

up have horns. Unlike antlers, which are shed every year, horns are permanently attached to the skull.
Count the heaviest ridges on the sketch below. The ridge is between
The big r
between

SANTA BARBARA MUSEUM of NATURAL HISTORY



A CLOSER LOOK
Bighorn sheep are well equipped to climb near-vertical cliffs using the tiniest of footholds. Their specialized hooves have soft inner pads with stiff outer edges that combine to give them sure footing over terrain where most predators are unable to tread.



The Virginia Opossum is North America's only marsupial (females have a pouch for their young).



Northern Raccoons use their nimble paws to capture and handle food. It may look like it, but they don't have opposable thumbs.



Striped Skunks spray



2025 ANNUAL REPORT



SANTA BARBARA MUSEUM of NATURAL HISTORY
SEA CENTER

From the President



Dear Museum Friends,

2025 was a wonderful year for the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History and Sea Center.

Attendance and support were strong, new exhibits opened, and beloved programs thrived: all thanks to our community of visitors, Members, and donors.

Museums are vital. They are places where people encounter shared humanity and discover new pathways to knowledge. Visualize a child marveling at a fossil, families exploring together, or visitors learning about native plants. Such moments remind us that we belong to something larger: to history, to nature, and to each other.

Museums spark curiosity and preserve knowledge, but their value goes deeper. Research from the World Health Organization and National Endowment for the Arts links engagement with arts and culture to reduced stress, greater empathy, and stronger social bonds. Frequent museum visits are even associated with slower cognitive decline and longer life.

Beyond individual well-being, museums strengthen communities. The American Alliance of Museums shows that museums boost tourism, education, and civic participation. Science centers and natural history museums like ours foster environmental stewardship and appreciation for the natural world.

Above all, museums create opportunities for wonder. In a noisy world, they offer space for reflection, imagination, and connection across generations. Our beloved Museum excels in its ability to provide these experiences.

Museums belong to everyone. They are living spaces that inspire discovery and help us understand ourselves and one another. Thank you for supporting the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History and for continuing your own journey of learning.

Sincerely,

Luke J. Swetland, M.A., M.I.L.S.
President & CEO



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By the Numbers

Connecting People to Nature for the Betterment of Both

With your generous support, the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History is inspiring a thirst for discovery and a passion for the natural world.

Museum

5,741

Museum Members

\$6.7M

in donations from 705 donors

110 Mission Creek Legacy Society Members

\$22.2 M

in estimated bequests for the Museum

18 new Leadership Circles of Giving Members

30-year

anniversary of the Maximus Gallery



119,214 visitors

36,344

planetarium guests, breaking records

1,767

visitors during SoCal Museums Free-for-All

~30,000

guests visited the Backyard and Nature Club House.

6,577

students served through School Programs at the Museum, with **63% from Title I** schools receiving discounts

10,000

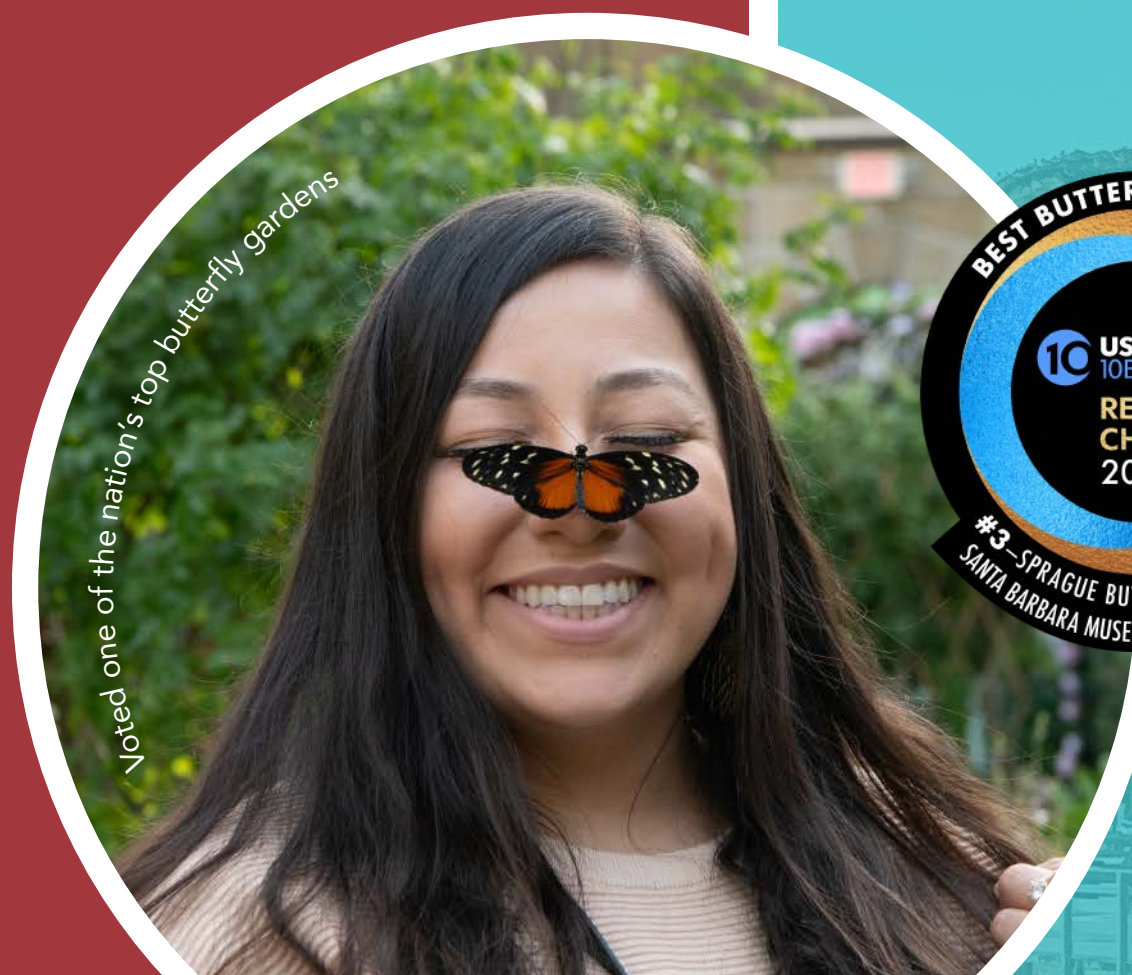
guests visited the Museum at a reduced rate through the Museums for All program.

5,159 Library browsers

99 researchers welcomed by the Library

7-year

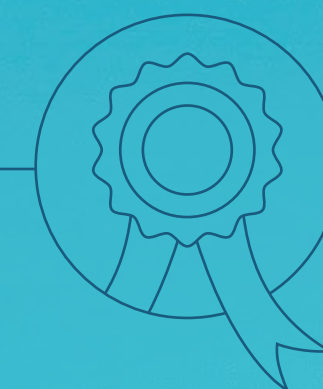
streak as Santa Barbara Independent Best Museum



Sea Center

115,514 visitors

The highest on record!



11,191 hours

contributed by volunteers



773 pounds

of trash removed by **246** volunteers during our beach cleanups



Collections & Research

John & Peggy Maximus Gallery

To mark the 30-year anniversary of the Maximus Wing, Gallery Curator Linda Miller and Exhibit Designer Marian McKenzie created *Drawn from Nature: The Maximus Legacy*. This milestone exhibition features the wide range of subject matter among the Museum's antique prints, with selected images of plants, mammals, birds, marine life, reptiles, amphibians, and insects. *Drawn from Nature* opened in April with a drawing table in the center that invited guests to try their hand at scientific illustration, replaced in fall with interpretive cases. The exhibit opening coincided with the launch of an online collections portal at maximusgallery.org. Mammals from John Gould's Australian work, engravings from Albertus Seba's eighteenth-century *Cabinet of Natural Curiosities*, and early European prints of butterflies and moths were acquired in 2025.

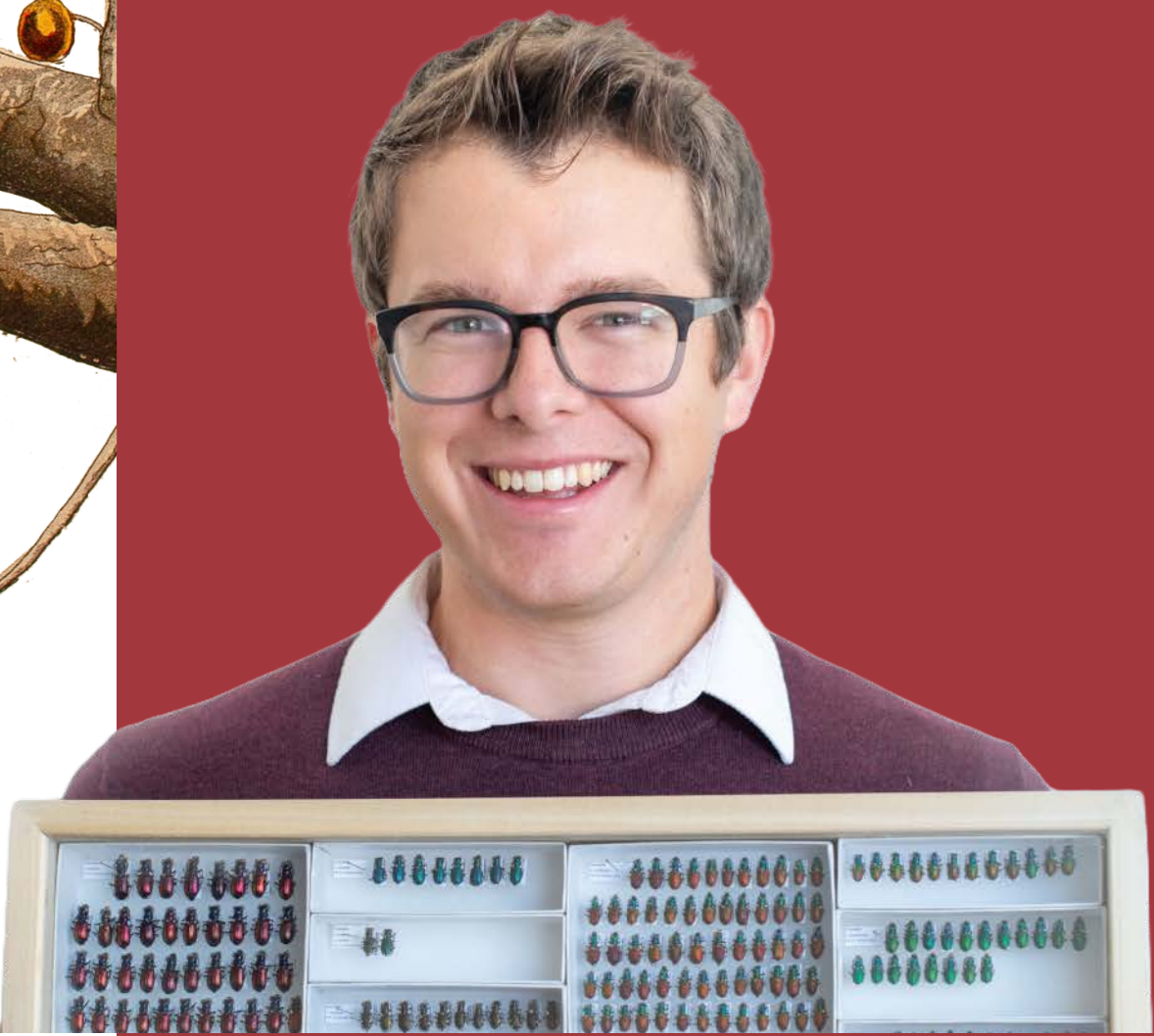
Library & Archives

Improvements continued in the Library, with dramatic changes to the main floor stack area. Narrow shelving from 1960—not properly secured to withstand earthquakes—was removed and recycled. The old asbestos flooring was demolished by a remediation team and replaced with durable and sustainable new flooring. New shelving that is both sufficiently deep and seismically secured has transformed this critical space to improve safety, conservation, access, and efficiency. After so many construction closures over the last few years, Library staff worked hard to keep the reading room open and facilitate research as much as possible in 2025. The Library's standout acquisition this year was a beautiful nature-printed giant squid by Mineo Yamamoto.



Invertebrate Zoology

New Schlinger Chair and Curator of Entomology Alex Harman, Ph.D., arrived in January, quickly completed his dissertation, and published eight manuscripts (with two more in review). The department's Specify database was transferred to the cloud-based system Specify 7, and over 8,000 non-entomological specimen images are now available to view in the online database. Recently added images include hundreds of bryozoan specimens captured by the Howard/Berry Chair of Malacology Henry Chaney, Ph.D., with the scanning electron microscope. Curator Emeritus of Malacology Paul Valentich-Scott attended a London/Paris workshop of bivalve specialists focused on the superfamily Galeommatoida that resulted in the identification of 50 new species.



Harman with a drawer of tiger beetles

Dibblee Geology Center

A large team led by Dibblee Curator of Earth Science Jonathan Hoffman, Ph.D., completed the excavation and safe transport of a middle-Miocene whale found on the Gaviota Coast. Newly hired Fossil Preparator Ben Rotenberg, M.A., began work exposing the specimen in the fossil preparation lab at the Museum. Dr. Hoffman's staff and

volunteers presented public events to mark National Earth Science Week, including Tom Dibblee's Birthday, National Fossil Day, Mineral Day, and Geologic Map Day. Dibblee maps are now available in digital form, with sales benefiting the Museum and the Dibblee Endowment. Curatorial Assistant Liz Flint, J.D., presented research at the

annual Society of Vertebrate Paleontology meeting in London. Collaborative research continues on fossils from Channel Islands National Park, including mammoth fossils and the marine fossils from the Santa Rosa Island sea cow site.



Hoffman and Flint in the new prep lab

Vertebrate Zoology

Curator of Vertebrate Zoology Krista Fahy, Ph.D., worked closely with the exhibits team on plans for updates to the Museum's older exhibits. Dr. Fahy facilitated collections tours and access for many visitors, notably including a behind-the-scenes tour for the advisory board of the Smithsonian's National

Museum of Natural History and a marine mammal identification workshop for the Western Section of the Wildlife Society. Fahy was pleased to welcome new Curator of Mammalogy Alexandra Coconis, Ph.D., a recent graduate from the University of Nevada, Reno. Dr. Coconis has studied the biogeography

of woodrats in the Great Basin Desert. Here at SBMNH, she began preparing and curating small mammal specimens and building partnerships with Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County researchers for research on small mammal collections and fire landscapes in the American West.



New curator Dr. Coconis

Anthropology

The exhibit Chumash Basketry: Art & Life culminated over 50 years of research by Curator Emeritus of Ethnography Jan Timbrook, Ph.D., and involved extensive collaboration with contemporary Chumash weavers. The Museum was awarded a \$150,000 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) grant.

NAGPRA Officer Jonathan Malindine, M.A., and Curatorial Assistant Allison Jaqua, M.A., completed a key federal requirement by sending 625 collection summary letters to tribes across the United States. The Museum repatriated 31 ancestors and 205 cultural items in 2025. Curator Emeritus of Anthropology John R. Johnson, Ph.D., edited a new

volume in the Museum's Contributions in Anthropology series, *Abrigo de los Escorpiones* by Ruth Gruhn and Alan Bryan. After hosting the Central Coast Information Center for several years, the Museum transferred CCIC records to a new host institution.



Nineteenth-century "treasure basket"

Education

Five graduating quasars



Teen Programs

64 teens across three Teen Programs—Quasars to Sea Stars, Counselors in Training, and VolunTEENS—gave 5,078 hours of volunteer service. The first college scholarship from the new Anderson Family Quasars to Sea Stars Scholarship Endowment was awarded to Isabella Figueroa, one of five teens to graduate from the Quasars to Sea Stars program in 2025. Led by Teen Programs Manager Haylee Rosso and Teen Programs Intern Audrey Engelsjerd, the quasars

studied museums and California mutualisms. At the end of the summer, they visited Catalina Island to collaborate with the Catalina Island Conservancy. Quasar alumnus Alvaro Vaca-Mendoza returned to serve Teen Programs as coordinator in a permanent capacity.



Director of Education Maggie Romero joined us in September.

School Programs

In 2025, the Museum served 6,577 students on field trips, with 63% of classes coming from Title I schools and receiving a 50% discount. An active team of 37 Volunteer Museum educators gave 3,263 hours to support field trips and other programs. School Programs Manager Jessica Prichard presented insights from the Museum's environmental justice and community science field trip program at the annual Association of Science and Technology Centers conference. Prichard and School

Programs Specialist Amihan Franada earned Nature Journal Educator certifications from the Wild Wonder Foundation and piloted a series of nature journal programs for the public. In summer, Franada revived the popular Dino Safari in Prehistoric Forest and recurring drawing sessions in Maximus Gallery.

Our robust team of volunteer educators



Astronomy Programs

Education staff supported a brilliant year for astronomy, coinciding with the opening of the new Space Sciences exhibit. Gladwin Planetarium welcomed a record-breaking 36,344 guests. Ila Jade Komasa advanced into the role of Astronomy Programs manager, expanding summer operations with daily hours at Palmer Observatory for solar viewing and hands-on activities. The Museum's robust partnerships with the Santa Barbara Astronomical Unit (SBAU) and Las Cumbres Observatory (LCO) continued to enrich public programs. SBAU volunteers gave 2,791 hours connecting 16,951 program attendees with the cosmos.



Komasa in the planetarium

Fleischmann Auditorium hosted distinguished experts in astronomy for free talks throughout the year, including LCO researchers working with the Vera C. Rubin Observatory, and the chief pilot of NASA's Mars Ingenuity helicopter.

Nature Education

Led by Nature Education Manager Clay Sipiora, M.S., Nature Adventures™ camps continue to provide nature-based education and play for 4–12-year-old children, with demand particularly strong in the 4–6-year-old range. In summer, campers enjoyed a range of activities, from exploring exhibits to talks by Museum experts at Coggeshall Bowl. New Schlinger Chair of Entomology Alex Harman, Ph.D., visited with campers several times, leading a

popular curated “bug hunt.” 2025 saw the tail end of Nature Exchange (developed by Science North) in the Backyard, allowing staff to shift away from extractive collecting and toward community science. When Max the Great Horned Owl passed away in November, Backyard staff helped guests create a memorial tree to honor Santa Barbara Audubon's beloved avian ambassador.



A happy camper in the Backyard

Sea Center



In 2025, the Sea Center celebrated its highest attendance on record: 115,514 visitors! Admissions, the Sea Center Store, and membership sales all exceeded projections, supporting the aquarium's work as a hub for sharing marine science and conservation. With philanthropic support, we made the final payment on the solar panels which generate 40% of the Sea Center's power. Underwater Parks Day on

January 18 drew 1,744 guests to celebrate marine protected areas. 219 volunteers gave 11,191 hours connecting people to marine life. Although school groups were limited to self-guided visits for part of the year (regular field trips are expected to begin again in 2026), the Sea Center hosted 1,667 students from 51 schools. Animal husbandry staff

continued our grant-funded assistance in the recovery of endangered White Abalone. In April we participated in a spawning day to support the captive breeding program, and in November we received a new cohort of juvenile White Abalone to raise. In October,

Assemblymember Gregg Hart chose the Sea Center as a fitting site for a press conference about Assembly Bill 14, expanding the Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies program statewide.

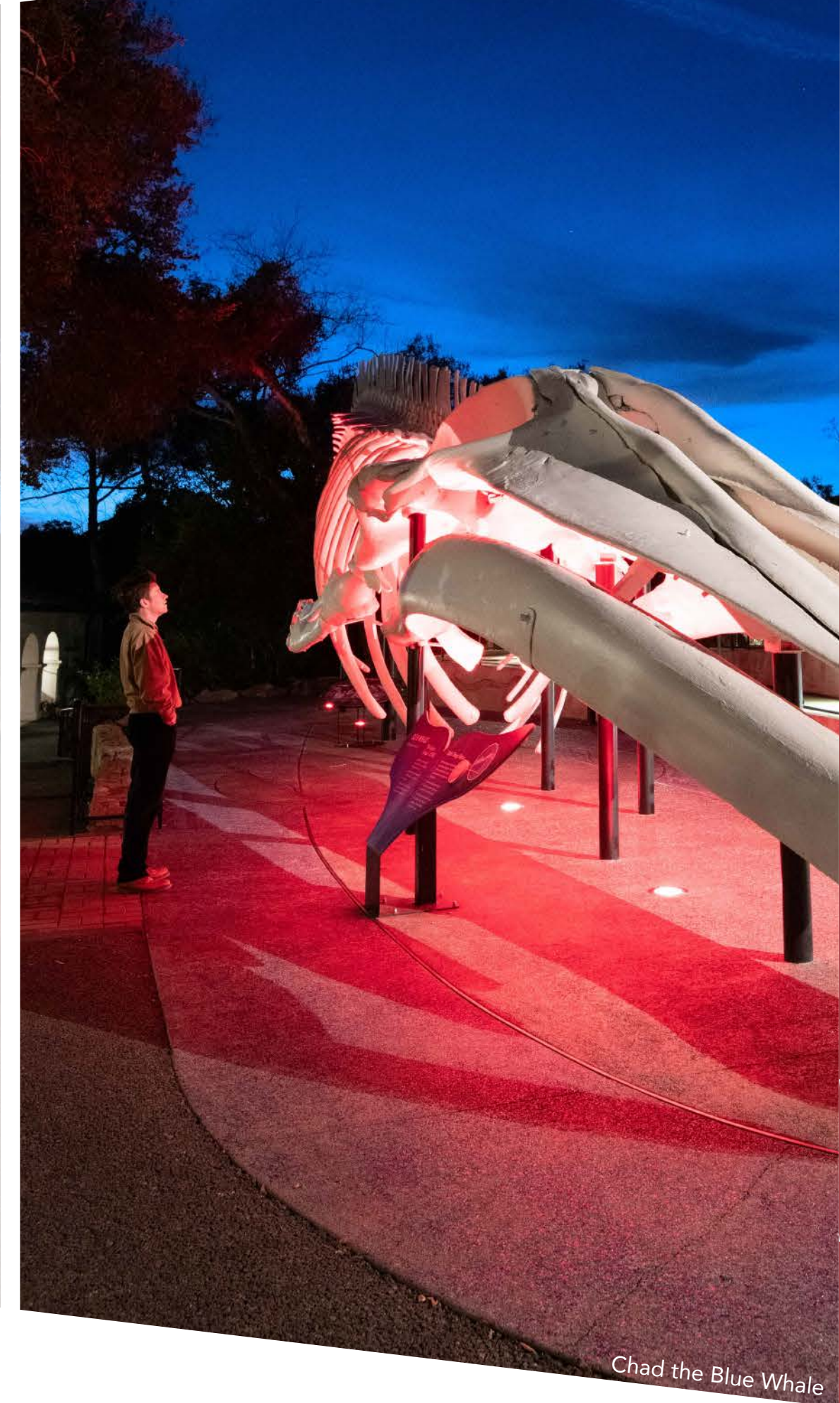
Community Programs



Oaxaca workshop attendees



Cook in Palmer Observatory



Chad the Blue Whale

Community Programs Specialist Kelsey Perry joined the Museum in April and oversaw increasingly robust public offerings, building on existing programs like Audubon talks and Science Pub while creating exciting new opportunities. A standing-room-only crowd came out to Dargan's Irish Pub & Restaurant for a 1925 earthquake anniversary Science Pub

with Larry Gurrola, Ph.D. The Sprague Pavilion hosted a Culinary & Folk Arts of Oaxaca workshop series with Bany Vargas and Claudia Berumen, celebrating Mexican cultural heritage in delicious and creative ways. Howls & Owls—a fun and educational nighttime event

centered on mysterious nocturnal wildlife—was warmly received by 344 family attendees. NASA Solar System Ambassador Krissie Cook offered sold-out courses in the Gladwin Planetarium featuring cutting-edge science.

Exhibits



Exhibits Director Melinda Morgan-Stowell led the exhibits team in opening three major exhibitions and conducting many smaller improvements. *Chumash Basketry: Art & Life* opened January 25, featuring the stunning work of Chumash weavers past and present. The new Space Sciences exhibit—titled *Our Cosmic Coast*—debuted to warm appreciation at the Members' Party on July 11. *The Living Print* opened October 25 in the Courtyard Gallery, featuring the artistic

explorations of four contemporary printmakers using traditional techniques to capture the beauty and wonder of the natural world: Latifat Apatira, Sara Woodburn, Dwight Hwang, and Mineo Yamamoto. A workshop in the center of the exhibit space invites guests to make leaf rubbings to exhibit or take home. The exhibits team added a timeline telling the story of abalone in California and



other enhancements to *Dive In: Our Changing Channel* at the Sea Center. Kiyo Yanagihashi of Kokoro Exhibits visited to assist with maintenance to the animatronic dinosaurs in *Prehistoric Forest*. The beloved interactive rattlesnake was refreshed with new interpretation, graphics, paint, and internal cleaning

and repair. The Barn Owl diorama was refurbished and reopened with help from Curator of Vertebrate Zoology Krista Fahy, Ph.D.



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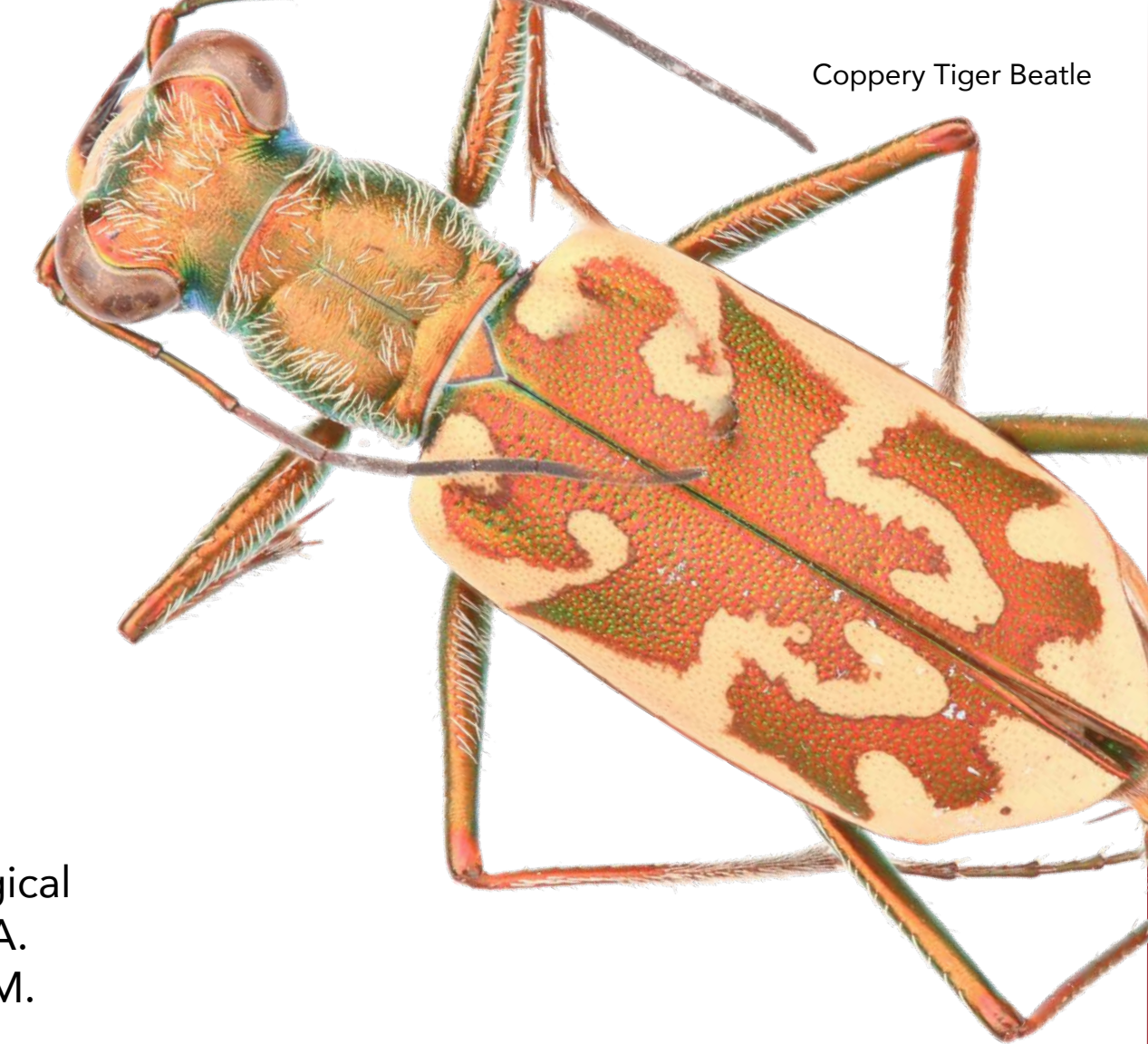
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Coppery Tiger Beetle

2025 Staff Publications

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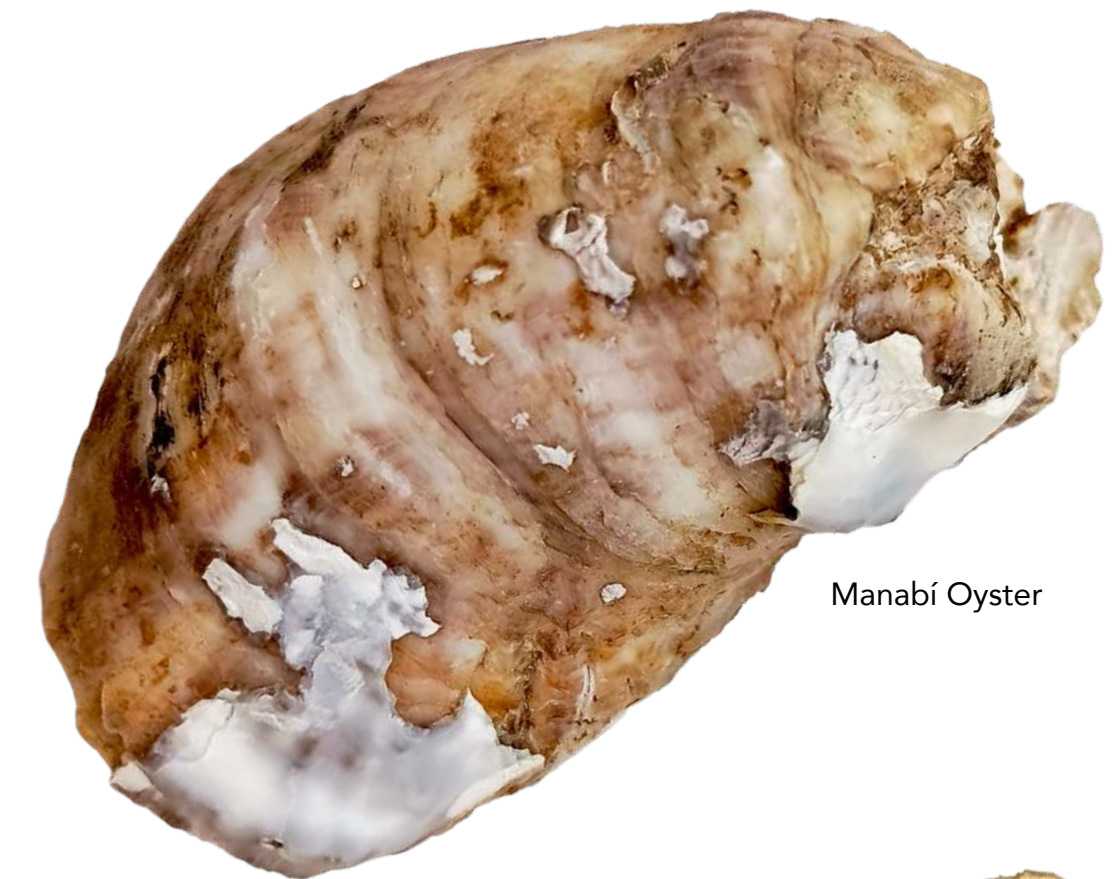
Lawson, R.L., H.M. Todaro, L.R. Bobay, M.S. Broadway, D.A. Cooper, M.M. Eori, **A.J. Harman**, L.K. Neumann, S.R. Loss, and T.J. O'Connell. 2024. Band recovery data illustrate spatiotemporal and taxonomic patterns of seabird collisions with anthropogenic structures. *The Wilson Journal of Ornithology* 1–16.

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Treviño, L., Lodeiros, C., Vélez-Falcones, J., Cáceres-Farias, L., González-Henríquez, N., Rey-Méndez, M., Maeda-Martínez, A. N., **Valentich-Scott, P.**, Oliver, P. G., & Salvi, D. 2025. Phylogenetic and morphological analyses of the Manabí oyster, an emerging aquaculture species in Ecuador, reveal its identity as *Crassostrea corteziensis* (Hertlein, 1951). *Marine Biodiversity*, 55(6), 120.



Manabí Oyster



2025 Staff



Common Postman *Heliconius melpomene*

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Central Coast Information Center

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Invertebrate Zoology

Vanessa Delnavaz, M.A.
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Vertebrate Zoology

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Technician
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Technician
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Madisyn Penny, Aurora Pringle, Gianna
Triplett, Rich Baez, Melina Ochoa,
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Naturalist and Volunteer Program Manager
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Dassatti, Sarah Ettman-Sterner, Hannah
Keaton, Emilie Lenoir, Betsy Mooney,
Cara Orndahl, Daisy Cuthbert, Ellory
Hoerth, Miguel Millan, Travis Pierce,
Maya Rink, Steen Unsworth

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Merwin, Nancy Palmer, Hannah Thorpe,
Patrick Turner, Joaquin Bailey-Musacchio,
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Western Meadowlark

Dr. Christel Bejenke Fund

Created by Christel and George Wittenstein to provide an annual income stream to support the Museum's public programming efforts focused on science and nature.

Value as of 12/31/25 **\$120,416**

Thomas Wilson Dibblee Endowment for Earth Sciences

In 2001, the Museum partnered with Mr. Dibblee to publish his extraordinary geological maps, and he designated his estate for the support of the map publishing effort and to establish an earth sciences position.

Value as of 12/31/25 **\$2,872,151.**

Robert Dougan Fund for Innovative Education

Mr. Dougan was a librarian, bibliophile, and scholar of Ireland's greatest literary treasure, the Book of Kells. Feeling deeply about the importance of education and scholarship, he provided in his estate an endowment fund to support innovative educational programs.

Value as of 12/31/25 **\$1,168,166**

Hearst Scholars in Museum Studies Fund

Endowed in 2002 with a grant from the William Randolph Hearst Foundation, this fund provides resources for college and university students to intern in various positions at the Museum.

Value as of 12/31/25 **\$198,628**

Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History Endowed Fund

Established in 2016 to provide general operating support, this endowed fund is held at the Santa Barbara Foundation.

Value of SBMNH Endowed Fund held at the Santa Barbara Foundation as of 12/31/25 **\$6,529,740**

Howard/Berry Chair of Malacology

The prominence of the Museum's vast shell collection and its scientific research staff is in part based on the support of two eminent shell collectors, Faye B. Howard and Dr. S. Stillman Berry. Both these individuals left as bequests, not only their superb private collections, but also the funds to support the expansion of our Collections and Research Center and to endow this curatorial chair.

Value as of 12/31/25 **\$1,472,766**

Thomas E. Hugunin and Elenore H. Hugunin Endowment

Established with a bequest in 2010, the Hugunin Endowment provides general operating support and is held at the Santa Barbara Foundation.

Value of Hugunin Endowment Fund held at the Santa Barbara Foundation as of 12/31/25 **\$842,586.**

John Johnson Chair of Anthropology

Established in 2023 in recognition of Dr. John Johnson, Curator of Anthropology at the Museum from 1986 to 2023.

Value as of 12/31/25 **\$1,195,051**

John and Peggy Maximus Endowment for Antique Natural History Art

John and Peggy funded the creation of a gallery dedicated to antique natural history art and provided for its continued support. A fund is held by the Museum and a second at the Santa Barbara Foundation.

Value as of 12/31/25 **\$2,114,147**
Value of Maximus Trust held at the Santa Barbara Foundation as of 12/31/25 **\$2,865,797.**

Quasars to Sea Stars Endowment

With a generous donation from the Hollis Norris Fund and David and Lyn Anderson, the Museum created the Quasars to Sea Stars Endowment in December 2020 to provide support for the Museum's valuable teen program.

Value as of 12/31/25 **\$1,148,140**

Ridder Sea Center Fund

Established in 2017 with a bequest from Virginia Ridder, this fund supports exhibits and maintenance at the Sea Center.

Value as of 12/31/25 **\$320,495**

Samuel Blake Shapiro Memorial Fund

Sam Shapiro went through the Sea Center volunteer training program when he was 12 and, over the next 5 years, he volunteered almost 450 hours at the Sea Center. Sam's love and support of the Sea Center continues on through this Fund which supports the Wet Deck's operations.

Value as of 12/31/2025 **\$10,332**

Schlinger Foundation Chair of Entomology

Evert Schlinger, Ph.D., was a world-renowned entomologist and a professor of biology. Believing ardently in the importance of museums for both research and education, Dr. Schlinger endowed the Schlinger Chair of Entomology in 2004.

Value as of 12/31/25 **\$2,421,020**

Vertress L. Vander Hoof Endowment

Established in 2018 through an estate gift from Jill Vander Hoof in honor of her father, Vertress Vander Hoof, this endowment supports the Library's operations and acquisitions.

Value as of 12/31/25 **\$2,317,078**

Lionel Albert Walford Fund

Dr. Walford was a research scientist in the field of ichthyology who participated in research trips aboard Museum Trustee Max Fleischmann's boat in the 1930s. The fund was established in 2021 by Dr. Walford's daughter Sarah and her husband Lincoln Hollister to provide operating support for the collection, care, and feeding of the sea life in the Sea Center's Channel Catch habitat.

Value as of 12/31/25 **\$124,411**

Total value of Museum's invested assets as of 12/31/25 **\$59,336,113**

Total value of Museum's invested assets held at the Santa Barbara Foundation as of 12/31/25 **\$10,238,123**

Donations can be made to support any existing fund or endowment. To discuss creating or donating to a named endowment or fund contact Museum President & CEO Luke J. Swetland at 805-682-4711 ext. 101.

Endowments & Funds

The Museum has several named endowments and funds that support programs and initiatives. Many of these endowments were established through bequests.

**2025
 OPERATING REVENUE
 \$9,223,000**

Financials

**2025
 OPERATING EXPENSES
 \$9,223,000**

51%

Philanthropy

\$4,739,000

35%
 Contributions & Grants
 \$1,661,000

14%
 Special Events
 \$676,000

45%
 Quasi-endowment
 & Trust Income
 \$2,108,000

6%
 Strategic Reserve
 \$294,000

40%

Admissions, Stores Sales,
 Membership

\$3,666,000

58%
 Admissions
 \$2,148,000

22%
 Membership
 \$793,000

20%
 Stores
 \$725,000

9%

Contracts &
 Generated Revenue

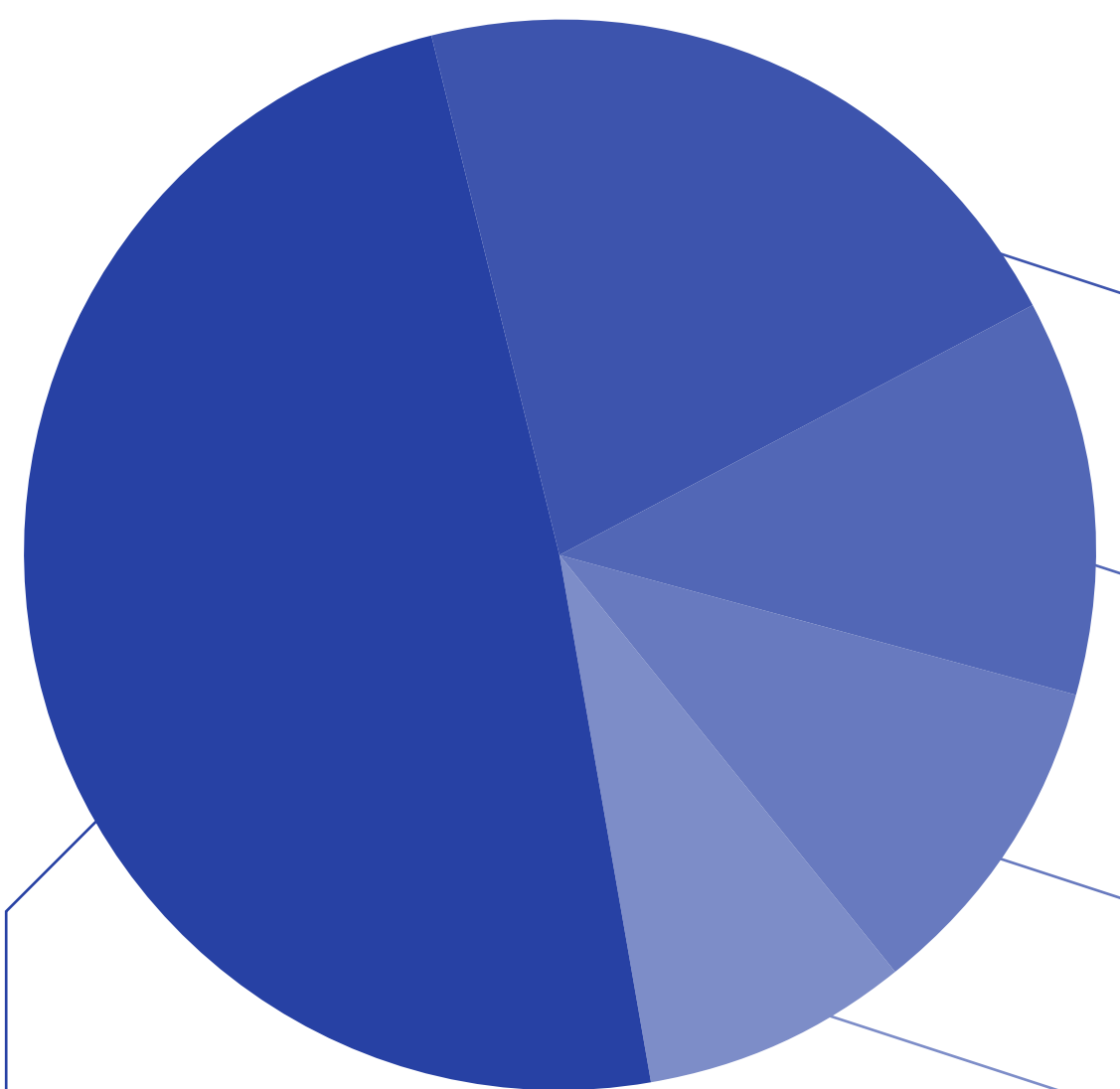
\$818,000

27%
 Lectures, Field Trips
 & Camps
 \$222,000

28%
 Facility &
 Property Rentals
 \$228,000

17%
 Contracts & Fees
 \$142,000

28%
 Other
 \$226,000



49%

Guest Experience

\$4,547,000

28%
 Sea Center
 \$1,185,000

8%
 Exhibits
 \$425,000

17%
 Guest Services
 \$858,000

15%
 Marketing
 \$659,000

32%
 Facility Maintenance
 \$1,420,000

21%

Management & General

\$1,891,000

12%

Fundraising

\$1,129,000

10%

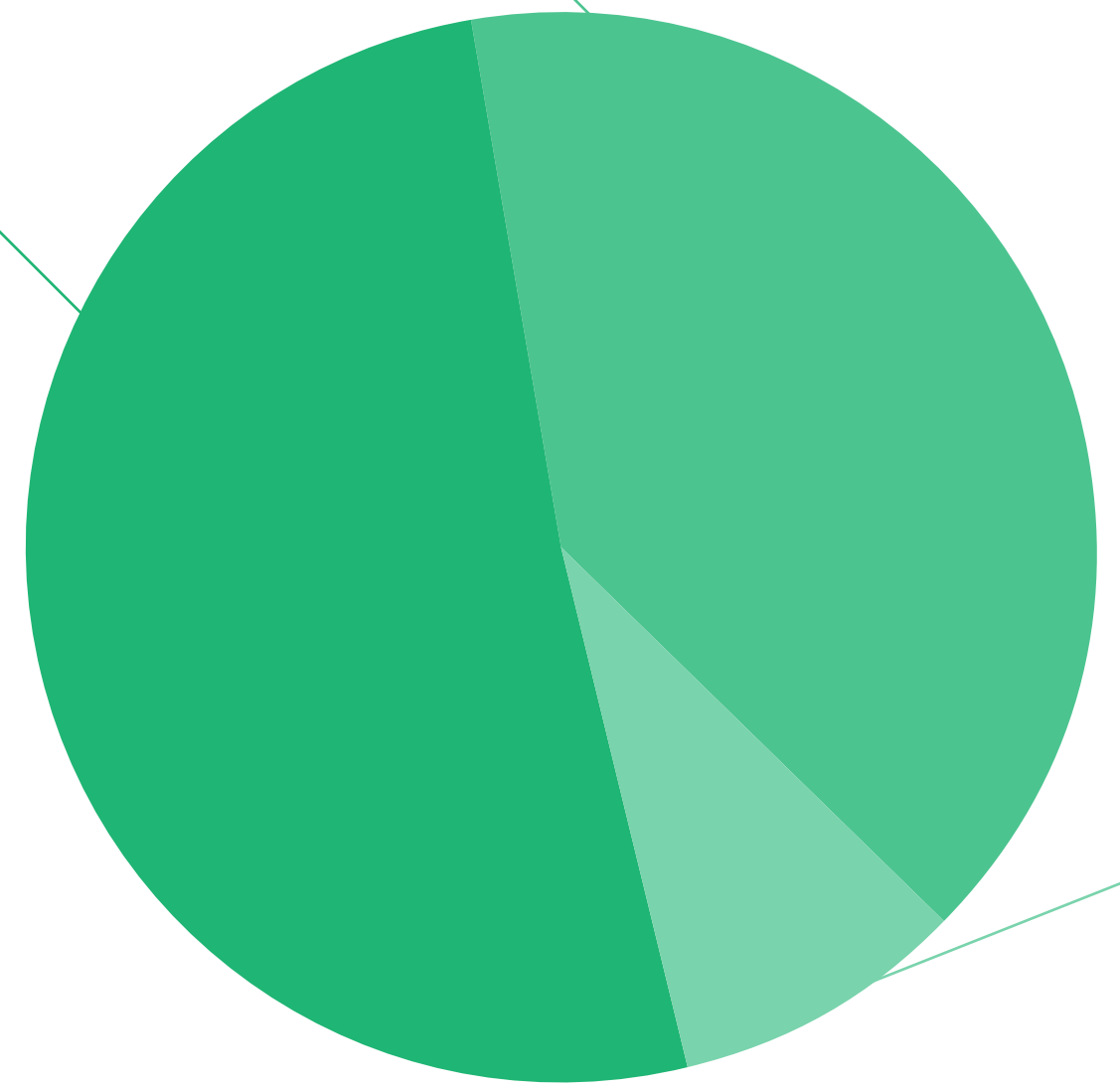
Education

\$948,000

8%

Scientific Research &
 Collections Management

\$708,000



Thank You

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