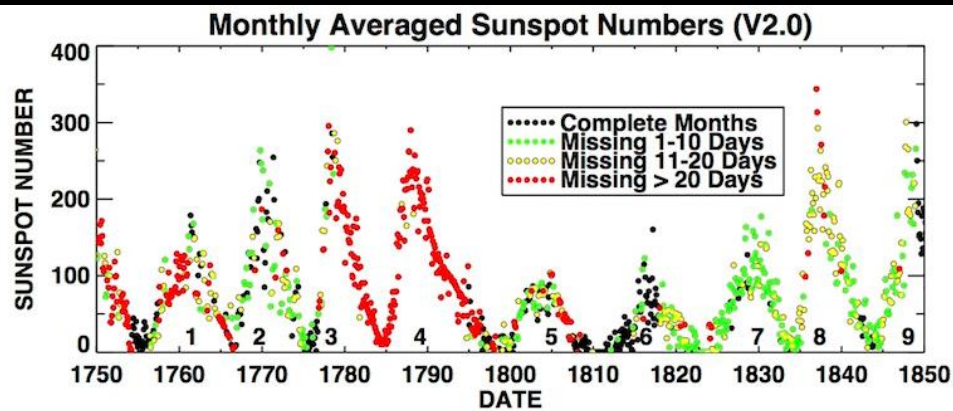
Cycle: increase and decrease over ~10-years

- number of sunspot groups and the
- number of days without sunspots

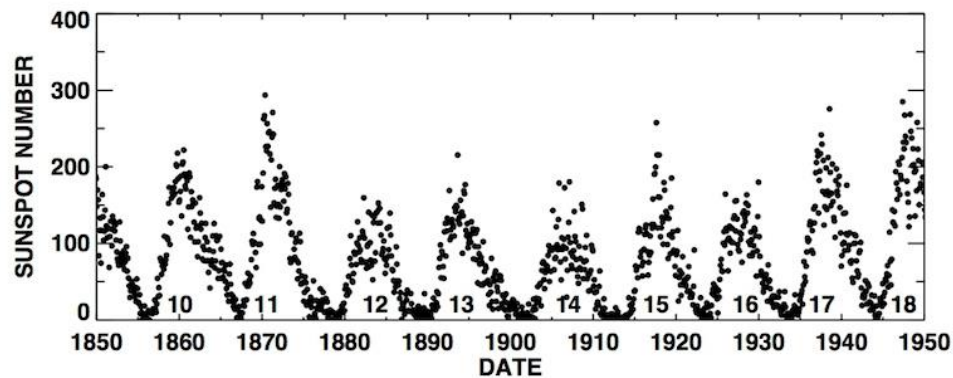
Schwabe's data for 1826 to 1843



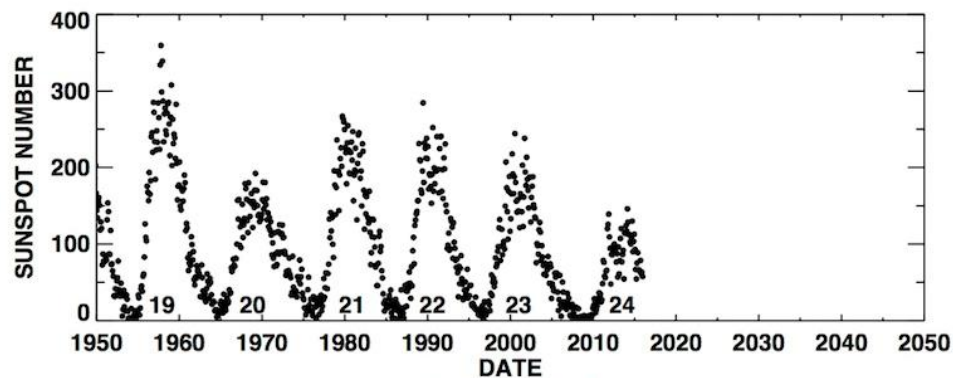
The Sun: 23 Full Cycles Observed



**Rudolf Wolf 1849 -- “Relative”
Sunspot Number = 10 times
number sunspot groups + total
distinct spots**



Average cycle: ~11 years, -2, +3



**Average amplitude: ~100, with
range from 50 to 200**

The Corona and the Solar Cycle

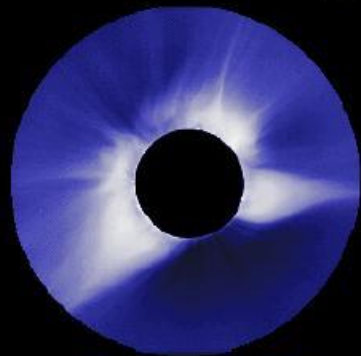
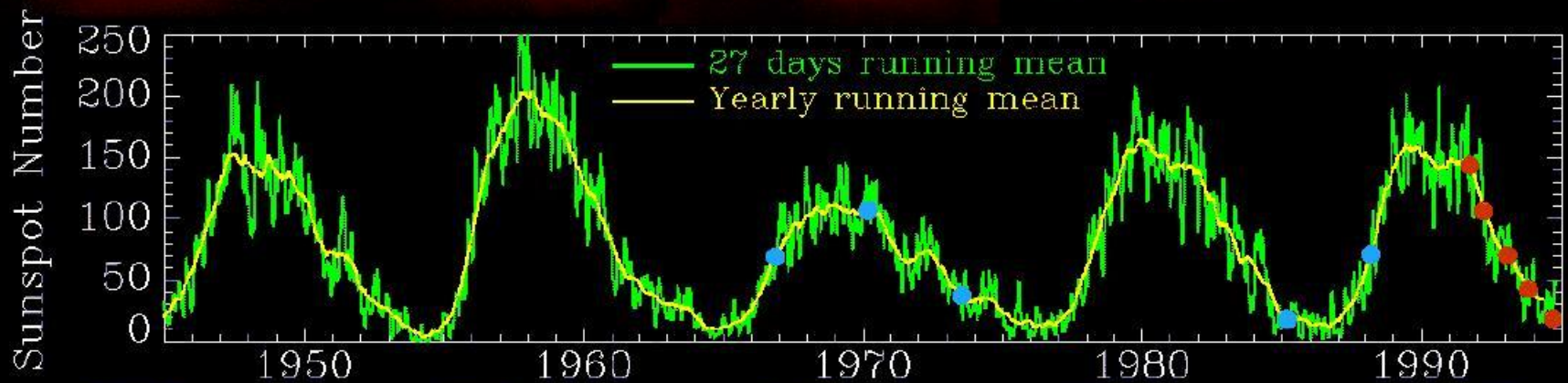
28 Sep 1991

27 Mar 1992

26 Jan 1993

04 Nov 1993

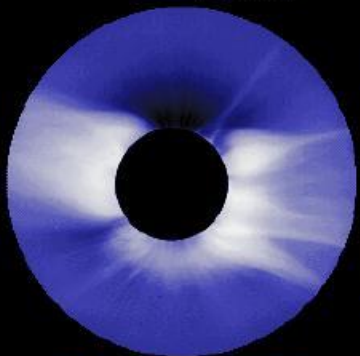
20 Sep 1994



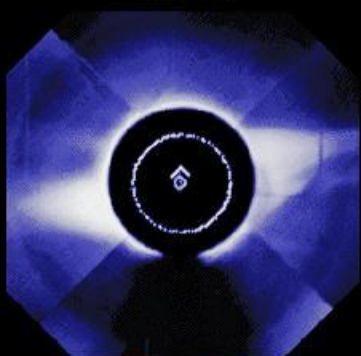
12 Nov 1966



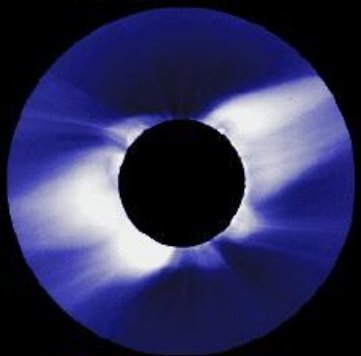
07 Mar 1970



20 Jun 1973



11 Mar 1985



18 Mar 1988

Source: Yohkoh/NOAA/HAO

[SMM Coronagraph]

HAO A-020

The Corona August 21, 2017

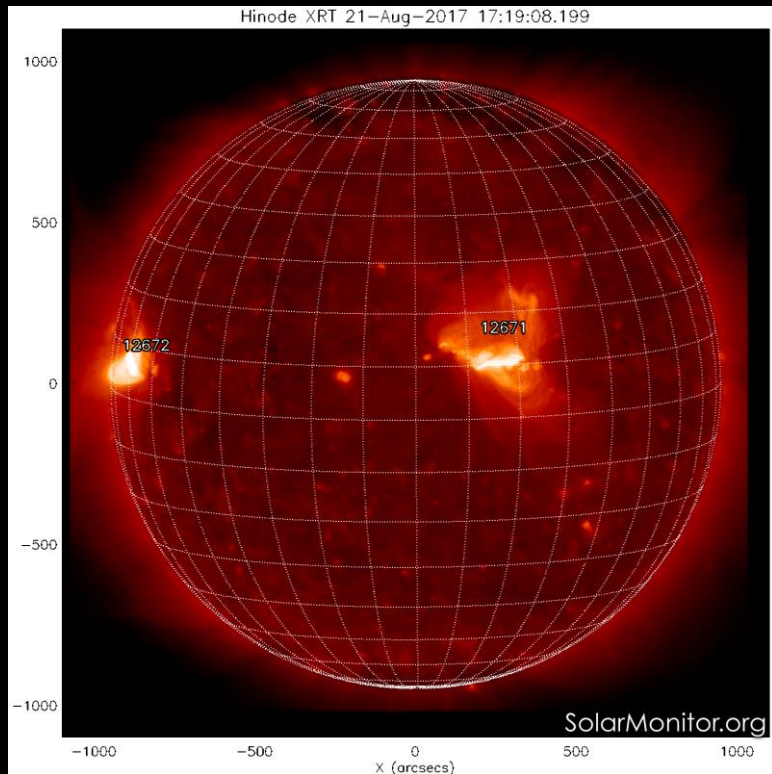


Image by Joe Matus, NASA/MSFC, taken from Hopkinsville, KY

Total Solar Eclipse August 21, 2017



Image Courtesy of Joe Matus, ST 24, NASA/MSFC

Partnerships

- .U.S. Space and Rocket Center
- .Austin Peay State University
- .University of Alabama in Huntsville
- .The Inspire Project
- .Christian County Schools
- .The City of Hopkinsville, KY
- .Citizen CATE
- .Tennessee Tech

Animal Behavior Observations: Cows, Bees, Crickets, Turtles



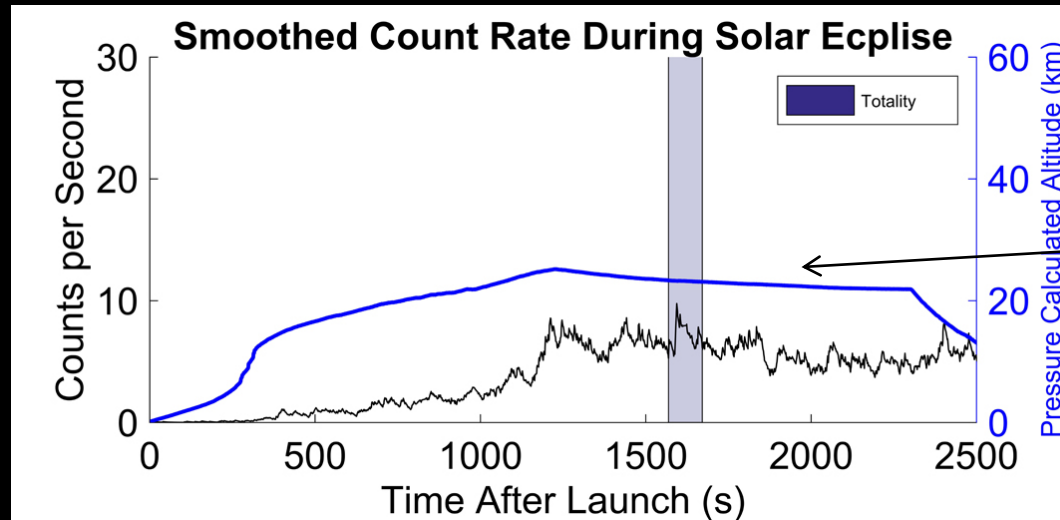
Totality (~13:30 CDT) Behavior

- 1 of 8 cows moved from shade tree
- 97% bees returned to hive, takeoffs 0.5 hr after totality
- 50% of crickets were active/chirping
- 40 turtles on pond bank, only 7 by 15:00 CDT

Montana State Balloon Project

50 Teams from across the nation flew payloads

Three teams at APSU:
APSU, Arkansas State, and UAH



Note plateau in altitude

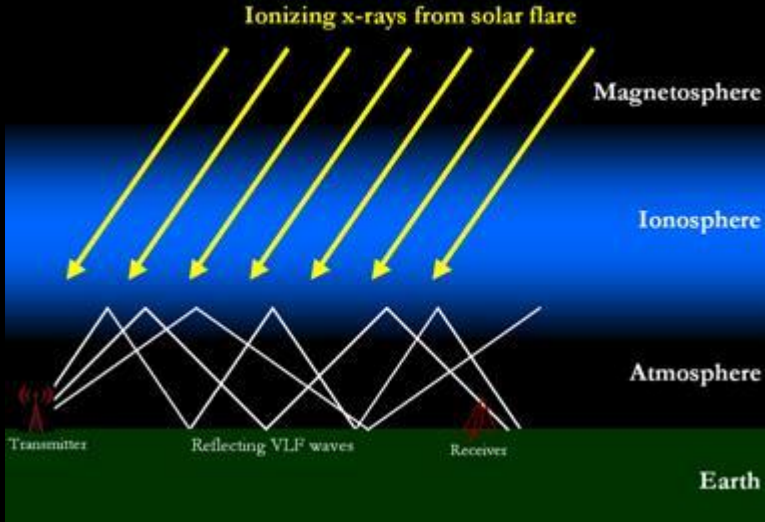


Payloads:

- Video-streaming camera
- Two pounds of hops for Straight to Ale Eclipse Brew
- Geiger counter, temperature, pressure

Impact of Reduced Solar Irradiance on the Ionosphere

Character of the lower ionosphere not well understood



Physical Processes:

Solar radiation reduced

Ionosphere responds--ions recombine

How quickly does the ionosphere recover?

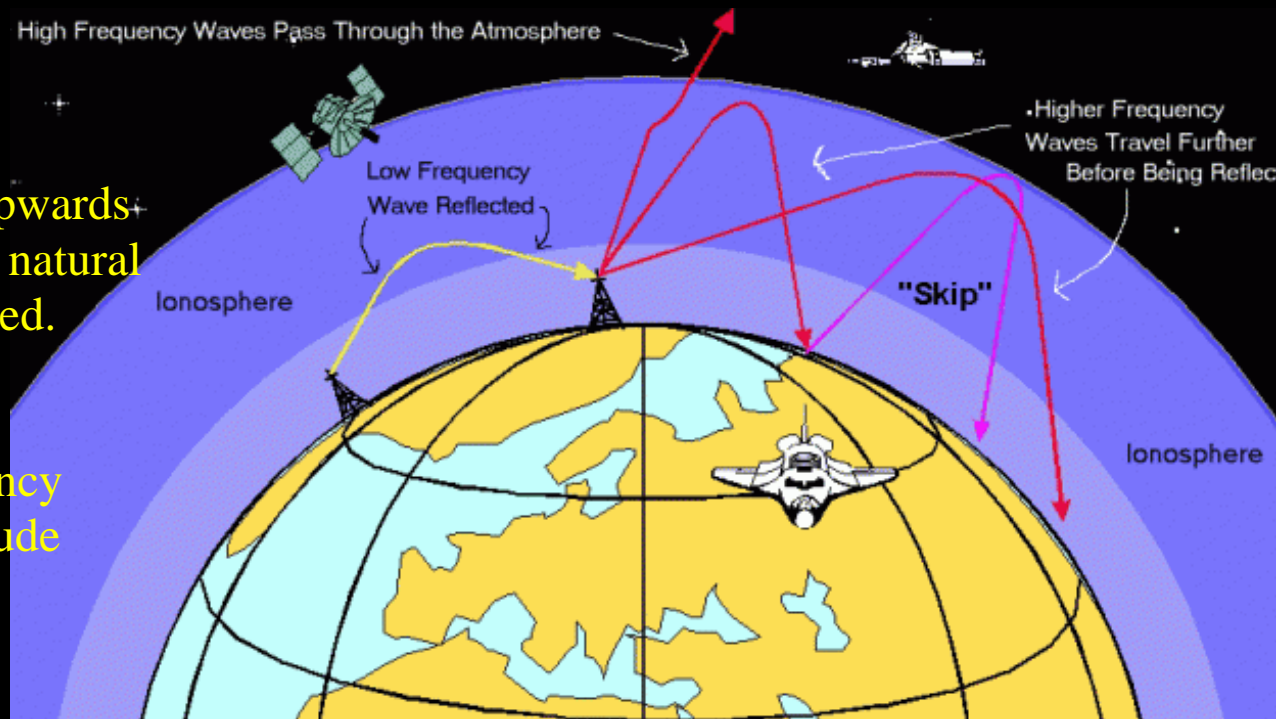
Measurements: Radio signal transmitted upwards
A layer of electrons reflect, when plasma's natural oscillation frequency equals that transmitted.

Time-of-flight measured

-> Height of reflection

Plasma density proportional to frequency

-> Plasma Density as function of altitude



Reverse Beacon Network (RBN)

The RBN: an array of passive receivers that record radio links of amateur (ham) operators
(Frissell et al., 2014)



guy wires for support

center mast for antenna

other end support
(off page)

Station WL7C- end support for antenna

The RBN experiment engaged students, citizen scientists, and amateur radio operators in an investigation of the impact of the eclipse on Earth's ionosphere.
82 foot-long antenna, 42 ft from center mast to each support,
focus on 40 m reception -- analysis ongoing

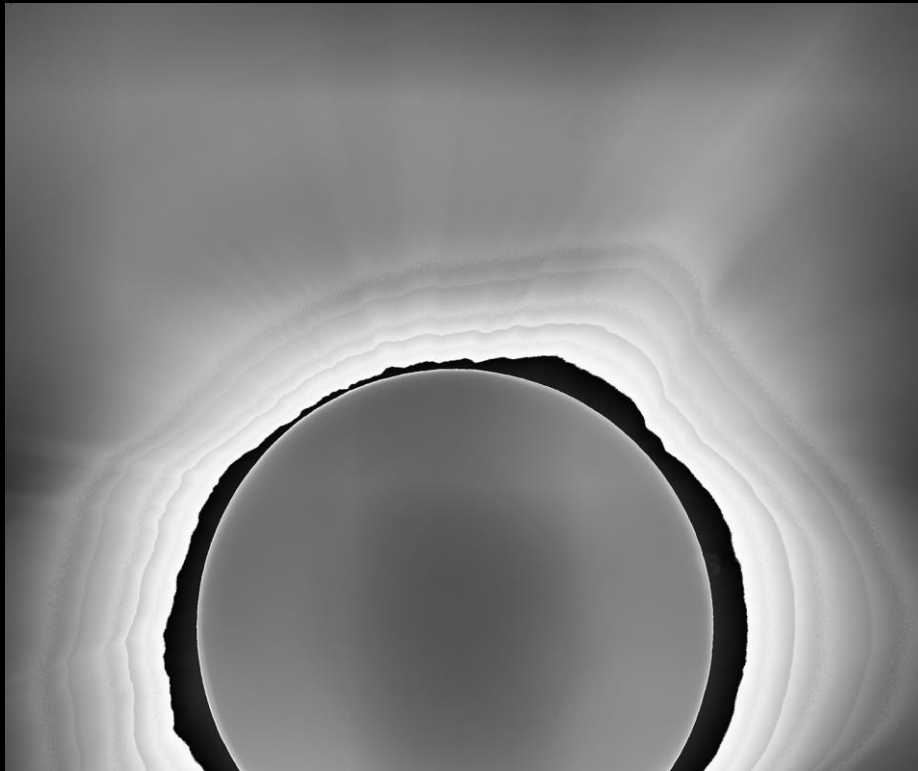
Shadow Bands

Shadow Bands



Citizen Continental-America Telescopic Eclipse Experiment (CATE)

62 Sites Across Country Using
Identical Equipment
Obtained Data



First Contact at APSU



Image: Mitzi Adams, NASA/MSFC

Totality at APSU



Totality at Hopkinsville, KY



Image from Dr. Jesse-Lee Dimech,
NASA NPP



Image from Joe Matus,
NASA/MSFC/ST24

Next "Big" U.S. Eclipses

Annular Solar Eclipse of 2023 Oct 14

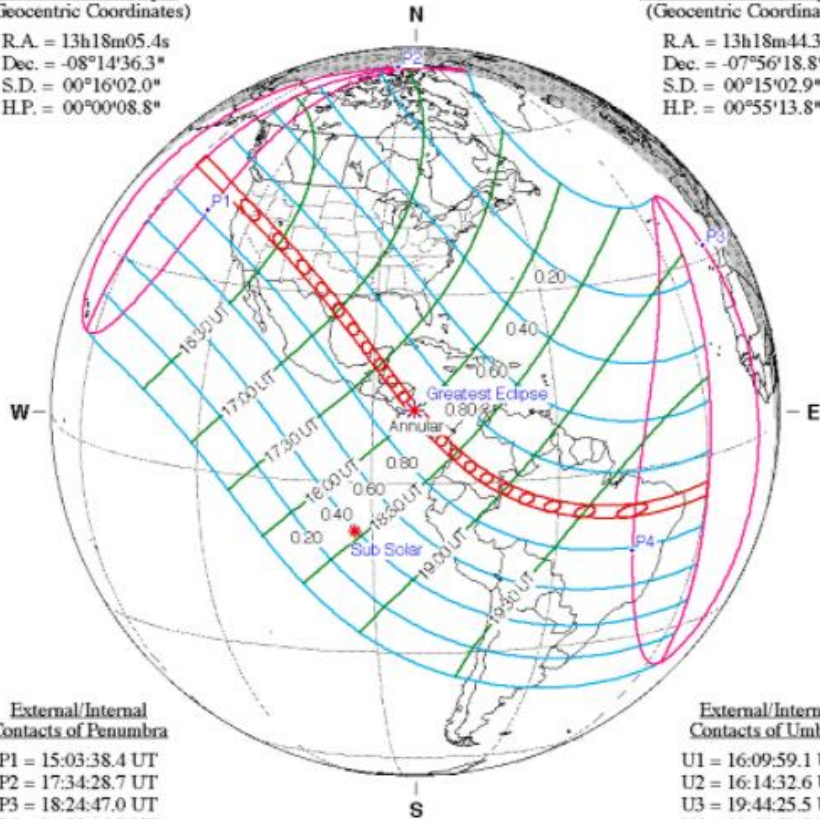
Geocentric Conjunction = 17:36:28.8 UT J.D. = 2460232.233667
 Greatest Eclipse = 17:59:21.0 UT J.D. = 2460232.249549
 Eclipse Magnitude = 0.9520 Gamma = 0.3752
 Saros Series = 134 Member = 44 of 71

Sun at Greatest Eclipse
 (Geocentric Coordinates)

R.A. = 13h18m05.4s
 Dec. = -08°14'36.3"
 S.D. = 00°16'02.0"
 H.P. = 00°00'08.8"

Moon at Greatest Eclipse
 (Geocentric Coordinates)

R.A. = 13h18m44.3s
 Dec. = -07°56'18.8"
 S.D. = 00°15'02.9"
 H.P. = 00°55'13.8"



External/Internal
 Contacts of Penumbra

P1 = 15:03:38.4 UT
 P2 = 17:34:28.7 UT
 P3 = 18:24:47.0 UT
 P4 = 20:55:06.9 UT

External/Internal
 Contacts of Umbra

U1 = 16:09:59.1 UT
 U2 = 16:14:32.6 UT
 U3 = 19:44:25.5 UT
 U4 = 19:48:53.5 UT

Local Circumstances at Greatest Eclipse

Lat. = 11°21.7'N Sun Alt. = 67.9°
 Long. = 083°04.3'W Sun Azm. = 208.0°
 Path Width = 187.4 km Duration = 05m17.2s

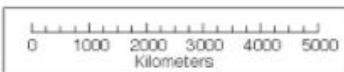
Geocentric Libration
 (Optical + Physical)

l = -3.80°
 b = -0.48°
 c = 20.45°

Brown Lun. No. = 1247

Ephemeris & Constants

Eph. = Newcomb/ILE
 ΔT = 80.7 s
 k1 = 0.2724880
 k2 = 0.2722810
 Δb = 0.0° Δl = 0.0°



F. Espenak, NASA's GSFC - Fri, Jul 2,

sunearth.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse/eclipse.html

Total Solar Eclipse of 2024 Apr 08

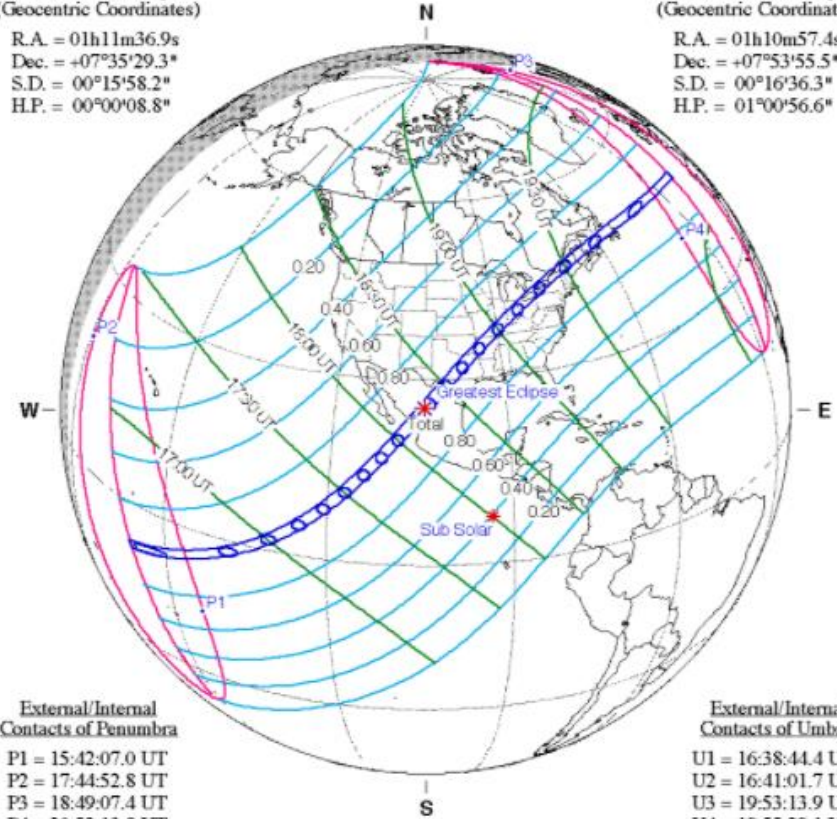
Geocentric Conjunction = 18:36:02.5 UT J.D. = 2460409.275029
 Greatest Eclipse = 18:17:13.1 UT J.D. = 2460409.261957
 Eclipse Magnitude = 1.0565 Gamma = 0.3432
 Saros Series = 139 Member = 30 of 71

Sun at Greatest Eclipse
 (Geocentric Coordinates)

R.A. = 01h11m36.9s
 Dec. = +07°35'29.3"
 S.D. = 00°15'58.2"
 H.P. = 00°00'08.8"

Moon at Greatest Eclipse
 (Geocentric Coordinates)

R.A. = 01h10m57.4s
 Dec. = +07°53'55.5"
 S.D. = 00°16'36.3"
 H.P. = 01°00'56.6"



External/Internal
 Contacts of Penumbra

P1 = 15:42:07.0 UT
 P2 = 17:44:52.8 UT
 P3 = 18:49:07.4 UT
 P4 = 20:52:13.8 UT

External/Internal
 Contacts of Umbra

U1 = 16:38:44.4 UT
 U2 = 16:41:01.7 UT
 U3 = 19:53:13.9 UT
 U4 = 19:55:29.1 UT

Local Circumstances at Greatest Eclipse

Lat. = 25°17.5'N Sun Alt. = 69.8°
 Long. = 104°07.2'W Sun Azm. = 149.4°
 Path Width = 197.5 km Duration = 04m28.1s

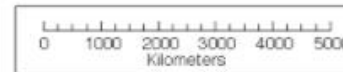
Geocentric Libration
 (Optical + Physical)

l = 2.00°
 b = -0.46°
 c = -20.75°

Brown Lun. No. = 1253

Ephemeris & Constants

Eph. = Newcomb/ILE
 ΔT = 81.2 s
 k1 = 0.2724880
 k2 = 0.2722810
 Δb = 0.0° Δl = 0.0°



F. Espenak, NASA's GSFC - Fri, Jul 2,

sunearth.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse/eclipse.html

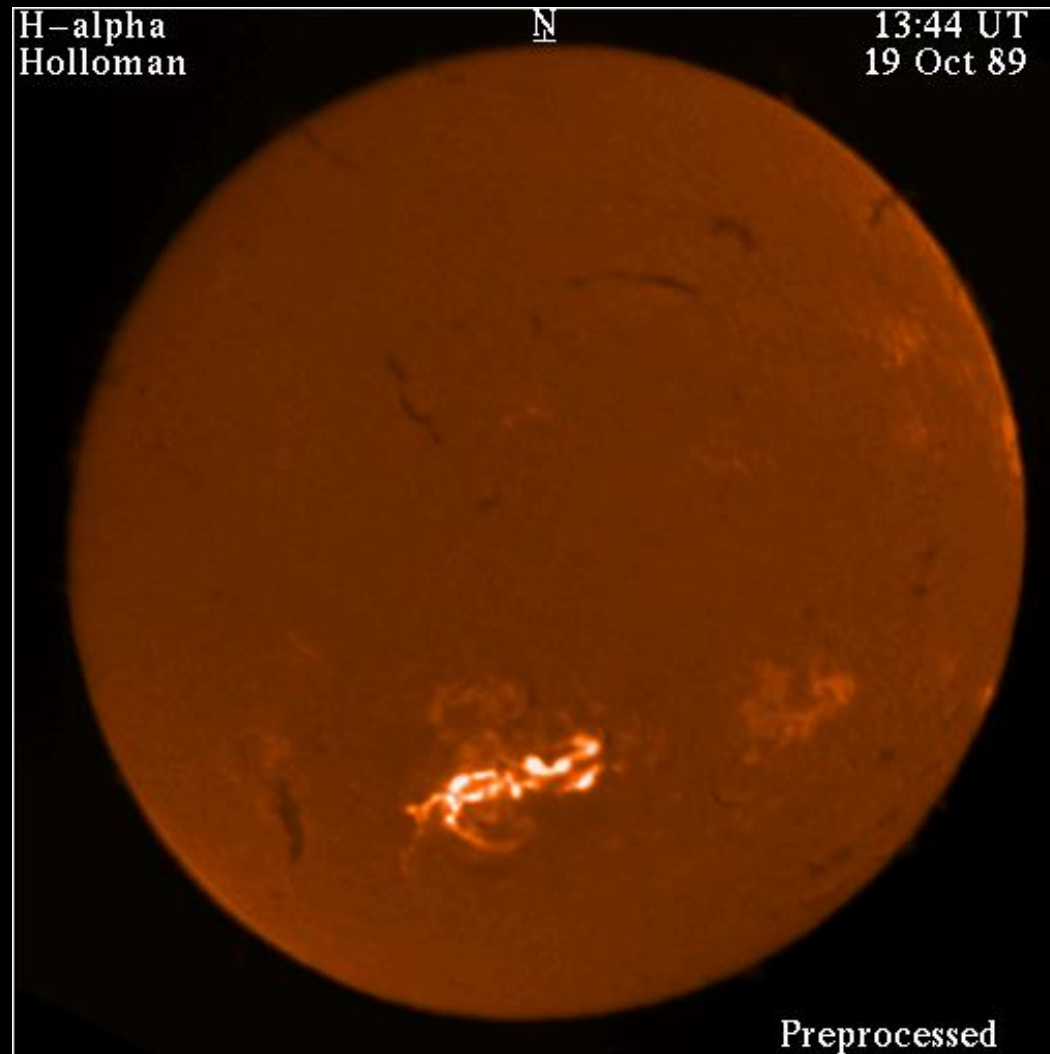
Solar Eruptions

Flares

Coronal Mass Ejections

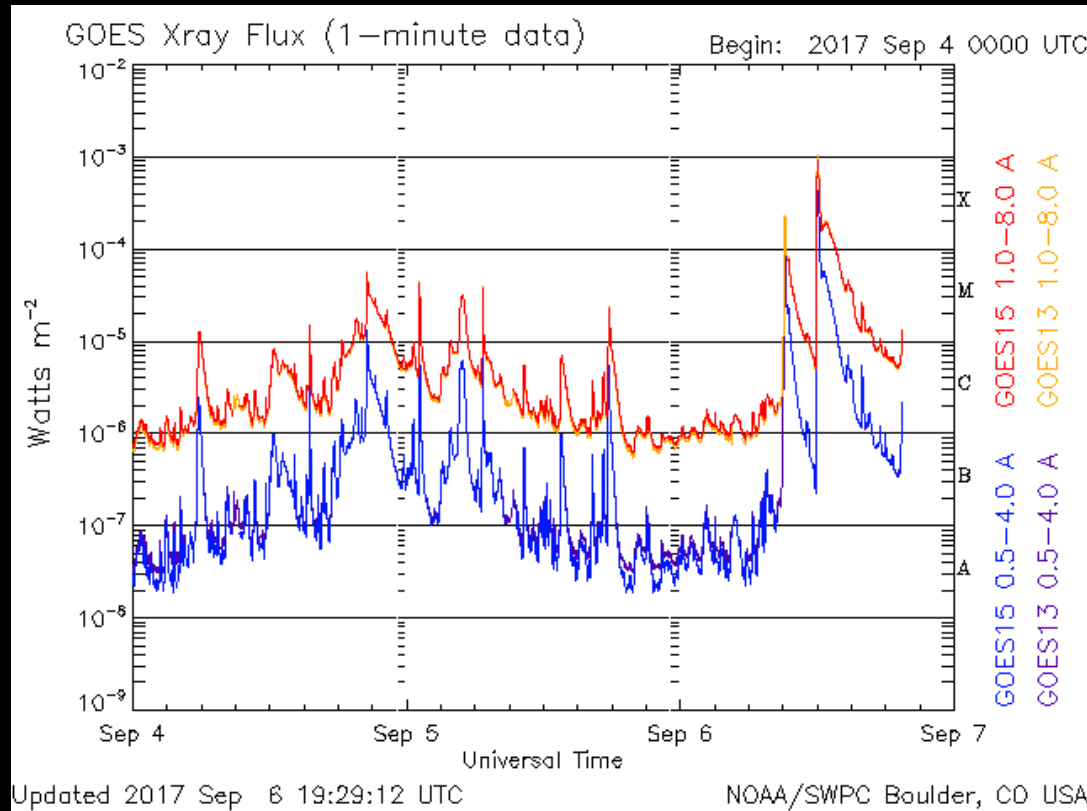
Jets

Solar Flares

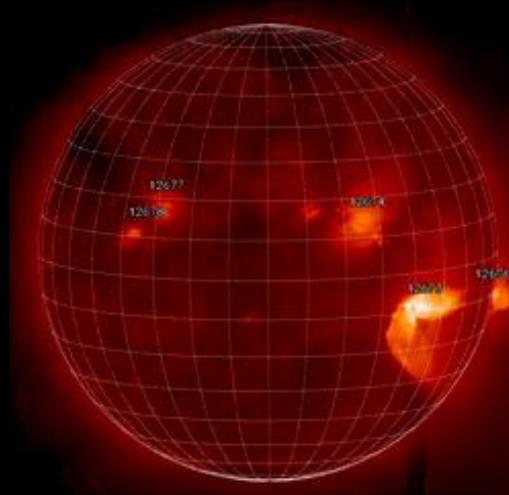


SELSIS H-alpha Solar Image File 13441902.SPA:
MRNG H-A FULL DISK W/4-B FLR I/P.

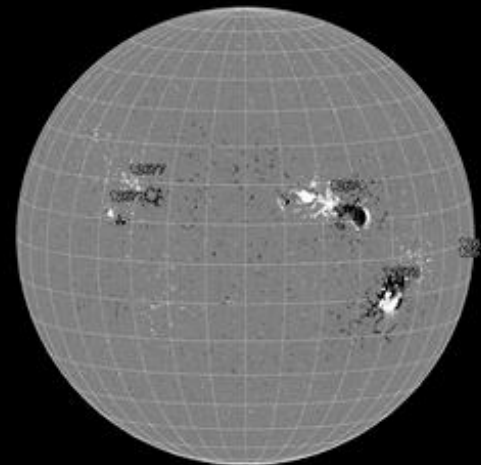
Solar Flare Classification



Sept. 6, 17:59 UT
Hinode X-Ray Telescope
(XRT) X9 flare

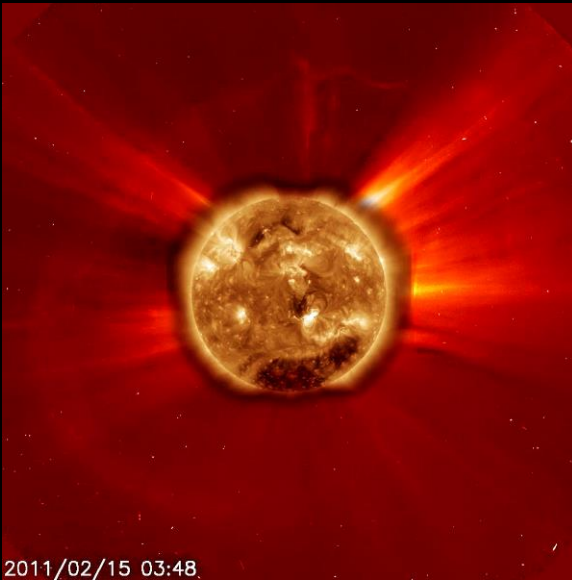


Sept. 6, 18:46 UT
SDO/Helioseismic
and Magnetic Imager
(HMI)

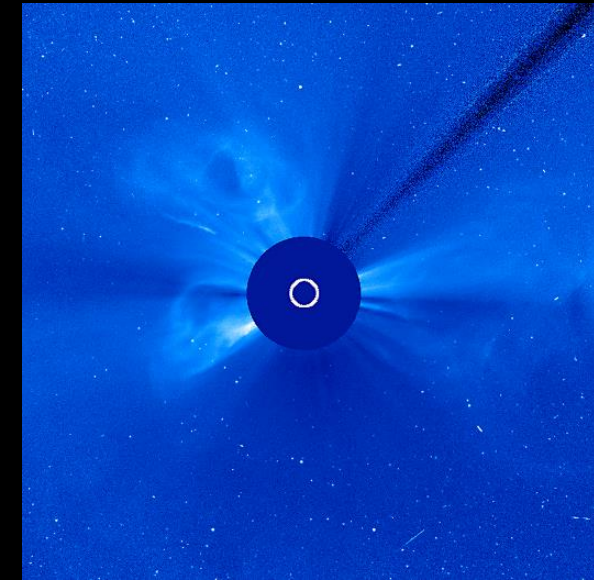
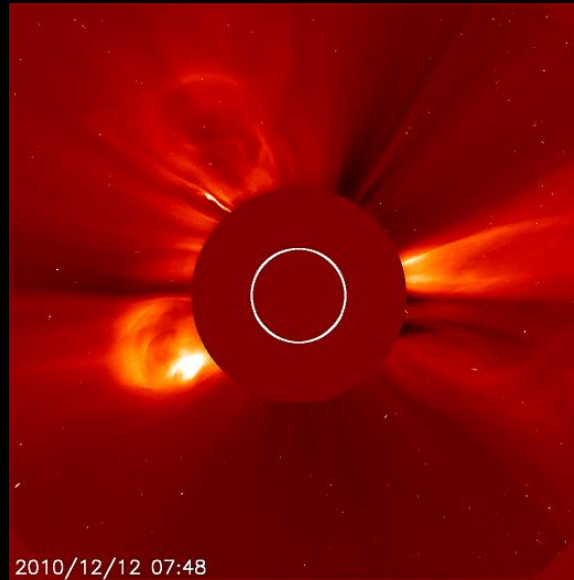


Solar Eruptions

Coronal Mass Ejections



SDO plus SOHO C2
X2-flare and halo CME



Three distinct CMEs

1. To right in both images, from a filament eruption,
2. From North Pole,
3. From far side of Sun.

All three eruptions happened within hours of each other.

Jets in Coronal Holes

Coronal Jets

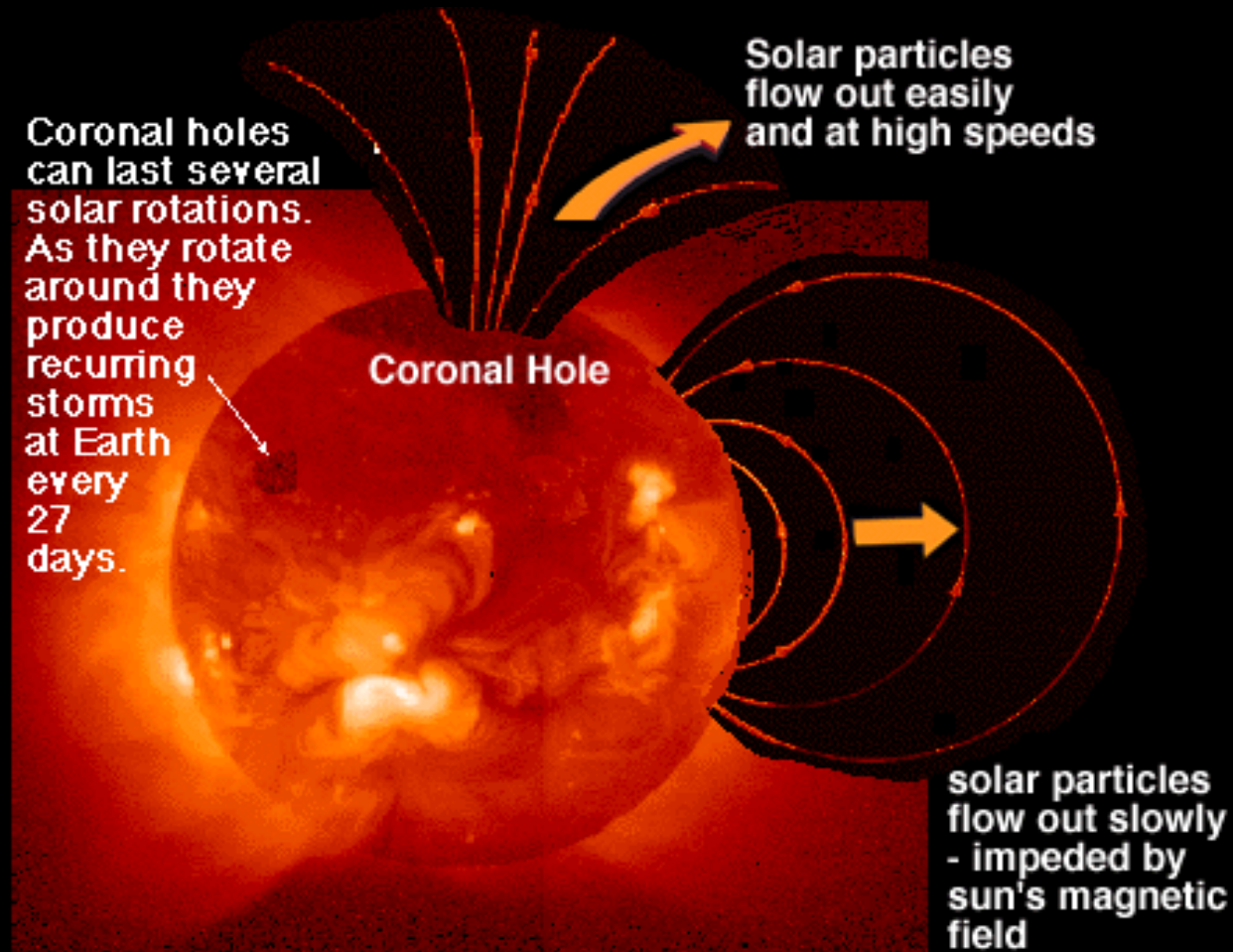
What is a Jet?



JET / noun – plural noun: jets

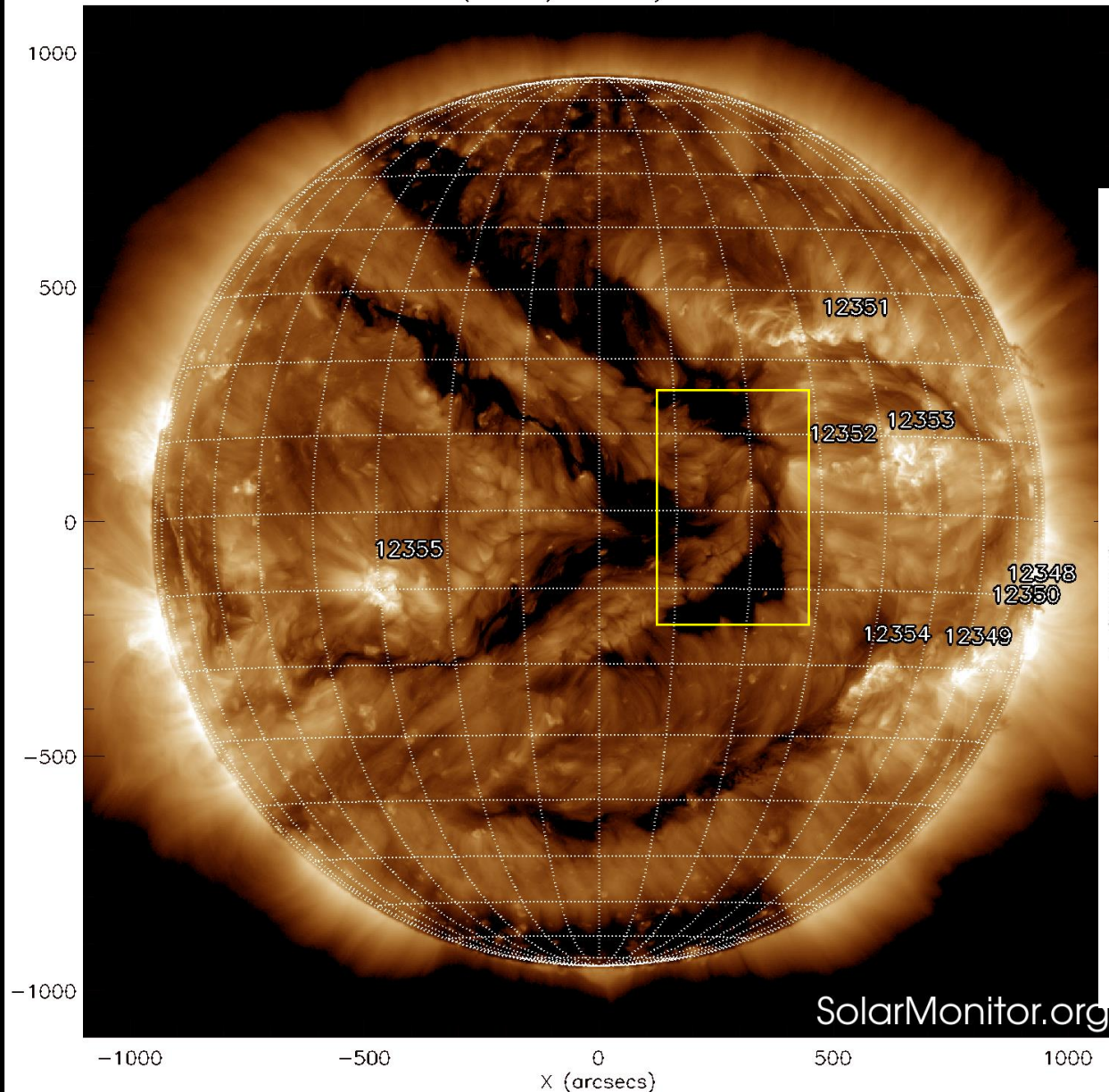
1. a rapid stream of liquid or gas forced out of a small opening. "a high-pressure shower with pulsating jets", a nozzle or narrow opening for sending out a jet of liquid or gas. "Agnes turned up the gas jet"
2. an aircraft powered by one or more jet engines. "a private jet". "Astronauts fly T-38 jets."

Coronal Holes in General (in X rays)

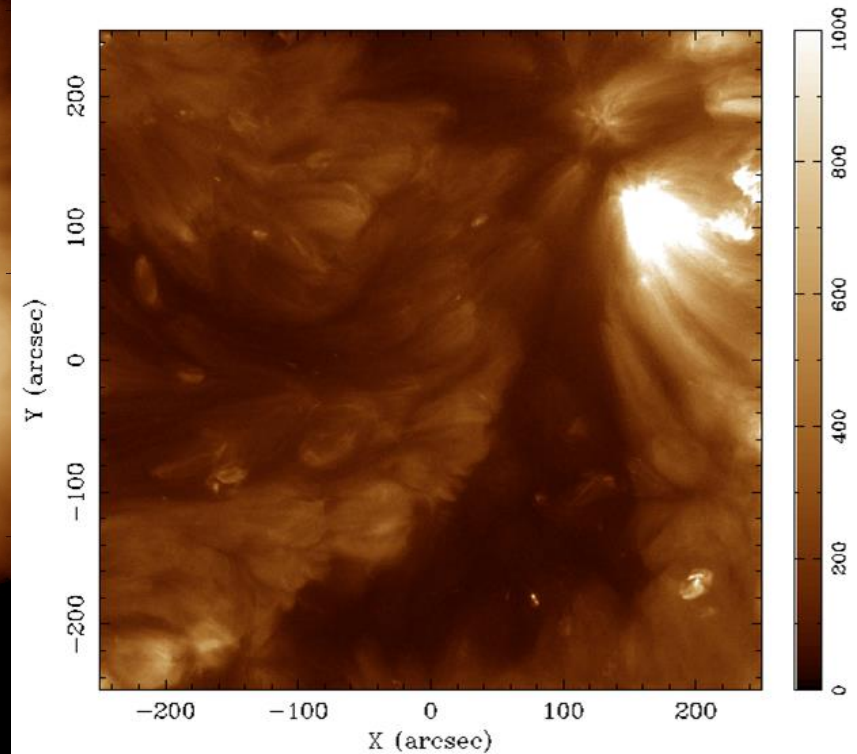


Corona Holes in General (in EUV)

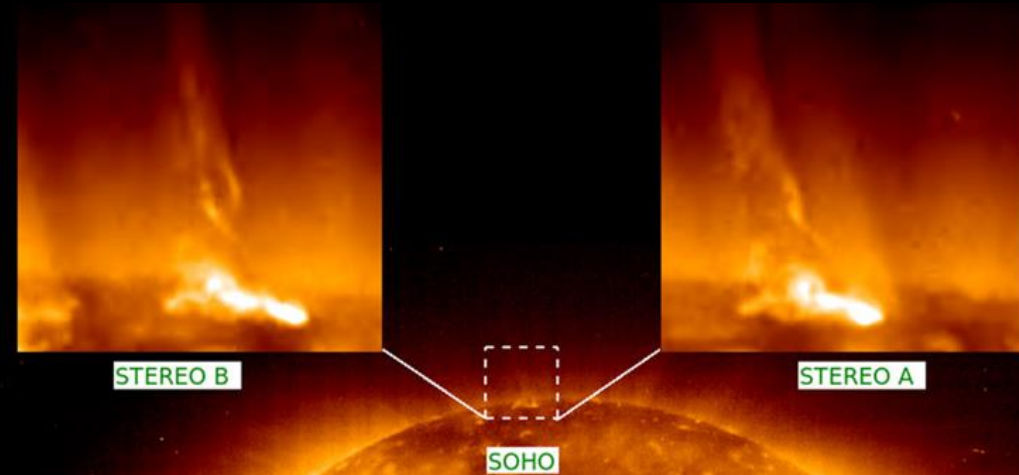
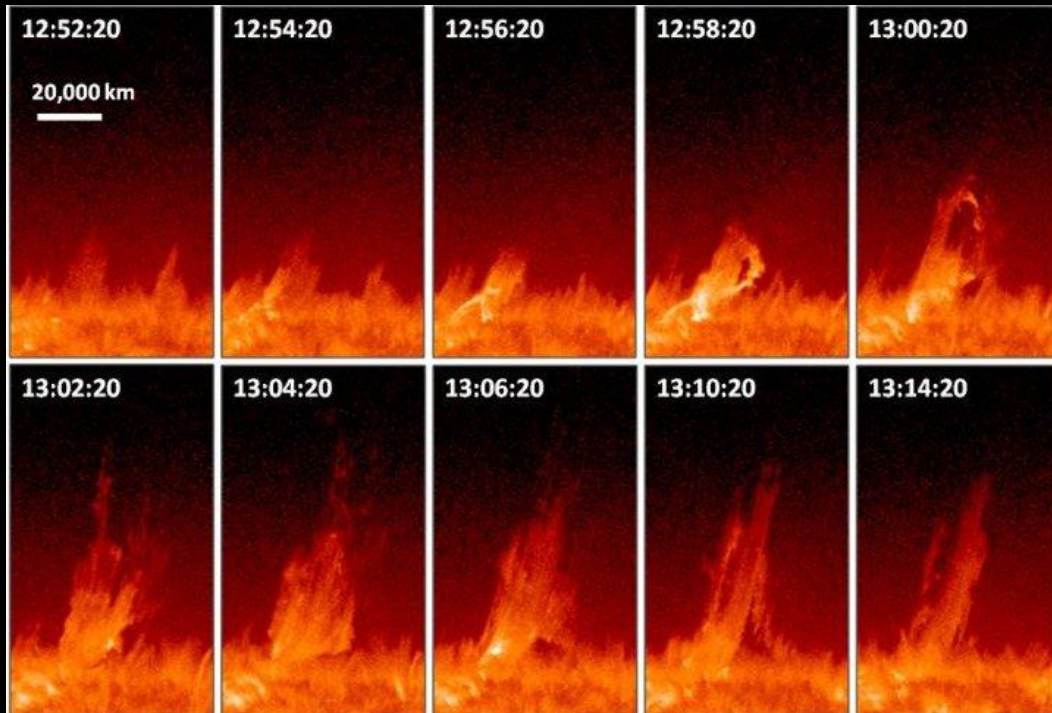
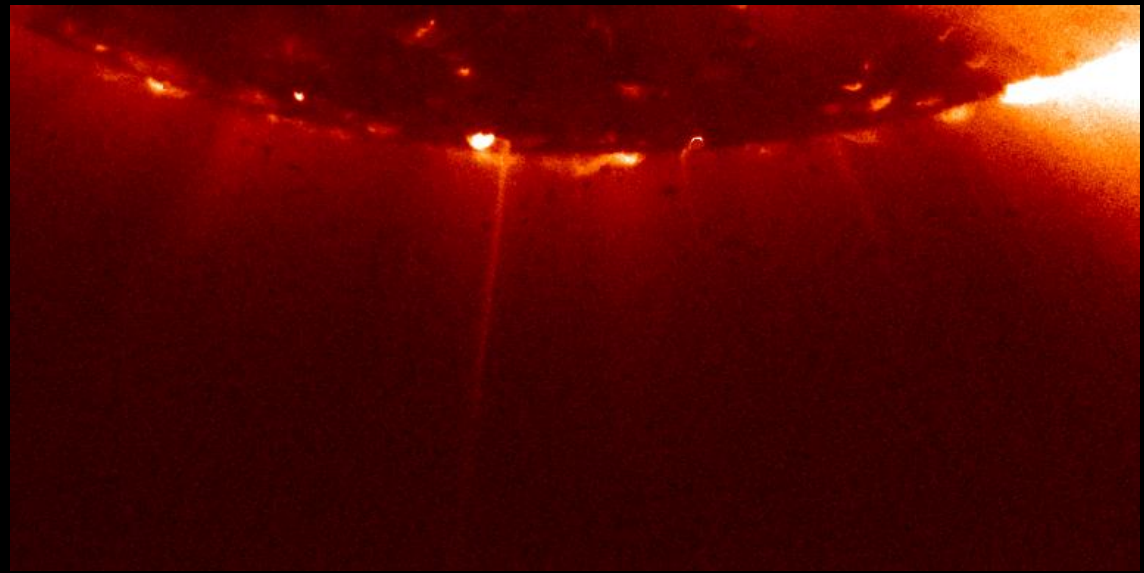
SDO AIA Fe XII (193 Å) 25-May-2015 23:30:42.840



AIA-193 2015-05-24_19:11:18 Coronal Hole
Rotate Time 19:00 UT



Solar jets can eject a million tons of matter at a speed of a million miles per hour (~45,000 km/s) in just a few minutes.



Above is an example of a “blowout” jet, from a northern polar coronal hole on 2010 October 2. The images are from SDO's AIA in 304 Å.

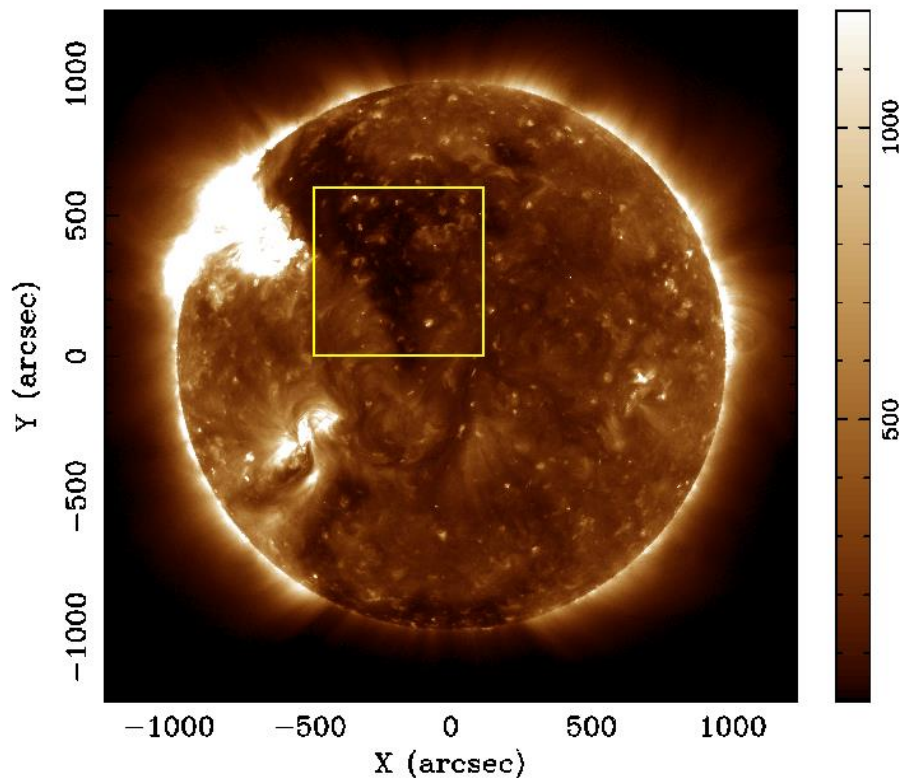
From: The Cool Component and the Dichotomy, Lateral Expansion, and Axial Rotation of Solar X-Ray Jets, R.L. Moore, *et al.*, *ApJ*, 768:134 2013 June 1

STEREO Stereoscopic Observations Constraining the Initiation of Polar Coronal Jets
 S. Patsourakos, E. Pariat, A. Vourlidas, S. K. Antiochos, J. P. Wuesler
 The Astrophysical Journal Letters; June 10 2008
<http://arxiv.org/abs/0804.4862>

A Model for Solar Jets
 E. Pariat, S.K. Antiochos, C.R. DeVore

Jets in Coronal Holes

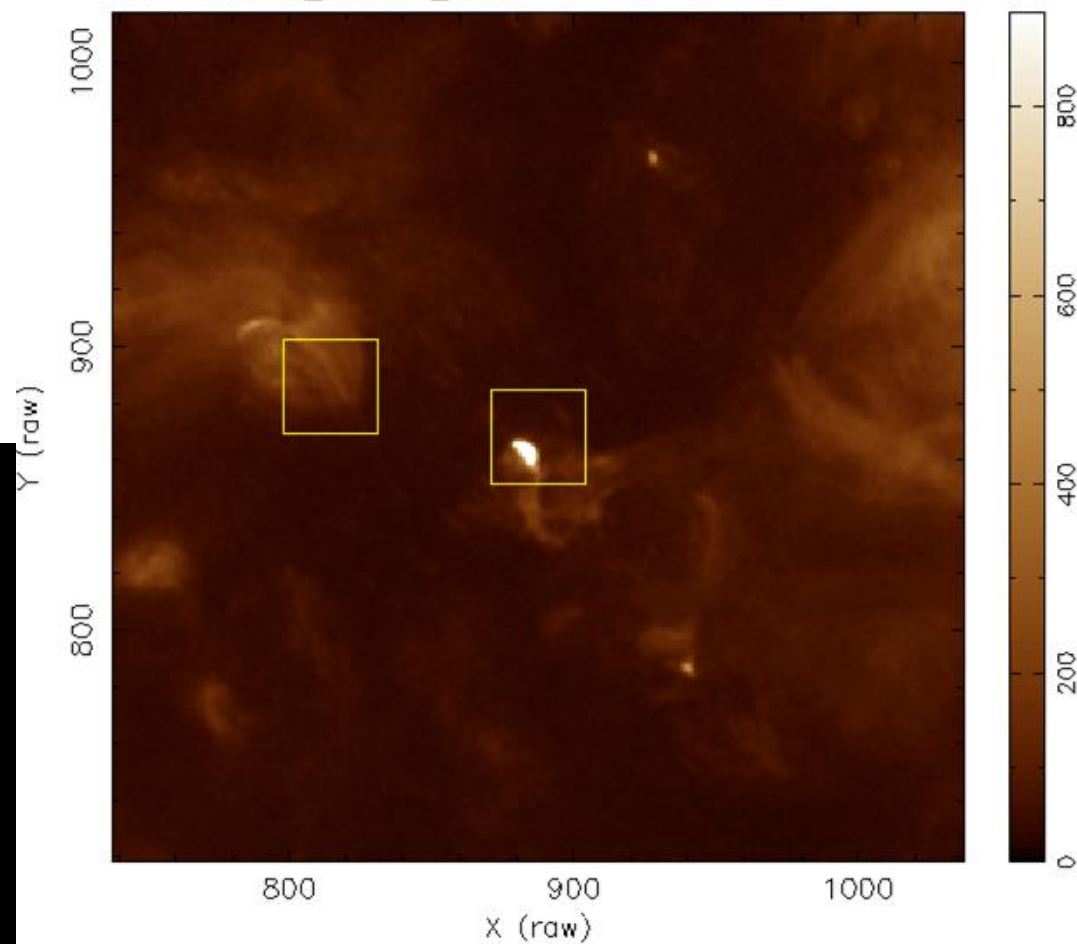
AIA-193 Full-Disk Image, 27-Feb-2011, 15:04:19 UT



This jet has a component with speeds > 200 km/s (1 min).

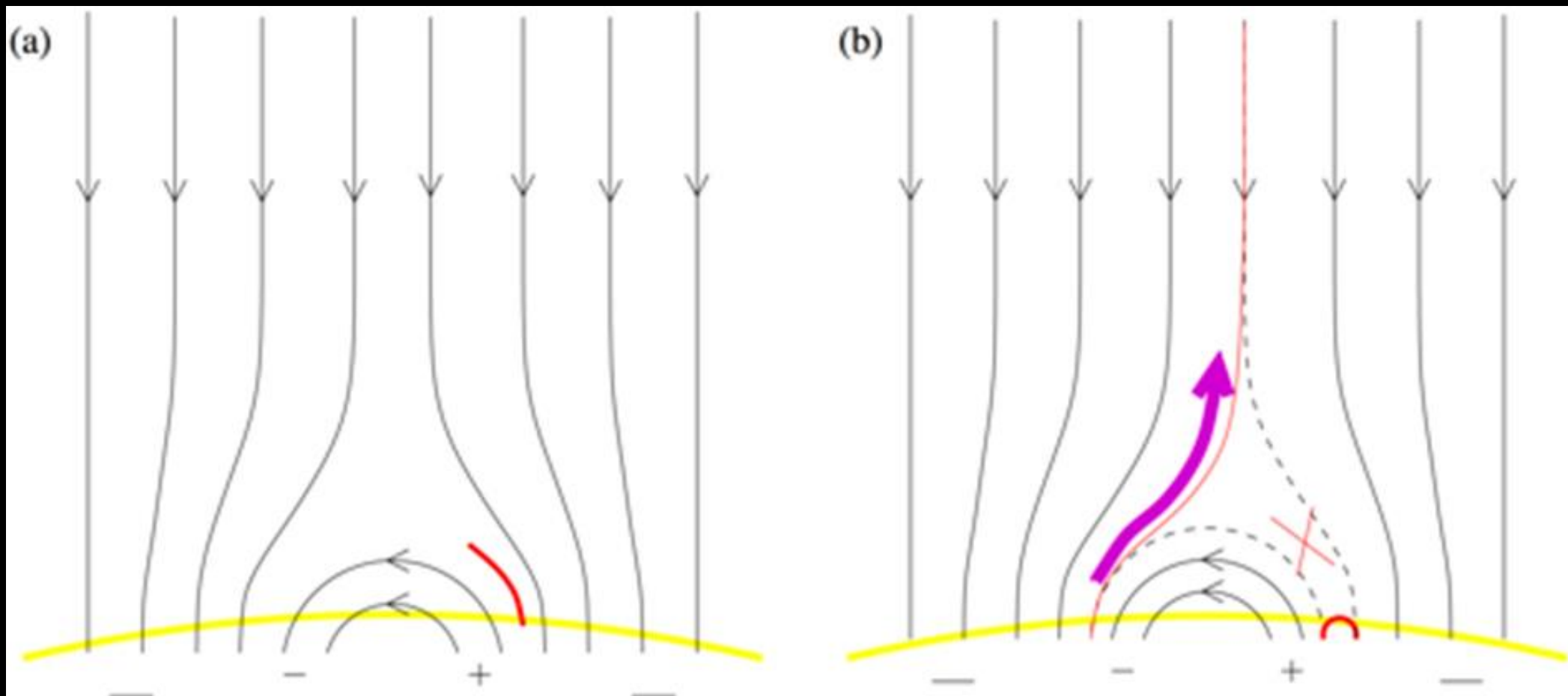
In 304 \AA , speeds are ~ 80 km/s (4 min.)

2011-02-27_130519_r.fits



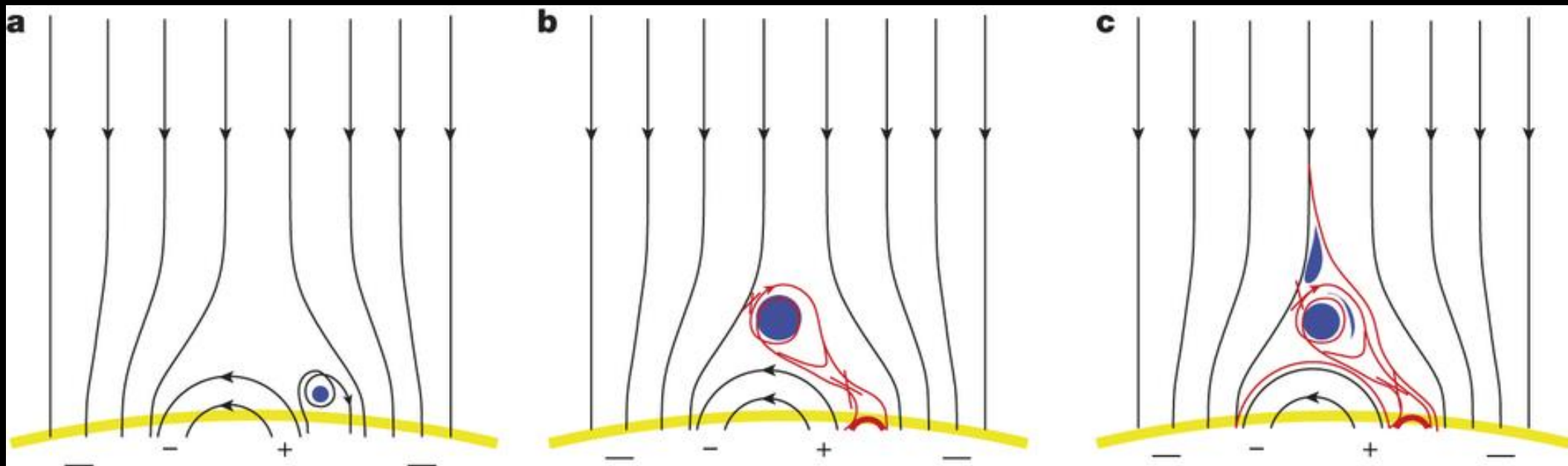
Coronal Mass Ejections have typical speeds of about 300 km/s, but can range from 100 - 3000 km/s

Jet Formation (Cartoon) Solar X-ray Jets



The commonly accepted mechanism for jet formation: Black lines represent magnetic field, with arrows indicating polarity; the yellow curve is the solar limb; the thick red curve in a represents a plasma current sheet; the red cross in b shows the location of field reconnection. a, Initial state. b, Jet formation: flux emergence purportedly forces reconnection at the current sheet (red cross), resulting in new closed-loop field (red loop), and new connections to the open coronal field (thin red line), along which the X-ray jet (purple) flows. According to this model, the new reconnection loops appear as the JBP.

Jet Formation (Cartoon) Solar X-ray Jets (Revised)



Representation of the minifilament-eruption process that drives the formation of solar X-ray jets, as inferred from our observations. Black lines represent magnetic field, with arrows indicating polarities; red curves are newly reconnected field lines; blue features are minifilament material; yellow curve is the solar limb (the apparent edge of the Sun). From the initial state (a), the jet forms as the minifilament erupts (b, c), with reconnection locations indicated by red crosses (b, c). The JBP (bold red arc) forms at the location of filament lift-off (b, c). See Methods for more details.

Summary

Our Sun is a single star with a system of planets

The Sun is a stable star, happily converting hydrogen to helium

The Sun will remain on the Main Sequence of ~ 4.5 billion years more

The Sun is an active star, which produces spots, flares, and coronal mass ejections

Jets of all sizes occur on the Sun.

The mechanism for producing the jets seems to be similar at all scales.

Because chromospheric jets can trigger flares and CMEs, which can affect Earth, it is important to understand all jets.

Will the Sun end its life with a bang or a whimper?

What is a Star? -- Differences



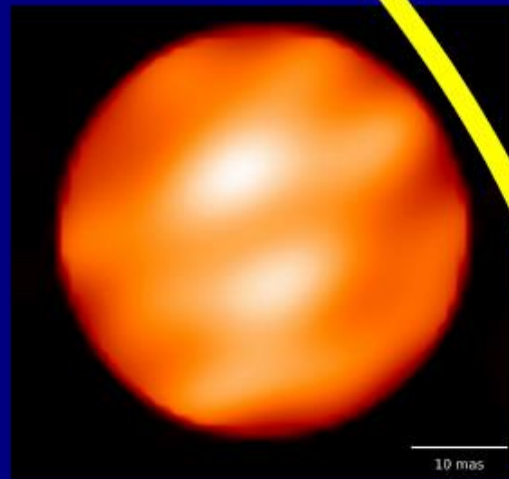
Brightness



Rigel: A blue-white star, about 8600 ly away, 12,000 K, 80 R_{\odot} , 23 M_{\odot} , 8 million years old.



Our Sun: A yellow star, ~8 lm away, 6,000 K, ~700,000 km (432,000 mi), 2×10^{30} kg, 4.5 billion years old, ~ 5M yr left.



Betelgeuse: A red-giant star, about 650 ly away, 3500 K, 862 R_{\odot} , 20 M_{\odot} , 8.5 million years old, ~100,000 years left.



Aging

Color



