

Hudson Highlands Nature Museum

Annual Report 2019



The New Path

It gives us great pleasure to introduce our redesigned annual bulletin. We hope you like the new format as much as we do. Adding powerful full color images and thematic articles allows us to more directly convey what we do and who we are. To make room for these important new features, and to deliver you more timely information, we are now delivering the Nature Museum program and events calendar seasonally by email newsletter and on our website. This change lowers costs and reduces our environmental footprint. Though the bulletin retains the most important financial and support data found in more traditional annual reports, we have placed a much greater emphasis on the qualitative and experiential aspect of what we do and how we do it. Our goal is to express the essence of the Nature Museum's mission, to reveal the timeless truths entwined in our ongoing story, and to proudly show our impact and value for children and their families.

So as we launch this inaugural issue and celebrate our sixtieth (60th) year of serving Hudson Valley communities, we stand in the present, but—like our Young Naturalist on the cover—stride confidently into the future. That image is a metaphor for who we are, where we are headed, and the special place we occupy in our region and in the natural world. Confident. Open. Respectful. Grounded. Fearless. Always looking up the path for what comes next. We hope you will join us on this journey.

Tom Bregman | *Executive Director*
Steve Bywater | *Board Chair*



The mission of the Nature Museum is to create responsible caretakers of the environment, which makes it difficult to quantify our full effect with statistics or measure our impact on individual children using short-term metrics. We measure in experiences. In moments. In wet shoes and dirty faces. In hikes and walks. In leaves and trails and pebbles. In wildflowers and bird nests found, but left untouched. It is here that the real impact and value of the Nature Museum is found—in these moments where a child first learns to love and care for the earth.

Since its start in 1959, the Nature Museum has shared literally thousands of such moments with children from across the region, planting the seeds of a lifelong connection to the natural world in each of them.

Cover photo by Alex Bennett

How We Teach

Jenny Brinker

Between after-school classes, Weekend Nature Programs, field trips, and special events, we've created 28,752 opportunities to make a lasting connection to the natural world.



Hands

Sensory experiences elicit strong responses in the brain that allow us to form stronger connections between static information and its meaning. Hands-on activities can allow us to learn without it feeling like work, making it appealing to many audiences.



Head

Through science-based curriculum, we promote knowledge of the environment and the dynamic role humankind plays in its well-being. Programming is guided by state and national standards used by many schools to keep our information relevant to teachers and students.



Heart

Creating an emotional connection to nature spurs us to action and encourages behaviors that show respect for the community around us. Caring for the environment and its citizens centers around one key feeling--love.



Young Naturalist Preschool Director,
Kerrilee Hunter, with students

Children Know

Kerrilee Hunter

I cannot tell you how many times I have been walking through one of the Young Naturalist classrooms with a prospective preschool family and the child suddenly goes running off to play. Even children described by their parents as clingers, shy, or 'takes a little while to warm up' often get to the business of playing in our classrooms within moments of arriving. I like to think it's because the children know.

They know that what we're doing here feels right. In the way that we go outside each day and the way we bring the outdoors into our classroom space, we say yes to being part of the wider world and all that comes with it. We set boundaries for safe exploration, but we're not stifling the children's best interests in the name of it. The children feel this when they come into our classrooms and find others happily engaged in play, often streaked with paint or mud, and see the teachers interacting with them at the children's level. They feel that sense of safety and freedom that is the backbone of our program and the attitude we take with us on hikes into the woods or down to the pond.

We have seen time and again the magic that happens when we give children the opportunity to interact with the natural world, give them tools and simple guidelines for safety, and then get out of the way. Nature has a way of presenting lessons that even the best teachers could never dream up.



Photo by Joanna Marvel

Generations for Nature



Nature for Generations

Joe and Susan Maloney have been Nature Museum members since 1981, but Joe's history with us goes back further than that. Sixty years ago when the Nature Museum offered its first summer programs, Joe was not quite old enough. "Many of my friends joined that first year and I followed everything they did with great interest." The following summer he met the minimum age requirement. Years later, he introduced Susan to the organization and the two have been actively involved ever since.

"I was fortunate to spend a tremendous amount of time in the surrounding woodlands, hiking Little Round Top and Storm King Mountain," Joe says of his Cornwall childhood. "The Nature Museum brings those same experiences to children who do not live in places where they can simply walk out the door and get the benefits of being in nature." Sue shares his commitment to unique education

experiences. "During my time as Coordinator of Student Teaching at Mount Saint Mary College I was responsible for providing enrichment opportunities for our student teachers." Susan says. "The Nature Museum provided seminars for my students for several years and those experiences empowered them to think of working outside the walls of a traditional classroom."

The Nature Museum brings [outdoor] experiences to children who do not live in places where they can simply walk out the door and get the benefits of being in nature.

As members of Generations for Nature, our legacy giving group, the Maloneys are helping to ensure the Nature Museum's future. "Joining Generations for Nature was a natural for us!" Sue says. Joe agrees that "being part of the evolution of this truly unique organization and helping to sustain the operation for future generations" is important to both of them. "Good stewards of the environment are more crucial than ever."

Jess Oliveri

Scales & Tails

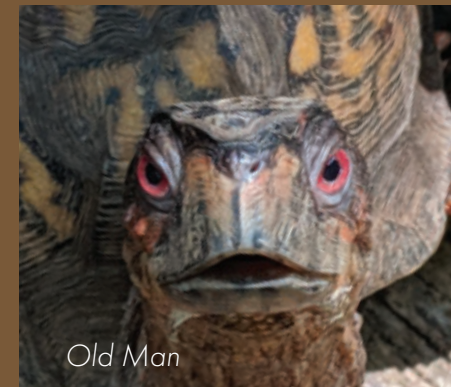
Emily Nestlerode

The Wildlife Education Center (WEC) is the place that our Animal Ambassadors call home. The WEC welcomes visitors during public weekend hours year-round, hosts dozens of programs each season, houses our natural history exhibits, and provides additional education space for the Young Naturalists.

Our animal family consists of over 35 individuals that are used for education. Here are just a few:



Edgar



Old Man

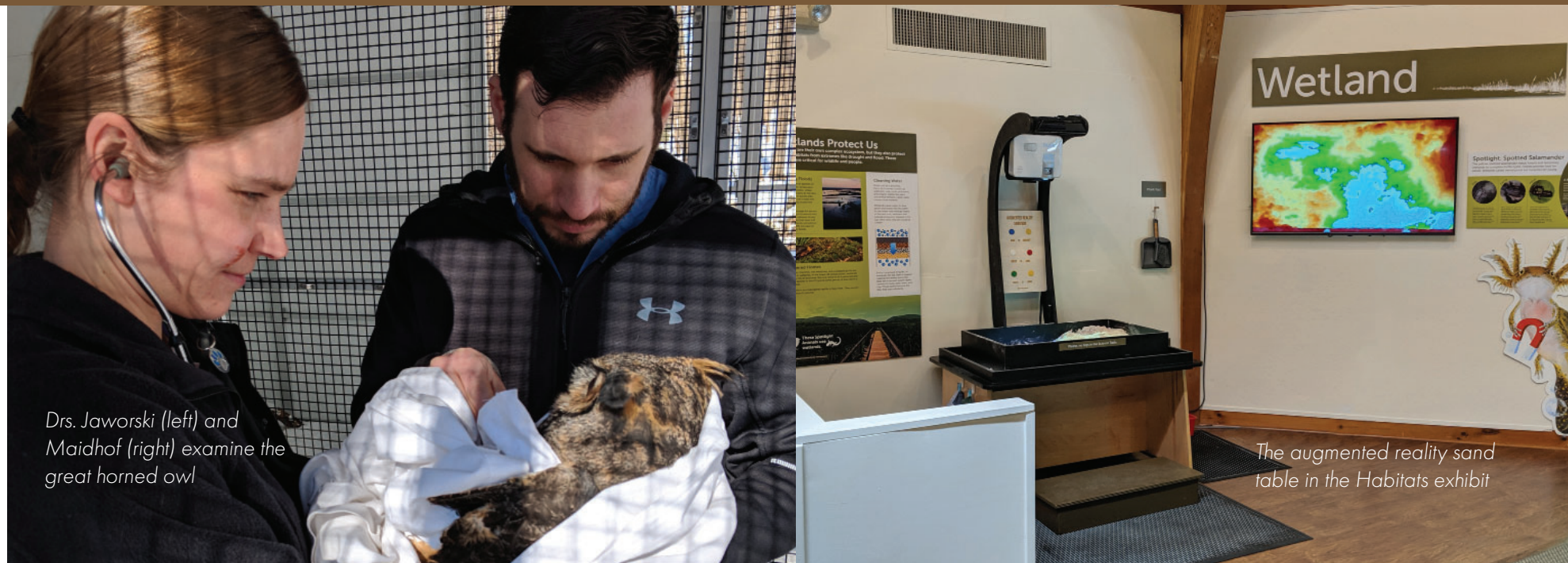


Blossom

Photos by Emily Nestlerode

Animal Ambassadors

Our animal ambassadors bring joy to visitors and staff alike. They require specialized diets, stimulation, and care in order to thrive. Of particular note this year, our great horned owl—who has been with the museum since the mid-1980s—required emergency surgery to fully remove one eye. Thankfully our veterinarians, Dr. Jaworski and Dr. Maidhof, were up to the task on very short notice. He's fully recovered and adapted to his new abilities!



Drs. Jaworski (left) and Maidhof (right) examine the great horned owl

The augmented reality sand table in the Habitats exhibit

Habitats Exhibit

Funded by a grant from the Dorr Foundation, the Habitats exhibit in the Ogden Gallery opened in April 2019. The grant included a fully funded program component and bus transportation for all fifth grades at Horizons-on-the-Hudson magnet school. The addition of an augmented reality sand table was made possible by Hamlin Hill Science. The exhibit was designed by Emily Nestlerode.

A Natural Education

Amy Bandolik

The Young Naturalist Preschool teachers support early learners exactly where they are in their own development, help move them along in ways unique to each, and don't subscribe to the idea that every child follows the same textbook timeline. I knew I had chosen the right preschool the very first time I saw Kerrilee Hunter squat down, near to the floor to be at eye-level with my son Jack before speaking with him. That deliberate physical move, to

not talk down to him in any sense of the word and to meet him where he was, physically, intellectually, and emotionally, was a clue to the deep affection and respect these educators have for childhood.

I was repeatedly astounded and impressed when I'd speak with Jack's teachers and find that they knew him as I know him. They described his qualities, strengths, and challenges

and saw him for exactly who I know him to be and they were approaching their teaching to meet his needs. Their observational skills, combined with the will to act according to what they observed, are rare and to be applauded. Every time I squat down to answer Jack's question, I think of his Young Naturalist teachers and realize how much I got out of HHNM as a parent. I learned how to turn philosophy into practice and be a mom in a way I can never repay.



Amy Bandolik and son, Jack, at school pick-up

"The Hudson Highlands Nature Museum's teaching philosophy extends far beyond a nature-based education. It is, instead, a 'natural' education that draws on the lessons of tree and sky and bird and stream to celebrate and support the natural development of a child."

It Adds Up

No matter how big or how small; whether watching a red tailed hawk soar above the trees or ushering an earthworm across a rain-soaked pathway, the time a child spends in nature adds up to equal something bigger than those individual moments.



6,327
leaves collected



271
puddles splashed

1,054
sticks played with
0
eyes poked out



weekend visitors
played in
Grasshopper Grove



6,693
school students received
programming



1,176
of those students received
programming free of charge



people came to the
Wildlife Education
Center

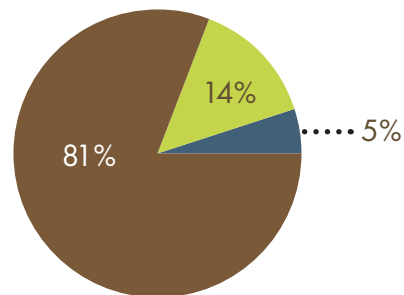
Financial Statements

Operating Expenses

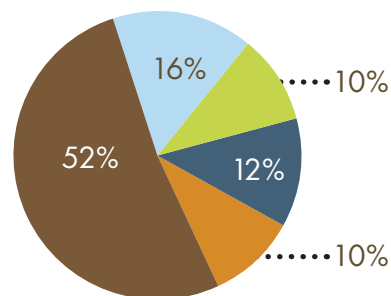
Education Program Costs	\$832,871
Administration	\$143,953
Fundraising	\$51,412
Total Operating Expenses	\$1,028,236

Operating Revenue

Admissions/Sales/Program Fees.....	\$535,524
Fundraising Events.....	\$163,130
Grants & Corporate Sponsorships.....	\$100,001
Membership Donations.....	\$127,309
Other Donations.....	\$102,272
Total Operating Revenue	\$1,028,236



- Education Program Costs (81%)
- Administration (14%)
- Fundraising (5%)



- Admission/Sales/Program Fees (52%)
- Fund Raising Events (16%)
- Grants/Corporate Sponsorships (10%)
- Membership Donations (12%)
- Other Donations (10%)

Thanks

Thank you for your generous support of nature education and play at the Nature Museum. Your donations make possible an array of hands-on, experiential education programs that help children and families establish a meaningful connection to the natural world.

This list represents only a small portion of the people and businesses whose donations made a difference in 2018-19. Please visit our website for the complete list.

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