

Monthly Report

April 2022

Summary

April 2022 was the start of our school trip season, and as a result, most of our attendance has been from these school trips. Despite the school trips, during April I was able to get Science Saturday Prepped and ready for May, plan out my summer events list, and get started on reporting for the grant that we used to purchase the eVscope last year, among other small tasks and meetings along the way, and on top of the usual planetarium showings on the weekend.

In April we acquired the rights to show “The Birth of Planet Earth”, the beautiful and scientifically detailed Full Dome movie. This video covers the topic of planetary evolution as it is currently understood in modern astrophysics, broken down and displayed in a way that even average people can understand the general process. This movie is a little more advanced than some of the other videos that we have, but this is good for older audiences and groups that we usually don’t target. The planetarium has the rights to this movie for the next ten years, and it will be a fantastic addition to our Full Dome library. I already have plans to use it for our local ACC courses on May 5th, in conjunction with some discussion about cosmology, and hopefully we can reach out to the local school system and get our high school students inside the planetarium more often.

As of May 1st, I have ended the mask mandate inside the planetarium. While I think it would be nicer to wait until the pandemic is fully over, I don’t know when that will happen. As it stands, people seem increasingly unwilling to wear masks in Alpena and across the United States, despite the dangers of doing so. In order to accommodate those who no longer wish to wear masks, I will simply provide people with the opportunity and resources to mask up if they so choose to, all the while I will continue to wear a mask in the planetarium in the hopes that I can stay safe. If in the future, another outbreak grows to threaten the health of the public, I would recommend that the planetarium move back to requiring masks on all of its guests.

Work From Home

As the planetarium coordinator/manager/director, my work goes towards ensuring the success of the planetarium and thus the museum here in Alpena. While my job is focused on the planetarium, this does not mean my work is isolated to the planetarium itself, in fact, what I do inside the planetarium would be far less impactful without the work I perform outside of it.

My time outside the planetarium is varied, my work involves planning for planetarium shows and live events, managing and creating content for the planetarium's social media and the museum's website, writing reports, contacting individuals for permits and plans, and much-much more. While these tasks can take a lot of time and energy, they are capable of being completed from just about anywhere. Most of the software that I use to complete a lot of my office work can be performed easily with any computer with internet access. I also work with a laptop at the museum, so any software, like email clients, that I do not have at home, I can bring my laptop with me. This makes it easy for me to work at home, where I am more comfortable, which ultimately allows me to work more efficiently and happily on my tasks.

A large aspect of my job as the planetarium coordinator/manager/director involves creativity and brainstorming. Nearly every outreach program that I design, every planetarium show I present, and nearly every external resource that I utilize requires a significant amount of thought and planning. While this is of course going to be easier for me due to the aforementioned comfort, it is also easier to work at my own pace at home, not having to worry about an 8-5 schedule helps me focus on my ideas all throughout the day, instead of shutting down once the workday ends. Being at home also allows me access to my greatest creative resource, my wife Haley. A fellow educator, Haley has consistently helped me throughout my career when it comes to the creation of new content for the planetarium, both physically and mentally. Haley has helped me with brainstorming but she's also there to help me when I need an audience, or an extra pair of hands. Her keen insight into education and teaching has helped me to not only create, but also to refine my creations, and allowing me to present my best content to the public.

While working at home, there are going to be times when the software I am working with is impossible to use here at the museum. The best example of this situation is Adobe After Effects, a video editing program that has been crucial to the museum's YouTube content, which has already brought in over 100,000 views. Simply put, Aftereffects requires a lot of powerful hardware from the machine it is running on, hardware that the museum does not have, this means that in order to produce videos, I have had to use my own equipment to record, edit, and upload videos online over the past 3 years. This difficult work put a strain on my computer, which recently had to be replaced after breaking. While my new computer may not be mobile, it is more powerful and should allow me to spend more time on producing online content for the Besser Museum.

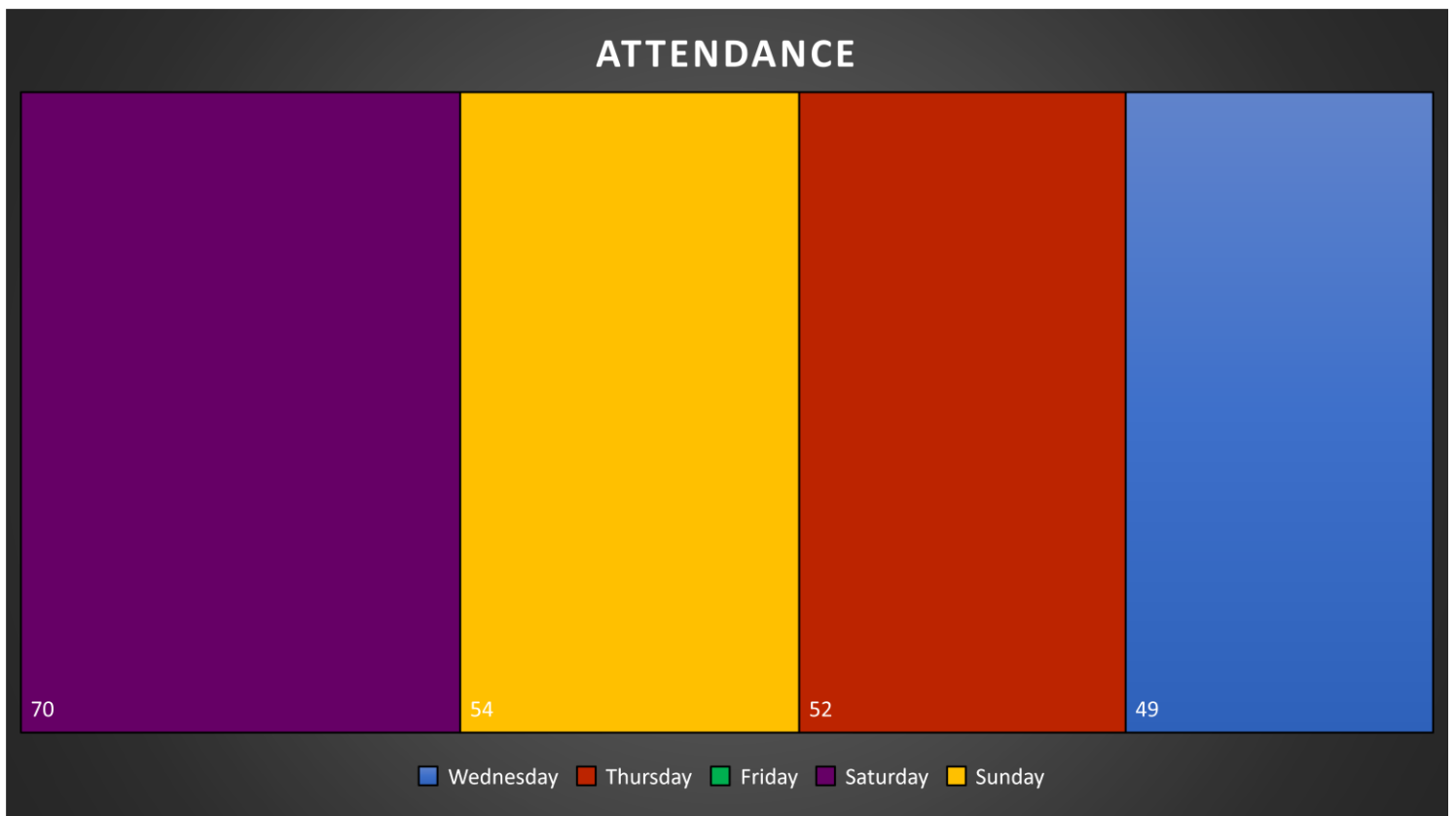
It can be hard to see the benefits of me working from home, but I hope that this report and the results I have produced over the past 4 years helps to assuage some of the anxieties over how I am spending my time from home, and showcases my time is still dedicated to the museum and planetarium.

Plans

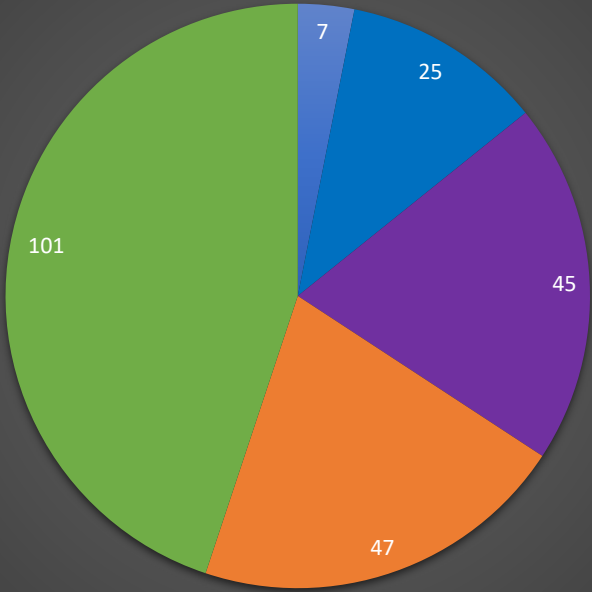
My list of events and activities for May have been included in my Summer Plans document. Please see that document for a list and description of my large objectives for May, June, July, and August.

Attendance

April Attendance was pretty low on the public side, but we made up for it from the few groups that we did have. In total, there were 225 tickets sold this month, with about half of that being from groups. I'm sure that will increase next month, as we already have several groups planned.

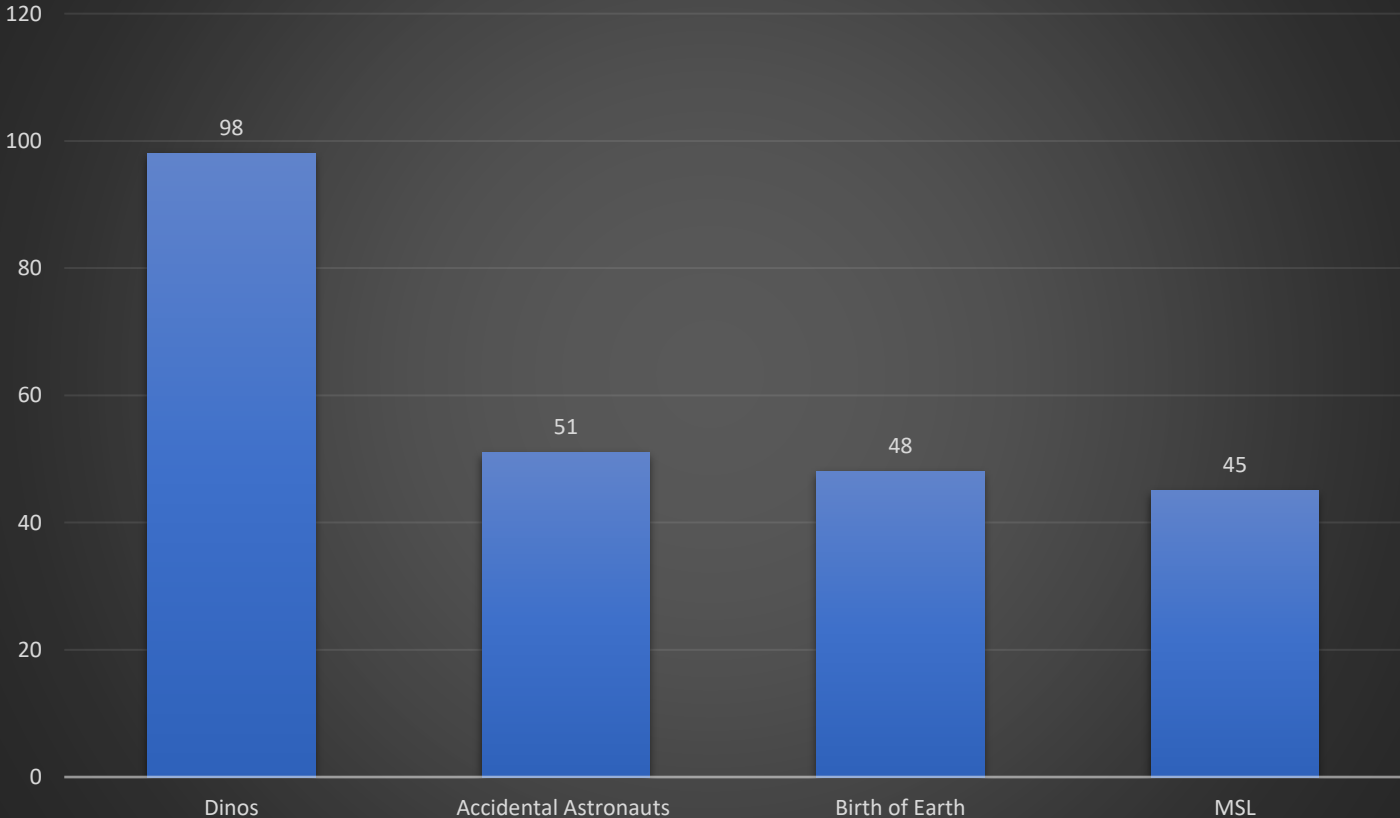


Showtimes



■ 10:30 AM ■ 12:00 ■ 1:30 PM ■ 3:00 PM ■ Other

Shows



Summer Plans

May Plans:

In May, I have the planetarium open 2 days a week to the public, Saturday, and Sunday, which tend to be our busier days. Monday-Friday is currently left open in order to better accommodate to local field trips that are being hurriedly planned by teachers and schools. For field trips, I usually take the time to answer questions from the students about astronomy and science and inform them about upcoming events. I also supplement these trips with a video from our fulldome library. On weekends I am back to holding live public shows from the time the museum opens, up until it closes.

Even though I spend I lot of time holding planetarium shows for schools and the public, I am also in charge of the planetarium's outreach programs, and such I have been planning a series of outreach activities and events.

Total Lunar Eclipse watch party (May 16)

- I've started talking with Matt about resources I'll need for this event. At the moment I want to break out the eVscope and have it track the moon during the lunar eclipse. I will hold this event at the museum, out front in the parking lot, or on the grass. I will be blocking off the front parking lot to allow ease of movement for pedestrians. I will also have a popup tent out on the grass in front, where I will primarily be located.

Huron Pines collaboration Star Party (May 28th)

- Late night observing session at Rockport State Park from 10:00-12:00am. Telescopes and an open invitation to other astronomers to bring their own.

Science Saturday; Observing (May 28)

- Science Saturday based on astronomical observing throughout history, mostly focusing on telescope use. There will be several telescope related activities run by the museum and the library. Right now, I have 3 separate activities that we can use from NISE network kits in our possession, add that with our video 2 Small Pieces of Glass, and what the Library has planned, and we have a full course of events ready for the end of May.

June Plans:

Starting in June and going until September or October, the planetarium will be hosting shows 7 days a week. For 5 of those days, I will be hosting multiple live programs that last about an hour each. Each day will also include one showing of MSL, which is a fully live show and generally does not include any videos. Managing and running so many shows by myself is a full-time job. On especially busy days, the schedule can change, instead of the normal programs I show a short planetarium video and a 5-minute live talk, as is needed to accommodate the hundreds of visitors that desire planetarium shows. This second scenario is quite rare but may be necessary again this year.

June Outreach:

Ales & astronomy

- Paid event directed towards adults. Bringing some telescopes to Austin Brothers once or twice, to reach a more mature audience.

Log Cabin Day

- Will run a short planetarium show throughout the event. 4-6 showings depending on length of Log Cabin Day. No regularly scheduled shows on that day.

Venus and Mars conjunction watch party (June 13)

- This is a pretty simple event. I'll bring out a telescope to watch the planets side by side and give insight to guests on the event. I also want to bring a picture showing the solar system view, that way people can see what's happening from beyond of our surface perspective.

Summer solstice solar observing (June 20th)

- I want to set up a solar telescope downtown in Alpena, at the plaza right across the corner from Downtown Scoops. I'd like to setup a popup tent, some chairs, and a little information table, as well as a solar telescope that would let me show people what the sun looks like in real time. I'm not sure how long I want to do this for, that would depend on whether or not I can get the Library to help out that day, as I know they have solar telescopes too.

July Plans

Ales & Astronomy

- Paid event directed towards adults. Bringing some telescopes to Austin Brothers once or twice, to reach a more mature audience.

Free nighttime observing sessions

- Pretty similar to Saturn Viewing. I want to bring out a telescope or two and talk to people about astronomy, while showing them really cool stuff in the night sky. This will be a casual event with telescopes and some free resources and materials for people to take home.

Science Saturday (June 30th)

- To be determined.

August Plans

Ales & Astronomy

- Paid event directed towards adults. Bringing some telescopes to Austin Brothers once or twice, to reach a more mature audience.

Saturn Opposition watch party

- Saturn will be at opposition to the Earth, making it highly visible in the sky, allowing for great observations of the ringed planet and its larger moons. While the actual date of opposition will be on the 14th, anytime in August will permit a great observing opportunity of this planet. A lot of people have never seen Saturn's rings with their own eyes, let alone any of its moons, so I want to try my best to show this wonderful site to people.

Perseid Meteor Shower

- Best Meteor shower of the summer. Would be nice to hold a Meteors & S'mores party this year at the local dark sky parks, especially if the friends of rock port are back in business by then.