

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
Death Valley Tourist Center Northern Mojave Visitor Center



Museum Director's Notes

By Debbie Benson, Director

Life was meant to be lived, and curiosity must be kept alive.

One must never, for whatever reason, turn their back on life – Eleanor Roosevelt

This year is moving ahead quickly, with Spring already in the basket and the Summer sun attempting to push its way in. Curious times. In March we had a Conservation Day and so many people came and took part in it that we are reminded of our need to stay current with what it takes to grow plants, trees and even what flowers will survive our desert climate. We appreciate everyone who put this together and all of the families that came. Thank you!

The work is moving ahead in the "Pollinator Garden". It's fun to watch it taking shape with some blooms on various plantings. Our thanks to the Oasis Garden Club, Hyla Nursery and Bernie's Landscaping for their time and expertise. A beautiful garden with a purpose is good for all!

Another addition to the garden is the Rotary International-funded "Music Garden". The Howard McCauley family installed it and we can't wait for our visitors to enjoy it; It's fun for all ages!

On April 17, 18 & 19 we will be holding an estate sale with all proceeds going to the museum. The week of the event we will be posting the address on Facebook and sending out via Mailchimp. We will also be posting some photos of a lifetime of travel collectables and so much more!

Please be safe in the heat, respect the critters and carry water with you! Enjoy the flowers!
Be Well

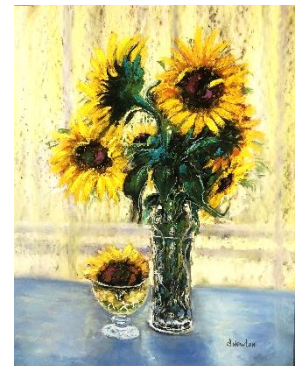
Debbie Newton's Art Gallery Exhibit:

"Seeing Through My Eyes"

In the Coso Room through May 5



She started her artistic journey oil painting and has continued that journey adding watercolor, acrylic and pastel along the way. After her retirement, she focused on her art, painting daily. She fell in love with pastels when she took a workshop through the Desert Artists' League in Ridgecrest. Although she still works in oil, acrylic and watercolor she prefers to paint in pastel. Her subject matter includes traditional landscape, seascape, floral, and still life but her favorite subjects are animals, mainly birds. She works mostly from her studio because, as she likes to say, the desert is either too hot, too cold, or too windy for painting outside. She



works from photos from her travels, including trips to Africa, England, Southern France, Canada, Alaska, Hawaii and most of continental USA.

She is a member of the Desert Artists' League and the Kern River Valley Art Association.

Docent Doings

By Nora Nuckles, Education Coordinator

We welcomed three new potential docents: Diane Foucher has already helped with student tours, Diane Youngblood has helped with student tours and a program on geology and Jocelyn assists the art docents in their school programs.

During February, docents gave 12 programs to about 290 people. Making Valentine cards was a popular event on Free Saturday. The event was led by Terry McGuire, Bob and Sue Parker. Residents of High Desert Haven decorated Mardi Gras masks with the help of docents Bob and Sue Parker, Judy Martin, Charlotte Pofeldt and myself. We all had a delightful time!

Glenn Harris, Shirley Crouse, and I reviewed our Weather PowerPoint presentation and the accompanying hands-on activities and presented it to grades 1-3 at Pierce. The students were very interested in watching the water cycle demonstration beginning with boiling water, transitioning to evaporation (steam or water vapor), and then to condensation collected on aluminum bottles. One bottle only collected water (rain /precipitation) on the outside of the bottle while the other rock salt-filled bottle showed precipitation on the bottle that modeled "ice or snow."

Children and adults are enjoying the bright, musical instruments in the garden. Howard McCauley obtained a grant for the instruments and the Rotary Club stepped up to buy these instruments for the garden. Be sure to walk through the garden and enjoy playing the instruments!

What a surprise! About 20 students from the Waldorf School in Pasadena showed up one Monday morning in the shade structure at the Museum. They were stopping by on their way to camp out in Death Valley for three days (maybe it wasn't any hotter than Pasadena this week). The students, accompanied by an ample number of adults, toured the Museum and went out to see the tortoises. The large male tortoise and a smaller tortoise put on a performance; the large male kept circling the smaller tortoise and nipping at it - the smaller tortoise just kept turning itself in circles! Eventually the large tortoise began bobbing its head up and down. Quite interesting since none of us could yet identify the sex of the smaller tortoise...

The sixth graders then moved on to see the model of the solar system, the sundial, and play the newly-installed musical instruments. A few boys liked playing the mushrooms but then began to conduct a "science experiment; one boy put a rocky dirt clump on the east rim of the mushroom at which point a boy on the opposite side of the mushroom would hit the west rim to see how far they could move the rock off the mushroom. Physics education in action!



A docent's life at the Maturango Museum is full of fun and surprises! If you would like to consider becoming a docent, please join us at our next meeting in the Coso Room on Tuesday April 14 at 10:30 am. If you have any questions, please call me, Nora, at the Museum, 760-375-6900.

**Children’s Hour: “Butterflies”
Friday April 24, 10:30-11:30 am**

Why wouldn’t the butterfly go to the dance? It was a moth ball.

Why did the kid throw butter out the window? He wanted to see butter fly.

But seriously, the docents of Maturango Museum would like to invite families and young children to our “Butterflies; Loved by Flowers and Children” program. This free event will be full of your favorite stories about butterflies, as well as action songs, and a fun, child-friendly craft. We will be exploring exhibits and butterfly science at the Discovery Table.

We will have a butterfly backdrop set up so families can take colorful photos.

More information about Children’s Hour can be found on www.Maturango.org or by calling 760-375-6900.

“If you smile when you see a butterfly, you have happiness in your soul.”

Diane Cooper



Recent Donations

Donations

Rob and Andrea Jones
Judy and Don McCauley
Blair Manzke
Patricia Wharton and Ken
Wetzel

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Roofing Project

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Jay and Peggy Chun
Shelley Crabtree
West and Irene Katzenstein
Bob and Julie Smith
Douglas and Cathy Sticht
Ray and Louise Wetzel

New Members

Rubi Medrano

New Premium Members

William and Linda Duncan
Elizabeth Lim and Michael Liu
Shane McGuire

Celebration of Life for Janet Westbrook:

Sunday 26 April, 2-4pm

Janet Westbrook, well-known Naturalist and Biology Professor Emeritus at Cerro Coso College, passed away peacefully in Ridgecrest on 24 August, 2025. She was an ardent environmentalist, loving deserts, mountains and trees. She participated in and supported many environmental causes and organizations. She gave regular lectures and slide shows at the Maturango Museum sharing her world adventures. She became involved with the Maturango Museum when it was still on the China Lake Navy base. She served on the Board and contributed untold hours of ideas, time, effort and financial contributions.

For over 50 years she was a member of the China Lake Mountain Rescue Group, amongst other duties teaching first aid and CPR, as well as being one of the callout coordinators.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Maturango Museum.

Field Trip: Manzanar National Historic Site – Friday May 1, 2026

This is a Maturango Museum Member-Only Field Trip.

If you are interested in going on this field trip and you are not a current member of the Maturango Museum, you will need to become a member prior to signing up for the field trip. Go to maturango.org/become-a-member-2/ This is a Maturango Museum Member-Only Event so there is no fee for this field trip, however, donations are appreciated.

Manzanar was one of 10 War Relocation Centers where the US Government incarcerated Japanese American citizens and Japanese immigrants who were ineligible for citizenship during World War II. Most of the internees were from the Los Angeles area, Terminal Island, and the San Fernando Valley. Others came from the San Joaquin Valley and Bainbridge Island Washington; the latter transferred to Minidoka in 1943.

We will be visiting the Visitor's Center, Block 14, and then take the Auto Tour, stopping along the way to visit the various exhibits including Merritt Park and the Cemetery & Monument. What makes this trip unique is that I have arranged for a 30-minute Q&A with one of the Rangers during our time at Manzanar.

Note: Parking can be limited on the Auto Tour so at the Manzanar site carpooling is encouraged.

Our journey will start at the Maturango Museum and arrange carpools (if people want to carpool) and ultimately head north on 395 to the Owens Valley trying to stay together as much as possible without annoying others on the road. We'll stop at the Interagency Center just before Lone Pine to use the facilities and look around a bit (about 30 minutes). The Interagency Center has a lot of information and if you feel that you need more time to peruse, I encourage you to do that after we've completed our Manzanar visit. The Interagency Center closes at 4:30pm, gates close at 4:15pm.

From the Interagency Center we'll again head north on 395 to Manzanar. It is about 16 miles. We'll park at the Visitor's Center. There are many different things to see while at Manzanar and I'm expecting us to be at the site for 3-4 hours, including lunch and the Q&A Session.

Please note from the NPS Website: **Visitor amenities are limited at Manzanar.** Visitors must bring their own drinking water, carry out their own trash, and are recommended to bring personal handwashing/sanitizing supplies.

Saturday May 1, 7:30am, meet at the Museum for check in. Participants will be required to sign a liability waiver. Car caravan will be organized and for those that want to carpool, we'll figure it out there.

Sign up at shop.maturango.org ([check website](#)) or come to the Maturango Museum Store.

Be sure you have enough gas (approximately 200 miles round trip), car and tires in good running order.

Usual dress code for field trips applies: hat, sunscreen, comfortable walking shoes, layered clothing, water, camera. It is better to have these items and not need them, than need them and not have them.

We will be walking on uneven ground to get to outdoor exhibits and gardens. Parking area also may have uneven ground.

Families are encouraged. No pets. Bring a picnic lunch to eat while we are at Manzanar. Water, snacks, lunch, etc. No alcohol.

**Maturango Museum
of the IWV**

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Sunday noon – 4pm (except major holidays)

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Nadia Mohsen, Curation Technician
Terry McGuire, Local History Curator
Sherry Brubaker, Natural History Curator
Andrea Pelch, Art Gallery Coordinator,
Newsletter Editor
Nora Nuckles, Education Coordinator,
Museum Assistant
Barbara Ingle, Membership, Donations,
Museum Assistant
Leslie Layfield, Accounting Bookkeeper
Heidi Farmer, Accounting
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**Thank You to Hampton Inn and Suites
for donating the use of a conference room
for a museum planning meeting.**

Wildflower Exhibit 2026
Friday, April 10 – Sunday, April 12

See an impressive array of wildflowers all in one location.
Requested donation of \$2/person.

Wildflowers will fill the largest room of the Maturango Museum with color and scent over the weekend of April 10 – 12. This is a great opportunity to see a variety of plants up close and all in one room! Collectors, with the proper BLM permits, spend multiple days gathering wildflowers from the Indian Wells Valley watershed area. This area includes canyons from Horse Canyon in the south to Fossil Falls in the north, as well as the Indian Wells Valley, Rademacher Hills, and Poison Canyon.



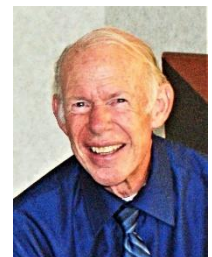
Typically, the collectors find around 200 different species of wildflowers. Wildflowers are placed in vases of various sizes and arranged by plant family and species. They come in many sizes and colors. You'll see the orange California Poppy and its small yellow relative, the Little Gold Poppy. The wildflowers in the sunflower family are abundant and come in yellow, purple, and white. Some flowers are so tiny you need a hand lens to see them!

In addition to seeing the large variety of wildflowers, the museum has scheduled three speakers this year:

Friday, April 10, at 5:30 pm, Glenn Harris: "Why Plants Grow Where They Do." Glenn, a retired BLM employee, now volunteers with the Maturango Museum, giving environmental education talks to children and adults.

Have you ever wondered why certain plants grow where they do? We have all looked at landscapes with their variety of plant colors and physical features. Glenn Harris will delve into this subject in his presentation on Friday evening. Ecologists have classified the Earth into a series of similar areas called biomes. The biomes include aquatic, grassland, forest, desert, and tundra. This illustrated presentation will focus on the Desert Biome and, in particular, the desert region where we live. The presentation will include discussions of landscape, community, and individual plant-level factors affecting plant distribution.

Glenn is familiar with the desert area, having worked in the region for over 45 years, 39 of them for BLM. He serves as a volunteer with the BLM and a docent with the Maturango Museum. With the museum, he takes environmental education into the classroom and public groups, giving talks on geology, earthquakes, volcanoes, and insects. He has worked with the annual Wildflower Exhibit as both a collector and taxonomist, identifying the collected specimens for many years.



Saturday, April 11, at 2 pm, Allison Autry, PhD candidate, studies orchids that grow on the eastern slopes of the Sierra Nevada and riparian enclaves on the Mojave Desert. Her presentation is titled, **"An Introduction to the Native Orchids of California and Nevada, with a special focus on the Southeastern Sierra and the Mojave Desert."** Did you know that orchids grow in the eastern Sierra Nevada and the Mojave Desert?

The Maturango Museum is pleased to host PhD Candidate Allison Autry, who will give a presentation on Native Orchids of California and Nevada. Nearly 40 species of orchids are found across California in habitats including the eastern slopes of the Sierra Nevada and the riparian enclaves of the Mojave Desert. This talk will cover topics including orchid diversity in California, historical efforts to document orchid diversity in the state, and contemporary threats to native orchids. The stories of a handful of noteworthy native orchid species, including the Ash Meadows Ladies' Tresses, will be highlighted during the presentation.



Allison Autry is a PhD Candidate conducting rare orchid conservation and genetics research at California Botanic Garden in Claremont, CA. She also serves as a Director of the Native Orchid Conference. Allison earned a B.S. degree in plant science and environmental science from the University of Delaware and has previously worked as a research assistant at Longwood Gardens. She is currently conducting fieldwork in Ash Meadows, Nevada, Railroad Valley, Nevada, and eastern California in support of her dissertation research on *Spiranthes infernalis*.

Sunday, April 12, at 2 pm, Dylan Layfield will give a presentation on the “Vascular Flora of Sand Canyon”.

This canyon is located to the north of Grapevine Canyon and south of No Name Canyon. Sand Canyon has diverse plant species due to its long stretches of continuous water in both the Main Fork and South Fork of the canyon. In addition, elevations ranging from 2,800 ft to 7,989 ft allow for unique transition zones between the Mojave Desert, the Great Basin, and the Sierra Nevada. Sand Canyon is one of the larger and less-traveled canyons in the eastern Owens Peak Wilderness.

As an avid hiker and explorer, Dylan put this talent to use in the extensive Sand Canyon watershed, where he began his independent floristic project in 2020. The plants in this area of the Owens Peak Wilderness are not well documented, with most collections concentrated near the base of the canyon and on the northeastern aspects of Spanish Needle. Dylan’s presentation covers the history of Sand Canyon, previous collections, and some of his favorite plants growing there.

Dylan graduated from Cal Poly Humboldt with a BS in Environmental Science and Management (emphasis in ecological restoration). He became extremely interested in plants and soils during his time at Humboldt and seasonal jobs with the Forest Service. Currently, Dylan works as a Natural Resources Specialist on NAWA China Lake, where he has spent many hours studying, cataloguing, managing, and remediating ecosystems for native plants and animal species such as the Joshua tree and the federally listed Inyo California Towhee.



Upcoming and Ongoing Events

- **Debbie Newton’s Art Exhibit:** in the Coso Room through May 5
- **Annual Wildflower Exhibit:** April 10 – 12, 10am – 5pm each day
 - **Friday, April 10, at 5:30 pm, Glenn Harris: “Why Plants Grow Where They Do”**
 - **Saturday, April 11, at 2 pm, Allison Autry: “An Introduction to the Native Orchids of California and Nevada, with a special focus on the Southeastern Sierra and the Mojave Desert”**
 - **Sunday, April 12, at 2 pm, Dylan Layfield: “Vascular Flora of Sand Canyon”**
- **Children’s Hour: “Butterflies”,** Friday April 24, 10:30 – 11:30 am
- **Celebration of Life for Janet Westbrook:** Sunday 26 April, 2-4pm
- Maturango Museum **Member-Only Field Trip to Manzanar:** Friday May 1

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