

Annual Report 2021



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LEADERSHIP



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Scott Mayo
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Our Mission is to engage, excite, & educate visitors of all ages about the natural created world around us.



John Kelton
Director of Exhibits
& Visitor Experience



Jeanne Payne
Director of
Development

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t has been an eventful and unprecedented year here at the Cook Museum of Natural Science. As we opened the year in January and February, we were still feeling the effects of the pandemic, especially due to the absence of weekday visits from schools to experience field trips and education classes.

However, the month of March saw a marked increase in guests, with local, regional, and national visitors enjoying all the Museum had to offer.

Following those great crowds, corresponding to the Spring Break vacations, another wonderful bit of news came to us - schools would resume field trips. For the balance of the school year, the Exhibits and classrooms of the Museum were filled with students of all ages. They seemed so happy to be getting off campus again and especially thrilled to be at the Cook Museum of Natural Science! As the year progressed to summer, the visitors returned in full force.

Within this annual report, you will see in great detail the new and expanded offerings in programs, classes, and experiences that met our guests. In addition to our typical summer guests, the schools were engaged in enrichment activities for a much larger number of students following the difficult previous school year.

The Museum hosted numerous weekly summer field trips to play a vital role in engaging, exciting, and educating students in the region. The activity level did not diminish as the Museum headed into fall and the holidays.

Field trips, classes, event space rentals, the Museum Store, and Nature's Table sales all exceeded expectations leading to the busiest November and December for the Museum since Grand Opening.

Looking back, none of this would have been possible without the incredible support of our guests, staff, Members, Donors, Executive Board, and Advisory Board. The Museum is also thankful for the support of the great entities such as the Decatur Morgan County Chamber of Commerce, Decatur Morgan Tourism, Decatur Downtown Redevlopment Authority, Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association, and the Alabama Tourism Department. These wonderful organizations hit the ground running every morning thinking of ways to drive more interest in our area.

The Museum has always viewed itself as part of the community and region, trying to do our part in educating, in drawing visitors, and providing an economic boost. The trying times over these past two years have solidified the idea that we are all in this together and that together we will get through it and thrive.

Thanks again for the support and we look forward to a great 2022!

Scott Mayo

Executive Director



Scott Mayo helps unload a bus

EDUCATION



Food Science Camp

The Cook Museum of Natural Science offers interactive, hands-on education about the observable natural world.



By creating and implementing curriculum that contain lifescience, Earth science, and physical science, the Museum works to enhance and encourage scientific learning in our community.

EDUCATION CLASSROOMS



- The Salamander Classroom is where younger students are introduced to live animals, take part in fun crafts, and study shapes, patterns, and colors in nature in this bright and exciting classroom.
- Maker Space is designed to help upper elementary and middle school students use the concept of biomimicry: using science and STEAM concepts to creatively solve a problem.
- The Adventure Lab is designed for middle and high school-aged students to get a full hands-on experience with more in-depth science topics like anatomy through dissections and chemistry by performing experiments.



Education Class

EDUCATION BY THE NUMBERS



60 public education classes offered including the Ologies After School Program, Community and Homeschool Classes, and the Little Larvae Learning Series

2,295 students attended education classes covering one of 20 topics offered for students from Pre-K to high school

908 4th through 8th grade students attended Aquarist, Herpetologist, or Entomologist for a Day Camps

7,859 students visited the Museum on field trips to explore the Exhibits



Phantastic Phenomena Camp



Aquarist for a Day Camp

CAMP OFFERINGS FOR 2021

- Aquarist for a Day, Herpetologist for a Day, and Entomologist for a Day camps were held several times throughout the year. Students delved into concentrated areas of animal and insect care and education. They experienced live animal feedings, behind the scenes tours, focused classes, independent workstations, and dissections!
- Seasonal camps offered educational opportunities to the public during school breaks. These camps included Little Squirrely Mini-Camp, Phantastic Phenomena Summer Camp, Food Science Camp, and Christmas Under the Sea Camp.

PROGRAMMING



Amazing Amphibians Fun Day



of programs offered unique experiences for Members and visitors.

PUBLIC PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Science on the Spot: Over 40 weekly presentations covered 13 topics such as Magnetic Marvels and Nature's Nanoparticles.
- Bug Barcoding: This workshop was developed by the DNA Learning Center of Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, funded through an NIH SEPA grant, and offered in coordination with the HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology and the Citizen DNA Barcode Network.



Bug Barcoding

Fun Days: Themed Saturdays allowed visitors to explore the Museum's offerings in a more in-depth way with hands-on demonstrations. The year's Fun Day topics included Amazing Amphibians, Butterflies & Friends, Forces of Nature, and Arctic Wonder.



Forces of Nature Fun Day

ADDING TO OUR RESOURCES

T n 2021, the Cook Museum introduced **1** 2 new accessibility resources that are available online on the Museum's website and onsite at the Guest Services Desk.





to the Museum.

Visual Vocabulary can be used to get a sense of what to expect, introduce new vocabulary, and plan out what to see at the Museum.



ADDING TO OUR PROGRAMS



Sensory Friendly Hours: Children and their families were able to explore the Cook Museum at their own pace with additional sensory-based activities available in the Exhibits.

For this event, the Museum, in partnership with the Regional Autism Network, aimed to provide a relaxed environment for individuals with autism and other sensory or communication needs.

Sounds were lowered, crowds were limited, and a designated quiet room was available.



Sensory Friendly Hours

MEMBERSHIP



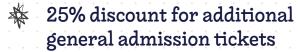
In addition to the numerous public events and programs available to Cook Museum

Members, the Museum offered 2 Member-Only programs: Member Appreciation Day in July and the Member-Only Pop-Up Lounge! in November.

As part of those events, the Museum Store offered a Member-Only Double Discount (20% off instead of the usual 10%) on purchases made the Thursday, Friday, & Saturday of those weekends.

BENEFITS FOR MEMBERS





\$50 off birthday party packages

10% discount at Nature's Table& Museum Store

Exclusive Member-Only discounts, programs, and events

The Museum held two Member-Only prize drawings, mailed out exclusive 2022 magnetic calendars, and granted Members early access to register for the Bug Barcoding workshop.

Members were also invited to give feedback and share their Museum experiences in an online survey.

MEMBERSHIP BY THE NUMBERS



2,545
Memberships
sold in 2021

13 U.S. states represented



ANIMAL CARE

EXPANDING OUR CARE

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service called on the Cook Museum to temporarily house confiscated animals on 2 separate occasions in 2021: confiscated insects in July and reptiles in October.

This is a great achievement and honor to be recognized as a facility they can call upon, due to the work the staff has done and the permits that were obtained.

INSPECTION SUCCESS

A nimal Care is a USDA permitted area due to some insects in the Museum's care that are nonnative. Museum staff takes a lot of precautions to ensure those insects stay in and other insects stay out.

In order to keep these insects and permits, USDA inspects Museum facilities to ensure all appropriate measures are being taken.

In April 2021, the Museum had its first inspection since 2018. This was a big step for Animal Care staff since it was the first inspection with live insects in the Museum's care, and it went very smoothly!

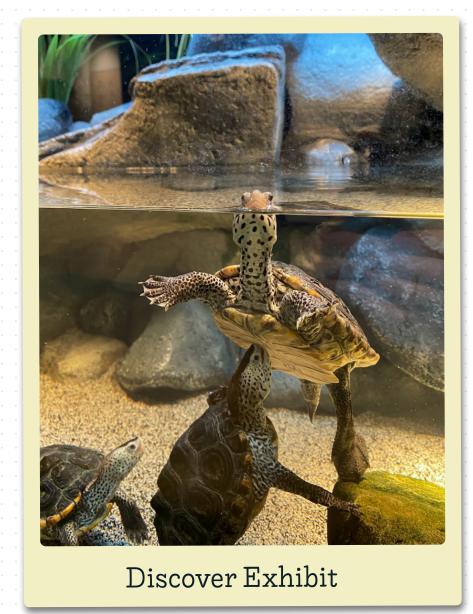
CARING FOR KALE

In 2021, Kale, the Kemp's ridley sea turtle, continued to brighten the faces of visitors to the Museum.

Kale's experiences, prior to coming to the Cook Museum, make him a non-releasable sea turtle that needs ongoing care and attention by Animal Care personnel and our veterinarian to help him maintain proper health.



Kale, the Kemp's ridley sea turtle



DIAMONDBACK TERRAPIN EXCHANGE

Through the Museum's partnership with University of Alabama at Birmingham, Animal Care staff are able to rear their diamondback terrapins until they are mature enough to release back into the wild.

In 2021, Animal Care exchanged the Museum's matured terrapins for adolescents once again.

FIRST HONEY HARVEST



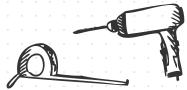
Tn August 2021, Animal Care staff harvested ▲ honey from the external beehives in Hartselle for the first time! This truly shows the progress made with the bees.

This success was shared with the Museum staff as everyone received a sample cup of honey!



Hartselle Beehives

EXHIBITS



CONTINUING TO ENHANCE

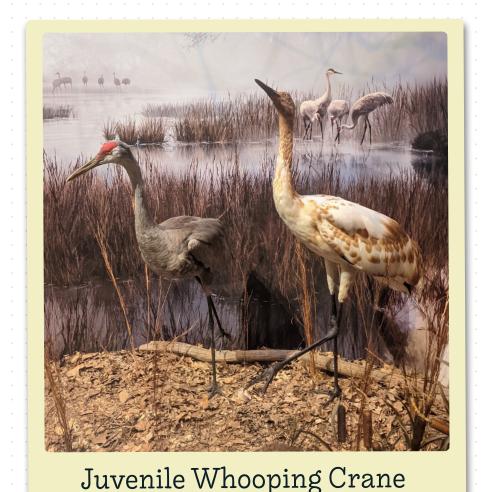
The year held some fun, new updates to several areas of the Museum. Enhancements included:

- Discover: A #cookmuseumbees phone cradle was installed on the beehive for visitor photos.
- Rivers & Streams: A whooping crane (juvenile) taxidermy was installed in the Wetlands Diorama.
- First Floor Lobby: A Bird House Photo Op was constructed.
- Second Floor Lobby: Mechanics of Nature was installed, artwork by Sloane Bibb and sponsored by Pam & Joe Alexander
- Museum traveling display, was shown at two locations Oakville Indian Mounds Education Center and the Guntersville Museum.

EXHIBITS BY THE NUMBERS

203,121 Visitors have been through the Museum Exhibits since opening in June 2019







ACCOLADES





BEST NEW MUSEUM

Cook Museum was voted the #1 Best New Museum for 2021 in the USA Today Readers' Choice poll.



A panel of travel experts picked 20 museums that opened within the last two years and then let voters determine the winners. Cook Museum was honored to be nominated for this contest for the second year in a row.



FAMILY FAVORITE

Local voters chose
Cook Museum as the
Favorite Local Attaction
(Ages 5-9) during the
Rocket City Mom Family
Favorite Awards in 2021.

PUBLICATION GOLD MEDAL

The Southeastern
Museums Conference
awarded Cook Museum
a Gold Award and five
Bronze Awards in the
Publication Competition.





SEMC Publication Competition

SOCIAL MEDIA BY THE NUMBERS

30,160 accounts follow Cook Museum on social media, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter

2,162 likes, comments, shares, and more on the Museum's most interactive social media post in 2021

EVENTS

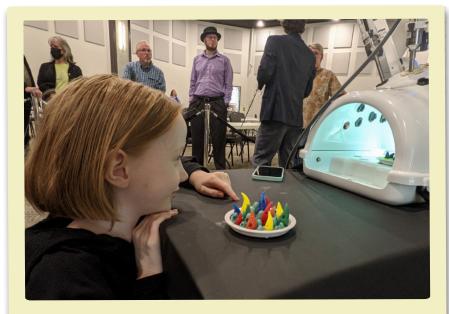
MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS

Ook Museum is home to several unique event spaces which suit many needs, from birthday parties to conferences. The Museum's versatile and beautiful event spaces include: Monarch Hall, Migratory Hall, Trek, and the Conference Room.



EVENTS BY THE NUMBERS

244 Events were hosted at the Museum in 2021 by local companies and groups including, Rotary Club of Decatur Daybreak, Nucor Steel, Alabama Education Association, Cerrowire, Huntsville Hospital, and many more.



da Vinci Surgical Robot



Leadership Greater Huntsville

VOLUNTEERS



LENDING A HELPING HAND

Volunteers are instrumental in the work accomplished at the Cook Museum! They assist in areas such as education, animal care, administration, and even wrapping Museum Store purchases for visitors at Christmas time! We are so thankful for our volunteers!



VOLUNTEERS BY THE NUMBERS

93 Volunteers dedicated their free time to the Museum

3,246 hours spent volunteering at Cook Museum in 2021





Aquarist for a Day

NATURE'S TABLE

OFFERING HEALTHY OPTIONS

Nature's Table is a clean eating restaurant located inside Cook Museum that offers fresh ingredients with a menu that includes wraps, salads, sandwiches, smoothies, and more!

Nature's Table 2021 Happenings:

- Gathered customer feedback and presented \$200 Cook Museum gift cards to eight lucky winners.
- Nature's Table decorated a Christmas tree in **Decatur's Enchanted Forest** in 2021.
- Offered cookies to **trick-or-treaters** on Saturday, October 30th.
- Featured a drawing for a free lunch to Business of the Month participants who dropped their business card in the designated bowl.



MUSEUM STORE



Stories in the Store

SCIENCE AND NATURE IN STORE

The Museum Store offers a wide selection of books, games, activities, and gifts for all ages!

- The Museum store held the free **Stories in the**Store program on 17 different occasions in 2021.
- The Museum Store Open House spanned three days in November and featured an increased discount for Members of 20%, instead of the usual 10% discount.

DEVELOPMENT

NONPROFIT NOMINATION

Dr. Jeanne Payne, Director of Development, and Sara Underhill, Grant Writer and Administrative Assistant of Development, attended the Huntsville/Madison County Chamber Small Business Awards where Cook Museum was nominated for Nonprofit of the Year.



Small Business Awards - Huntsville

\$415k + received in grants in 2021

mazing things continue to happen at Cook Museum because of the support of so many individuals and businesses! We are grateful that so many generous people share in the vision for the Museum.

2021 Highlights:

- Thousands of students visited the Museum for field trips and education classes at a subsidized rate due to the generosity of our donors!
- Individuals and businesses continued to sponsor Exhibits and donate to the Capital Campaign which has raised over \$22.3 Million.
- The Legacy Society was created for donors who choose to include the Museum in their Will.
- Donors continued to give to the Annual Fund, supporting the purchase of education materials, care for the animals, and more!

There are many ways you can continue to support the Museum!

- Sponsor one of the limited number of naming opportunities that are still available
- Become part of the Legacy Society by including the Museum in your Will
- · Donate land, stocks, and other non-cash items
- Donate to the Annual Fund to support animal care and the purchase of education materials
- Donate to the Education Sponsorship Fund to help subsidize field trip and education costs for students

If you would like more information, or would like to help make an introduction to a potential donor, contact me at jpayne@cookmuseum.org. Please come visit us and help spread the good word about the Museum! We appreciate you!

Dr. Jeanne Payne





Creekside Elementary

SPONSORING EDUCATION

The Education Sponsorship Fund is an indispensable tool that utilizes donated funds to subsidize field trip costs for students. The Museum has had some incredible supporters donate over \$46,000 this year!

Donations from this fund reached seven school systems including Athens City, Decatur City, Hartselle City, Huntsville City, Lawrence County, Madison County, and Morgan County Schools.

DEVELOPMENT BY THE NUMBERS

\$163k donated to the Cook Museum Education Sponsorship Fund since it was created in January 2020

1,361 students positively impacted through Education Sponsorships in 2021

EDUCATION SPONSORSHIP DONORS

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Founding Friends Level: \$10,000 - \$99,999

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Artist Sloane Bibb with sponsors Joe & Pam Alexander

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in memory of Carl Craig

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in honor of City of Decatur's 6th floor stat

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in memory of Jo Cook

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CAUGHT AT THE COOK



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Kim Huskey, Laura Fallon, Jayne Russell, and Bailey Brotherton, Huntsville City Schools



Huntsville CEO Roundtable



Rob Hamilton, Chair of Launch 2035, and John Joseph, Executive Director of Decatur Morgan County Entrepreneurial Center



Henry Thornton, City of Huntsville External Relations, Huntsville Mayor Tommy Battle, and Lynn Troy, CEO Troy 7, Inc

