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**Bishop Museum's J. Watumull Planetarium Shares
May 2026 Astronomical Phenomena**

May sees occurrences of a Lāhainā Noon and a Blue Moon.

Honolulu, Hawai'i — [Bishop Museum](#), the State of Hawai'i Museum of Natural and Cultural History, shares news of two astronomical phenomena occurring in the second half of May. Educators from the Museum's [J. Watumull Planetarium](#) note that people on O'ahu will experience a Lāhainā Noon on Tuesday, May 26, 2026, and all major Hawaiian Islands will see a Blue Moon on Saturday, May 30, 2026.

Lāhainā Noon

"Twice a year, in May and July, the sun passes directly overhead us in Hawai'i. On these two days, the sun will be above us at a 90 degree angle to the horizon and any upright object, such as a flagpole, won't have a shadow," said Romee Wizza Gaoiran, Bishop Museum Planetarium manager. "This phenomenon only occurs in the tropics and as Hawai'i is the only U.S. state in the tropics, we're the only state that experiences Lāhainā Noon."

While the contemporary term "Lāhainā Noon" is often used today, an older term in 'Ōlelo Hawai'i (Hawaiian language) for this phenomena is "kau ka lā i ka lolo," which can be understood to mean "the sun rests upon the brain."

Mary Kawena Pukui (1979) shares in the book "Nānā I Ke Kumu, Volume 1," that the phrase references high noon, when the sun is directly overhead and the shadow retreats into the body, a time of great spiritual significance when certain rituals might be conducted. High noon "was thought of as a time of great mana (spiritual power)," according to Pukui.

Lāhainā Noon has also been called "Shadowless Noon." On Tuesday, May 26, those on O'ahu can experience the phenomena for about 10 minutes when the sun is at its highest point in the sky. Other Lāhainā Noon dates and times, for locations throughout Hawai'i, can be found on Bishop Museum's webpage: BishopMuseum.org/LahainaNoon.

Blue Moon and the "colors" of the moon

“Although it would be really neat to see, during a Blue Moon the moon isn’t actually blue, contrary to popular belief,” said Gaoiran. “Rather, a Blue Moon is when there’s a second full moon in any given month.”

The phenomenon occurs every 2-3 years and this month, a Blue Moon can be seen over Hawai‘i on Saturday, May 30 (the first full moon this month occurred on May Day, Friday, May 1).

When the moon is observed in a different color, such as shades of red, it is usually due to a lunar eclipse — when the moon passes through the Earth’s shadow — or as a result of scattering of particulate matter in the Earth’s atmosphere.

During the Artemis II mission, astronauts were quoted as observing how “colorful” the moon was up close, with astronaut Jeremy Hansen describing the Aristarchus Plateau as having green and brown hues.

For the earthbound population, we can only ever see one side of the Moon as it is tidally locked with our planet, meaning that the moon spins around its axis once at a rate that matches the duration of its orbit around Earth. Thus, we are only ever looking at one side of the moon. Our solar system's largest moons are also tidally locked with their planets. When a “new moon” occurs, and the moon appears dark to us on Earth, its far side is fully lit.

Bishop Museum’s J. Watumull Planetarium offers weekly daytime programming and monthly evening programs that feature Hawai‘i’s night sky, navigation by starlight, the undersea realm, dinosaurs, and even a trivia competition! Details can be found on the Planetarium’s webpage, BishopMuseum.org/Planetarium.

The Planetarium also offers a monthly Sky Map of celestial objects visible in the Hawaiian night sky, as a free educational tool for astronomers of all ages. A PDF of the June Sky Map is attached with this release.

About the J. Watumull Planetarium

Bishop Museum’s Jhamandas Watumull Planetarium opened its doors on December 12, 1961. Originally called the Kilolani Planetarium, in 2003 it was renamed the J. Watumull Planetarium and has served more than six million visitors and students over 60 years of continuous operation.

The Planetarium was instrumental in the recovery of the nearly lost art and science of traditional, non-instrument navigation in Hawai‘i. Nainoa Thompson of the Polynesian Voyaging Society spent countless hours in the Planetarium with Will Kyselka and other Planetarium staff in the late 1970s, learning how to read the night sky. Today, the Planetarium serves 70,000 people every year, focusing on programs about Hawai‘i and blending live and prerecorded elements within each program, as well as providing online options for those around the world to enjoy.

The Planetarium is named in honor of Jhamandas Watumull, father of the late Gulab Watumull, whose family has a long history in the community and with the Museum. The Watumulls are active supporters of Bishop Museum through many decades, with Gulab serving on the Museum’s Board of Directors from about 1999 until 2016. In addition to the Planetarium, the family’s support is reflected in the “Gulab and Indru Watumull Atrium”; the Kapa case in Hawaiian Hall; and the Volcano Observatory in the Science Adventure Center.

To learn more about the J. Watumull Planetarium, please visit BishopMuseum.org/Planetarium.

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About Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, the State of Hawai‘i Museum of Natural and Cultural History:

Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum's mission is to inspire our community and visitors through the exploration, celebration, and perpetuation of the extraordinary history, culture, and environment of Hawai'i and the Pacific. The Museum was founded in 1889 by Charles Reed Bishop in memory of his wife Bernice Pauahi Bishop, a royal descendant of King Kamehameha I. Today, the Museum thrives as an educational center for the community and is widely regarded as the world's premier institution for Hawaiian and Pacific content.

Bishop Museum's vast collections of more than 25 million objects and specimens represent nine disciplines and include more than 22 million biological specimens, over 2 million cultural objects, 115,000 historical publications, and 1 million photographs, films, works of art, audio recordings, and manuscripts. These collections tell the stories of the cultures and biodiversity of Hawai'i and the Pacific as well as the proud legacy of scholarly research spanning 130 years.

Bishop Museum proudly serves more than 200,000 visitors each year, including 20,000 children on school visits. Guests are encouraged to pre-plan their trip to #HawaiiisMuseum with its [free digital guide](#), available through Bloomberg Connects.

To learn more about the Museum's research, collections, exhibits, and programs, visit BishopMuseum.org, follow @BishopMuseum on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#), visit Bishop Museum's [YouTube](#) channel, or call (808) 847-3511. Bishop Museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Bishop Museum is proud to be an Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Employer, and welcomes applicants from the military, veterans, and those with disabilities. Learn about careers at Bishop Museum at BishopMuseum.org/Careers and on its [LinkedIn](#) page.

[Bishop Museum Press](#) is Hawai'i's oldest book publisher and one of the first scholarly publishers in the Western Hemisphere, and has published over 1,200 titles and distributed over 1 million books in 72 countries worldwide. Bishop Museum hosts a restaurant and gift shop on campus, [Tūtū's Place by Highway Inn](#) and [Shop Pacifica by Nā Mea Hawai'i](#).

Past news releases can be viewed and downloaded at BishopMuseum.org/NewsRoom.