

Maturango News



“Spirit of the Desert” earrings.

Maturango Museum:
Preserve, interpret and develop an appreciation for
the natural and cultural history of the Northern Mojave Desert.
100 E. Las Flores Ave., Ridgecrest, CA 93555
10 am – 3 pm every day. 760.375.6900 www.maturango.org
Death Valley Tourist Center Northern Mojave Visitor Center

Museum Director’s Notes

By Debbie Benson, Director

I cannot tell you how it was; but this I know: it came to pass
Upon a bright and breezy day
When May was young
Christina Rossetti

May is our celebration of Spring having truly arrived! The local wildlife has begun the parental time where birth and the hatching of eggs brings about the seeking of nourishment for the young. Because of the extreme dryness causing such a sparse selection of plants available we may see less in the wild, and some of the wildlife may brave city life just to sustain. Here at the Museum garden we have noticed that the redesigned water feature is attracting a steady flow of thirsty guests.

We were pleased to be able to open our doors in April. As we move forward we will continue to be as safe as possible for the safety and health of our staff, volunteers and guests. Thank you all for your many kindnesses and respect for our attempts at protecting where possible.

The changes in displays and our Gift Shop and the care of our gardens were accomplished with the work and diligence of our volunteers. Volunteering is a great way to participate in our Museum and the community. If you would be interested in volunteering, just come in and talk to us or fill out a form on the website.

Please enjoy the outdoors and the many opportunities to enjoy the walking trails and vistas to be found in our local area. If you would like information we can help! One of the best parts about being open to the public once again is sharing our travel information and tips.

Each of us is extremely grateful for the support and concerns shown to us by our membership and the community. Please take care. My best to you all.

Gift Shop Mother’s Day Sale: Monday May 3rd - Sunday May 9th



Save 20% on selected gifts for Mom.
We have beautiful hand jewelry, t-shirts, wind
chimes and purses that just might suit Mom.
Come visit and see what you can find.

Free Admission for Mom on Mother’s Day.



Archeology the Old Fashioned Way: By Mule to the Top of the Panamints

By Barbara Bane, M.A., RPA, Archeology Curator



Recently I volunteered to do some archeological site monitoring for the BLM in the Panamint Range. Since my backpacking skills have surrendered to a lifetime of outdoor work on my joints, the question became “how to get up there without a jeep?” Some mule packer friends of mine from Barstow offered to help me out with a multi-day mule excursion. Now, I’ve done mule-supported excavation in Yosemite back country, traveled by mule for days to tourist at remote Baja rock art sites, but never actually done archeology site work by riding on a mule. “Retro travel” in the pursuit of science – we were on!

We camped the first night in Panamint Valley and packed up the animals the next morning. The string consisted of three mules for three riders, two pack mules, and a young pack burro, Jezebel, on her first overnight trip fully loaded. With water springs uncertain in this dry year, we took water for people and animals for four days, as well as high protein alfalfa pellets and grain for the mules to avoid foraging.

Packing is a lot of work and “arranging” – balancing loads, covering and protecting the loads, and then situating the animals in the string per their personality quirks. Jezebel would only follow her favorite mule, my mount Peaches, and Annie had to be near her best buddy, Honey. By noon we were finally off.

Climbing off the valley floor up-canyon alongside a flowing stream, we gained over four thousand feet in six hours. By the time we made a cowboy camp up in the pinyon zone, animals and riders were beat. The trees made it possible to high-line the animals for the night since pickets would have been almost impossible in the stony ground. Using metal bear boxes as coolers, we enjoyed fresh food and hearty stews. The night was cold and clear with the Milky Way shining above.

The next morning we hiked cross country to find the sites due for monitoring, leaving the animals to rest on their lines for the day. After a successful detective hunt for the most part, we returned late in the afternoon to lead the animals back down-canyon to a spring-fed watering hole. Another round of stew on the camp stove for us, grain for the animals, and we were out for the night, disturbed only by the local wild burros who stopped by to check on their domestic counterpart, Jezebel.

Up at dawn on the third and final morning, strong coffee perked in a large Italian espresso maker. The packing for home went a little faster relieved of water and food, but the animals were restless and cantankerous, knowing they were headed for the trailer. A slow trip back down-canyon was interrupted numerous times by jeeps and OHV traffic, the first folks we’d seen, but the mules took it peacefully and wheeled visitors courteously yielded the road. By sunset we were back on the valley floor, hurrying to unpack and trailer the animals before total dark. Little Jezebel was too tired to even stand to eat her alfalfa snack, but she did beautifully on her first big trip. Sore muscles for me also after my first mule trip this year, but I could do archeology like this forever.



Betty Spindler's Retrospective Art Exhibit

Now Showing in the Coso Room.

By Andrea Pelch, Art Gallery Coordinator



Betty Spindler grew up in Ridgecrest after her folks moved here to work at NOTS in the 1940's. She has recently moved to Tucson to be near her family. Before she moved last November, she donated many items to the museum - Betty's sculptures are for sale and will be on display through June.

Betty made a name for herself in the art community with her still life sculptures of common everyday items; fruit and vegetables, hamburgers, cake, pizza and more. She was an active part of the Museum's Art Gallery Committee and participated in the Open Studio Tour since its beginning. Betty is the only person I know that has a piece of artwork in the Smithsonian! - Her "hotdog" caught the attention of a curator from the Smithsonian American Art Museum at a gallery in Carmel, California.



Scan these QR Codes with your smartphone to visit the Vimeo website for Betty's interview videos. Thank You to Mark Pahuta for doing the interviews and making and posting the videos.

In this 2020 interview, Betty talks about growing up on the China Lake Navy Base, coping with dyslexia, her career as a ceramic artist and the "hotdog in the Smithsonian" story.



Vimeo.com/538953081

Short version of Betty's interview, Nov. 2020.



Vimeo.com/534560942

Docent Doings

By Nora Nuckles, Education Coordinator

Docents are finally going again! Bob Parker, Glenn Harris, and I were lucky to be able to lead a small group of scouts through the Museum, show them the new exhibits, and the tortoises. In addition, Glenn brought his special mineral and rock collection and taught the scouts about the joys of collecting. The boys are focusing on their 'collections badge'. Glenn demonstrated how collecting can tell a story, maybe a story about the earth and maybe also a story about your own life.



The scouts were also working on their "Historical Discovery Project". Mark Pahuta printed 10 historical photos from his Book "Double Exposre"; the scouts were challenged to find current location of where those photos were taken. The boys were really fun and cooperative!

Last month I wrote a brief article about the history of the Docent League. I decided to add a little more this month. I learned that Bette Goodrich, Susan Huber, Betty Spindler and Phyllis Wise formed a committee to research school curricula, review textbooks, and interview teachers and principals so they could write programs to enhance the classroom instruction while focusing on the uniqueness of the Indian Wells Valley. This was the basis for the creation of so many of our popular docent programs that we bring to the schools.

If you are interested in learning about our docent program, please join us for an outdoor, garden meeting on Tuesday, May 4, at 9 am. Bring a lawn chair and your own something to drink. We do have shade structures.

Spring Brings Out the Friendly Natives

By Carol Dezelle

Some old friends and new ones are making their appearances as Spring arrives. With the warm morning sun, lizards are making a show and are preparing for their daily routine as their body temperature rises by sunbathing, allowing them to move about. It isn't warm enough for the mature iguanas, still resting underground. At this time of writing, only the smaller immature iguanas are on the move.

Our tortoise friend, Gypsy, is now out of his burrow and with each day, he is becoming more active and now hungrier. Usually, his first appearance takes place in late April, but he was ready before March came to a close. He took his initial long drink of water and then surveyed his yard but found very little in the food department. None of the usual bunch grasses, cryptantha and red stem filaree – just some mulberry catkins on the ground. His roses weren't ready- not even a bud. Slim



pickings. A few days later, he was ready to take his stroll and investigate the larger yard, giving his signal saying "Let's go!" by patiently waiting for me to open his gate. I opened the gate and propped it open and we walked around together. He would occasionally stop and sniff the ground and then move on. We would rest in the shadows of the trees and then proceed with the investigation. Nothing. I plucked some new leaves from the older mulberry tree and he took my offering. Then he turned around and decided that he had had enough and headed back to his yard on his own. I felt sorry for the guy. I watched him from behind as he plodded along. It was so disappointing but we will have more outings.

We also recently had a visit from a gopher snake who was checking out the perimeter of the house. He wound his way around the potted plants on the front porch, took a drink of water from a saucer of a recently watered plant and then slowly and smoothly went around to the back patio. S/He even looked into our dining room through the sliding glass door. This isn't the first time for snakes to appear in our yard. We've seen several gopher snakes and coachwhips through the years. We welcome them because they fill another niche in the desert environment. Snakes of all kinds (including rattlesnakes) help keep the



rodent population in check so they are a good thing. I remember a man boasting how he killed every rattler he came across. I "blew his mind" when I said to him, "Why??" Then I informed him that all snakes help with keeping rodent populations in check - no need for rodenticides (that will kill other species that also eat unfortunately-poisoned rodents). Snakes and other rodent eaters help lessen the incidence of Hantavirus, a problem for humans. How can we reside on this planet along with other species? That's up to us.

Garden Notes

By Bev Hill, Garden Coordinator

In April, a long over-due project in the garden was completed with the help of numerous volunteers. New irrigation was installed on the Low Desert, High Desert, Desert-Adapted, and Sheep mounds. Dirt was shoveled and moved to excavate the original system along with major pruning! Several hundred feet of tubing was then measured and buried to reach the existing plants. Volunteers are awesome!

I would like to thank Peter and Elaine Wiley, Bob Westbrook, Bob McGowan, Bob Joy, BJ Holden, Tom Sakai and Bryan Hill.

Also in April, three new plants were added to the garden. Peter Woodman donated and also planted an Interior Oak and two Saguaro cactuses. These additions will provide needed variety to the grounds and garden. Thank you Peter for your generosity.

Donations in April 2021

Donations

Ron Atkins
Lewis and Sharon Ballenger
Craig Bansmer
Thom Boggs
David and Jo Burdick
Milt and Jane Burford
Dennis Burge
Dan and Brenda Burnett
John and Suzette Caufield
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Jim and Deanna Stewart
Vivian VanDevender
Patricia Wharton
Ray and Louise Wetzel
Don and Carol Zdeba

In Memory of Donald A. Brath

Michael Vincent

In Memory of Gene Breitenstein

Susan Hueber
Alexander and Frances Rogers

In Honor of Judy Breitenstein

Susan Hueber

In Memory of Carol Burge

High Desert Music Teachers Association
B.J. Holden
Daniel and Mary Kus
Bob and Tiana McGowan
Alexander and Frances Rogers
Mike and Karen Sanford
Libby Vincent
Peter Woodman

In Memory of John and Lois Carr

Bob and Jamie Carr

In Memory of Susan (Pebs) Hammer

Doris Hammer

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Michael J. Ford
Denise Moliterno

In Memory of Bill Wight

Russell Kaldenberg and Judyth Reed
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Open Studio Tour

Debra Newton

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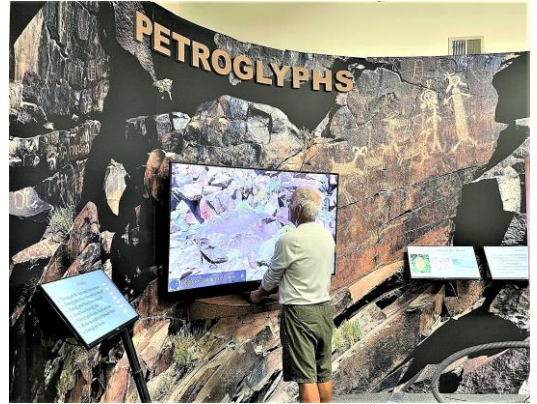
New Members

Michael and Cait Hutnik
Carrie Woods

New Petroglyphs Display

By Elaine Wiley, Local History Curator

As you enter the El Paso Room (main exhibit room), look to your left to see the new Petroglyphs Exhibit. When looking at this exhibit, one gets the feeling of actually being in Little Petroglyph Canyon. This 16' x 9' exhibit includes a curved wall covered with a photographic mural taken in Little Petroglyph Canyon, a large curved TV screen and three 24" touch screens. The mural is what gives the feeling of being in the canyon. The large curved screen provides interactive 360-degree views from within Little Petroglyph Canyon and the touch screens provide interesting information on petroglyphs.



Jerry Bradley, the Maturango Museum's board president who designed this exhibit wanted an awe-inspiring look to this display as well as useful information regarding petroglyphs. This look was achieved with the help of many volunteers. Gary Arnold, along with Jerry's help, built the large curved wall in 9 pieces. Assembling the wall took most of a day and went up easily since the wall was well designed and built with precision.

Finding a photograph that could be enlarged to cover the 16' x 9' wall was a bit of a challenge. The original plan was for Mark Pahuta to take 4 shots of a section of Little Petroglyph Canyon and piece them together to create a large, high resolution photograph that could cover the wall without becoming pixelated. But due to Covid this was not possible, so Mark found in his collection of photographs a 4" x 5" transparency of a section of the canyon wall that showed many petroglyphs. Even with this size of a transparency, we were not sure this image would work until we had



New Petroglyph Exhibit - March 16, 2021 Gary Arnold and Jerry Bradley



Petroglyph Exhibit Installation, March 26, 2021
Bob McGowan and Peter Wiley

the transparency professionally scanned and sent to the mural company to check for resolution issues. Luckily for us, the resolution of the scanned image was met and a mural was printed. Hanging a mural of this size, even though the mural was printed on 4 vertical strips, was challenging and a bit stressful but accomplished! Helping with the wall prep and mural hanging were Jerry Bradley, BJ Holden, Bob McGowan, Larry Sawyer, Bob Westbrook, Elaine Wiley and Peter Wiley.

Once the mural was installed, Jerry installed the large curved screen and the three touch screens. The large curved screen with a track ball allows the user to see three different locations of the canyon in a 360-degree view. The photographs to construct the 360-degree views were taken by Ben Parker and donated to the museum. The three touch screens allow the user to read about information on petroglyphs around the world and in the United States including multiple local sites. There is also information on local petroglyph events, books and tours. To complete the exhibit, Jerry Bradley made 3D letters spelling

"Petroglyphs" and hung them at the top of the mural. All in all, the exhibit turned out fantastic and is a great addition to our museum.

Maturango Museum of the IWV

100 E. Las Flores Ave., Ridgecrest, CA 93555

Open every day (except major holidays)

10 am - 5 pm

Staff

Debbie Benson, Museum Director
Maureen Goff, Store Manager/Buyer
Barbara Bane, M.A., RPA, Archaeology
Curator
Elaine Wiley, History Curator
Sherry Brubaker, Natural History Curator
Julie Stephens, Finance Manager
Andrea Pelch, Art Gallery Coordinator,
Newsletter Editor
Nora Nuckles, Education Coordinator
Linda Saholt, Petroglyph Tour Coord.,
Membership, Donations
Leslie Layfield, Accounting Bookkeeper
Kelly Goff, Museum Assistant
Deanna Stewart, Museum Assistant
Nora Nuckles, Museum Assistant
Nick Rogers, Museum Assistant

Committee Chairpersons

Dan Burnett, Building
Elaine Wiley, Publications
Bob Westbrook, Strategic Planning

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Jerry Bradley – President
Bev Hill – Vice President
Camille Anderson – Treasurer
Sue Parker – Secretary
Robert McGowan
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The Swap Sheet
TJ Frisbee Bicycles, Inc.
TOSS
WACOM
Warren's Automotive



Unfortunately there are no Petroglyph Tours this Spring season.
Looks hopeful that we can resume tours in the Fall.

If you currently receive our newsletter in print form please consider sending your current email to Andrea at gallery@maturango.org to transition to the email version. The color photos themselves are worth it! Thank you for being a part of this process!

Bob Parker has also planned a “come and observe” feeding time for the Museum’s tortoises. Join us on Sundays at 9 am. Bob will provide the food and our guests will provide the observation! Our tortoises belong to the local tortoise club. They are not wild and have never been wild. It is illegal to take and keep wild tortoises. In addition, Fish and Wildlife requires those of us with pet tortoises to keep male and females separated. So our female tortoises are on the west side of the enclosure and the males are on the east side.

The museum is now open daily.

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