Dear Friends,

2020 started auspiciously at the Montana Natural History Center. We were riding high on new partnerships and projects, a strong financial footing, and firing up on a five-year strategic planning process.

Of course you know what happened next. On Saturday, March 14, 2020, we closed the exhibit hall at MNHC to the public and the new normal of telework and virtual programming began.

But despite the challenges of not being with students and program participants in person, the coronavirus pandemic has created many unexpectedly positive opportunities for MNHC. Which is why I want to underscore and celebrate the vast and incredible work the organization tackled in 2020.

The program staff immediately adapted to teaching online last spring, facilitated by the experience we had already built with our distance-learning programs across rural Montana. As the year—and the pandemic—progressed, staff created free virtual programs so families could learn about and engage with the outdoors. We also took existing programs online and in doing so reached many, many more people, such as with the Field Notes writing workshop, which was so popular we were able to offer it in the spring, summer, and fall, with attendees even Zooming in from other countries.

In fact, the program staff were not just hard at work but also entrepreneurial, seizing new opportunities and creating new partnerships, like our summer and fall projects with the National Military Family Association’s Operation Purple to provide virtual summer camp experiences and after-school activities to the children of active duty servicewomen and men across the United States. We created a wealth of content to support all of this programming, including 140 videos shot and produced by MNHC staff!

And while the staff were busy teaching remotely and building tons of new content that can be used well into the future, the board supported the staff and toughed out many Zoom meetings, even creating that aforementioned five-year strategic plan—not the easiest process to conclude during a pandemic.

Throughout 2020, we persevered. We grew our programs and our audience, and in 2021 we are set and ready to embark on a new journey that not only includes welcoming visitors back to the Center, but working on important aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We are bolstering our financial infrastructure by building on our operating reserve—another lesson from the pandemic. And we are working on elements of our organizational health, taking care of staff and extending our reach across Montana.

So, to our staff and board members, for all their hard work: an enormous THANK YOU.

And an equally huge thanks to all of our members, community, and supporters for standing by and helping out in so many ways. We certainly could not have done what we did in 2020 without all of your help!

I am so excited that we will be returning to more in-person programming in 2021: welcoming the public back to see new exhibits and providing great Summer Discovery Day Camps. But mostly I can’t wait to see you in this new year.

Thank you and the very best wishes from everyone at MNHC,

Thurston Elfstrom
Executive Director, Montana Natural History Center

2020 BUDGET

$730,094.00
Total Net Assets: $1,829,017.00
(December 2020)

FUNDING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue</th>
<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business Donations</td>
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<td>Grants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program Fees</td>
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<tr>
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EXPENDITURES

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<tr>
<td>Publications &amp; Outreach</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Exhibits</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer Camps</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraisers</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Programs</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$ raised in license plate sales: $11,940.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Financial statements and IRS form 990 are available on our website.*
2020 was a year unlike any other, yet the Montana Natural History Center engaged more than 17,000 people of all ages in nature education through programs, online webinars, virtual classes, volunteering, and community events. We reached new audiences across the United States and even internationally through innovative online courses and webinars. We’ve remained steadfast in our mission to promote and cultivate the appreciation, understanding, and stewardship of nature through education. We haven’t wavered and we certainly aren’t slowing down.

Here are some of our amazing 2020 highlights!

- **Our incredible teaching naturalists created 149 educational videos** for viewers of all ages.
- **The Online Educational Resources page on our website had 3923 views.**
- **Over 500 people participated in our NatureWebs webinars in real time and 1816 more viewed the recordings.**
- **We reached 450 military families across the country through the Operation Purple program.**
- **974 people participated in our Streamable Learning webinars from 14 states and 3 Canadian provinces.**
- **The Age of the Coronapacene webinar series had 1826 views.**

In 2020 we focused on creating programming that was accessible to people where they were, at home, during the COVID-19 pandemic. We continued to provide resources and inspiration for families to get outside and explore nature. Getting outdoors and exploring, appreciating, understanding, and stewarding nature is still what MNHC is all about.
“I have been blown away by the willingness of the MNHC naturalists and staff to help adapt lessons and programs for my students during the COVID-19 pandemic. They’ve reached out to see what they can do to help and it’s been wonderful. Every request has been fulfilled speedily and my students are so excited to be able to continue learning about nature and our surrounding areas.”

Marisa Crerar, 5th-grade teacher, Arlee, MT
Visiting Naturalist in the Schools (VNS) connects professional naturalists with fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms in western Montana. Each student receives a journal to record observations, practice science journaling, and develop reading and writing skills. Naturalists teach and mentor students through ongoing inquiry and encouragement of the students’ natural curiosity about the natural world. Our curriculum is aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards that also contribute to curriculum goals in literacy, critical thinking, and communication. In March 2020 we shifted our focus from in-person, hands-on nature education in the schools to working within the new confines in order to continue educating 4th and 5th graders across Montana. Our naturalists went from teaching in classrooms to going live via Zoom. They delivered online content, nature lessons, and projects all with the goal of maintaining a sense of stability and encouraging kids and their families to get outside to explore nature.
The Interactive Distance Learning program expanded in 2020, reaching a wider audience. We deliver live, interactive programming across the state of Montana and beyond.

The ID Naturalist LIVE! (formerly Virtual Naturalist in the Schools) program brings professional naturalists into 3rd- through 5th-grade classrooms through the use of video conferencing to teach science and natural history across rural Montana. Students get to experience naturalist-led classroom lessons—most of which include outdoor exploration—via monthly virtual nature and science experiences.

ID Naturalist is a subscription-based service. Educators gain access to ten web-based video lessons presented by a teaching naturalist that can be opened at the convenience of the teacher and in the comfort of the classroom.

FieldStudies gets students in touch with practicing scientists through live and interactive video broadcasts. Prior to the program’s date, teachers are sent a brief video introducing the scientist and their work. Students are encouraged to generate questions for the scientist and send them in before the live event. On the day of the program, classes tune in for answers to their questions, polling questions, and more served up by the scientist themselves.

The Montana Natural History Center is now a content provider for Streamable Learning. This innovative programming connects districts and classrooms across North American for live and interactive educational events.

The Wings Over Water (WOW) Osprey Program brings STEM research into middle and high school classrooms and sparks student interest in biology, physics, chemistry, math, and engineering through the study of Ospreys. The program starts by building STEM capacity for teachers through a week-long workshop in Missoula. Teachers return to the classroom with a rich curriculum which is built around Next Generation Science Standards and can be tailored to each classroom’s needs.

The 2020 teacher training workshop was put on hold. The curriculum is now reaching more than 2,000 middle and high school students across the country.
Homeschool Naturalists runs September-April and gives students the opportunity to learn about the natural history of Montana while gaining naturalist skills and making friends. Each month the group explores our place in the ecosystem. We love using the naturalist tools of science, writing, and art.
NatureWebs webinars are 30-minute nature and science adventures for elementary-aged children. MNHC staff created 12 interactive episodes with accompanying activities. 500 individuals participated in the livestreams and NatureWebs recordings have been viewed 3,923 times.

“My son is LOVING the NatureWebs webinars (he is 7 in 2nd grade)! He came running into the kitchen last week to tell me that since I eat so much chocolate I really should thank the bats for that (there was discussion of bats as pollinators). Thanks for all that MNHC is doing for Missoula families and students right now!”

Caitlin Gill | Education Partnership Coordinator, Ecology Project International, April 2020

Nature’s Notes is a collaboration between the Montana Natural History Center and the Missoula Symphony Orchestra. The four-episode video series explores the connections between music and some of Montana’s most beautiful, natural music and sounds in nature.

In place of in-person Summer Camps, in 2020 we offered Summer Explorer Kits that were available every week for nine weeks of summer. Kits included instructions and materials for daily activities to help families explore and have fun in nature. We also created 21 Story Time readings on YouTube that were available to families for free.
New in 2020:
School's Out Camps

30 kids participated in
3 school's out camps in
January and February 2020

1:6 low student-to-
counselor ratio
If every little girl in the world had the opportunity to experience the evolution of growth and confidence the STEEM Sisters are, the world would be a better place!

Janie Quilici, STEEM parent, March 2020

The 2019 STEEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Environment, and Mathematics) Program cohort continued to meet virtually once a month through 2020. STEEM aims to inspire the next generation of female scientists through hands-on learning and real-world experiences. The goal of this program is to provide incoming middle school girls with a professional mentorship opportunity. Through the program the girls build trust, confidence, and courage in the fields of science, technology, engineering, environment, and math.
While the Center was closed to the public for most of 2020, **300 kids and community members** participated in educational programming and **808 visitors** enjoyed our exhibits before we closed in mid-March. We look forward to opening our doors again in 2021!

The **Fort Missoula Native Plant Garden** includes a three-season classroom, impressive outdoor learning space, diverse native plants, and a variety of wildlife.

**MNHC’s new exhibit explores Montana’s Ancient Past**

Thanks to a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services and a partnership with the University of Montana Paleontology Center, we’ve spent much of 2020 hard at work on a new permanent exhibit: Montana’s Ancient Past. This large exhibit follows the fossil record of life in Montana, starting 4.5 billion years ago when the earth was still lifeless, and traces the path of evolution and extinction through Earth’s changing geology and climate all the way until the present day. We can’t wait to share Montana’s Ancient Past with you sometime in 2021!
I can honestly say that this Master Naturalist course has changed my life for the better. I am very grateful to the instructors for their kindness, organizational skills, and for sharing their love of nature with me.

Summer 2020 Master Naturalist
OUTREACH

Every week since 1991, Field Notes, written by naturalists, students, and listeners, has inquired about Montana’s natural history. Field Notes airs two times per week on Montana Public Radio: Tuesday and Friday at 4:54 p.m.

Field Notes is available as a podcast! Subscribe on iTunes, Google Play, or wherever you listen to podcasts.

Montana Naturalist Magazine published two new issues.

15,000 magazines were distributed locally and to national subscribers.

Teacher Benefits Program

All K-12 teachers actively employed in a public or private Montana school are eligible. Benefits include:

• Free individual membership
• Discounts on trunk rentals, museum tours, classroom naturalist presentations, and ID Nature programs
• Special invitations to educator events and trainings

Go go MontanaNaturalist.org/teacher-benefits-program to see full list of benefits and to sign up.

Traveling Trunks

Our Nature Discovery traveling educational trunks help make natural history come alive for over 652 students annually across the state.

We have 25 trunks available for rental, each filled with thematic hands-on interdisciplinary and scientifically accurate educational materials.

License Plates

$11,940 raised in license plate sales

952 plates sold—up 50 plates from last year

You don’t have to wait until your current plates expire to pick up an MNHC plate!

VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteers, board members, and committee members are invaluable to our organization and are largely responsible for the success and high quality of our programs!

Thank you, volunteers!

Despite dialing back on many of our in-person volunteer opportunities due to COVID, we had 48 volunteers donate 944 hours in 2020. We look forward to providing more volunteer opportunities in 2021.
MEMBERSHIP

Become a member today and enjoy the following benefits:

• **Unlimited free admission** to our Center, Kids’ Discovery Room, and Nature Adventure Playground

• **Free admission** to the miniNaturalist Pre-K Program and naturalist-led hikes

• **Discounts** on classes, programs, lectures, and summer camps

• **Free use** of naturalist backpacks for your outdoor adventure (includes binos, field guides, etc.)

• **Annual subscription** to *Montana Naturalist* magazine

To become a member go to [MontanaNaturalist.org/membership](http://MontanaNaturalist.org/membership)

MNHC is a member of the Association for Science-Technology Centers (ASTC), which means our members receive reciprocal **free admission** to over 300 science centers in cities including Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Denver, Salt Lake City, Minneapolis, and more! For a full list, go to [astc.org](http://astc.org).

MAKE A GIFT

Support our critical work of educating future conservationists and our community with a gift today. Please visit [MontanaNaturalist.org/donate](http://MontanaNaturalist.org/donate).

Consider including MNHC in your estate plans.

Help us connect people with nature for generations to come. Please consider MNHC in your estate planning. Please visit [MontanaNaturalist.org/planned-giving](http://MontanaNaturalist.org/planned-giving).
Foundations, Corporations, and Organizations

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Hellgate Hunters and Anglers
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Julie Gardner Realtor
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Mackenzie Dixon Realtor
Networth Financial
PhysioTrekk
Shirt Shop
The Trailhead
YAMA Mountain Gear

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Shirt Shop
The Trailhead
YAMA Mountain Gear

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First Interstate Bank
First Security Bank
Freestone Concrete Works
Garlington Lohn Robinson
Ink Realty
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Meng Dentistry
Missoula Anesthesiology
Missoula Electric Cooperative
Monida Healthcare
Montana Land Company - Mandy Snook
Morgan Eichwald and Noah Bray
Native Yards
Networth Financial
Northern Rockies Orthopaedics
Partners Creative
Payne West
Rocky Mountain Eye Center
SG Long Financial
Shirt Shop
Southgate Mall
Stockman Bank
Trail 103.3
Williams Law Firm
Windfall, Inc
Wozniak Freeman Jensen
Investment Group of Wells Fargo Advisors

Community Collaborations
Animal Wonders
Be Bear Aware Campaign
Big Sky Documentary Film Festival
Blackfoot Challenge
Boys and Girls Club
Caffé Dolce
Clark Fork Coalition
Clearwater Credit Union
Five Valleys Land Trust
The Flagship Program
Friends of the Lee Metcalf Wildlife Refuge
Garden City Harvest
Girl Scouts of Montana & Wyoming
Hellgate Gem & Mineral Society
Hellgate Hunters and Anglers
Home ReSource
Inspired Classroom
International Wildlife Film Festival
Kettlehouse Brewing Company
Lucky’s Market
Missoula County Weed District
Missoula Insectarium
Missoula Search and Rescue
Missoula Smokejumper Visitor Center
Montana Environmental Education Association
Montana Museum of Art and Culture
Montana Native Plant Society
Montana Office of Public Instruction
Montana Osprey Project
Montana Public Radio
Montana Rail Link
Montana State Parks
National Bison Range
National Military Family Association
National Wildlife Federation
North Missoula Community Development Corporation
Park Side Credit Union
Partners Creative
Raptor View Research Institute
Southgate Mall
spectrUM
Swan Valley Connections
Teller Wildlife Refuge
University of Montana
Philip L. Wright Zoological Museum
University of Montana: Bird Ecology Lab, Broader Impacts Group, Ecology and Organismal Biology, Environmental Studies Department, Office of Civic Engagement, School of Education, Wildlife Biology Department
University of Montana Paleontology Museum
USFS, Lolo National Forest, Missoula Ranger District
USFS, Fire Lab
Watson’s Children’s Center
YWCA GRIT Program

We could not operate without the generous support of our many supporters and partners. We thank you for all your ongoing support!
THE MISSION OF THE MONTANA NATURAL HISTORY CENTER IS TO PROMOTE AND CULTIVATE THE APPRECIATION, UNDERSTANDING, AND STEWARDSHIP OF NATURE THROUGH EDUCATION.