

# Maturango Museum News

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  
Open Monday – Saturday 10 am – 5 pm, Sunday Noon – 4pm  
760.375.6900 [www.maturango.org](http://www.maturango.org)  
Death Valley Tourist Center Northern Mojave Visitor Center

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## Museum Director’s Notes

*By Debbie Benson, Director*

Wishing all the best for the New Year! 2025 is on the doorstep and we will all be meeting it with our own plans and hopes. Many thanks to all of the supporters and volunteers who have made 2024 a year of many kindnesses and amazing accomplishments. Take care and come see us at the Museum!

### “The Desert to Denali” Saturday, January 11, 3 pm

A few minutes before dawn, on a mid-July day with the temperature hanging tens of degrees below zero, nine mountaineers from China Lake commenced a day of adventure that set an American climbing record lasting for years.

This is the story of the 1967 ascent of Denali, reaching an elevation of 20,320 feet. It covers the team's equipment, physical preparation, testing and practice in the Sierras, and the final spectacular grind to the summit of Denali.

Join surviving team members Bob Westbrook and Jim Nichols for the presentation; the show will feature photos, videos, and displays of expeditionary mountaineering trappings from that era.



Frank Buffum, Jim Nichols, and Bob Westbrook on the summit of Denali.



### “Soaring on The Eastern Side of The Sierras” – A Talk by Cindy Brickner Sunday January 12, 2 pm

What makes soaring on the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada so special? Join airplane and soaring pilot Cindy Brickner as she discusses the art of soaring in this unique region and shares other fascinating insights about the sport.

While in high school in Palmdale, CA Cindy worked as a receptionist at a local glider flight school and started soaring. Three years later, she worked at the national headquarters of the Soaring Society of America (SSA), then in Santa Monica, CA. She held many positions at the SSA and gained valuable business and soaring skills during this time.

In 1990, she decided to open her own soaring school in California City. For two decades, she taught soaring, towed sailplanes to altitude, and offered national training seminars. Her soaring accomplishments include seven U.S. national records for speed and distance flights. Her longest soaring flight is over 600 miles and 13.5 hours in duration. Her highest altitude achieved is 32,500 feet msl (mean sea level).

Cindy currently teaches soaring at two locations, El Mirage and Inyokern.

**High Desert Music Teachers Association Concert**  
**Saturday January 25 7pm**  
**Sunday January 26 2pm**

Our theme will be "B" musicians; selections include Bach, Beethoven, Bizet, Brahms, Bartók, Bohemian traditional songs, and more. Teachers performing include Jordan Covert (guitar, tenor), David Hodgson (baritone), Deb Veit (flute), Joanne Freeman (flute), Jamie Leadbetter (piano, Sat. only), Karen Sanford (piano), and Cathy Douglas (piano, ret.).

Tickets can be purchased in the gift store or [www.maturango.org/events](http://www.maturango.org/events)



**Docent Doings**  
**By Nora Nuckles, Education Coordinator**



What are coyote gourds? That is the common name for *Cucurbita palmata*, a flowering plant in the squash family. The plant bears spherical fruits that are dark green or yellow and get thinner rinds as they age. The fruits are inedible but the Native Americans used them for soap and also ground the seeds to use as food. They also used the dried gourds as rattles.

For Free Second Saturday in December the docents found another use for coyote gourds that grow all around the Indian Wells Valley. We drilled holes in the top, used large paper clips for hangers (thank you Barbara Ingle for the idea), painted them white and had Museum visitors decorate them with markers and all sorts of sparkly stick-on designs!

Visitors for the winter solstice celebration made tea light lanterns that Elaine Wiley designed; she takes the lead on our solstice and equinox celebrations.

Terry McGuire and Fran Kelyt have been training on using the Beth Armogida Planetarium. Mike Herr has donated time to help them learn to use the planetarium. Sherry Brubaker has already trained to use it but we need to have several people available to use it. We are getting requests for the planetarium in January!

Many of the docents attended the Celebration of Life for Judy and Gene Breitenstein. Both have always been dedicated members and supporters of the Maturango Museum. Judy had been a docent for 40 years! She was our premier docent trainer for years! We will all miss her very much!

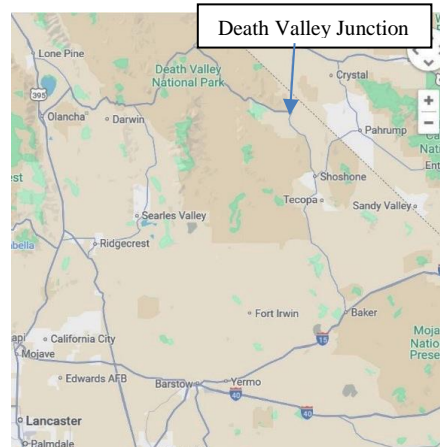
The spring schedule of Children's Hour will be available on-line in early January at [Maturango.org](http://Maturango.org) and on Facebook.

**I would like to thank the Eastern Kern County Resource Conservation District** for their generous donation of plants for the Gladys Merrick demonstration garden at the museum. This year their annual fall plant sale offered a variety of both native and desert-adapted plants; a selection of plants from the sale will be a welcome addition to the garden. The new plants include salvias, mallows and poppies; their abundant blossoms will appeal to bees, butterflies and hummingbirds and provide color during the spring and summer.

Bev Hill, Maturango Museum Gardens Chairperson

## Spring Field Trip: Southern Amargosa Valley (Tecopa Valley) Friday evening February 28 - Sunday afternoon March 2

The Southern Amargosa Valley (also known as the Tecopa Valley) is a wonderful place to explore; full of history and natural wonders. It is located just East of the Southern end of Death Valley. We'll start our journey Friday night (February 28) in the little town of Tecopa with a social and brief overview of the weekend's activities. Exact time and location will be provided to registered participants as the date gets closer. On Saturday morning (March 1) we'll meet at the Shoshone Museum at 9 am in Shoshone where a staff member will greet us and walk us through the museum. We'll have time to explore the history of the area as curated by the museum's inside and outside displays before reconvening for a short ride (less than a mile) to Dublin Gulch.



Dublin Gulch contains the remnants of homes dug into the hillsides in the late 1800s. After some time to explore the Dublin Gulch area, we'll drive roughly 20 miles to the Tecopa Mines where we'll be met by the mine's owner who will give us a two-hour walking tour of part of the mine and discuss its history. From Tecopa Mines we'll drive to the China Date Ranch where we'll have the chance to enjoy one of their famous date shakes or some of their baked goods or dates and eat what will be a late picnic lunch (no host) at the picnic tables near the Amargosa River trailhead. After lunch

we'll take a hike down to the Amargosa River and discuss this amazing wild and scenic river that runs mostly underground. We'll return via a loop trail to the trailhead and our vehicles. Dinner and the rest of the evening is on your own. There are a few restaurants in Tecopa and one in Shoshone.

Sunday morning (March 2) at 8:45 am we'll meet for a tour at the famous Amargosa Opera House in Death Valley Junction where Marta Becket once dazzled audiences with her ballet performances.

For those who are interested in extending the tour a bit further, we'll travel up to Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge and take a short hike to see the famous Devil's Hole and gaze down from a caged catwalk onto the deep pond where a few hardy pupfish reside. We'll conclude our tour at the Ash Meadows Visitor Center where you can explore the center and take a walk on the catwalks to see the thermal springs and their resident pupfish.



For those interested in taking the tour, book accommodations as soon as possible. There are limited rooms available at the Amargosa Opera House in Death Valley Junction and the nearby Longstreet Hotel and Casino, in Shoshone at the Shoshone Inn, and a couple of hotels in Tecopa. Be aware that accommodations in Death Valley Junction, Shoshone, and Tecopa are a bit rustic. More modern accommodations and eating options can be found in Pahrump NV about 30 minutes from Shoshone.

The drive to the Tecopa mines is partially on a well graded dirt road with about a 1 mile section on an unimproved dirt road. A high-clearance vehicle is recommended for this last mile (a Subaru or similar should be fine). No 4WD required. Also, should you choose to travel through Death Valley to meet us, you will need to pay the park entrance fee not included in the tour cost.

The tour cost will be \$275 for members and \$350 for non-members and will include light snacks at Friday night's social (no host drinks), donation for the Shoshone museum, Tecopa Mine tour fee, and the Amargosa Opera House tour fee. Cancellations prior to the 7th of February will receive a 100% refund. Cancellations after the 7th but before the 21st will receive a 50% refund. Cancellations after the 21st will receive no refund.

Tickets are available at [www.maturango.org/events](http://www.maturango.org/events)

## Winter is here! Our migratory birds are on the move...

By Sherry Brubaker, Natural History Curator

Winter is here! Our migratory birds are on the move and the ones that “winter over” are out foraging. We can help our feathered friends by offering food and water. Keeping feeders and water sources clean (10% bleach, soap and warm water) helps minimize infections; make sure the feeders are thoroughly rinsed and dry before refilling. Using a good quality bird feed, not one with lots of corn, is better for the birds.

Something else that is helpful year around is keeping birds from flying into windows. Using anti-collision adhesives on windows provides greater visibility to prevent collisions. Many birds fly at night so reducing lighting, diming and pointing lights downward, is a big help.

And our snow geese are here; geese like grass - they will be in yards with grass, they will poop and they are messy. The geese will also walk in the road, slow down and they will move (slowly). Hitting one is fatal to the bird and there is no source of local veterinary care if one is injured. So please slow down and enjoy our feathered friends!

### Joint Art Exhibit - Lori Michelin: “Desert Miscellany” and Jael Hoffman: “States of Being” November 2 – January 31, 2025

#### Lori Michelin

Printmaking is my love - it's the BEST: labor-intensive, meditative, and surprising. Drawing is also a BIG LOVE. I am interested in the creatures that we share this area with, sometimes these creatures need to be dressed in haute couture; they are always important and need to be revered and adored. They come in peace. Let's welcome them.

New artwork added...



#### Jael Hoffmann

I mainly work in metal sculpture, soldered jewelry, and block print. A collection of my larger work is displayed at the Olancho Sculpture Garden in Olancho, CA.

Many of my pieces reflect psychological states of being that arise from unresolved inner tensions or the process of change that follows their acceptance.

My latest exploration has been attaching glass to metal via the stained-glass method. This allows me to play with light and color to expand on the traditional expressions of metal.

### Debbie Abshear - 'Evoking Emotions: A Visual Exploration'

February 1, 2025- April 8, 2025

Art Gallery Opening Reception: Saturday February 1, 2-4pm



Debbie says “I work mainly in watercolor on 100% cotton paper. I start my paintings by strategically applying water to the paper then introducing watercolor and inks into the wet surface. Then using gravity, pipettes, brushes and sometimes branches and twigs, the journey begins.

I love to carefully observe the mingling of the water, paints and ink traveling and creating the soft and hard edges which help define the shapes and focal areas. My paintings are full of movement, and the viewer can almost follow the path that the paint traveled.”



## Recent Donations

### Donations

Helen Baker  
David and Jo Burdick  
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Marek Cichanski  
Janet Coleman  
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### In Memory of Ron Atkins

Andrea Atkins and Evan  
Eustis

### In Memory of Judy

Breitenstein  
Jim and Deanna Stewart

### Building Fund

Robert Westbrook

### Curation/Archaeology Building

### Fund

WACOM

### QB Link (Quickbooks)

Dan and Brenda Burnett

### New Members

Mary Ambre  
Sally and Gary Fry  
Paula and Michael Herr  
Shirley Kidner  
Colleen Murphy  
Duane O'Donnell  
Nancy Porter  
Marvin Wendt

### New Premium Members

Melissa Murphy  
Megan Richter

### **Maturango Museum of the IWV**

100 E. Las Flores Ave., Ridgecrest, CA 93555  
Open Mon - Sat 10 am – 5 pm  
Sunday noon – 4pm (except major holidays)

### Staff

Debbie Benson, Museum Director  
Maureen Goff, Store Manager/Buyer  
Barbara Bane, M.A., RPA, Archaeology Curator  
Nadia Mohsen, Curation Technician  
Elaine Wiley, History Curator  
Sherry Brubaker, Natural History Curator  
Andrea Pelch, Art Gallery Coordinator,  
Newsletter Editor  
Nora Nuckles, Education Coordinator  
Linda Saholt, Membership, Donations  
Leslie Layfield, Accounting Bookkeeper  
Nick Rogers, Museum Assistant  
Barbara Ingle, Museum Assistant

### Committee Chairpersons

Elaine Wiley, Publications  
Bob Westbrook, Strategic Planning  
Bev Hill, Gardens

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## Holiday Gift Giving is Easy with a Gift Certificate from the Maturango Museum



### Upcoming and Ongoing Exhibits and Events

- Joint Art Exhibit - Lori Michelin: “Desert Miscellany” and Jael Hoffman: “States of Being”  
November 2 – January 31, 2025
- Pizza Factory and Beanster’s Espresso Fundraiser: All day, Wednesday, January 8.
- Free Second Saturday: January 11, 11am- 2pm, craft activities
- “The Desert to Denali”: Saturday, January 11, 3 pm
- “Soaring on The Eastern Side of The Sierras”: Sunday January 12, 2 pm
- Soaring Exhibit: now through February 2025
- High Desert Music Teachers Association Concert: Saturday January 25, 7pm  
and Sunday January 26, 2pm
- Field Trip: Southern Amargosa Valley: Friday February 28 - Sunday March 2
- Debbie Abshear Art Gallery Opening Reception: Saturday February 1, 2-4pm



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#### **Pizza Factory and Beanster’s Espresso Fundraiser**

All day, Wednesday, January 8.

20% of your purchase is donated to the Maturango Museum

You must mention this fundraiser when ordering.

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**BEANSTER'S  
ESPRESSO**

Maturango Museum  
100 E Las Flores  
Ridgecrest CA 93555

January 2025 Newsletter

Maturango  
Museum  
Ridgecrest,  
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