

A round-up of the eye-related hot topics that have been trending on social media over the last few weeks.

#solar #eclipse

The recent total solar eclipse over North America resulted in some stunning photos, but it was the aftermath that made the most headlines. There were ophthalmologists reporting a significant increase in the number of patients coming through their clinic after the event [1]. Many patients admitted to looking at the eclipse without any appropriate eyewear, leading to damage to the retina, which may end up being permanent. There was even a spike in Google search trends for 'retina damage', 'eyes hurt', 'can't see' and 'eye damage' within hours of the eclipse occurring [2]. On a separate note, it is important to remember that there is more than one way to 'see' a solar eclipse. It was great to read the articles covering the availability of sound and touch devices at public gatherings on the day of the event, to allow those with differing levels of visual impairment to also experience it [3]. Either using a box that converts light into different sounds to convey the sense of darkening during the eclipse, or using tablets with rows of moving dots to simulate the passage of the moon across the sun, there were more ways than ever to appreciate this natural wonder. As blind astronomer Wanda Díaz-Merced so aptly put it, "the sky belongs to everyone."

#RunningWithSightLoss #inspirational

Alongside Wanda, there were other inspirational figures with visual impairments who made the news recently. Mark Rogerson previously lost sight in one eye from a retinal detachment, then the other eye from complications of a preventative ocular surgery. He has become the first person with sight loss in Europe, and only the second in the world, to finish the Six World Marathon Majors, raising £25,000 for the Royal National Institute of Blind People, alongside his guide runner Katie Garrity [4]. The cities that make up the elusive six are Tokyo, Boston, Berlin, Chicago, New York and, of course, London. I was in London for the marathon, not running, but may have cheered on Mark without knowing; it was hard to keep track of the hundreds going past! Speaking of runners, Yahya Pandor ran the Manchester marathon, and is believed to be the first blind runner to do so without being tethered to a guide [5]. Yahya lost his vision due to macula degeneration, but wanted to show that sight loss "doesn't limit you." While not tethered, he still had a running partner who would guide him with voice prompts, describing the surroundings and warning about what lay ahead. In a similar vein, Adrian Chiles wrote in his *Guardian* column this month about walking with a friend of his, blind ultra-runner Dave Heeley, who was

fundraising with a walk from Wembley to West Bromwich [6]. There were people in the group who were sighted, partially sighted and, like Dave, blind. Adrian even spent some of his time walking blindfolded with an experienced guide, noting how impressive it is to carry out such a role effectively, and how much of a difference it can make to a journey with the loss of just one sense.

#SeaBeast #periocularInjury #PeskyAnts

Recently, there seem to be a number of animal-related news stories with an ocular theme. Firstly, reports of sea creatures washing up on the shores of Texas caught my attention as they have a striking resemblance to a disembodied eyeball [7]. Their tentacle resembles the optic nerve and packs quite the sting, so beachgoers are being warned to keep away, despite their captivating appearance. On the other side of the world in Indonesia, researchers were tracking a wild Sumatran orangutang named Rakus [8]. He had sustained an injury below his right eye with an open wound. The team were amazed to see him seek out the leaves of a specific climbing vine, chew them without swallowing, then purposefully use the pulp to cover the wound. It healed nicely over the coming days and left only a small scar. We know the leaves of this vine have an anti-bacterial, anti-inflammatory and analgesic effect from their role in traditional medicine, but the researchers are perplexed as to where Rakus picked this up. He seemed to show that he had the cognitive capacity to know that he needed to treat the injury with a medically active plant, which is just incredible. If he gets his hand on my phaco machine I might be out of a job! Lastly, a crossover of animal news, eyes, and my love of gaming I mentioned in a previous issue... the newly released *Ants Took My Eyeball* might conjure up some uncomfortable mental images, but this 2D action platform game has been released to stellar reviews [9]. Hopefully I will be keeping headlines like this in the virtual world, rather than describing any true-life incidences of ants stealing a person's eyeball.

#DogBite #BiteCroc

Back to humans, though it seems our eyes can still be affected by the animal kingdom. A 19-year-old man in Japan has made international headlines after paralysis of his left eye following a dog bite [10]. After developing double vision a few days after the injury to the side of his face, he was diagnosed with 'canine tooth syndrome'. Excessive inflammation was preventing normal ocular motility, and the bite itself seemed to have injured the trochlea and superior oblique muscle of his left eye. He

ended up requiring surgery, but is now making good improvement. Talking of animals with a nasty bite, another story that caught my eye was one featuring a crocodile [11]. A 28-year-old woman in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had a lump slowly grow on her left eye over two years. The lump was noted to move and subsequently operated on, revealing it to contain a number of small larva that belong to a parasite that often infects crocodiles. The woman reported regularly eating the meat of crocs, and so this is thought to be the route of transmission in this case. And yes, that story makes me want to vigorously rub my eyes, but hey, at least some ants didn't actually take her eyeball.

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