

Betelgeuse

Monthly newsletter of the East Oxford Astronomy Club
Issue 8: September 2026.



Drawing by Michelle Aždajić

Bosnian Tatsuniya

Editorial

Tatsuniya. This is a generic Hausa term for folklore. And in this issue of Betelgeuse, we celebrate **Bosnian** folklore and inter-generational creativity, through the mother and son collaboration of club members, **Michelle** and **Thomas Aždajić**. The tale which Thomas tells and Michelle illustrates, refers to Bosnian/**South Slavic** traditions concerning solar eclipses.

Now, usually, when the name Elias came to mind, I would think of **Elias Motsoaledi**, the activist and trade unionist, imprisoned for life alongside **Nelson Mandela** and the other **Rivonia** trialists, spending two and a half decades on Robben Island. Now I have another reference. Discovered earlier this month, **Elias 2-24b**, about a million years old, is the youngest of the six thousand or so **exoplanets** so far documented. According to **NASA Science** it is "*about as massive as Jupiter and the star is about 450 light-years from Earth.*"

Have you been outside yet and laid on a sleeping bag or rug, watching the **Taurid meteor showers**? Don't worry if not, you've still got time to see either the **Southern** or **Northern Taurids**; to get horizontal and enjoy this celestial phenomenon.

Please think about a **star gazing session** for November or December. Either as a club session, or something extra, maybe on a Friday or Saturday evening. Naked eye observation, as well as sharing optical aids: I have a telescope and two pairs of binoculars.

Recommended book

Einstein for Dummies – Carlos Calle – Wiley Publishing

Recommended YouTube video

Historic Solar Eclipse in Ghana, Fifteen Years on – Komla Adom

Sources for the Thomas piece

Čajkanović, Veselin (1973). *Mit i religija u Srba* [Myth and Religion among the Serbs]. Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga

Dorđević, Tihomir R. (1958). *Priroda u verovanju i predanju našega naroda* [Nature in the Beliefs and Traditions of Our People]. *Srpski etnografski zbornik*, Vols. 71–72. Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

Natty Mark Samuels, 2026. African School.

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Three Suns and a Dragon

According to Bosnian mythology, in the beginning, when the earth was created, there were three suns in the sky. A giant dragon who resided under a mountain flew up and devoured two of the suns. This type of sky dragon is known as an *Aždaja*.

Down below on the earth, a graceful swallow observed what was happening above and flew up to stop the dragon from plunging the world into eternal darkness.

As the *Aždaja* began to bite into the third sun, the heroic swallow darted into its wretched mouth and swiftly snatched the sun from its grasp.

As the bird flew away with the rescued light in its beak, the dragon nipped at its tail, splitting it into the shape of a fork. Defeated, the dragon returned to its cavernous hiding place, sleeping for several years until it woke to try devouring the sun again.

This recurring battle between the dragon and the swallow continues until today.

Adapted and written by Thomas Aždajić

Based on traditional Bosnian folklore

The Science in The Myth

The Devouring Bite. The “bite” of the dragon is the curved edge of the moon passing in front of the sun during an eclipse.

The Teeth Marks. The dark spots associated with the dragon’s bite on the solar surface resemble sunspots.

The Swallow’s Tail. The split feathers of the swallow’s forked tail provide superior aerodynamics.

South Slavic Cultural Traditions

Upon observing a solar eclipse, villagers believed that the light radiating from the sun was contaminated by the dragon’s mouth, so they would cover their water sources (such as wells and springs). They would also try to startle and chase away the dragon by making loud noises such as banging copper pots together, shouting, and ringing church bells. Amazingly, the sunlight would always return!

In Bosnian and South Slavic folklore, the swallow is a sacred bird, known as *Božija ptica* (“God’s bird”) or *rajska ptica* (“heavenly bird”). As the rescuer of the sun, it is intrinsically tied to solar warmth and revered as a divine protector against house fires.



Drawing by Michelle Aždajić

launching **Betelgeuse Theatre** through

Lady Ionosphere



a one-act play by **Natty Mark Samuels**

celebrating the 70th birthday of Nigerian physicist

Francisca Okeke

@**East Oxford Community Centre**
Princes Street, East Oxford.

October 9th 2026 – 6.30-8pm

Reading of the play by **Amantha Edmead** and **Ruby Duncan**

Q&A Chair - **Geno Humphrey** - Astronomy book stall - **Pat Green**

africanschool.weebly.com/betelgeuse-theatre.html

part of the **Oxford Science and Ideas Festival**

Community Astronomy

East Oxford Astronomy Club

Learn about the celestial objects; how they were formed, where they reside, how they interact. The pioneering astronomers, past and present. Space programs, telescopes and observatories. Folklore of the skies and cultural astronomy.

Third Tuesday of each month from September 15th: 6-7PM

Room P107

Leys College

**Blackbird Leys Road and Cuddesdon Way
Oxford
OX4 6HN**

Open to all twelve plus. Those under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

A once monthly newsletter: Betelgeuse.

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The problem is, most people believe that real science is too difficult and complicated for them to understand. But I don't think this is the case...most people can understand and appreciate the basic ideas if they are presented in a clear way without equations, which I believe is possible and which is something I have enjoyed trying to do throughout my life.

Stephen Hawking: from *Brief Answers to the Big Questions*