

Executive Director's Board Report
February 2021
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Executive Summary, FY 2020-2021, Second Quarter:

I take this opportunity, at half-way through the current Fiscal Year and nearly one year into our pandemic response, to highlight accomplishments during this most unusual of times. We avoided losing staff, but delayed some hires to leverage finances to best position VMNH for future success while doing our best to serve the public, schools, and the research community and continue to meet mission.

In the meantime, it appears we are well positioned to ease back to a more normal operation this summer. Staff will follow new guidelines for operation that will help keep everyone as safe as possible. We are planning summer camps (will ascertain feasibility in the spring), and Dragon Festival in October 2021. All programming will follow practical hygiene methods to reduce transmission of pathogens.

REMAINING VISIBLE AND RELEVANT

- Staff hosted **three drive through shows**, two in Martinsville and one in Waynesboro, highlighting collections in reptiles and prehistoric life. All were well-received and fully attended.
- The **Wayne Theatre Lecture Series** was conducted using mainly electronic means, although there was some in-person attendance within the spacious theater area.
- **Online resources** were compiled in abundance, presented on social media, and archived on the museum's web page:
 - Ben in Nature: >250 posts
 - Tales of Ancient Life: 28 videos
 - Museum minute
 - Live animal feeding
 - Miscellaneous programming
- VMNH was **open 1-2 days per week**, thus reducing expenses. Numbers were low but steady, and no special events were held in the museum (e.g., festivals, lectures, field trips, sleep overs, birthday parties).
- **New exhibit elements have been installed**, and plans for future updates have been made:
 - **A new 400 gallon trout tank** has been installed in support of our Trout in the Classroom program.
 - **A new butterfly and moth exhibit, "Lepidoptera"**, was installed featuring over 700 specimens.
 - The new **Flight exhibit** is being planned and will be installed at a later date. When we reopen with longer hours, we'll let the public enjoy the *Cats* exhibit for a time before installing *Flight*.

MEETING MISSION

- **A new contribution to the Insects of Virginia series** by Flint et al. was published.
- **The VMNH Molecular Lab** has been overhauled to support VMNH and visiting researchers. It is mostly completed, with remaining equipment to be installed during this FY.
- **A Visiting Researcher Lab** has been established, to support researchers visiting our collections and keeping them isolated for safety.
- **The Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab** has been established, and will be a central focus of a collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution and the Army Monuments Innovation Lab.
- The entire VMNH **Millipede Collection** was inventoried to assist cataloguing. With 400 type specimens present, it also includes 226 undescribed genera and 617 undescribed species.
- **9000 paleontology records** have been updated since their importation into the museum's main database, and an additional 20,000 were updated for consistency.
- **A new Triassic reptile** has been discovered at a site in Ashland, VA.
- **A grant for \$107,000** has been received for the Smith River Survey focusing on local Virginia Indian settlements.
- Dr. Nancy Moncrief completed her 2-year term as President of the Virginia Natural History Society. Dr. Kal Ivanov begins his 2-year term as President in January 2021. Dr. Joe Keiper begins year 2 of this 2-year term as President of the Association of Science Museum Directors.
- The **Homeschool Science and Engineering Academy** was adapted for online content.

ENHANCING VMNH

- Work will begin on the replacement of the **Douglas Avenue roof** and on the **Jean S. Adams Education Pavilion** once General Services gives the go-ahead.
- Work to **replace the existing VMNH passenger elevator** began January 2021, with completion scheduled for February.
- The new **VMNH website** has enhanced our online presence.
- **Remote Learning Resources** were compiled for the VMNH website.
- Educators developed **Summer Discovery Kits** for families to take home.
- Education staff have attended multiple **virtual professional development opportunities**, including those from AAM, Smithsonian, ASTC, and VAST. In addition, staff cross-trained in support of some areas of VMNH Collections and Research.
- **Media coverage** included some high profile outlets such as *Smithsonian*, *National Geographic*, and *The New York Times*.