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SBnature Journal

SANTA BARBARA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY



CELEBRATING CHANNEL ISLANDS BIRDS

ROARING BACK TO THE PAVILION

RETURN OF THE SUNFLOWER STARS

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A NOTE FROM LUKE

President & CEO



Dear Members,

Most of you are familiar with our beautiful halls and the iconic specimens that fill our dioramas. But did you know the Museum is home to more than 3.5 million objects behind the scenes? The stories in this issue are about the people, partnerships, discoveries, and collections that power our mission every day.

This issue's cover story celebrates the publication of *Birds of California's Channel Islands*, a landmark achievement representing decades of research led by Curator Emeritus Paul Collins, M.A. At the Sea Center, you'll meet the remarkable Sunflower Stars making a comeback thanks to collaborative conservation efforts. You'll follow our entomologist into the field as he uses black light to better understand some of the world's fastest insects: tiger beetles.

You'll be deeply moved by one family's story of cultural connection and rematriation. You'll meet Sarah Monks, Ph.D., and read about her debut exhibit of historical prints, *Selby's Circles: Art & Nature in Romantic Britain*. You'll see how our collaboration with La Brea Tar Pits continues to uncover chapters of Earth's ancient history.

These stories offer a glimpse at how our curatorial staff expand our understanding of the natural and cultural world. For a deeper look, join us at a Science Salon in 2027.

Thank you for making this work possible.

Luke J. Swetland
President & CEO
Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History



ROARING BACK TO THE PAVILION

When *Dinorama: Miniatures Through the Mesozoic* debuted in 2021, we didn't know what to expect. Would people respond to mini dioramas? Guests of all ages took to them like ichthyosaurs to water. Many visitors—especially the seven-year-olds—had long, deep, scientific conversations with our interpreters. The little exhibit left a big impression.

This year, three paleontologists curated a fresh incarnation with more biodiversity and nuance. Dibblee Curator of Earth Science Jonathan Hoffman, Ph.D., and Fossil Preparator Ben Rotenberg, M.A., called in Justin Lemberg, Ph.D., to provide key expertise. Dr. Lemberg's day job is being the John Johnson Chair of Anthropology, but his background in vertebrate paleontology drew him into helping with *Dinorama*. (His dissertation subject was the famous transitional fish *Tiktaalik*.)

"I hope people notice how interesting and strange the Triassic was," says Lemberg. "It was a time period when the role of 'crocs' was filled by giant amphibians and the role of 'dinosaurs' was filled by croc-relatives and giant-egg-laying mammal-relatives. Don't rush through it on your way to *T. rex*!"

"The biodiversity through the Mesozoic is amazing," says Dr. Hoffman. "Each period has its own assemblage of vertebrates with different characteristics: giant size, formidable headgear, protective armor, winged flight, and streamlined swimming. And every year, paleontologists are discovering new species of dinosaurs and other Mesozoic vertebrates."

The combination of whimsical staging and hard science makes this exhibit compelling and fun for all ages. *Dinorama* runs through March 14, 2027.

Top: A feathered *T. rex* asserts its dominance over the Cretaceous landscape.

Middle: Allosaurs dig into a fresh *Apatosaurus* kill.

Left: Rhynchocephalians bask in the Triassic warmth.

Learn more at **sbnature.org/dinorama**



Coconis (far right) leads a bat-preparation team including UCSB students and teens in the Quasars to Sea Stars Program.

HARDWORKING MAMMALS

New Curator of Mammalogy Ally Coconis, Ph.D., has had an extremely productive first year in the Department of Vertebrate Zoology. Dr. Coconis is a highly social mammal who came with many connections from her fieldwork and museum experience across the West. Coconis has worked hard to foster new mutually beneficial connections with researchers, students, and regulatory agencies. She has already supervised the preparation of 135 rodents—mostly mice from the Channel Islands—and 120 bats collected from around the state. Her zest for mentorship and specimen preparation has created real museum career experiences for 4 teen volunteers and 22 UCSB students. Her most numerous helpers are the smallest: she revived our dermestid beetle colony to assist with cleaning tiny, fragile bones.

Just a dozen days shy of her first anniversary with the Museum, Coconis hosted a popular Cocktails with a Curator: Mammals Magnified, at which Members enjoyed learning more about her research and taking a close look at some of the 11,000 specimens in her care. Building the scientific utility of the mammal research collection is one of her top goals.

Partnerships are key to this effort. Zoos, wildlife rehab centers, and local and state agencies such as the California Department of Fish and Wildlife are helping Coconis salvage specimens for science.

Her own fieldwork is another source of specimens. She is currently studying how climate change and wildfire disturbance affect both where small mammal populations are geographically distributed and how they use food and shelter resources.



Botta's Pocket Gopher study skin specimen with curatorial hand for scale

Watch bat preparation at **sbnature.org/mammals**





Top: The Dibblee delegation with fossil prep experts at La Brea Tar Pits

Circle: Rotenberg and Hoffman at the Hell Creek K-Pg boundary

WORKING TOGETHER TO UNCOVER EARTH'S HISTORY

About 11–13,000 years ago, most large animals in the Americas went extinct. Scientists have proposed theories about the causes, but reaching scientific consensus requires more data about what died when. Researchers led by La Brea Tar Pits Curator & Excavation Site Director Emily Lindsey, Ph.D., visited the Dibblee Geology Center at the Museum to examine a variety of megafauna fossils from Carpinteria and the Channel Islands. The researchers plan to have about a dozen of them analyzed and dated as part of a wider effort to solve the Late Pleistocene whodunnit.

Dibblee Curator of Earth Science Jonathan Hoffman, Ph.D., is excited to have more data about the specimens in his care. Specimens and data from Rancho La Brea have given that location an outsized impact on our understanding of change over time in Pleistocene California. New data points from closer to home may reveal interesting comparisons that enrich our picture of the environments where the megafauna extinction unfolded.



Carpinteria tar pit fossils examined by La Brea researchers on their SBMNH visit



Researchers led by Emily Lindsey (center) screening specimens at SBMNH for future analysis

Fossil Preparator Ben Rotenberg, M.A., continued the collaboration with La Brea Tar Pits during a weeklong stay in Los Angeles to learn from the leading global authorities on tar fossil preparation. With assistance from La Brea staff and volunteers, he began to clear matrix away from several SBMNH-held fossils from the Carpinteria tar pits.

During Rotenberg's visit, Rancho La Brea Fossil Lab Manager Stephany Potze and Preparator Connie Clarke shared insights from their research on solvents that remove matrix from tar fossils. Sharing their techniques with Rotenberg adds one more person to the small but proud cadre of skilled preparators who make it possible for researchers to study the Pleistocene.

Curatorial Assistant Liz Flint, J.D., and Rotenberg attended last April's annual meeting of the Association for Materials and Methods in Paleontology in Bismark, North Dakota. Flint presented her use of a variety of sources to confirm the provenance of mammoth fossils collected by the Museum from the 1920s through the 1950s. Rotenberg shared the findings of his master's thesis in a poster about new methods using acid to dissolve rock away from marine mammal fossils.

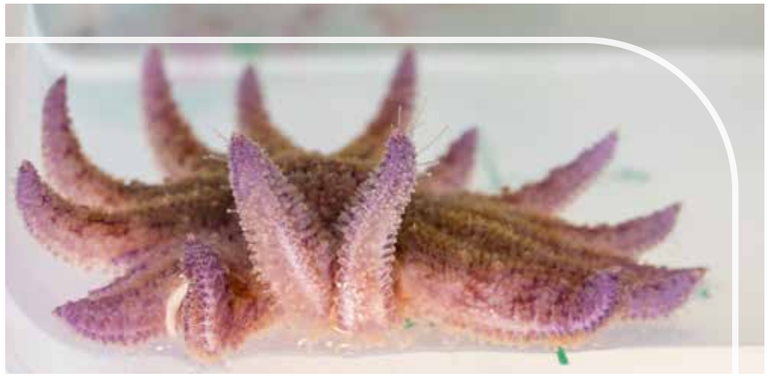
In late July, Hoffman and Rotenberg visited the latter's former colleagues at the famous Hell Creek Formation in Montana (the source of *T. rex*). In a pivot from their usual work, they were there to dig up dinosaurs with the Burke Museum's Discoveries in Geosciences (DIG) field school. DIG is a program focused on giving K–12 teachers hands-on experiences with paleontology and geology. Rotenberg and Hoffman worked directly with teachers and were thrilled to find two from our region in attendance. Over 70 people from institutions across the country came together for this massively collaborative event. Rotenberg was honored to bring an SBMNH presence to the place where he cut his teeth excavating prehistoric animals like *Triceratops*, *Oviraptor*, *Didelphodon*, hadrosaurs, and champsosaurs.

Learn more at
sbnature.org/earthscience



RETURN OF THE SUNFLOWER STARS

Top: Wild Sunflower Star. Photo by Marco Mazza
Above: Placing a juvenile star into a pod in Monterey. Photo © 2025 Sage Ono
Circle: SSL conservation facility. Photo by Reuven Bank



Sunflower Star at SSL. Photo by Reuven Bank

The Sea Center is now home to a pair of 18-armed, tube-footed, pale purple urchin eaters that were raised in human care as part of an effort to save their species. Sunflower Stars (Pycnopodia helianthoides) evolved to play a key role in maintaining healthy kelp forest ecosystems, but have been largely absent from the wild in California since the mid-2010s.

The outbreak of sea star wasting disease in 2013–2014 devastated Sunflower Stars. It was one of the largest marine disease events on record, affecting both wild animals and those in aquariums with exposure to unsterilized seawater. Sea Center Director Rich Smalldon remembers that crushing period: "We had Sunflower Stars here during the disease outbreak, and they basically self-destructed. I came in one day and there were detached arms everywhere. It was shocking and without warning." The disease—which also affected many other sea star species—can progress rapidly, as stars fragment and turn to goo in just a few days. Recent research suggests it is caused by a strain of bacteria that remains present along the West Coast.

Wild Sunflower Stars ate urchins, helping to regulate the population of these kelp grazers. Their presence affected the urchins' behavior, too, creating what marine ecologist Sarah Gravem, Ph.D., memorably dubbed "a landscape of fear" for the urchin prey. Without stars, urchins moved and ate unchecked. "When they stopped smelling Sunflower Stars nearby, urchins spent less time hiding and more time eating," explains Sunflower Star Laboratory Executive Director Reuven Bank. "They switched from passively grazing on drift kelp to actively chomping through stipes and holdfasts (kelp's version of stems and roots), razing vast swathes of kelp forests."

Since Sunflower Star populations have collapsed, many of California's kelp forests have become degraded. In the absence of Pycnopodia, kelp-grazing urchins—particularly Purple Urchins—have thrown these biologically, culturally, and economically significant ecosystems out of balance. According to the latest data from kelpwatch.org, 95% of Northern California's kelp forests have disappeared in the last 10 years, in large part due to urchin overgrazing.

Sunflower Star Laboratory (SSL) is a nonprofit that raises the stars and works to restore them where they can rehabilitate kelp forests. Headquartered in Moss Landing, SSL coordinates with many other institutions and researchers. The joint effort to rear endangered species in human care has parallels with the White Abalone Restoration Consortium. The Sea Center has been a member of that group since 2006, and hopes to play a similar role in educating the public about Sunflower Stars.

SSL has grown hundreds of sea stars at their conservation facility to meet future restoration needs, while spearheading the first ever temporary outplantings of Sunflower Stars back into California waters. The Sunflower Stars on display at the Sea Center participated in these inaugural outplanting trials in Monterey, before returning from "camp ocean" to SSL and arriving at the Sea Center this summer. The well-traveled stars now serve as ambassadors for their species, making an impression on hundreds of guests each day.

ILLUMINATING THE WORLD'S FASTEST INSECTS

with Schlinger Chair of Entomology
Alex Harman, Ph.D.







Far left: Harman with tiger beetle specimens in collections
Middle: *Cicindela scutellaris*
Circle: *Cicindela albissima*
Photos by Alex Harman

You just published an index to light attraction in North American tiger beetles, which could help inform efforts to protect these insects. What's a tiger beetle?

AH: They're some of the top insect predators, and actually a lot more like cheetahs than tigers. They hunt by running extremely fast at prey with their mandibles open. They need open places like sand dunes, mudflats, and sandbars.

These habitats tend to be patchy, so tiger beetle species are patchily distributed with small ranges.

Many species could theoretically be listed as endangered or protected. To prove something needs protection, you need to prove it's declined. You can try to count them, but experienced counters are going to see more beetles. Blacklighting is cheap, easy, and standardizable.

The species aren't all the same in their attraction to light?

AH: Nope. So if you're trying to estimate a population of tiger beetles and considering attracting them with light, you need to know if that technique is effective with that species. I've probably laid eyes on every tiger beetle photo on iNaturalist in the United States, and I can tell which were taken with blacklighting.



Insects attracted to a blacklight

You're making use of your familiarity with the community science. You've done quite a bit of tiger beetle surveying yourself, too.

AH: I've set up black lights in Wisconsin, Florida, Oklahoma, throughout the southwest, and here. Here's an example of how blacklighting helped me. There's one particular subspecies of *Ellipsoptera nevadica* out on this mudflat in New Mexico. I saw three individuals while I was setting one light trap in the daytime. I checked it the next day, and had caught more than 47.

Eunota johnsonii johnsonii



What an effective tool! Now you've given other researchers the gift of knowing which species they can use it with to generate worthwhile data.

AH: Yes. My paper covers the 125 species found in the United States and Canada.

This attraction has a dark side, too.

AH: The flip side is when insects fly to a gas station or a dollar store with bright lights, they're vulnerable. Birds have learned they can find insects to eat at these places. Because this light pollution happens every night on a massive scale, it affects the wider populations. It disrupts mating, egg laying. Anything that nocturnal insects are supposed to do, they're not doing if they're sitting next to a streetlight.

Does this inform how you use blacklighting?

AH: It's definitely a different magnitude. City lights are on all night, every night. Blacklighting is typically done only a couple nights at a time, and responsible entomologists are careful not to do too much lethal sampling on rare populations, since the whole point is to understand and protect.

FURTHER READING

Harman, Alexander. (2026). Tiger Beetle (Coleoptera: Cicindelidae) Attraction to Lights, an Underutilized Method for Population Monitoring and an Overlooked Threat. *The Coleopterists Bulletin*. 80. 302-308.

Full interview at
sbnature.org/blog

CELEBRATING CHANNEL ISLANDS BIRDS



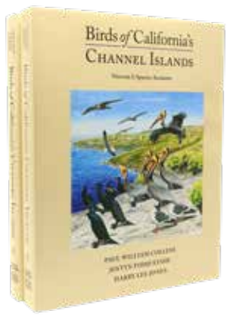


Top: Collins scanning for seabirds at Sandy Point on Santa Rosa Island in 1986. San Miguel Island is in the distance.

Circle: Taking notes in the field at the Bechers Bay bunkhouse in 2008. Photos by John Storrer

A new two-volume, 809-page tome published by the Museum is the definitive guide to 449 species of birds known from California's Channel Islands. The culmination of over 50 years of scientific tenacity, *Birds of California's Channel Islands* has three authors, all of whom brought rare and valuable expertise to the project. The lengthy acknowledgements provide a measure of how many people (over 150) and institutions (over 30) flocked to the cause over five decades. But make no mistake—this book would never have existed if not for the curiosity and determination of Curator Emeritus of Vertebrate Zoology Paul W. Collins, M.A., who has used the Museum as a home base for research that led him to remote and rugged locations across all eight islands.

Collins was first bitten by the island bug back in the 1970s. "I started on this project because I got a love for the islands from Dennis Power," Collins recalls. Museum Director Power "hired me to come out and work in the field with him, gathering data on House Finches and Rock Wrens." Collins was struck by how much remained to be learned about Channel Islands birds.



Book design by
Terri Wright / Book Lotus

Waldo Abbott and Collins on Santa Rosa Island in 1986
Photo by John Storrer

This was an era of handwritten field notes, gun-toting scientists, and private island ownership. Collins convinced Curator of Ornithology Waldo Abbott to seek access to understudied Santa Rosa Island. Soon Paul, Waldo, and other staff members were regularly visiting the Vail & Vickers Ranch to collect proof of what species were present. The specimens they collected during the ranching era now provide an important historic baseline against which to measure current conservation and restoration efforts.

The Museum's own specimens are part of a much wider picture revealed by the book. Thousands of bird specimens, egg sets, and nests collected from the Channel Islands are spread across 38 institutions. Collins has personally visited a number of those museums in the United States—as well as the Natural History Museum at Tring, England—to inventory and verify the specimens. He brought the same attention to detail to gleaning insights from historical field records in the spidery writing of nineteenth-century naturalists.





Coauthors Justyn T. Stahl, Paul W. Collins, and H. Lee Jones at their standing-room-only book signing in Fleischmann Auditorium

In *Birds of California's Channel Islands*, this old-fashioned detective work conducted on undigitized resources is married with the latest digital-born data from eBird and iNaturalist. The result is a rich, four-dimensional picture of bird status and distribution on the islands from prehistory through the present.

For Power—who wrote the foreword—the book reveals "how dynamic this region is in terms of its avifauna. Without the detailed data and the authors' synthesis," Power writes, "you would not realize the extent of the changes that have taken place." Collins notes that these changes are ongoing, "as we have climate change starting to rear its ugly head."

Collins and Stahl shared highlights from their research findings at a packed public talk on September 29 at the Museum, co-presented with Santa Barbara Audubon Society.

Watch the recording of Collins and Stahl's talk on the Museum's YouTube channel and find the book in the Museum Library.



Collins at the Two Harbors Bald Eagle nest on Santa Catalina Island in 2011. Photo by Seth Newsom

Watch the talk at
sbnature.org/youtube





Top: Prideaux John Selby, *Green Lapwing*, hand-colored etching from *Illustrations of British Ornithology* (1821–1834)

Above: Edward Hastings, *Prideaux John Selby* (c. 1820, oil on canvas, unlocated; photo by Donald Macbeth c/o Natural History Society of Northumbria)

SELBY'S CIRCLES: ART & NATURE IN ROMANTIC BRITAIN

by Maximus Gallery Curator Sarah Monks, Ph.D.

In 1819, a young aristocrat living on the border of England and Scotland embarked on an extraordinary project: the life-size depiction of every type of bird to be found in Britain, on land and water, native and migrant alike. Over the next 15 years, Prideaux John Selby would produce hundreds of large hand-colored etchings which show the plumage, behavior, and lifecycle of birds in meticulous detail.



Prideaux John Selby, *Wryneck & Woodpeckers*, hand-colored etching from *Illustrations of British Ornithology*

This is the first museum exhibition ever devoted to Selby, a "British Audubon" who had a major influence on other naturalists (Charles Darwin among them) but whose work is less well-known today.

Selby's large inherited estates stretched along Britain's northeastern coastline, still a globally-important site for bird migration. These estates enabled him to observe each bird's qualities year-round while providing him with the wealth required to complete this huge artistic project. He was also helped by his unusually broad and inclusive social circle, which encompassed both the American artist-ornithologist John James Audubon and the local artisan Thomas Bewick, now considered one of Britain's greatest printmakers. Bewick taught Selby how to etch. Audubon taught Selby how to bring birds alive.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Jane Austen's *Persuasion* had just been published. Like these Romantic novels, Selby's highly expressive etchings explore lifeforces, characters, and styles of appearance. He was among the first to identify in detail how birds' feathers change with age, seasons, and the desire to breed.

He was also among the first to document contemporary extinctions, noting the ways in which an increasingly industrialized society was beginning to threaten birdlife. Together, his etchings illustrate his radically Romantic philosophy of nature as a set of interconnected circles in which creatures have affinities with each other. Selby was more interested in what living beings shared than in what divided them.

Alongside Selby's etchings, the exhibition features works by Thomas Bewick including *A History of British Birds* (1797–1804), a new acquisition and widely considered Bewick's finest work. The exhibition also features a unique engraving from Audubon's *Birds of America*. Created entirely while Audubon was in Edinburgh with Selby, and featuring Audubon's own handwritten notes, this extremely rare and newly restored print from our collection will be displayed for the first time. At the exhibition's heart is a suitably circular display of real bird specimens from the Museum's collection, sharing their own affinities with Selby's birds on the wall.



Prideaux John Selby, *Barn Owl*, hand-colored etching, ibid.

Learn more at **sbnature.org/maximus**



Myranell Bergtold (center) holds her great-grandfather Niishluut's headdress as Dr. Mique'l Dangeli and Matthew Bergtold dance Niishluut's warrior song. Photo by Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie

A CHIEF'S HEADDRESS RESTORED TO LIFE



Niishluut in his *amhalaayt* and other chiefly regalia. Alaska State Library, Duncan Cottage Photograph Collection, ca.1857–1916, P43–28

Sacred Bald Eagle down floated through the air in the Department of Anthropology. The office resounded with the singing, dancing, and drumming of honored Ts'msyen guests. University of Victoria Assistant Professor of Indigenous Arts Mique'l Dangeli, Ph.D., Myranell Bergtold, and Myranell's son Matthew Bergtold, daughter Jennifer McCarty, and granddaughter Shannon McCarty held ceremony to breathe life back into the *amhalaayt* (chiefly headdress) of Myranell's great-grandfather Sm'ooygit Niishluut (Chief Sidney Campbell, 1840–1934).

Niishluut was one of the founding leaders of their community—the Metlakatla Indian Community (MIC)—and a well-known carver, artist, Sm'algyax language speaker, culture bearer, and heredity chief.

Museum Trustee Maj. Max Fleischmann acquired Niishluut's *amhalaayt* from dodgy Alaska-based art dealer W.C. Waters. In 1939, Fleischmann donated it to the Museum, where its specific cultural origins remained obscure. In 1970, researcher Bill Holm visited the Museum, accurately identified it as likely Ts'msyen, photographed it, and returned to Washington state. Decades passed. Although the majority of Niishluut's carvings—and all his regalia—were taken from Metlakatla, Niishluut's family persisted in stewarding his legacy and singing his warrior song. His great-granddaughter Myranell became a cedar weaver and genealogist.

In 2005 at the University of Washington, Dr. Dangeli saw Holm's photo of the *amhalaayt* held at SBMNH. She recognized it from historic photos of Niishluut in his regalia. Dangeli and Myranell Bergtold placed it on their list of Niishluut's items to rematriate. (They use the word rematriate to foreground their values as matrilineal people with matriarchal governance.) With Niishluut's great-great grandnephew, Ts'msyen carver Clifton Guthrie, they worked diligently to restore Niishluut's legacy.

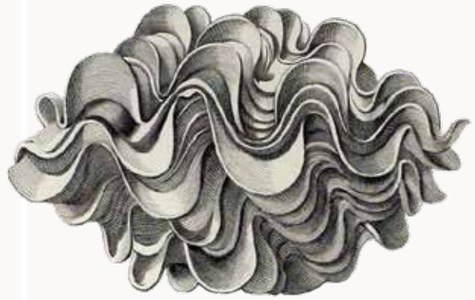
In 2025, Myranell received a fateful email. The MIC forwarded a message from SBMNH NAGPRA Officer Jonathan Malindine, the full-time staff member who carries out the Museum's responsibilities under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. Malindine's job is mostly returning ancestors. He also sends letters notifying communities of objects here that might qualify for return. Myranell and Dangeli were shocked and happy to hear about Niishluut's *amhalaayt* directly from the Museum. Dangeli then surprised Malindine by sharing two historic photographs of Niishluut wearing his amhalaayt. This evidence, along with Myranell's genealogical records, facilitated the transfer of ownership to Niishluut's descendants under NAGPRA's rarely-used lineal descent clause.

This August, the family and Dangeli came to the Museum. In the presence of local Chumash leaders and Museum staff, they breathed life back into Niishluut's *amhalaayt* through the abovementioned ceremony, with many acts of care and connection. Two flights later, Niishluut's *amhalaayt* journeyed from the Alaskan mainland to its island home, riding Guthrie's fishing boat and escorted by traditional canoes. The community celebrated the rematriation with days of song, dance, ceremony, and a feast. "It was a transformative and healing event for all who participated and witnessed," Dangeli attests.

Navajo documentary filmmaker and journalist Alana Minkler accompanied the family and is working on a film to further raise awareness. The family is working to raise funds to return home to Metlakatla many of Niishluut's carvings—including totem poles—from museums in the US and Europe.



Dangeli sews new ermines on the *amhalaayt* to "show it love and respect." Ceremonial belongings are lifeless in collections, she explains, but "live vibrant and healthy lives through our songs, dance, and ceremony, as well as the special care they are given by our people." Photo by Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie



NEW CURATOR OF HISTORICAL PRINTS

with Maximus Gallery Curator
Sarah Monks, Ph.D.



Top: Detail from facing page - Pietro Antonio Pazzi after Giuseppe Menabuoni, *Giant clams*, plate 93 from Niccolo Gualtieri, *Index Testarum Conchylorum… in Museo Nicolai Gualtieri [Catalog of the Shells preserved in Niccolo Gualtieri's Museum]* (1742, engraving)

Above: Monks with John J. Audubon, *Brown Pelican*

Your role here is almost synonymous with the curator who held it for many years—Linda Miller.

SM: Linda has established an excellent framework for the Maximus Gallery, and I'm very grateful that I don't need to build one from scratch. My job now is to continue that framework while allowing it to grow and evolve.

You started your museum career at the National Maritime Museum in London. What was your role there?

SM: I curated the art collections there: 65,000 works of art spread across a massive, multi-site campus. At that time, there weren't many curators, so it gave me a broad experience of how museums operate. One of the things I'm most proud of doing there is leading one of the earliest contemporary art initiatives within a history museum, featuring recordings by sound artist Bill Fontana.

You've curated and/or written about many forms of art. Do you feel limited by the tighter scope of natural history illustration prints?

SM: No! There's more to these prints than meets the eye. The images were made within a competitive arena—the natural sciences as they emerged—that could be pretty cutthroat. If you can't depict the thing accurately and someone else can, they win. I'm also interested in the commercial aspects of how artists were seeking to satisfy and shape the tastes of a certain marketplace.

For many years, you were a teacher inside a museum. How did that work?

SM: I was a professor at the University of East Anglia, in the UK, where my office was right in the heart of the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts. I taught art history and museum studies. There's very little in the way of architecture to divide up that collection, and the curators have mobile walls. There was a curatorial ethos of working with colleagues and students to put together shows based on connections in this huge collection. I had many fantastic graduate students during my decade there.

Giles King after Arnoldus van Haecken, *Still life of fish before a seascape*, plate 3 from *Wonders of the Deep* (1734, engraving, British Museum) © The Trustees of the British Museum. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0





What brought you to the Central Coast?

SM: After fifteen years of teaching, I decided I wanted fresh challenges. My husband is Californian, so it made sense for me to move here. I want to continue publishing my own research here for sure, as well as coordinating events that bring researchers together. This is a great time for researchers to engage with the natural history print collection. There are many young scholars now working on precisely the kind of images and histories that this collection deals with.

Is your thing for the sea going to continue here?

SM: I would love to do a show about the representation of the shell within natural history and how it impacts the arts. The shell is a key form in the transformation of aesthetics and design that occurs in the mid-eighteenth century with Rococo. Shells are so diverse, there's an entire universe of possibilities for artists.

Full interview at **sbnature.org/blog**



CELEBRATING OUR LEGACY DONORS

by Philanthropy Officer of Legacy Giving Andrea McFarling

A legacy is something passed down from one generation to the next. It may take the form of financial assets, property, or cherished possessions. A legacy could be a lasting impact based on one's values, lessons, or memories that shape lives long after we are gone. For many Members of the Mission Creek Legacy Society (MCLS), it is both.

At the recent MCLS Annual Luncheon at the Sea Center, we celebrated individuals whose legacy commitments reflect a deep belief in the Museum's vision: connecting people to nature for the benefit of both. Their planned gifts ensure that future generations will continue to discover, learn, and be inspired through the Museum and Sea Center.

The MCLS recognizes donors who have informed us of their plans to include the Museum in their estate. We are pleased to welcome our newest Members:



2026 NEW MCLS MEMBERS

Mercy Bermudez-Robertson & Michael Robertson
Linda & Peter Beuret
Linda England
Liz Flint
Sharon Kayser
Alan Staehle
Karen & David Telleen-Lawton
Laura & Geof Wyatt

We also extend special recognition to Thomas Dimock and Nancy Mann, who made additional legacy commitments to the Museum during the past year, further strengthening their support of our mission.

In addition, we honor and remember MCLS Members and friends whom we lost this past year: Rose Ann & Fred Gaeden, Michael Glassow, Alice Henry, Steve Hicks, Thomas Rohlen, Joan Seaver Kurze, and Shari Smith & David Heidelberger. Their generosity and commitment continue to benefit the Museum and the community they cared so deeply about.

Your legacy can be as enduring as the natural and cultural history we preserve. To learn more about creating a legacy at the Museum, please contact me at amcfarling@sbnature2.org or 805-682-4711 ext. 179.

Top: Philanthropy Officer of Legacy Giving Andrea McFarling and President / CEO Luke J. Swetland present a membership certificate to new MCLS Member and Museum Trustee David Telleen-Lawton and his wife Karen.

Center: New Member Sharon Kayser addresses the society. Photos by Baron Spafford

Learn more at **sbnature.org/legacygiving**



Left: Curator of Mammalogy Ally Coconis, Ph.D., with Channel Islands Fox specimens. Below: Fossil Preparator Ben Rotenberg, M.A., with dugong vertebra from Santa Rosa Island

GO BEHIND THE SCENES WITH THE LEADERSHIP CIRCLES OF GIVING

by Philanthropy Officer of Leadership Circles Diane Devine

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MUSEUM LIFE





















1. Guests enjoy a taste from Fennell Family Wine Co. at Santa Barbara Wine Festival©.
2. Genny Anderson shares a special moment with a Blue Morpho at a Sprague Butterfly Pavilion birthday celebration.
3. Seasonal Leafwing *(Zaretis ellops)* in *Butterflies Alive!* Photo by Gary Robinson
4. Children at the Members' Party spread their wings along a banner shared by Eyes in the Sky, a program of the Santa Barbara Audubon Society.
5. Astronomy Programs Manager Ila Jade Komasa provides live interpretation during a solar eclipse watch party in Fleischmann Auditorium.
6. Relatives of past Curator Charles D. Woodhouse, Jr., visited his Blue Whale and reminisced with Curators of Vertebrate Zoology Paul Collins and Krista Fahy.
7. Kenan Chan and Reuven Bank of Sunflower Star Laboratory show the Sea Center's guests at World Oceans Day how the endangered species contributes to ecosystems.
8. Guests in Intertidal Wonders connect with a sea anemone during World Oceans Day.
9. Wildlife biologist Rae Wynn-Grant, Ph.D., shares her new book *You Belong in the Wild* at Storytime in the Backyard.
10. World Oceans Day organizers Sea Center Programs Manager Ally Aplin and Programs Coordinator Audrey Engelsgjerd aren't afraid of Toothy the Shark!
11. Historic study skins of Ethiopian birds in the Blanchard Collection, Department of Vertebrate Zoology

Photos 1,2, and 4 by Baron Spafford



SANTA BARBARA MUSEUM of NATURAL HISTORY

2559 Puesta del Sol
Santa Barbara, CA 93105

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For information about how to support the Museum, contact Director of Philanthropy Caroline Baker at 805-682-4711 ext. 109 or development@sbnature2.org.

Cover photo: Paul Collins at Sandy Point on Santa Rosa Island by John Storrer

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SANTA BARBARA MUSEUM of NATURAL HISTORY

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