

The Shortest Day

Chilly weather, shorter days and snowfall means winter is on its way! The first official day of winter is called the “winter solstice.” This day occurs in the Northern Hemisphere on Tuesday, December 21 at 10:59 AM EST. In the Southern Hemisphere, the winter solstice takes place in June. The winter solstice marks the day with the fewest hours of sunlight or shortest day of the year. However, it is exciting to note that once we pass the winter solstice, each day gets a little more sunlight until we reach the summer solstice, which occurs in June in the Northern Hemisphere.

There is something very special about this year’s winter solstice. We will be able to witness an exciting astronomical event deemed the “Great Conjunction.” Jupiter and Saturn will appear closer together than they’ve been for hundreds of years. The best way to spot this rare occurrence is to keep watch on the southwestern horizon just after sunset. You may be able to spot these two large planets close together!

WINTER SOLSTICE LUMINARY WALK

in partnership with Shaker Historical Society

Friday, December 17 | 6PM–8PM

Let luminaries light your way on a festive stroll from the Nature Center, along South Park Blvd., and to the Shaker Historical Society while you connect with friends and neighbors and enjoy one of winter’s longest nights. This event will feature holiday music by Nightingale—Women’s A Capella as they roam the luminary path singing carols. Warm up near a fire at the Nature Center, grab a hot beverage, or purchase additional food and drink from local vendors. Street parking is available near the Nature Center and Shaker Historical Society. Gift shops open. **Free.**

NIGHT SKY

Friday, January 28, 2022 | 7PM–8:30PM

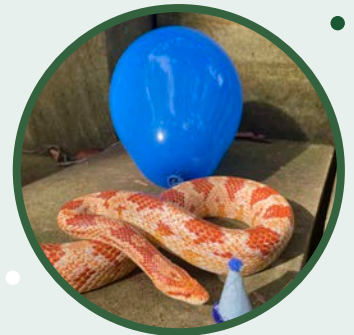
Winter is the best time for night sky viewing, but what will we see from the Nature Center? Stars? Clouds? Nocturnal animals? Bundle up to find out as you join a naturalist for this astronomy-themed outdoor program. Meet at the Nature Center. **Member: \$5 per person; non-member: \$7.50 per person; no charge for ages 2 and under. Registration required.**

NATURE CONNECTION

NEXT TIME YOU VISIT THE NATURE CENTER LOBBY,
be sure to wish **SUNSET THE CORN SNAKE** a Happy 20th Birthday!

The average lifespan of a corn snake is 15–20 years,
but we are hoping that Sunset will beat the world record of 32 years.

In honor of Sunset’s birthday, here are some corn snake facts:



- **Sunset was born in 2001** in captivity at University School in Shaker Heights. He was given to the Nature Center by Kris Sinnenberg of Shaker Heights and has been here since 2009!
- **Corn snakes are usually found in the southeastern United States**, and are not currently found in our region.
- Though superficially resembling the venomous Northern copperhead, **corn snakes are harmless, non-venomous, and beneficial to humans as they help control populations** of wild rodent pests that damage crops and spread disease.
- **Corn snakes are named for the species’ regular presence near grain storage**, where they prey on mice and rats that eat harvested corn. Some sources maintain that the corn snake is so-named because the distinctive, nearly-checked pattern of the snake’s belly scales resembles the kernels of corn.
- **While most corn snakes will eat small rodents, they will also eat reptiles, amphibians, or climb trees to find bird eggs.**
- When disturbed, **corn snakes rattle their tail on their surroundings as a defense mechanism**, making them sound similar to a rattlesnake.

WINTER PROGRAMS & EVENTS

GUIDED WINTER BIRD WALKS

Select Sundays: December 12, January 9, February 13 | 8-10AM

Join a guided walk through the Shaker Parklands looking and listening for birds. Meet in the Nature Center parking lot. Physical distancing between non-family participants will be required. **\$5 suggested donation.**

Registration required.

NATURE STORY TIME: NIGHTLY HAPPENINGS

While we are sleeping, nature is still stirring. Join a naturalist to learn about nocturnal animals, the moon and the nightly happenings we miss while we sleep. **Member: \$5 per child; non-member: \$10 per child.**

Registration required.

• **Moon Phases–Hello Mr. Moon** | Sunday, December 12 | 11AM–12PM

Join a naturalist to learn about the phases of the moon.

Program includes a story, craft and hike. Meet at the Nature Center.

• **Batty Bats–Stellaluna** | Saturday, January 8 | 11AM–12PM

Join a naturalist to learn about these batty nocturnal creatures.

Program includes a story, craft and hike. Meet at the Nature Center.

• **Awesome Owls–Owl Babies** | Saturday, February 12 | 11AM–12PM

Whoooooo are the owls that call the Nature Center home?

Program includes a story, craft and hike. Meet at the Nature Center.

BEHIND THE SCENES: ANIMAL CARE

Saturday, January 8 | 2-3:30PM & Wednesday, February 9 | 4-5:30PM

Have you ever wondered what it takes to keep our animal ambassadors here at the nature center happy and healthy? If you're curious about animal care or just want a chance to meet our animals close up, join us for an afternoon of feeding our turtles and snakes! Donations encouraged. Meet in Nature Center Lobby. **Free. Registration required.**

WINTER HIKES FEATURING PHOENIX COFFEE

Saturdays January 8, February 12 and March 12 | 9-10:30AM

Start the weekend off with a mug of warm coffee from Phoenix as we take an easy morning stroll through the Nature Center trails. A naturalist will lead the hike and discuss some of the wildlife we see as we enjoy the winter wonderland. We encourage you to bring your own mug or thermos, but some will be provided. Meet at the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes.

Member: \$5 per person; non-member: \$7.50 per person. Bring a friend for free! Registration required.

“GRAND” ADVENTURE DAY!

Saturday, January 15 | 11AM-12:30PM

Bring Grandma, Grandpa or your special person to the Nature Center's “Grand” Adventure Day! Join a naturalist for a hike, make a craft and enjoy some special time out in nature. We'll end the program by sipping hot chocolate as we reflect on the day's adventure. **Member: \$5 per person; non-member: \$7.50 per person; no charge for ages 2 and under.**

Registration required.

Register at shakerlakes.org/programs

VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

It is with gratitude that we thank our many volunteers for their ongoing support of the Nature Center and its programs. A special thank you to the following groups; Ruffing Montessori, Shaker Heights High School Art Club and all of our National Public Lands Day volunteers.

FEEDER WATCH

November–April | 2-hour shifts weekdays or weekends

Citizen Scientists Needed! Help us count the birds visiting our bird feeders this winter as part of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Project FeederWatch. Volunteers of all birding abilities are welcome. Training is provided.

TRAIL AMBASSADORS & SURVEY VOLUNTEERS

Weekend and weekday shifts available

Friendly Volunteers Needed! Help us greet nature lovers and outdoor enthusiasts who are sure to be on our trails this winter. Volunteers will share Nature Center highlights, answer frequently asked questions, and on select days help us field a brief visitor survey so NCSL can better meet community needs.

For more information please visit shakerlakes.org/volunteer/

SUMMER OUTDOOR ADVENTURE CAMP



Offering NINE weeks of in-person camps for children ages 3 1/2 to Grade 9 with themes such as Happy Habitats, Survival Skills, Geology Rocks, Dirt Detectives, and MORE. Pricing details available online, varies by age group.

MEMBER REGISTRATION begins November 30
(Member Discount of \$30 off per week applies!)

PUBLIC REGISTRATION begins January 10

\$5 EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT if registered before January 30

Watch for details about
SPRING BREAK CAMPS
March 28–April 1

Register at shakerlakes.org/camp

