

# NEWSLETTER

## ALTA ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

JANUARY 2021 | WINTER | ISSUE 97



### A New Learning Opportunity: Trees and Skis

The trees at Alta help tell the story of Alta's history and provide a picture of the current forest health. Much like all of us, the trees weather the seasons - from cold, windy, winter nights to dry, hot, summer days. This winter, we decided we wanted to hang out in the trees a little bit longer. The Alta Environmental Center (AEC) has partnered with TreeUtah to offer an exploratory tour of the forest. Join Ian Peisner, TreeUtah's arborist, for a ski exploration of Alta's forest ecosystem. Spend an hour learning about the tree species that are found at Alta, the forest ecology, threats to forest health, and the efforts that the Alta Environmental Center and TreeUtah implement at Alta to promote a healthy forest. This tour is open to skiers of all abilities, so bring the kids and take a tour through the trees! Tours are free for season pass and lift ticket holders.

**3rd Wednesday  
of each month**

**January 20**

**February 17**

**March 17**

### Mask up, Stay Safe

A key component to operating safely during a pandemic is taking into account the science behind wearing a mask. It is keeping our workers safe and healthy, as well as the skiers around us. We are thankful to our community of thoughtful skiers who are doing their part to keep each other safe. And we know - wearing a mask is not always comfortable. However, much like wearing a beacon for avalanche safety, wearing a mask is that precautionary measure that we take because we know one thing for sure - we want to keep skiing all season long. So keep doing your part, and we will see you out there.

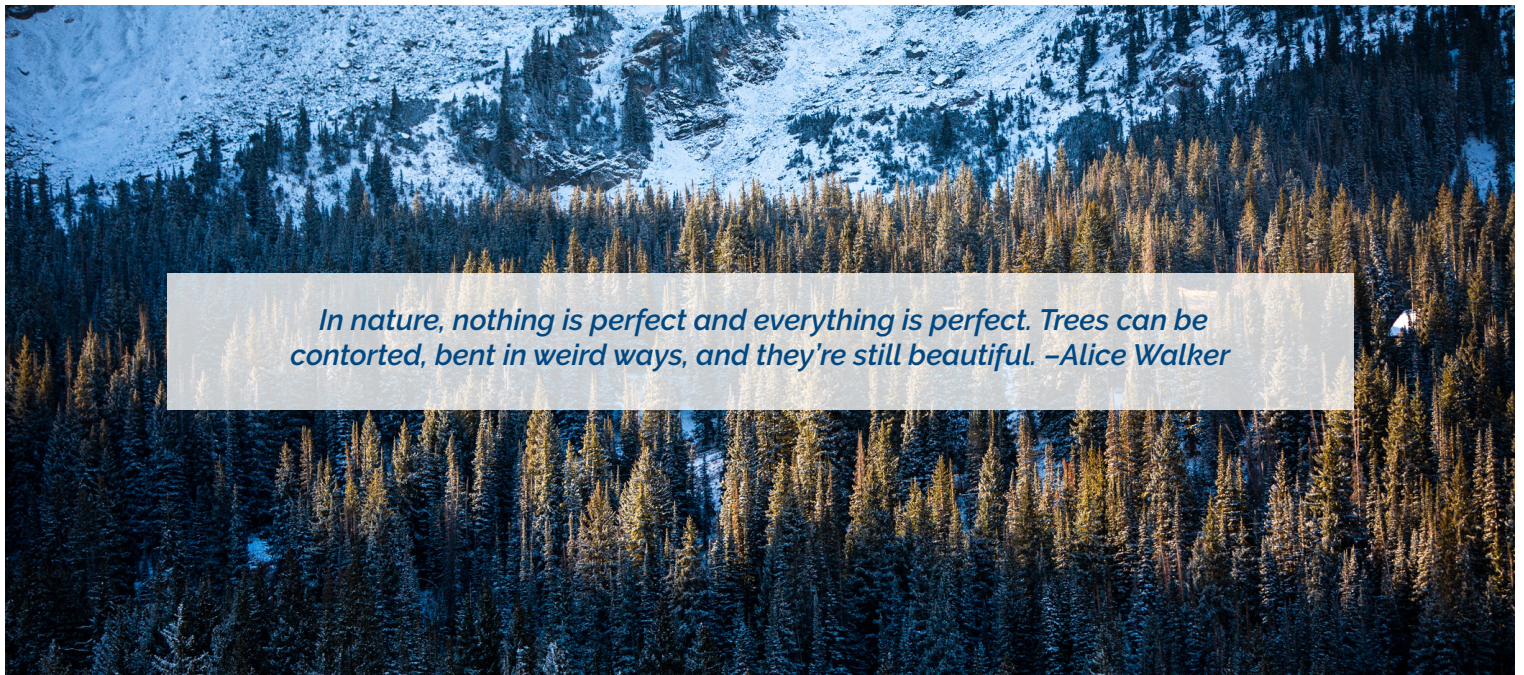


*Our skiers masked up around the mountain. Wearing a mask under your buff is preferred, and required in some buildings at Alta.*



## Winter Solstice Expose - by Caroline Olsen

Winter solstice occurred on December 21st. Surprisingly, that is not the date with the earliest sunset, nor latest sunrise. At Alta, those were December 7th and January 3rd, respectively. Thanks to Earth's elliptical orbit, daylight hours don't fluctuate in parallel. At times, Earth orbits closer to the sun and when it does, its orbit becomes faster (slower when further away.) Rarely is Earth's day 24 hours exactly. The imposition of the 24-hour clock is responsible for the apparent imbalance of the sunrise/sunset offset on solstice. A clock could be devised that matches Earth's orbit, but then any measure of time would cease to equal a constant, instead a cyclical function of Earth's speed relative to the sun. Our clock creates the imbalance of sunrise to sunset, as well as the periodic need for leap years, but this is infinitely more practical than the alternative. It's advantageous that time remains a constant.



*In nature, nothing is perfect and everything is perfect. Trees can be contorted, bent in weird ways, and they're still beautiful. –Alice Walker*

## EVENTS

**TREES AND SKIS - JANUARY 20.** TreeUtah and the AEC's newest learning opportunity. Ski for an hour in the trees with an arborist and learn about the gentle giants that live at Alta.

**ALTA EMPLOYEE BACKCOUNTRY 101 - JANUARY 25 & 26.** This clinic is for Alta Employees only. This class is for skiers & snowboarders who go into the backcountry in winter. It is designed as an introductory course for those who are new to backcountry skiing and riding. Visit [altacommunity.org/events/empbackcountry1012020](https://altacommunity.org/events/empbackcountry1012020).

**UNIVERSITY OF UTAH GLOBAL CHANGE & SUSTAINABILITY CENTER SEMINAR SERIES - INTERSECTION OF SCIENCE POLICY DECISIONS, SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES - FEBRUARY 9.** Join Daniel Sarewitz, Professor of Science and Society at Arizona State University for an online discussion. Visit [environment.utah.edu/seminar-series/](https://environment.utah.edu/seminar-series/).

**GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT - FEBRUARY 12-15.** People from around the world spend some time in their favorite places connecting to the birds around their home and in their community. Share in the joy of watching birds and connecting to nature. Head to [www.birdcount.org](https://www.birdcount.org) for more information.