

## *Kids Corner Newsletter*



*Winter 2024*

## *The Night Sky*

*Let it snow??*

Winter officially began in the Northern Hemisphere (the section of Earth that includes the United States) on Dec. 21, 2023. It is the shortest day of the year and the longest night. Our atmosphere gets less sunlight, meaning cooler temperatures. This is known as the winter solstice and is usually the start of holiday celebrations. After that day, though, the sun will start to creep back north and our days will get longer.

*Fly me to the Moon*

The portion of the moon that we can see from Earth on any given night is called a phase. The phases of the moon repeat in a cycle about once a month. The eight lunar phases are, in order: new moon, waxing crescent, first quarter, waxing gibbous, full moon, waning gibbous, third quarter and waning crescent. The cycle repeats once a month (every 29.5 days). Then the phases repeat in reverse.



Each new moon has a name. In winter they are: January, Wolf Moon, February, Snow Moon and March, Worm Moon. There is a rare exception when the full moon repeats itself in the same month. This is called the Blue Moon. And that's where the expression "Once in a Blue Moon" (meaning not very often) started.

### *It's all in the Stars*

Constellations are groups of stars in the night sky that form a picture or pattern. The shapes they might take include animals, objects, or people. Many of the human-shaped patterns have been named after mythological figures from the ancient world. Constellations have many uses in astronomy, navigation, farming, and storytelling. In the Northern Hemisphere some constellations are visible in the winter months. They include:

January - Orion ,the hunter; Monoceris,the unicorn

February - Gemini,the twins; Ursa Major,the great bear

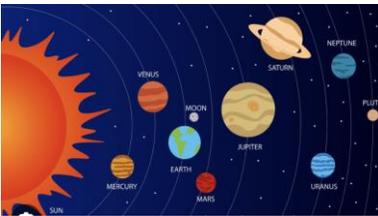
March - Leo,the lion; Canis minor, the small dog





## *Our Home Galaxy*

The Milky Way is a large spiral galaxy that is home to our solar system. (the sun and eight major planets including Earth) and more than 200 billion stars. It is a cloudy stripe across the sky that contains gas and dust. You may see it on a clear, dark night. The only planets you can see without a telescope are Mercury, Venus and Mars.



## *Other Lights in the Sky*

Some lights look like stars that move. Here's how to tell them apart: Planes have blinking lights on them. Satellites move slowly and don't blink. Meteors or shooting stars race across the sky. The International Space Station is a high flying laboratory that moves quickly and steadily

## *Want to know more?*

To learn more about the Night Sky you can visit a Science Museum (like Liberty Science Center) or Planetarium. Of course, there is always lots of information available at the local library.

Useful websites:

<https://njmom.com/things-to-do/planetariums-in-new-jersey/>

<https://www.njsea.com/observatory/> William D McDowell Observatory