Saint John’s Arboretum Environmental Education Field Classes
Available for grades 4th-6th

**Winter Survival Class**

**Objective:** Students will learn how humans learned to survive the winter by observing how wild animals survive the winter. Students will discuss and explore all aspects of cold weather survival, including insulation, shelter, and transportation. They will also look for signs of winter animal life in the forest. Students will work individually and in teams to help complete guided activities.

**Field Activities:**

* **Biomimicry:** Students will discuss the ways humans have learned from animals to survive the winter and how to stay safe when outside during cold weather.

* **Jar Animals:** Students will be challenged to keep their ‘jar animal’ warm while outside during class using various forms of insulation and shelter. Discussion of appropriate forms of insulation for humans will follow.

* **Animal Detectives:** Students will go through a guided exploration of the forest, searching for the ‘clues’ animals leave behind that give us an idea how they survive the winter. Signs looked for include tracks, trails, scat (droppings), body parts, homes, shelter, rubbings, and food sources.

* **Snow Shelters:** Students will explore types of shelters made from snow, for both humans and animals. Depending on weather conditions, they may also help construct a ‘quin-zhee’ (domed snow shelter) of their own!

* **Winter Transportation:** Students will discover easy ways for moving through the snow, most of which are modified versions of how animals move through the snow. Modes of transportation we will cover include snowshoes, sleds, kick sleds, skis, ice skates, etc…

**Key points covered in each class:**

- Biomimicry is the process of looking to nature for answers to human problems.
- Humans have learned to survive the winter by studying how animals survive the winter.
- Three main ways animals survive the winter: migration, toleration, hibernation
- Examples of common signs of animals in the winter: tracks, trails, scat, body parts, homes, shelter, rubbings, and food sources
- How to explore appropriately and safely in nature during the winter

**Animals active during the winter we may encounter/talk about:**

- White-tailed deer
- Squirrels: red, gray, fox
- Rabbits
- Birds such as chickadees, woodpeckers, crows, sparrows,
- Owls
- Coyote
- Fox
- Beaver
- Humans!