



# Beyond the Exhibit

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## Coastal Explorations Bring the Shore to Life

Our coastal habitats were alive with activity as young explorers joined the Marion Natural History Museum's Coastal Explorations program to discover the remarkable diversity of wildlife found just beyond the shoreline.

Led by Elizabeth Leidhold, the museum's executive director, participants visited several of the area's unique natural environments during two week-long sessions in July and August. With every step revealing something new, children searched for and identified frogs, fish, crabs, insects, and a variety of other fascinating creatures that make these dynamic coastal ecosystems their home. From peering into tide pools to exploring marsh edges, each outing offered opportunities for discovery and hands-on learning.

As they explored, museum staff introduced participants to the animals they encountered and explained how tides, changing seasons, and weather create an environment in constant motion. These ever-changing conditions support an incredible variety of life, making the coast one of the region's most

vibrant and fascinating places to explore.

A highlight of the week is a trip to Bird Island on a boat generously captained by the Marion Harbormaster. This rarely visited island is the nesting place for a vast number of terns and other coastal birds.

Coastal Explorations with the Marion Natural History Museum is a unique experience for children to explore the natural spaces around them. Through this program, we are able to encourage careful observation, and help foster a lifelong appreciation for the natural world. We were delighted to share these experiences with our young naturalists and look forward to many more adventures discovering the rich biodiversity that surrounds our community.



## Thank You to our Generous Donors

Through the generous donation from Tess Cederholm the museum has been able to acquire updated scientific supplies to support our family and children's programming and fund the staff hours toward the valuable educational programs at the museum. It is a rare treat that children get to interact with scientific equipment such as sein nets, soil augers, and microscopes enabling them to explore the natural world up close. Thanks to the generous support of this fund, these programs continue to inspire and educate the youth of Marion and beyond.



### Winged Wonders Take Flight

The Marion Natural History Museum offered families an up-close look at some fascinating feathered creatures during a special presentation by Amazing Animal Ambassadors.

Bethany Boucher brought five of her animal ambassadors to the museum: a red-tailed hawk, great horned owl, kookaburra, raven and macaw. Each bird offered visitors a unique glimpse into the remarkable diversity of the avian world.

Throughout the program, Ms. Boucher shared fascinating facts about birds and their lives in the wild. She explained how feathers grow and the important roles they play, from helping birds fly and stay warm to attracting mates. She also discussed the many ways birds find and capture food, highlighting how different species have developed specialized adaptations to survive in their environments.

The presentation also allowed families to learn about wildlife rehabilitation. Ms. Boucher explained how injured or orphaned wild animals can be cared for and rehabilitated, and why trained professionals play an important role in giving these animals a second chance.

The highlight of the afternoon was meeting Ms. Boucher's feathered ambassadors. Audience members watched as the birds showed off their personalities and abilities, with some performing tricks and even "talking" for the crowd. The interactive presentation gave children and adults alike an opportunity to see these remarkable animals up close while learning more about the importance of respecting and protecting wildlife.

## Museum Programs

### A Sonic Boom from Space

A dramatic meteor event that shook homes across southern New England took center stage on July 24, 2026, when Dr. Sarah Caudill, Professor of Astronomy at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, presented a program on the spectacular May 30 Cape Cod Bay fireball.

At approximately 2:11 p.m. EDT on May 30, a space rock nearly five feet across and weighing an estimated 5.6 metric tons entered Earth's atmosphere at speeds approaching 75,000 mph. The object fragmented over Cape Cod Bay, producing a sonic boom with an estimated energy release of 230–300 tons of TNT. The resulting shockwave rattled windows, shook homes, and startled residents across Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island.

Using the Cape Cod Bay event as a case study, Dr. Caudill explained the origins of asteroids, the differences between asteroids, meteors, and meteorites, and how scientists analyze these ancient remnants of the early Solar System. She also discussed what such events reveal about Earth's place in an active cosmic environment and the valuable scientific information carried by these visitors from space.

The program offered a timely reminder that while most incoming space debris burns up unnoticed, occasional larger objects provide both a spectacular natural phenomenon and an opportunity to understand the history and evolution of our Solar System.

# Secret World of Fireflies with Entomologist Blake Dinius



Summer evenings wouldn't be the same without the magical glow of fireflies. At a recent museum presentation, entomologist Blake Dinius introduced the fascinating world behind these beloved insects and explained why they deserve our protection.

"Despite their common name, fireflies are not flies at all," Mr. Dinius explained. They are actually beetles, with more than 2,000 species found around the world. Each species has its own unique flashing pattern, allowing males and females to recognize one another in the dark.

Fireflies create light through a remarkable process called bioluminescence, using a chemical reaction that produces "cold light" with almost no wasted energy. While the glowing adults capture our attention, they spend most of their lives as larvae in soil and leaf litter, feeding

slugs, and worms. Adult fireflies live only a few weeks, using their brief time to find mates and reproduce.

"Their flashing displays serve several purposes: attracting mates, identifying members of the

same species, warning predators that they are unpalatable, and, in a few species, even luring unsuspecting prey," Mr. Dinius explained.

Fireflies also play an important role in healthy ecosystems by helping control pest populations and serving as indicators of environmental quality. Their unique chemistry has even contributed to advances in medical and biotechnology research.

Unfortunately, many firefly populations are declining due to habitat loss, light pollution, pesticide use, and climate change. Mr. Dinius encouraged everyone to help by reducing unnecessary outdoor lighting, preserving natural areas, leaving leaf litter in gardens, and limiting pesticide use.

The next time you see fireflies dancing across a summer landscape, take a moment to appreciate these remarkable beetles. Protecting their habitats today will help ensure that future generations can continue to enjoy one of nature's most enchanting nighttime displays.

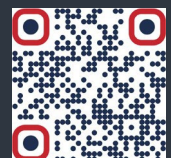
## Updates from the Board

Through a Community Preservation Committee (CPC) grant awarded in 2025, the museum was able to inventory and acquire updated storage for a large portion of the Native American collection that the museum holds. With assistance from the Public Archeology Lab, museum staff identified and inventoried artifacts from the Ernest Clark, Arthur Benson Robinson, Jr., Richard T. Butterfield, and Edwin Walsh, Jr. Collections. The inventory and identification of these artifacts is the first step in properly storing and displaying these collections. This coming year, the board hopes to reinvigorate the display area for these artifacts using the information gained from investigation and identification by the Public Archeology Lab.



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Visit us at [marionmuseum.org](http://marionmuseum.org)

**It is through the support of our members and donors that the Marion Natural History Museum can continue to work toward building a more informed and environmentally conscious community.**

**You can count on me:** ☐ make a donation ☐ become/renew my membership

Membership offers the benefits of reduced rates for after school and community programs, invitation to the annual members meeting, and subscription to our biannual newsletter.

- ☐ Individual \_\_\_\_\_ \$50
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Make checks payable to: Marion Natural History Society  
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508-748-2098

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## Upcoming Events

### After School Programs:

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September 30 @ 3:30 – 4:30 pm - Walking the Fall Forest with Jim Rassman

October 14 @ 3:30 – 4:30 pm – Having Fun with Fall Leaves

October 28 @ 3:30 - 4:30 pm – Farming Cranberries

November 4 @ 3:30 - 4:30 pm – Investigating Dinosaur Fossils

December 9 @ 3:30 - 4:30 pm – Holiday and Nature Craft Party

January 20 @ 3:30 -4:30 pm – Shed Hunting 101

### Community Programs:

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#### Fall Nature Journaling in Washburn Park

October 10 @ 10:00-11:30 am

#### Deep Ocean Hydrothermal Vents with Dr. Stacie Beaulieu

October 16 @ 6:00 – 7:00 pm

#### Stone Walls as Drylands: Viewing New England's Landforms as Habitats with Robert Thorston

November 6 @ 6:00 – 7:00 pm

#### Archaeological Collections at the Marion Natural History Museum

November 13 @ 6:00 – 7:00 pm

**Beyond the Exhibit** October 2026



**Marion Natural  
History Museum**

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