

Weather Analysis

Robert O'Connell and Anthony Cook

We noted in 'Revisiting The 1963 Aristarchus Events'¹ TLP skeptics have suggested a temperature inversion layer, which "*often markedly accentuates [atmospheric prismatic] dispersion*", may have been a contributing factor in producing the reddish TLP of 'The 1963 Aristarchus Events.'² Fitton (1975) notes an atmospheric inversion layer over an observing location can produce odd and enhanced manifestations of color fringing at high contrasty areas on the Moon, which, could *trick* telescopic observers into believing they are witnessing a real lunar-based color phenomenon.³ For anyone who has ever carefully studied cataloged TLP reports, it quickly becomes apparent that many, if not most, color TLP observations are in fact most likely due to the misinterpretation of atmospheric prismatic dispersion (APD) (particularly if one takes the time to determine the Moon's altitude range during the observation). In this web-based supplement, we present Flagstaff weather data for the two nights of 'The 1963 Aristarchus Events'⁴ which suggest there was no inversion layer present over the city on either night. This supplement available for download at www.the1963aristarchusevents.com

Introduction

TLP skeptics have argued the simplest and most plausible non-lunar explanation for color TLP reports is observer misinterpretation of APD and have raised this possibility specifically with regard to 'The 1963 Aristarchus Events'.⁵ APD is a well known optical phenomenon produced by the differential density of Earth's atmosphere which, acting like a prism, can produce bluish and reddish color fringing at high contrasty areas along the Moon's terminator. This effect can be particularly noticeable when the Moon is viewed at relatively low altitudes through large telescopes like the Lowell Observatory 24-inch achromatic Clark refractor.

In our paper we address the APD hypothesis with regard to these reports, noting why its color-fringing effects appear to inadequately account for the color, obscurations and flowing lights reported. We further noted there is no evidence an inversion layer was present over Flagstaff on either night which was based on the following weather analyses provided by retired meteorologist Tandy Carter.

Tandy Carter Weather Analyses

In 2009, we supplied retired U.S. Naval meteorologist Tandy Carter of Gainesville, Florida the Flagstaff weather data for the two nights in question seeking to determine if there was any evidence of an inversion layer over Flagstaff on October 30th or November 28th (UT). Here are Mr. Carter's analyses:

"After analyzing the provided data I have come to the following conclusions:"

Night 1: *"During the time of the (reddish TLP) observations on October 30, 1963 UT (Oct. 29th Flagstaff) the sky had a few high Cirrus Clouds (Thin Clouds). The surface temperature was 54 degrees (F) with the relative humidity of*

47%. Winds were from the south southeast at 7 knots. Surface visibility was better than fifteen miles. There was no indication of any haze in the area. Although I cannot say for sure since there were no upper air soundings available, indications are that there was no temperature inversion in the area."

Night 2: *"During the time of the (reddish TLP) observations on November 28, 1963 UT (Nov. 27 Flagstaff) the sky was almost clear, for a short time during the observation period a few Cirrus Clouds appeared but dissipated rapidly. The temperature at start was at 49 degrees (F) and had dropped to 31 degrees (F) by the time observations were finished. Relative Humidity was 36%. The wind was from the north and the wind speed varied from calm to 6 knots. As before surface visibility was greater than fifteen miles and with no haze reported. Again there was no indication of a temperature inversion."*

Tandy Carter, June 26, 2009

Mr. Carter is a retired U.S. Navy Lieutenant Commander, graduate, U.S. Naval Post Graduate School Monterey CA, May 1960. He served as Chief Meteorological Officer NAS Sand Point Seattle, WA; Forecaster U.S. Naval Fleet Weather Center Joint Typhoon Warning Center Guam and Forecaster U.S. Naval Fleet Weather Facility Alameda, CA.

Conclusion

It appears from the weather data that a temperature inversion layer was *not* present over Flagstaff on either night which might have produced unusual manifestations of APD leading to false TLP reports from Mars Hill. Additionally it seems unlikely the combined experience of the observers at the 24-inch Clark refractor would have allowed for misinterpretation of APD's all too familiar and *ubiquitous* effects for the few discrete TLP seen in October and November. In this regard, it is interesting to note Fitton's comment regarding the ubiquitous nature of APD: *"It is worth noting that, if*

one bright point source at the lunar surface is producing a spectrum (APD), all point sources over the entire lunar surface must be producing spectra.⁶ Greenacre repeatedly checked for colors similar to the TLP at other locations during the October TLP episode and failed to detect any noting “If the atmosphere had been responsible for these colors, we feel there would have been other points, particularly bright points, that would have had these colors. But this was not the case, as no evidence of any color could be found on this upland area or the vast area surrounding it.”⁷ Barr, noting a similar situation on November 28th, promptly called other observers to the Clark dome to confirm his suspected TLP observation.

Greenacre remained firmly convinced for the remainder of his life that he had witnessed some type of real lunar phenomena and it is reported that he was “sort of in awe” following the November 28th TLP event. (Personal communication, James E. Greenacre, Jr., 2011). In this connection it is interesting to note that following his own TLP observation on night 2, Hall wrote in a letter dated 1963 Dec. 5, “We do not know the nature of this phenomena . . . Contention made here is that this coloration is not produced in the optics of the telescope or by the earth’s atmosphere.”⁸

Weather Data

Carter’s analysis above is based on Flagstaff surface weather observations of the U.S. Department of Commerce Weather Bureau, Flagstaff Pulliam Airport weather station located 7 kilometers to the southwest and 72 meters below Lowell



Figure 1. Proximity of Lowell Observatory to Flagstaff Pulliam Airport weather station. Image: Google Maps 2010.

Observatory.⁹ (See Figure 1). The weather-log pages from the U.S. Department of Commerce Weather Bureau below are for October 29 and November 27, 1963 in Flagstaff which corresponds to October 30th and November 28th Universal Dates respectively - the dates of the two TLP observations. Flagstaff is in the Mountain Standard Time Zone (MST) which has always been 7 hours earlier than Universal Time as Daylight Saving Time has never been in effect in this city. Below are weather data for each night and times closest to the TLP observations in MST are highlighted in red.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank Mr. Tandy Carter for his weather analyses and Ms. Janet Wall, Archivist, NOAA National Climatic Data Center, for her assistance in accessing relevant weather data documents (presented below). We also thank James C. Greenacre’s eldest son, James E. Greenacre, Jr., for his personal anecdote.

Addresses: **RO:** P.O. Box 1963, Keystone Heights, FL 32656. [admin “at” the1963aristarchusevents.com] **AC:** Institute of Mathematical and Physical Sciences University of Wales Aberystwyth, Penglais, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 3BZ, WALES, UNITED KINGDOM. [atc “at” aber.ac.uk]. Website: www.the1963aristarchusevents.com

References and notes

- O’Connell, R. & Cook, A., ‘Revisiting The 1963 Aristarchus Events’, *J. Brit. Astron. Assoc.*, **123**(4) pp.197-208, (2013 August)
- Sheehan W. P. & Dobbins T. A., ‘Epic Moon: a history of lunar exploration in the age of the telescope’, (*Richmond: William-Bell, Inc., 2001*), p. 318. (Also personal communications with T. A. Dobbins, 2011).
- Fitton, L. E. 1975, ‘Transient Lunar Phenomena - A New Approach’, *Journal of the British Astronomical Association*, **85**(6), pp. 511-527 (1975). Note: The relevance of Fitton’s temperature inversion layer/anticyclone hypothesis in producing APD has been challenged. For example, see: Griffin, R. F., ‘Atmospheric Refraction and Spurious Colour’, letter to the editor, *Journal of the British Astronomical Association*, **86**(2), p. 165, (1976)
- Greenacre J. C., ‘The 1963 Aristarchus Events’, *The New York Academy of Sciences Annals*, **123**(2), pp. 811-816, (1965 July). Greenacre presented this paper at the conference entitled *Geological Problems in Lunar Research* held by The New York Academy of Sciences on 1964 May 16-19.
- Sheehan 2001, *op cit.* ref. 2, p. 317: “The most likely explanation is simply that Greenacre’s reddish glows (and the blue and violet counterparts reported by others) arise not on the Moon but in the Earth’s atmosphere.”
- Fitton 1975, *op. cit.* ref. 3, p. 523.
- Greenacre 1965, *op. cit.* ref 4, p. 813.
- John S. Hall letter to Phil Bury, (1963 Dec 5), In J. S. Hall papers, Lowell Observatory Archives. Mr. Bury was ‘Secretary of the Commission of Observations’ with the *Societe d’Astronomie Populaire*, Toulouse, France.
- National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration. ‘Surface Weather Observations for Flagstaff, Arizona for October 29 and November 27, 1963’. NOAA National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service, 2009. National Climatic Data Center.

NOAA National Data Centers
 U.S. Department of Commerce
 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
 National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service

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1	Surface Weather Observations	Digital Data	PG	\$6.00
	AZ/FLAGSTAFF KFLG	10/28/1963	10/31/1963	
	AZ/FLAGSTAFF KFLG	11/26/1963	11/29/1963	
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KEY TO AVIATION WEATHER OBSERVATIONS

LOCATION IDENTIFIER TYPE AND TIME OF REPORT *	SKY AND CEILING	VISIBILITY WEATHER AND OBSTRUCTION TO VISION	SEA-LEVEL PRESSURE	TEMPERATURE AND DEW POINT	WIND	ALTIMETER SETTING	REMARKS AND CODED DATA
MCI SA 0758	15 SCT M25 OVC	1R-F	132	/58/58	/1807	/993/	R01VR20V40
SKY AND CEILING Sky cover contractions are for each layer in ascending order. Figures preceding contractions are base heights in hundreds of feet above station elevation. Sky cover contractions used are: CLR = Clear: Less than 0.1 sky cover. SCT = Scattered: 0.1 to 0.5 sky cover. BKN = Broken: 0.6 to 0.9 sky cover. OVC = Overcast: More than 0.9 sky cover. — = Thin (When prefixed to SCT, BKN, OVC). —X = Partly obscured: 0.9 or less of sky hidden by precipitation or obstruction to vision (bases at surface). X = Obscured: 1.0 sky hidden by precipitation or obstruction to vision (bases at surface). A letter preceding the height of a base identifies a ceiling layer and indicates how ceiling height was determined. Thus: E = Estimated M = Measured W = Vertical visibility into obscured sky V = Immediately following the height of a base indicates a variable ceiling.		VISIBILITY Reported in statute miles and fractions (V = Variable) WEATHER AND OBSTRUCTION TO VISION SYMBOLS A Hail IC Ice crystals S Snow BD Blowing dust IF Ice-fog SG Snow grains BN Blowing sand IP Ice pellets SP Snow pellets BS Blowing snow IPW Ice pellet showers SW Snow showers D Dust K Smoke T Thunderstorms F Fog L Drizzle T+ Severe thunderstorm GF Ground fog R Rain ZL Freezing drizzle H Haze RW Rain showers ZR Freezing rain Precipitation intensities are indicated thus: - Light; (no sign) Moderate; + Heavy WIND Direction in tens of degrees from true north, speed in knots, 0000 indicates calm. G indicates gusty. Q indicates Squalls. Peak wind speed in the past 10 minutes follows G or Q when gusts or squalls are reported. The contraction WSHFT, followed by GMT time group in remarks, indicates windshift and its time of occurrence. (Knots x 1.15 = statute mi/hr). EXAMPLES: 3627 = wind from 360 Degrees at 27 knots; 3627G40 = wind from 360 Degrees at 27 knots, peak speed in gusts 40 knots ALTIMETER SETTING The first figure of the actual altimeter setting is always omitted from the report.			RUNWAY VISUAL RANGE (RVR) RVR is reported from some stations. For planning purposes, the value range during 10 minutes prior to observations and based on runway light setting 5 are reported in hundreds of feet. Runway identification precedes RVR report. PILOT REPORTS (PIREPs) When available, PIREPs in fixed-format may be appended to weather observations. PIREPs are designated by UA or UUA for urgent PIREPs. DECODED REPORT Kansas City International: Record observation completed at 0758 UTC 1500 feet scattered clouds, measured ceiling 2500 feet overcast, visibility 1 mile, light rain, fog, sea-level pressure 1013.2 millibars, temperature 58°F, dewpoint 56°F, wind from 180°, at 7 knots, altimeter setting 29.93 inches. Runway 01, visual range 2000 feet lowest 4000 feet highest in the past 10 minutes. * TYPE OF REPORT SA = a scheduled record observation SP = an unscheduled special observation indicating a significant change in one or more elements RS = a scheduled record observation that also qualifies as a special observation The designator for all three types of observations (SA, SP, RS) is followed by a 24-hour-clock-time-group in Coordinated Universal Time (UTC or Z).		

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE—NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION—NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

U.S. GPO 1988-214 639

TIME CONVERSION TABLE: LST to UTC (COORDINATED UNIVERSAL TIME)

STANDARD TIME ZONE	To Convert LST TO UTC ADD	ie: 1200 (NOON) LST EQUALS
Atlantic Standard Time	4 hours	1600 (4:00pm) UTC
Eastern Standard Time	5 hours	1700 (5:00pm) UTC
Central Standard Time	6 hours	1800 (6:00pm) UTC
Mountain Standard Time	7 hours	1900 (7:00pm) UTC
Pacific Standard Time	8 hours	2000 (8:00pm) UTC
Yukon Standard Time	9 hours	2100 (9:00pm) UTC
Alaska/Hawaii Standard Time	10 hours	2200 (10:00pm)UTC
Bering Standard Time	11 hours	2300 (11:00pm)UTC

To convert UTC to LST, **SUBTRACT** the same hours from UTC.

WBAN FORM 10A (REV. 11-1-60)											U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE - WEATHER BUREAU			STATION Flagstaff, Arizona		
SURFACE WEATHER OBSERVATIONS											DATE OCT 29 1963					
Type (1)	Time (LST) (2)	Sky and ceiling (Hundreds of Feet) (3)	Visibility (Statute Miles) (4)		Weather and obstructions to vision (5)	Sea level press. (Mbs.) (6)	Temp. (°F) (7)	Dew pt. (°F) (8)	Wind			Altimeter setting (Inch.) (12)	Remarks and supplemental coded data (13)	Observer initials (14a) (14b) (15)		
			Surface (4)	Tower (4a)					Direction (9)	Speed (Kts) (10)	Character and shifts (11)					
R	0058	E120 ⊕	15+			194	46	39		C		020				
R	0158	E120 ⊕	15+			188	45	39	←	C 3		029	710 102X			
R	0258	E120 ⊕	15+			181	48	39	→	C 5		027				
R	0358	E120 ⊕/⊕	15+			176	46	39		C		025				
R	0458	120 ⊕ U ⊕	15+			181	40	37		C		025	710 1078 40 25487 46540			
R	0558	E120 ⊕/⊕	15+			190	41	36		C		025				
R	0658	90 ⊕ E120 ⊕	15+			206	39	36	↗	C 3		026				
R	0758	90 ⊕ 120 ⊕/⊕	15+			200	47	38	↗	C 3		027	305 1074			
R	0858	120 ⊕	15+			200	54	39	↗	C 11		029				
R	0958	120 ⊕	15+			195	57	37	↗	C 8		029				
R	1058	60 ⊕ 120 ⊕	15+			195	58	36	↗	C 15		029	105 1170 39 25453			
R	1158	60 ⊕ 120 ⊕	15+			196	60	35	↗	C 14		027				
R	1258	0	15+			178	61	34	↗	C 15		025				
R	1358	0	15+			165	62	36	↗	C 17		022	719 1100			
R	1458	60 ⊕	15+			165	60	36	↗	C 12		022				
R	1558	60 ⊕	15+			162	61	35	↗	C 11		021				
R	1658	0	15+			168	59	35	↗	C 9		020	805 1106 63 25097			
R	1758	0	15+			177	54	33	↗	C 8		020	FFW C I S			
R	1858	1-⊕	15+			188	52	32	↗	C 7		021				
R	1958	1-⊕	15+			180	49	32	↗	C 4		022	105 1006			
R	2058	1-⊕	15+			179	44	33	↗	C 3		023				
R	2158	0 ⊕	15+			184	44	33		C		024				
R	2258	1-⊕	15+			177	40	31		C		022	000 1008 63 25361			
R	2358	1-⊕	15+			174	38	34		C		021				

A synoptic observation, in WMO code format FM11A, is entered on line following related aviation observation.

SURFACE WEATHER OBSERVATIONS
Flagstaff, Arizona

OCT 29 1963

STATION

DATE

TIME (L.S.T.)	STATION PRESSURE (INS.)	DRY BULB (°F.)	WET BULB (°F.)	REL. HUMIDITY (%)	TOTAL SKY COVER	CLOUDS AND OBSCURING PHENOMENA												TOTAL OPAQUE SKY COVER	PRESSURE TENDENCY	NET 3-HR. CHANGE	SUN-SHINE (MINUTES)	PRECIPITATION (INCHES)				
						LOWEST LAYER			SECOND LAYER			SUMMATION TOTAL	THIRD LAYER			FOURTH LAYER										
						AMT.	TYPE & DIR.	HEIGHT	AMT.	TYPE & DIR.	HEIGHT		AMT.	TYPE & DIR.	HEIGHT	AMT.	TYPE & DIR.						HEIGHT			
																								28	29	30
0058	23390	45.7	42.0	76	10	10	AS	E120	U											10						
0158	23380	45.2	41.9	79	10	10	AS	E120	U												10	7	030			
0258	23365	47.8	42.8	70	10	10	AC	E120	U												10					
0358	23350	46.3	42.1	74	10	6	AC	E120	U	4	CS	/	10	U							10					
0458	23350	40.4	38.8	89	7	4	AC	120	U	3	CS	U	7	0							7	7	030			
0558	23350	40.6	38.2	83	10	8	AC	E120	U	2	CS	/	10	U							10					
0658	23360	38.8	37.2	88	9	3	AC	90	U	6	AC	E120	9	0							9					
0758	23365	46.8	42.1	71	4	1	AC	90	U	3	AC	120	4	0	CC	/	4	0			4	3	015			
0858	23370	54.0	45.5	56	1	1	AC	120	U				1	0							1					
0958	23380	56.9	46.2	48	1	0	CU	60	U	1	AC	120	1	0							1					
1058	23380	57.8	46.0	44	2	1	CU	60	U	1	AC	120	2	0							2	1	015			
1158	23365	59.6	46.3	39	2	1	CU	60	U	1	AC	120	2	0							2					
1258	23350	60.7	46.5	37	0	0	CU	60	U				0	0							0					
1359	23325	61.8	47.8	38	0	0	CU	60	U				0	0							0	7	055			
1459	23325	60.0	47.0	41	1	1	CU	60	U				1	0							1					
1557	23320	61.0	47.0	38	1	1	CU	60	U				1	0							1					
1655	23310	59.0	46.0	40	0	0	CU	60	U	0	CU	/	0	0							0	8	015			
1758	23310	54.0	43.0	44	0	0	CI	/	U				0	0							0					
1858	23325	52.0	42.0	47	4	4	CI	/	U				4	0							4					
1958	23325	49.0	40.5	52	7	7	CI	/	U				7	0							7	1	015			
2057	23330	44.2	38.5	63	8	8	CI	/	U				8	0							8					
2155	23340	41.2	37.0	71	9	9	CS	U	U				9	0							9					
2258	23325	40.4	36.0	69	9	9	CS	/	U				9	0							9		000			
2355	23320	38.4	36.0	82	9	9	CS	/	U				9	0							9					

SYNOPTIC OBSERVATIONS

TIME (G.C.T.)	TIME (L.S.T.)	NO.	PRECIP. (INS.)	SNOW FALL (INS.)	SNOW DEPTH (INS.)	MAX. TEMP. (°F.)	MIN. TEMP. (°F.)	HGT. 850 MB. SURFACE	STATE OF GRND.	SEA STATE & DIR.	SWELL HGT. & DIR.	SWELL PERIOD	SURF H ₁ , H ₂ , M ₁ , P ₁ , D ₁	WATER TEMP.	SOIL TEMP.	STATION PRESSURE COMPUTATIONS					
																TIME (L.S.T.)	69	70	71	72	
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	0455	1050	1655	2255
	MID. TO 0455		0	0		50	40														
	0455	1	0	0	0	50	40	548	0												
	1050	2	0	0	0	60	39	545	0												
	1650	3	0	0	0	63	58	509	0												
	2250	4	0	0	0	59	39	536	0												
	MID.		0	0	0	40	38														

SUMMARY OF DAY (MIDNIGHT TO MIDNIGHT)

24-HR. MAX. TEMP. (°F.)	24-HR. MIN. TEMP. (°F.)	24-HR. PRECIP. WATER EQUIV. (INS.)	24-HR. SNOWFALL UNMLTD. (INS.)	SNOW DEPTH (INS.)	PEAK GUST			THICK-NESS OF ICE ON WATER (INS.)	FROZEN GRND. LAYER (INS.)		RIVER GAGE	24-HR. MAX. R. H.	24-HR. MIN. R. H.	WATER EQUIV. (INS.)	PRECIP. & THDRSTM.	BEGAN	ENDED	DUR. Hrs. Mins.	OBSTR. TO VIS.	BEGAN	ENDED	DUR. Hrs. Mins.	
					SPEED (KNOTS)	DI-RECTION	TIME L.S.T.		TOP	BASE													
63	38	0	0	0																			

80 REMARKS, NOTES AND MISCELLANEOUS PHENOMENA

Total sunshine _____ Sunrise 0645 / Sunset 1736
 Fastest observed 1-minute wind speed 20 m. p. h., or
 Fastest mile _____ m. p. h.; associated direction SSW and time: 1359
 Excessive precipitation: _____

Δt (MINUTES)	5	10	15	20	30	45	60	80	100	120	150	180
PRECIPITATION (INCHES)												

WBAN FORM 10A (REV. 11-1-60)		U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE - WEATHER BUREAU										STATION Flagstaff, Arizona				
SURFACE WEATHER OBSERVATIONS												DATE NOV 27 1963				
Type (1)	Time (LST) (2)	Sky and ceiling (Hundreds of Feet) (3)	Visibility (Statute Miles) (4)		Weather and obstructions to vision (5)	Sea level press. (Mbs.) (6)	Temp. (F) (7)	Dew pt. (F) (8)	Wind (9)			Altimeter setting (Inch.) (12)	Remarks and supplemental coded data (13)			Observer initials (15)
			Surface (4a)	Tower (4b)					Direction (9)	Speed (Kts) (10)	Character and shifts (11)		(14a)	(14b)	(14c)	
R	0058	0	15+			237	24	16	T	3	025					SM
R	0158	0	15+			233	24	15	C		025	103				SM
R	0258	0	15+			233	21	15	C		024					SM
R	0358	0	15+			235	19	14	↓	3	023					SM
R	0458	0	15+			238	19	15	↙	3	023	607 18 25671	445R			SM
R	0558	0	15+			247	17	15	↙	3	022					SM
R	0658	0	15+			257	18	13	↓	3	023					SM
R	0758	0	15+			252	19	13	C		024	303				SM
R	0857	0	15+			242	33	20	↓	3	025					SM
R	0956	0	15+			236	40	21	↙	5	026					SM
R	1055	0	15+			218	46	20	↙	5	025	003 17 25553				SM
R	1158	0	15+			214	48	23	↓	4	024	FEW CI W				SM
R	1256	0	15+			204	51	20	↙	3	020					SM
R	1357	0	15+			196	53	22	↙	4	019	717				SM
R	1456	0	15+			202	53	22	↙	5	019					SM
R	1558	0	15+			205	53	25	↙	4	019	FEW CI W				SM
R	1658	0	15+			217	49	24	↙	6	021	303 1001 54 25217				KK
R	1758	1-0	15+			241	38	26	C		022					KA
R	1858	0	15+			260	33	24	↙	4	024					KA
R	1958	0	15+			268	28	22	C		025	114				KA
R	2058	0	15+			261	27	21	↙	3	026					KA
R	2157	0	15+			245	25	21	↓	3	027					KA
R	2258	0	15+			239	24	21	↓	3	028	207 54 25641				KA
R	2358	1-0	15+			240	24	20	↘	5	029					KA

A synoptic observation, in WMO code format FM11A, is entered on line following related aviation observation.

