

The shining: sun, moon, and snowflakes

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Abstract:

Looking up to the skies offers an ever-changing view of the weather, climate, and astronomical phenomena. Much of what we see is recorded by multiple earth observation sensors which, in turn, gives us access to rich and detailed datasets for mapping purposes. Many of the maps made from these data are routine in their design, and while those sort of maps are relatively rapidly produced, shared, and consumed via digital products, what can cartography, and print technology, perhaps offer in terms of a more delightful product?

This talk will explore a few of the maps I've made recently of the 2023 U.S. Annular Eclipse, the 2024 U.S. Total Eclipse, and the record 2022-23 U.S. snowfall. The intent with each of these maps is to develop thematic mapping techniques beyond the defaults found in map-making software, along with using modern print technology to create effective, and artistic physical map products that are intended to delight, and inspire, as much as they are to deliver information clearly and effectively.

Innovative and creative symbology is the cornerstone of these maps but marrying the symbol design with advanced print techniques creates unique cartographic symbology. I'll explain the design processes, decision-making, digital workflows, and the development of new tools, and styles to create custom symbology. I'll also share some resources for the wider community to support making similar maps, or for further development of these techniques.

Some places are like people: some shine and some don't. The places on these maps literally shine, and reflect the phenomena being mapped. I'll do my best to share this work with a polish, rather than dull, talk on teasing out how we can make paper maps really glimmer.