

Tunç Tezel Star Man



Tunç Tezel

by David Chadwick

In the *School Journal*, Level 2, October 2015, there are some great photographs of stars (see “Cool Facts about a Hot Place” and “The Sons of Ma’afu”). The photos are by Tunç Tezel – an award-winning photographer from Turkey. He specialises in astrophotography – taking photos of the night sky. I asked Tunç some questions about his work.

Why did you become interested in the night sky?

I’ve been interested in the night sky for as long as I can remember. My elder brother Cenk encouraged me. He had some books about the planets and the stars, and he gave them to me to read.

When I was a child, I remember seeing a very bright star and a crescent moon close together in the evening sky. I think I noticed them because there is a crescent moon and a star on the Turkish flag. Many years later, I worked out that the star was the planet Venus. The moon and Venus came close together on 14 June 1983, so I would have been six years old when I saw them.

I used to read about the night sky in books and science magazines. One encyclopedia had maps of the night sky. I started to recognise some of the stars from the maps. I kept looking and learning about them as the seasons came and went.



Crescent moon

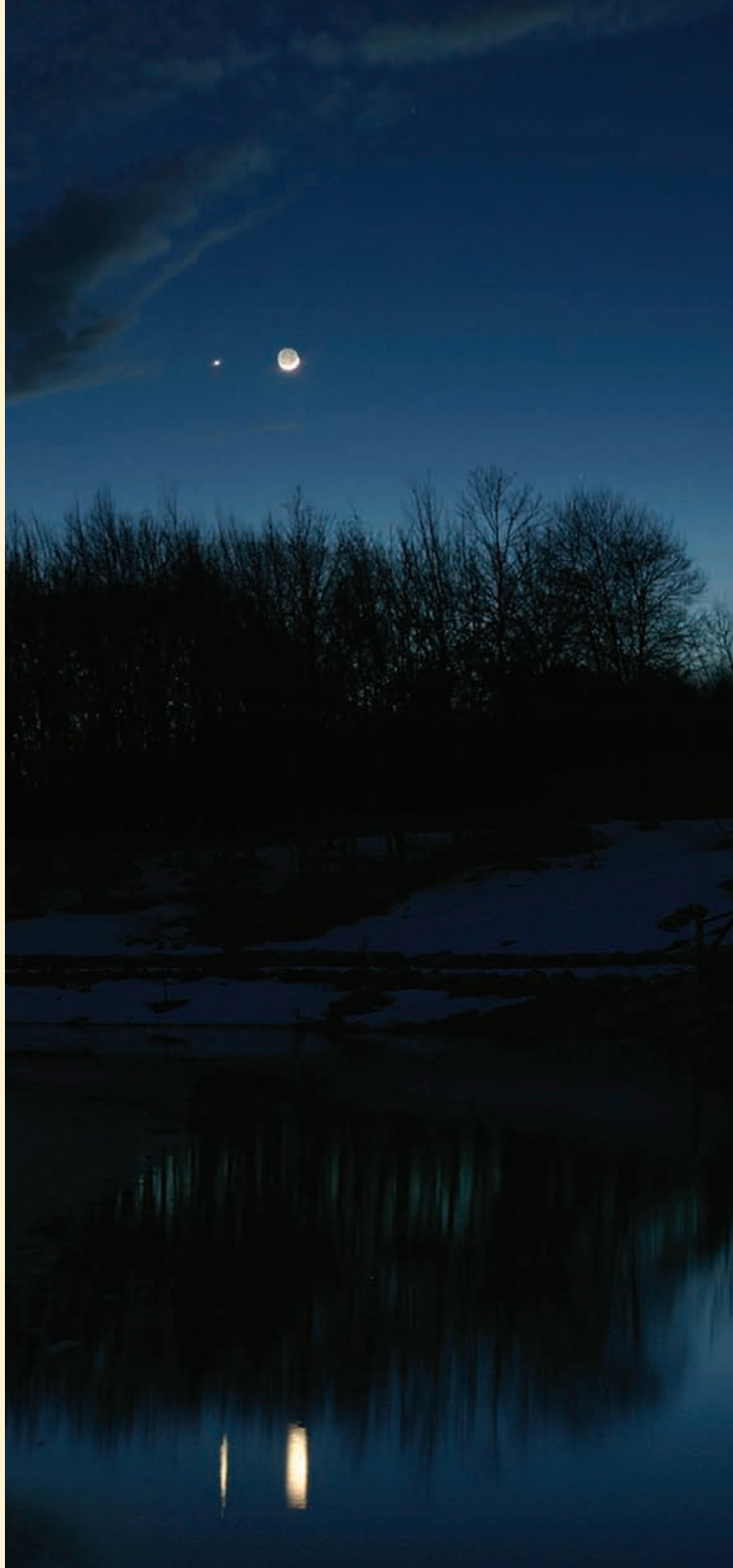


When did you start taking photos of the night sky?

Once I could recognise some of the stars, I tried taking pictures of them using my father's old camera. I didn't have a tripod, so I put the camera on a small table outside and used books to make the camera point upwards. In early 1993, I bought my first camera and started taking pictures regularly.

Why do you include scenes of nature in many of your photos?

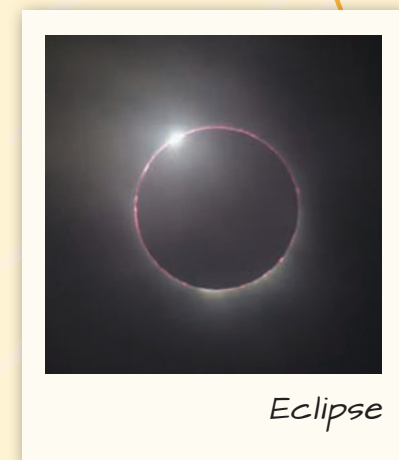
When I started, I took photos of the sky only. But then I began to include things such as trees and mountains in the frame because they tell you more about the place where the photo was taken. I also think that the sky looks better if you see it against a familiar scene from our world.



You take lots of photos of eclipses. Why are you so interested in them?

When I was reading about the night skies, I learnt that during a total solar eclipse, the sun is completely hidden from view. I thought everything would go dark and the stars would be shining at midday. I thought, "How cool is that?"

Later, I learnt that it's not completely dark during an eclipse. The corona of the sun can still be seen around the outside of the moon. I thought that would be even better – I wanted to see that for sure! Luckily, Turkey had a total solar eclipse in 1999 and another in 2006, and I saw both of them.



Sometimes your photos show the way the stars and planets move. How do you take those photos?

Sometimes I take several pictures of exactly the same scene over a period of time. That shows the movements of the stars and the planets really clearly. Another way to show movement is to leave the camera's shutter open for a long time.

Do you belong to any photography groups?

Yes, I belong to The World at Night (TWAN). It's a group of photographers from all around the world. We take photos of the world's most beautiful and well-known places with a background of stars and planets. The photos show that no matter where we live, we all see the same sky. I think that helps people to understand each other more and to work for a better, more peaceful planet.



Movement



Cook Islands



The night sky over Lake Salda, Turkey

Have you been to the Pacific and New Zealand?

I came to New Zealand in 2010. I stayed in Auckland for a few days, and then I drove down to Taupō to take some pictures of the night sky.

After that, I went to the Cook Islands to see a total solar eclipse, which I knew was going to take place on 11 July that year. I really liked New Zealand and the Cook Islands, and I hope to return there one day.

What differences did you notice between Turkey and New Zealand?

New Zealand is a lot like my homeland. The plants and trees look similar, and the climate also feels familiar. But when the sun goes down and it gets dark, it's really different. The southern stars and the bright, southern part of the Milky Way come up. They are always hidden from view in Turkey. I think the New Zealand night sky is more interesting.

Do you have any advice for young astronomers and photographers of the night sky?

Reading about the subject is still the most important thing. You should also find out if there are any astronomy groups in your area. They can help you. When you meet with other people who are interested in the same thing, it makes learning new stuff more enjoyable.



Tutulemma

Every day, the sun's path across the sky changes slightly. If you took a photo of the sun at the same time and from the same place every few days for a whole year, you would see that the sun seems to go in a figure of eight (called an analemma).

Tunç did just that – and he also included a total eclipse of the sun in his photo. It took a lot of careful planning. He started taking the photo in 2005 and finished it in 2006. His brother Cenk helped by taking some of the pictures. Tunç called the photo “Tutulemma”. (Tutulma is the Turkish word for eclipse.) The photo made him very well known around the world.

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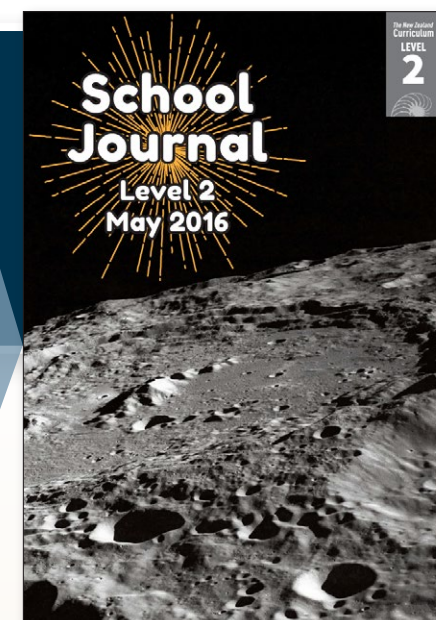
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