



# Maturango News

Death Valley Tourist Center • Northern Mojave Visitor Center

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[www.maturango.org](http://www.maturango.org)

## Museum Director's Notes

By Debbie Benson, Director

Now that we are nearing the end of the somewhat confusing month of May, we hope for some beautiful June days. May brought us a little bit of everything, including snow for some 5<sup>th</sup> graders on a Petroglyph Tour in the Cosos. We've had some great rain even though it is not nearly enough to solve our water issues. Our desert Iguanas seem to be going from warmed up and running at full speed to trying to find a sun-warmed rock. Sometimes I think we all feel that way!

As we are all so well aware, the Indian Wells Valley has to be very conservative with its water usage. One of the wonderful aspects of our Gladys Merrick Garden is how lush and diverse a water-wise garden can be. The garden can be explored for ideas as well as finding some great books on plants and landscaping in the Museum Gift Store.

The Museum had some great events with our Bud Sewell concert and our lectures. We are working on some more lectures for the summer. We will post them on our website as soon as we know! This year the Docents are going to have some classes for 9-12 year olds through the City of Ridgecrest Parks and Recreation Department. It should be a good time for all!

Help us get ready for our Annual Fundraising Dinner/ Auction ! September 19<sup>th</sup> will be here before we know it! Do you have things to donate? Do you have a great idea for an auction item? We'd love to hear from you!

## Your Own Magic Carpet

Presentation by Paul "Booger" Valovich, Tuesday, June 9th, 7:30 pm, (doors open at 7 pm)

Build your own airplane! Guaranteed to keep you occupied, broaden your honey-do skillsets, deplete your wallet, experience new levels of frustration while expanding your repertoire of four letter words, and in the end, produce an unmatched sense of accomplishment – not to mention providing you with an affordable magic carpet toy for yet-unimagined adventures.

"You've got to be kidding! No way! I wouldn't know where to begin!"

This presentation by Booger may change your mind.

Booger did build his own airplane – a Vans RV-8A. Took 6 ½ years to build. He is not going to tell you exactly how to build an airplane

– but rather go through the logical but somewhat complex decision processes he encountered while navigating the road to achieving his specific dream. At the end of the presentation you will, if interested, know where to start – and know the questions to ask yourself if you dare fall for the allure of flight.



## Your Museum Membership Just Became More Valuable



The Maturango Museum is an Association of Science-Technology Centers Travel Passport Participant. This means that Maturango Museum Members are eligible for benefits, such as free General Admission when traveling outside the Ridgecrest area and visiting other member, participating Passport museums. There is a complete downloadable list of participating museums, along with explanations and exclusions, on our web site at <http://maturango.org/become-a-member/>.

### Docent Doings

By Nora Nuckles, Education Coordinator

Tours, tours, tours! Rosy, our pet rosy boa, and many juvenile tortoises came to the museum to meet the many school children that visit with their classes at the end of the school year! Bob Parker brought a sulcata, a leopard tortoise, a Russian tortoise and several desert tortoise young. These animal ambassadors speak for the reptiles of the world! They are remarkable animals with many unique adaptations. When the children walk through the garden they are mesmerized by the great number of desert iguanas, whiptails, and side-blotched lizards that scurry across in front of them. It is difficult not to step on the many entrances (holes) to homes they have built. Another treat for the students is ringing the bell that used to be at the Little Lake Hotel. John Pate later acquired the bell and donated it to the Historical Society who had it installed at the museum.

When I visit our museum garden I enjoy observing the animals that abound there! Sometimes I learn something new to me. I never knew an Antelope ground squirrel could be carnivorous and none of the docents had taught me that. So I was very surprised to see an Antelope ground squirrel attack a desert iguana repeatedly and get a portion of protein from the iguana tail! Some patrons and I sent the Antelope ground squirrel away many times until the iguana sought refuge in some rocks.

It is fun to work with children! One class decided to name one of the small desert tortoises that Bob brings to the classroom. Instead of "Number 4" the class voted to name it 'Bambina' because Bob told them it was a girl. Often when we give presentations we are lucky enough to get a glimpse of what a child understands. On a recent presentation about volcanoes I had some wonderful questions from the fifth graders. One student understood the idea of how hot it was at the Equator but then went on to question since all magma was at the Equator then how does it get to volcanoes all around the world. Wonderful question since I was just about to show a model of the Earth and show where the magma was located! Children are always doing critical thinking; we just need time to listen to their questions!

Docents are offering some fun summer classes for students ready to enter 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, or 6<sup>th</sup> grade (ages 9-12). The classes are offered through the Ridgecrest City Parks and Recreation Department but will be given at the museum in our new workspace. Registration for the June classes will be through Ridgecrest Parks and Recreation Department. You can find the information on the city website. [www.ridgecrest-ca.gov/recreation](http://www.ridgecrest-ca.gov/recreation)

"Critters from the Inside Out" – Up-close and personal view of museum specimens, skeletons, and pelts. Fun activities to learn about our desert critters -- amazing facts about each animal and its adaptations for survival. June 8, 9, 10, 11. 9-11:30 am each day. Price -- \$50 for 4 days. Maximum of 15 students.

"Into the Stars: Our Solar System and Beyond" -- Learn about planets and stars with time spent inside and outside of the Beth Armogida Planetarium. There will also be hands-on activities. June 16 & June 17. 9-11:30 am each day. Price -- \$40 for 2 days. Maximum of 20 students.

"Fun with Kitchen Chemistry" -- Hands-on activities with common kitchen products such as baking soda, Epsom salts, salt, sugar, and yeast. Children will make things like crystals, elephant toothpaste, and Oobleck. They may do some chromatography with common products. June 23, 24, 25. 9:00-11:30 am each day. Price -- \$45 for 3 days. Maximum of 15 students.

Our last monthly meeting is a potluck celebration at Elaine's house. Call if you need directions.

Many of us will meet during the summer to run the summer classes, give a few tours, and continue script planning for next season. If you are interested in volunteering and working with warm, thoughtful, knowledgeable people, please call me!

### Summer Field Trip to Green, Cool Places with Janet Westbrook

Saturday, July 11, 8 am meet at the Museum, head up 9 Mile Canyon Rd through Kennedy Meadows and beyond!

Let's cool off and visit the high country in our back yard -- the Kern Plateau. Where's that? All the places west of and higher than Kennedy Meadows! There are over 20 pretty meadows up on the Plateau and we'll go visit a bunch of them, including my favorites Bonita and Paloma, probably Beach, Granite Knob, maybe Osa -- I'll go scout and find the greenest ones before our trip.

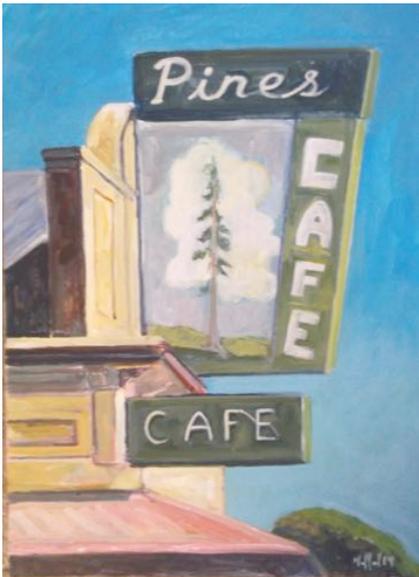
These meadows are on dirt roads off the main paved Kennedy Meadows to Sherman Pass road, so be sure your car and tires are in good shape. The roads are graded dirt - anything but a Porsche or Vet will be fine.

Bring a picnic lunch - we'll probably eat at Blackrock station, but who knows? Bring a folding chair so you can sit in the shade for talks. Bring drinking water - LOTS of drinking water - it's scarce up there! Bring camera. Leave cell phone home - "No Service". Bring jacket and sunburn goo - the weather can change quickly!

We'll discuss the trees that surround the meadows, how a meadow forms and who lives in them, critters of the forest and meadows, maybe catch frogs if there's any water left by July, how drought and wet winters affect the local mountains, effects and recovery after fires, beetle infestations, etc. LOTS of things to discuss!!

We'll wind up in the afternoon atop Sherman Pass, 9200 ft. with views of the Kern Plateau and Olancho and Whitney! From there it's the same travel time back to Ridgecrest if you retrace your steps down 9 Mile or if you head west and go down to the North Fork of the Kern river and down to Kernville - maybe dinner at McNally's or the Brewery or.... !!

Buy tickets in the museum gift shop or online at [shop.maturango.org/trips-tours/](http://shop.maturango.org/trips-tours/) \$30 per ticket or \$50 per couple for museum members.



earned a degree in History from San Francisco State in 1991.

I love to paint what I see. I am most influenced artistically by what I have lived through and experienced on any given day. I love to paint the West, but as it is today, not 100 years ago. I would rather paint an iconic sign like the Pines Café than a cowboy on a horse!"

### "Highway 395 Roadtrip"

Join us for the opening reception with artist Eric Holland  
Friday 12 June, doors open 7 pm.

Eric loves roadtrips. He entertained us a few years ago with his "Highway 50 Roadtrip" exhibit and wonderful oil paintings documenting his experiences. This exhibit takes us on an artistic journey on Highway 395 from Red Mountain to north of Reno. Eric's oil paintings are... "traditional landscape and building paintings.

I have primarily worked as an artist since my early 30s. I studied at the Art Students League, the Chicago Academy of Fine Art, and the Academy of Art College in San Francisco. I



Starry Night

## Wildflower Exhibit Volunteers Appreciated

By Charlotte Goodson

What a great wildflower spring it turned out to be! The timely rainfalls and early just-right temperatures produced an abundance and variety of blooms we haven't enjoyed for a long time. In the weeks ahead of the annual Wildflower Exhibit excitement was steadily building in spite of a nagging anxiety that the whole 'show' might dry up and be done before mid-April. Thankfully, that didn't happen and we ended up with an increase in the number of species collected within our drainage area compared with the past several years. (See related article by Judy Breitenstein)

Having the new "Coso Gallery" and adjacent workroom available for the exhibit's preparation week made possible long dreamed-of improvements. With space for the addition of more display tables, the wildflowers could be spread out within their plant families to enable visitors to much more easily see plants' characteristics and identifications. We owe a debt of gratitude to Boy Scout Troop 35, sponsored by the United Methodist Church, for bringing and setting up all the tables. They also returned with their leader, Mike Stenger, on Saturday to set up chairs for the program.

Under the direction of Elaine Wiley and her layout for processing incoming plants in the new workroom, Nora Nuckles and Bev Hill helped carry out the smooth-running work of the scheduled Flower Processors. Contributing two hours of steady bottling were Susan Prazak, Marty Corzine, Pat Strickland, Susan Hueber, Peter Wiley, Nora Nuckles, Pat Moore, and Sharon Oldfield on Wednesday. The following day a 'fresh' crew stepped in: Jane Van Aken, Elaine Wiley, Sue Gilbert, Bev Hill, Pat Silberberg, Karen Bowling, Leslie Layfield, Dianne Dilley, and Terry Ratcliff.

Collecting began on Tuesday, April 7, along the High Aqueduct Road, Hwy 178 to Short Canyon, by Judy and Gene Breitenstein and their visiting daughter, Karen Commodore. Also collecting that day in Horse and Sage Canyons was Erika Gardner. During the next two days more ice chests full of individually bagged specimens were brought in by BLM permitted teams from fifteen areas under the organization of Kathy LaShure. Collecting in Cow Heaven Canyon were Paula Herr and Terry Ratcliff; El Pasos Mtns. and Sheep Springs by Glenn Harris with family members; Fossil Falls South, Cinder Cone & Powerline Rd. junction by Lloyd and Bea Smith; Fossil Falls North to Gills Station and on 2<sup>nd</sup> day Poison Canyon South by Wendi Elkins and Andrea Pelch; Grapevine Canyon by Kitty Ferguson, Mike and Jerry Mumford; Indian Wells Canyon, 2 days by Pat Sorensen; Nine Mile Canyon by Kathy and Rich LaShure; Poison Canyon northside by Camille Anderson; Rademacher Hills by Elaine Wiley and Bev Hill; Sand Canyon by Cam Alden and Dan Burnett; Short Canyon Lower by Nora Nuckles and Joanna Foster; and Walker Pass, Hwy.14 to the Ridgeline by Marianne Kistler and Richard Villegas.

Nine of the above volunteers also served as hosts during the exhibit along with Tine Brouwer, Penny LePome, and Sherry Brubaker. Keeping all the plants looking their best were two Girl Scouts from Troop 56 on Saturday morning and two on Sunday. They did a careful and excellent job, and we thank their leader, Amy Pillers.

Members of the Desert Artists' League made and displayed their "plein air" sketches and watercolors all weekend -- a wonderful contribution. Perhaps a seed of inspiration was planted by their example among the visiting children. We hope they will join us again.

Naomi Fraga, PhD botanist with the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, presented "Wild About Monkeyflowers - and Other Local Wildflowers" on Saturday. Naomi has been invaluable to us in identifying wildflowers in the exhibit for several years. Erika Gardiner, also from the Garden, recently became a dedicated helper and promises to continue. In generously sharing their knowledge with us each year they've added much to ours.

Judy Breitenstein, a long-time Museum Docent and principal Wildflower Exhibit resource is the one to whom all turn with the certainty of thoughtful answers. Judy continues to be the anchor of our growing



Charlotte Goodson and Naomi Fraga.

wildflower team of coordinators that includes Al & Joan Woodman, Kathy LaShure, Elaine Wiley, Bev Hill, Nora Nuckles, Charlotte Goodson, and Kate Goodson. Supporting all the enthusiastic volunteers throughout the week were the Museum staff members -- Debbie Benson who made sure we got the tables and easels, Liz Babcock's beautiful WFE poster, and all of the workers in the Museum gift shop. The contributions of three others provided the vital components to having the exhibit in the new gallery. Dan Burnett, the wearer of many hats, all well fitting, was there to accomplish a myriad of jobs. Ed Czajka and Mike Brown worked tirelessly on the initial stages of installing the new audio/visual system.

To everyone, including any I may have overlooked, a heartfelt thanks for making this a fantastic Wildflower Exhibit.

### An Amazing Wildflower Year

By Judy Breitenstein



Judy at the exhibit.

We have had an amazing year. Nice slow, soaking rains, spaced so that the ground never really dried and the rain was never really hard enough to cause much run off. Wind was capricious as usual though mostly from the southwest so that south-facing slopes of the Sierras were generally more spectacular than north-facing ones.

Annuals were off and blooming so well and so soon we were afraid they would be gone before the Exhibit. But they stayed with us and it rained again just before we began collecting.

Perennials followed with the same enthusiasm, though later blooming ones like *Senna armata* were not as well provided for in most places. Poison Canyon produced well as usual. The Rademachers were glorious. Gold *Lasthenia gracilis* from bottom to top with swathes of purple *Phacelia fremontii* interspersed and an abundance of nearly

everything else. The Sierras were one surprise after another. Our northern collection area did not receive the abundance of moisture the valley did, so while seeds were made, that collection was not as impressive as hoped.

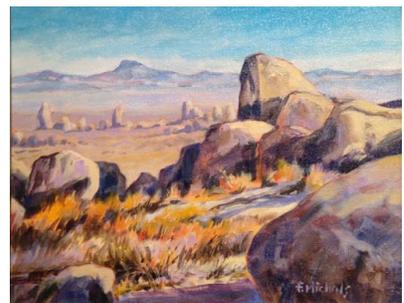
We collectors had a marvelous time finding favorite plants we had been worrying about and rejoicing over new ones. It's so exciting, and always a learning experience as well.

The new space at the Maturango Museum is marvelous. We can back right up to the door to deliver, and with two stations for area tagging, it goes faster and is more reliable. Not to mention more comfortable. Next the specimens are carried straight to the identifying table and then placed with the proper families with enough space to see and read the information of even the tiniest ones.

The ultimate identifiers were Naomi Fraga, who also spoke about *Mimulus*, her speciality, and Erika Gardener. These ladies share their time and knowledge with enthusiasm and grace. We are so lucky.

#### Frances Nichols' "Seasons of Color"

Pastel, watercolor and oil paintings in the gallery until June 9.





**Hello Artists... Time again to think about participating in the Open Studios Tour.**

**The dates this year are 17, 18 October.**

The tour gives all of us, artists and visitors alike, a chance to show off and experience the creative spaces where artwork is created.

For artists new to the tour idea, you can open your studio for the weekend or possibly share space with another artist. We are always eager to have new artists join this event. The application

and more information will be on the museum website [www.maturango.org/ost2015](http://www.maturango.org/ost2015).

Or call Andrea 760-793-2857.

## May 2015 Donations

### Donations

Russ and Linda Bates

Thomas and Caroline S. Maddock

Robert and Becky McDiarmid

Jenny McLaughlin

Millie Pate

Larry Sawyer

### Building Fund

Robert Westbrook

### In Kind Donation

Robert Aiken – equipment

### Art Gallery

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Jim and Deanna Stewart

### New Members

Brian Aikens

Bonnie and Nicholas Clapp

Rochelle Fulton

Shirley Helmick

Carmen and Michael Maas

Millie Pate



Nora Nuckles and our new volunteer Aaron Wooldridge. Aaron really likes the labyrinth; has been out weeding the area. Thanks Aaron.

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## **Maturango Museum of the IWV**

100 E. Las Flores Ave., Ridgecrest, CA 93555  
Open every day (except major holidays)  
from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

### **Staff**

Debbie Benson, Museum Director  
Maureen Goff, Store Manager/Buyer  
Sandy Rogers, Archaeology Curator  
Elizabeth Babcock, History Curator  
Maria Getusky, Natural History Curator  
Julie Stephens, Chief Financial Officer  
Fran Van Valkenburgh, Membership  
Andrea Pelch, Art Gallery Coordinator  
Joann Barbee, Assistant Bookkeeper  
Nora Nuckles, Education Coordinator  
Linda Saholt, Petroglyph Tour Coord.  
Sue Gilbert, Museum Assistant  
Nora Nuckles, Museum Assistant  
Nick Rogers, Museum Assistant  
Andrea Pelch, Newsletter Editor

### **Committee Chairpersons**

Dan Burnett, Building  
Fran Rogers, Concerts  
Paula Herr, Docent League  
Dan Burnett, Finance  
Sandy Rogers, Lectures  
Liz Babcock, Publications  
Bob Westbrook, Strategic Planning  
Mike Brown and Janet Westbrook,  
Webmasters  
Mike Brown, Operational Fundraising

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## **Regularly Scheduled Meetings**

- China Lake Astronomical Society: 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of every month, 7 pm
- China Lake Photographic Society: 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of every month, 7 pm
- Kerncrest Audubon Society: 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday bi-monthly [Jan, Mar, May, Sep, Nov, not July], 7 pm
- Docent League: 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of every month, 8:45 a.m., anyone welcome to attend

## Calendar of Events

Friday, June 12 : Art Exhibit Opening Reception : Eric Holland's "Highway 395 Roadtrip"

Free Day at the Museum : Saturday, June 13

Tuesday, June 9, 7:30 pm : Presentation by Booger Valovich, "How to Build Your Own Airplane"

Summer classes for students ready to enter 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, or 6<sup>th</sup> grade (ages 9-12) : see Docent Doings article

Pizza Factory Fundraiser : all day June 25

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