

Audubon Center at Riverlands Marks Winter Solstice With Sunrise Meditation

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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WEST ALTON - The Audubon Center at Riverlands celebrated the winter solstice with a silent sunrise meditation on Thursday, Dec. 21, 2023.

About a dozen people came to the center, located at 301 Riverlands Way in West Alton, Missouri, to mark the first day of winter and enjoy the sunrise at 7:16 a.m. on Thursday. Ashley Lockwood is an educator at the center, which specializes in birds through the Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary. She noted that the winter solstice is significant to people for various reasons, but it also marks the return of many birds to the Riverbend area.

“The winter solstice is especially important for us because it has a lot to do also with when the birds are returning to us,” Lockwood explained. “As a sanctuary, we see a lot of change in migration throughout the year, and so the winter solstice, not only is it signaling that the days are lengthening, but it’s also telling us that we’re actually officially entering the winter season as per the calendar. So we’re looking forward to seeing more of those swans and eagles come out. Not only is it kind of beautiful for the soul, but you’re also getting this natural return of this wildlife that we love seeing out here in the Riverbend area.”

The Audubon Center hosts regular equinox and solstice meditations. The meditation was led by teachers from Soul Sanctuary in Alton. People brought their own blankets and sat by the river to watch the sunrise, which Lockwood said is usually “stunning” at the center and “highlights the natural colors of the landscape.”

The winter solstice refers to the Earth’s position in relation to the sun. This day is the shortest day and longest night of the year, but it also marks the beginning of longer daylight hours until the summer solstice in June.

“It was absolutely beautiful being in this setting in the morning,” Lockwood added. “It was just kind of an ethereal experience.”

For more information about The Audubon Center at Riverlands, visit their [official website at Riverlands.Audubon.org](https://www.audubon.org/riverlands).