Volume 64, # 12 **December 2026**

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

"Human" ~ Cambridge Dictionary Word of the Year for 2026

"In a marketplace saturated with AI content, humans have started to become a premium that is code for intention, care, judgment, and the imperfections that make something feel real."

I cannot help but be grateful for the choice of "human" as the Word of the Year. Here at the Maturango Museum it has sparked some wonderful conversations and stories that create human connections through often-random pathways. There are some pretty wonderful humans who come our way. Thank you all!

To the north, the Eastern Sierras show fresh snow—crisp and inviting, though cold to these human hands. Throughout this month of winter holidays, I hope there is time to connect with people you care about and enough time to share. Please travel safely and watch weather and road conditions, especially in those mountains! We are all looking forward to our holiday and winter activities and hope you can come by to enjoy them with us!

Please take care, remember us in your end-of-year giving, and know that a Museum Membership is the perfect gift for a family. A Premium Membership includes: ASTC https://www.astc.org/membership/find-an-astc-member/passport/and NARM https://narmassociation.org/ benefits. Exploring the museums and science centers included in these programs makes traveling outside the area even more exciting!

Our best to you all. Be well

QR Code for End of Year Giving





Free Admission

Snacks and drinks

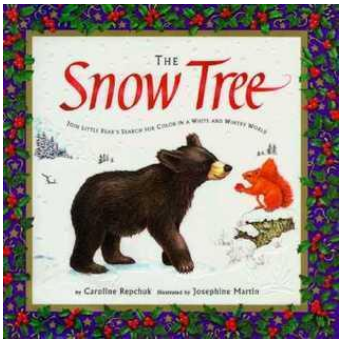
Door prizes

Gift ideas for all

Gift certificates



Children's Hour – "The Snow Tree"
Friday, Dec 4 at 10:30 a.m.



The Docents are excited about celebrating a snowy winter for a little bear with young children and their families. "The Snow Tree" by Caroline Repchuk is a tale of friendship and the sharing of beautiful gifts from nature. Children will participate in decorating a special 'snowy' tree like the animals in the story. This activity has become a tradition of Children's Hour. Singing with bells for each child, another wintry story featuring a gingerbread character, and a fun craft will round out a joyous morning for everyone!



Information about future Children's Hour programs will be available on the Museum's website, Maturango.org in late December.

Winter Solstice Event
Saturday, December 19, 12 noon to 2 pm

The winter solstice is just around the corner, and the Maturango Museum is having a "Winter Solstice" event. The solstice marks the beginning of winter and is the shortest day of the year. After the solstice, days get longer and nights shorter.





The museum will provide supplies for a fun craft using a gourd for the sun and wood for the moon and stars.

If the sky is clear, members of the China Lake Astronomical Society will set up their solar scopes.
Come say "Hello Winter!" at the Maturango Museum.

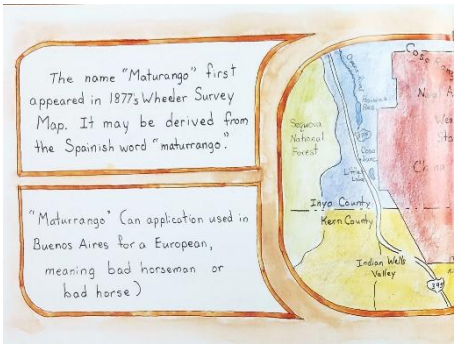
Cerro Coso Students' Art Exhibit

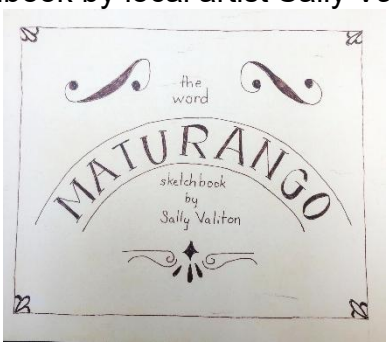
Cerro Coso Community College Art Students will be showing their artwork featuring various mediums including painting, sculpture, ceramics, woodworking, and metal.

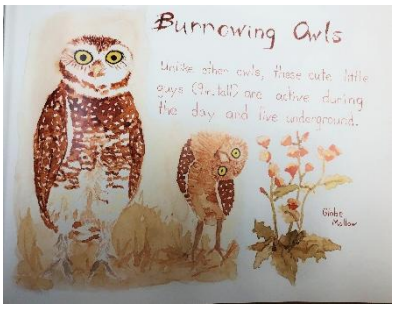
This exhibit will continue through mid-January.

Book of the Month

A sketchbook by local artist Sally Valiton







Docent Doings

By Nora Nuckles

Many docents presented eighteen programs in October to 365 people! We have so much fun - one of our favorite activities is our Free Second Saturday! Carol (a new docent) designed a "passport" activity during which participants toured the Museum with a "passport booklet" in which they made notes or drew pictures about the various displays. They then stamped their booklets in every room they toured. What was the most delightful activity I observed? With the booklet we gave bookmarks that had a "map" of the Museum galleries. I observed parents showing children how to follow the "map" to determine where they were going next! I think adults had as much fun really learning about each of our galleries/exhibits. We thank Elaine Wiley for creating the final design of the "passport" and bookmark.

We are continuing to provide science programs at the Museum for the Vieweg Stem School on Desert Alive and the Planetarium. We also presented several Bats and Birds programs to Sierra Sands students. Heartland Charter students attended the Museum for a lesson on Coyotes and the topic of the Children's Hour was Coyotes - attendees had no problem howling like coyotes.

See the attached article on Children's Hour, "The Snow Tree" on Dec. 4, Friday, at 10:30 AM.
Our Free Saturday on December 12 will provide holiday crafts and docents will show our snow geese specimens and perhaps some other beautiful water birds. Elaine Wiley has developed some delightful crafts for the celebration of the winter solstice on Dec. 19. See her article in this newsletter for more information.

Being a docent sounds like fun, doesn't it? Call or email Nora (Nora@maturango.com) at the Maturango Museum if you would like to give it a try!

Free Saturday December 12, holiday craft 11am – 2pm
Free admission - Museum open 10am – 5pm

Recent Donations

Operating Fund
Barbara Porter
Dan Burnett
Susan McEwan
Terry and Andrew Mitchell
Barry and Lynn Thompson
Tom and Carol Sakai
Patricia Wharton and Ken Wetzel

Discovery Area Exhibit
WACOM

In Memory of Fred Terry Rogers, III
Patricia Conwell
Karen Haden

New Member
Chris Kleine
Molly and David Cooley

New Premium Member
Michael Chu
Andrea Currylow

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
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
Travis Yost, Website

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Upcoming and Ongoing Events

- **Two Museums' Holiday Shopping Night:** Friday December 11, 5 – 8pm
- **Children's Hour: "The Snow Tree":** Friday, December 4, 10:30 - 11:30 am
- **Free Saturday** December 12: holiday craft activity, 11am – 2pm
- **Winter Solstice Event:** Saturday Dec 19, 12 Noon – 2pm, craft activity
- **Cerro Coso Students' Art Exhibit** through mid-January 2027

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