

JANUARY 1 – DECEMBER 31, 2022

2022 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



bell
museum

150 years

Our 150th anniversary
year celebrated the
best of the Bell.



The Bell Museum is located on the traditional and treaty land of the Dakota people, in the area known as Mnisóta Makhóche (the land of Minnesota).



DEAR BELL FRIEND –

Our 150th anniversary year was an incredible celebration of the best of the Bell Museum and new ways of bringing our mission to life. The Bell community plays a significant role in this process—and you are an important part of this community! We hope you enjoy hearing more of our reflections on the year through this report.

We made significant progress towards serving communities in Greater Minnesota in intentional and impactful ways. A highlight included offering a NEW summer camp program in Grand Rapids hosted at the University of Minnesota's North Central Research and Outreach Center. We look forward to expanding access to this dynamic program across Minnesota in the coming years.

Summer 2022 was our first year distributing 10,000 Science & Nature Activity Kits reaching more than 20,000 children and caregivers across the state. This Fall marked the full return of onsite field trips after a two-year hiatus! We wish you could have been with us that first week to feel the incredible energy that nearly 200 2nd, 5th, and 7th graders from three schools brought into the building. It is experiences like these that plant the seed of possibility for the next generation in STEM.

The Bell began the process of working towards our 2023–27 strategic plan, which we are very excited to share with you soon! This strategic plan is coming at a time when we have just celebrated 150 years of serving as Minnesota's natural history museum, and are now preparing to take the next step. This plan will provide a roadmap for the museum as we explore some of today's greatest challenges.

We hope you enjoy the opportunity to learn more about this past year through the lens of the Bell Museum and our key focus areas that include: Museum without Boundaries, Minnesota's Astronomy Classroom, Creative by Nature, Curiosity Catalyst, and Research and Collections—as well take a sneak peek of what's to come in each of these areas this coming year. Lastly, none of this would be possible without the generosity, passion and engagement from this community. From our donors to our members, our visitors to our community and University partners, each of you has made the Bell what it is today and what it will become tomorrow.

DENISE YOUNG, Ed.D.
Executive Director, Bell
Museum

BRIAN BUHR, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Food, Agricultural
and Natural Resource Sciences
University of Minnesota





MUSEUM WITHOUT BOUNDARIES

During our 150th year the Bell made significant strides toward our goals to deepen engagement, connection and service to communities that face geographic, financial and situational barriers.

We successfully launched a pilot **Summer Camp in Grand Rapids** in partnership with the University of Minnesota's North Central Research and Outreach Center (NCROC) where we collaborated with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greenway and Grand Rapids to serve area youth. This camp connected children with scientists that focus on agriculture, horticulture and farming to explore where their food comes from.

Our Statewide Engagement team continues to travel the state connecting with communities, learning about their needs, exploring opportunities for collaboration on new endeavors, and adapting existing programs.

Science & Nature Activity Kits continue to be an entry point for community organizations and the children and caregivers they serve. This summer the Bell distributed 10,000 kits—that served 20,000 children and caregivers, through partnerships with 50 community, education and social service organizations. Kits were distributed primarily to communities that are historically underrepresented in museums with 80% being distributed in the Twin Cities Metro Area and 20% being distributed to communities in Greater Minnesota.



The Bell welcomed back in-person Statewide Star Parties at 18 locations across Minnesota!

Through a collaboration with Native Skywatchers we explored the theme *Shared Sky, Open Minds*, where we foster appreciation for our shared night sky through various cultural lenses.

We cap-off our reflections of the year with the Bell's participation in the **Nature for New Minnesotans** program. This program combines English language instruction with an introduction to Minnesota's natural history and the outdoors.



MUSEUM WITHOUT BOUNDARIES | BELL MUSEUM

SNEAK PEEK

The Bell will welcome a new position to our staff: **Native American Education Initiatives Specialist**

New Bell Community Science Days events in Greater Minnesota (Winona, White Earth, and Leech Lake)

CREATIVE BY NATURE

This year marked the first major Bell-produced exhibition in our new building, *Seeing Birds*—which brought our incredible art and science collections together.



Seeing Birds featured the work of Bell curators, Associate Professors Sushma Reddy and F. Keith Barker, and their students. This exhibition engaged 62,656 visitors with the Bell's long and robust connection with wildlife art and ornithological research, highlighting the work of past Bell directors T.S. Roberts and Walter Breckenridge as well as artists including Francis Lee Jaques and John James Audubon. The show included recently donated artwork from former curator of birds Professor David Parmalee and a new commission by paleoartist Emily Willoughby.

Art provides an opportunity to connect with our natural world in ways that we never thought possible.

In July and August 2022, the Bell brought the world within arm's reach for visitors through UK based artist Luke Jerrum's **Gaia**. Suspended in Horizon Hall, *Gaia* captivated 13,077 Bell visitors, as they experienced Earth the same way astronauts do from space. This experience prompted questions about how the planet is changing from the effects of climate change and inspired imagination from some of our younger visitors, who were positive they could see penguins!






SNEAK PEEK

Secrets From a Forest, an original planetarium show developed in collaboration with Jim Brandenburg, explores the Paneveggio Forest in Northern Italy where the spruce trees used to create Stradivarius violins are harvested. The show will feature the Minnesota Orchestra and unique programs throughout the winter of 2023-24.

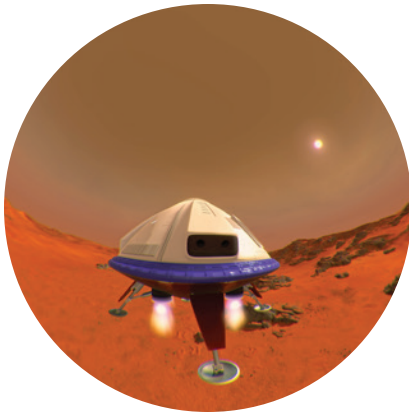
CREATIVE BY NATURE | BELL MUSEUM

Luke Jerrum's *Gaia* allowed Bell visitors to experience Earth the same way astronauts do from space.

A person wearing a dark beanie with a yellow pom-pom and the word "MINNESOTA" in white letters is looking through a large telescope at night. The telescope has a glowing green light inside. The background is dark with some blurred lights.

MINNESOTA'S ASTRONOMY CLASSROOM

Highlights from 2022 included exciting new images from space, monthly star parties, virtual conversations with astronauts, and new planetarium shows!



Mars: The Ultimate Voyage focuses on the challenges of long-distance space flight and what it will take to get humans to Mars and back safely.

2022 was a BIG year in astronomy and provided another chance for the Bell Museum to truly be Minnesota's Astronomy Classroom! With NASA's successful deployment of the James Webb Space Telescope, the Bell shared outstanding new images to planetarium audiences daily during our original ***Latest in Space*** planetarium show and during our monthly star parties. The Bell even sent Dr. Holly Menninger, director of public engagement & science learning, to the Kennedy Space Center to see NASA's Artemis launch system up close!

Our Summer Campers had an out-of-this-world opportunity to speak virtually with two astronauts.

The conversation with Josh Cassada from White Bear Lake, who is currently stationed on the International Space Station, and NASA Administrator Bill Nelson, was moderated by Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar, and held in the Whitney and Elizabeth MacMillan Planetarium. In addition to hearing about their experience, Bell Campers had a chance to ask Astronaut Josh Cassada questions about training, innovations in space technology, and his favorite planet (Earth, of course!).

In December the Bell opened our new original planetarium show, ***Mars: The Ultimate Voyage***. This show, which took two years to produce and was funded through a competitive NASA grant, focuses on the challenges of long-distance space flight and what it will take to get humans to Mars and back safely.




SNEAK PEEK

Over the next 18 months, you have the chance to connect with the Bell as your astronomy classroom as we host events on October 14, 2023 and April 8, 2024 to observe two partial solar eclipses!

MINNESOTA'S ASTRONOMY CLASSROOM

CURIOSITY CATALYST

We are thrilled to have our galleries, classrooms, and planetarium buzzing with the excited sounds of students again!



In October we welcomed onsite field trips back to the Bell Museum! We are excited to be partnering with the St. Paul Public Schools to provide an opportunity for 2nd graders to participate in a special field trip experience on pollination as well as piloting a new urban ecology lab for middle school students focused on squirrels in the urban environment.

The Bell Museum continues to invest in opportunities for visitors to engage in immersive learning through science-based storytelling.

These experiences, whether in front of nature wildlife dioramas, in the planetarium, or at a temporary exhibition, allow visitors to be transported to another place or time, engaging the senses of sight and sound. Research suggests that immersive environments have positive impacts on learning, attitudes, and thinking around STEM topics. As the Bell continues to be a curiosity catalyst for the community, ongoing investment in these experiential areas is critical.

The Bell Museum also had a second **Bell Expedition** event at the museum, providing a unique opportunity for visitors to see what it means to prepare and process new specimens into a collections-based museum.



The Bell hosted its first-ever Collectors Day, welcoming members of the community to share and showcase their personal collections with the public!



SNEAK PEEK

CURIOSITY CATALYST | BELL MUSEUM

Summer science experiences with labs for middle school students! New in 2023, these weeklong programs will include partnerships with The Raptor Center and College of Biological Sciences and give students a unique on-campus experience as they visit research labs and field sites.



RESEARCH & COLLECTIONS

From the penguins of Antarctica to the carnivorous plants at the headwaters of the Mississippi, research and collections are at the heart of our mission.



New ultra-cold storage preserves diverse DNA samples and allows museum researchers to look into the past and search for solutions to contemporary problems.



The Bell's Curator of Genetic Resources, Associate Professor F. Keith Barker, is leading the installation of ultra-cold storage in the scientific collections for the preservation of diverse DNA samples from across the tree of life.

Bell Museum curators and their graduate and undergraduate students resumed their fieldwork in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to Bell curators being in the field, the Bell provided fellowships and awards to more than 20 students to engage in research around the world!

Our digital collection, the *Biodiversity Atlas*, grew to 1.5 million records and 500,000 digital images.

We are well on our way to expanding the Biodiversity Atlas to 2.5 million records through renewed external support.

After a highly productive 25 years as Bell Museum Curator of Fishes, Professor Andrew Simons will be retiring in 2023. The Bell Museum is grateful for Professor Simons' commitment and dedication to this collection, which is in excellent condition, and to the generation of scientists he has trained in specimen-based research.



SNEAK PEEK

Professor of Plant & Microbial Biology and our Director of Science George Weiblen will return to New Guinea to resume his forest research.

A new zoological collections manager will oversee our invertebrate and vertebrate collections beginning in 2023.

RESEARCH & COLLECTIONS | BELL MUSEUM

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YOUR GIFT HAS THE POWER TO IGNITE CURIOSITY AND SHAPE THE FUTURE.

At the Bell Museum we recognize that understanding the past plays a critical role in empowering people of all ages to shape the future. Find what ignites your curiosity and take the next step.

SHAPE THE FUTURE OF THE BELL MUSEUM THROUGH YOUR DONATION TODAY!

Your gift makes the Bell's mission, vision and values a reality. The investment you make today supports the museum's key initiatives:

Museum without Boundaries FUND 23605

Support museum access to programs such as Science & Nature Activity Kits, NEW Statewide Programs, Community STEM Nights, and more!

Creative by Nature FUND 3958

Make it possible to preserve the Bell's Nature Art Collection, and develop new programs and exhibits that focus on the intersection between art and science.

Minnesota's Astronomy Classroom FUND 24683

Development of NEW planetarium shows, Monthly Star Parties, creation and distribution of Star Maps for all visitors and students.

Curiosity Catalyst FUND 3421

Support K-12 visits to the museum virtual field trips, scholarships for youth programs, new hands-on experiences in the Touch & See Lab and Learning Landscape, exhibition extension experiences and programs and more!

Research & Collections FUND 2267

Preserve the Bell's collection, expand and maintain the digital collection through the Biodiversity Atlas, collections-based research and more!

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Open the doors of curiosity and discovery from Bell Museum galleries and planetarium experiences, to providing free and discounted admissions to museums across the country. Find the Bell Membership level and benefits that fit your passion for discovery!



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bellmuseum.umn.edu



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