



# Flagstaff Dark Skies Coalition

*To Celebrate, Promote and Protect Dark Skies*

## Dark Sky Moment – May 2021

**Shooting stars may fulfill wishes, but make us gain weight!** Seeing a shooting star, or meteor, is a brief but thrilling experience. These streaks of light are caused by bits of comets or asteroids entering the atmosphere, and altogether add 10,000 tons or more to Earth's weight every year. Speeding at up to 50 miles per second – covering the distance from Flagstaff to Winslow in little more than a second – they vaporize at 50 miles or higher, ending their long cosmic lives in a moment of thrilling brilliance.

[88 words]

### Fun Facts

In the same way as the front of your coat gets wetter than the back as you walk through the rain (or your windshield catches more snow than your back window), so the side of the Earth facing the direction the Earth is heading in its orbit encounters more meteors than the backward-looking side. The overhead sky in the evening is looking out the "back window" while in the morning we are facing forward in the Earth's orbit. That's why there are more meteors visible in the morning!

Nearly all meteors vaporize in the atmosphere and never reach the ground. A meteor that lands on the ground is called a meteorite.

Very rarely – but not never – a meteor is so large that it causes a calamity when it hits the ground – like at Meteor Crater east of Flagstaff. Another even larger struck the earth 65 million years ago, bringing the Age of the Dinosaurs to an end.

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