



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Shenandoah National Park News Release

Shenandoah National Park announces 2023 Night Sky Festival

LURAY, VA – Shenandoah National Park will celebrate the annual Night Sky Festival, August 11-13, 2023. Featured speakers, including amateur astronomers, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Solar System Ambassadors, and a veteran NASA astronaut, will present on topics ranging from asteroid defense to the largest known impact crater in the United States. Ranger-led programs will focus on animals that rely on dark skies, each planet's role in the solar system, and stories told by the constellations. There will be opportunities for stargazing, constellation tours, Junior Ranger activities, and more.

Park Rangers and guest speakers will encourage visitors to gain appreciation for dark skies through a variety of special programs and activities. Programs and presentations will take place at Dickey Ridge Visitor Center (mile 4.6 on Skyline Drive), Mathews Arm Campground Amphitheater (mile 22.1), Skyland Amphitheater (mile 42.5), Byrd Visitor Center and Big Meadows (mile 51), and Loft Mountain Amphitheater (mile 79.5).

Veteran astronaut and space scientist Tom Jones returns this year with three presentations in Byrd Visitor Center Auditorium. Jones will present "When Rocks Attack: Defending Earth from Asteroids" and "Beyond Earth: Humanity's Future in Space" Saturday, August 12, at 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., respectively, "Sky Walking: An Astronaut's Journey" Sunday, August 13, at 11:00 a.m., and "The Future of U.S. Human Spaceflight" Sunday, August 13, at 9:00 p.m. in Big Meadows Lodge Massanutten Room.

Also making a return this year is NASA Solar System Ambassador Greg Redfern. Attend Redfern's presentations in Byrd Visitor Center Auditorium for "The Chesapeake Bay Impact Crater" Friday, August 11, and Sunday, August 13, at 5:00 p.m. and "Shenandoah Skies and the Perseids" all three nights, August 11-13, at 6:00 p.m.

Join amateur astronomers for a "Telescope Party" Saturday, August 12 at 10:30 p.m. to view stars and the Perseid meteor shower in two locations: Dickey Ridge Visitor Center with Northern Virginia Astronomy Club, or Big Meadows with Rappahannock Astronomy Club, Richmond Astronomical Society, and the University of Virginia Department of Astronomy.

Artist-in-Residence Paul Atkinson will share his approach to night sky landscape photography during his program "Making Art in the Dark" Friday, August 11, at 3:30 p.m. in Byrd Visitor Center Auditorium. The Artist-in-Residence program is financially supported by Shenandoah National Park Trust, the official philanthropic partner of the park.

This annual festival and featured speakers are sponsored by Delaware North, the park's concessioner, and Shenandoah National Park Association. For a full list of Night Sky Festival activities, please visit, <https://www.nps.gov/shen/planyourvisit/night-sky-festival.htm>.

- www.nps.gov/shen -

About the National Park Service: Since 1916, the National Park Service has been entrusted with the care of America's more than 400 national parks. With the help of volunteers and partners, we safeguard these special places and share their stories with millions of people every year. Learn more at www.nps.gov.

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