2025 VOL. 11, NO. 1

SBnature Journal

SANTA BARBARA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

BUTTERFLY PAPARAZZO

TEACHING LOVE OF THE OCEAN

FROM STARGAZING TO SCIENCE

CHUMASH BASKETRY

BE SMART, MAKE MISTAKES

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CONTENTS

SANTA BARBARA MUSEUM of NATURAL HISTORY
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Photo by Stacey Byers - Captured Spirit Photography

A NOTE FROM LUKE

President & CEO

Watching these sad changes unfold leaves all of us here at the Museum and Sea Center with a renewed resolve to continue to be an independent and trusted voice for science.

In the last weeks I have been asked by many friends of the Museum and Sea Center if we are being impacted by the changes coming out of the current administration. I am grimly relieved to share that we have not been directly impacted yet.

The Museum and Sea Center do not rely on any direct funding from the federal, state, or local governments. We do not have any current grants from those agencies that are being slashed, although we have benefitted from grants from those agencies in the past to undertake significant projects here at the Museum and Sea Center.

Tragically, what we are seeing is staffing and funding being reduced for our federal partners—the National Park Service, NOAA, and others. Those cuts will immediately weaken our ability to work together with them to advance our common goals of celebrating, better understanding, and protecting our local environment.

Watching these sad changes unfold leaves all of us here at the Museum and Sea Center with a renewed resolve to continue to be an independent and trusted voice for science, for the environment, and for our wonderful and fragile Central Coast.

More change and chaos is no doubt coming, but remember it is your support that sustains our independence and our ability to carry on every day.

Please visit the Museum and Sea Center and find the respite and renewal that will enable us all to continue forward together, with courage and with hope.

Thank you,

Luke J. Swetland
President & CEO

Top: Hoffman and Flint in the new lab

Above left: Using an air scribe to remove matrix surrounding part of a mid-Miocene whale

Circle: Gently blowing away dust with a bath toy to expose ancient bivalves

Learn more about the Dibblee Geology Center at **sbnature.org/EarthScience**.

PREPARE TO BE AMAZED: NEW FOSSIL PREP LAB

with Dibblee Curator of Earth Science Jonathan Hoffman, Ph.D., and Curatorial Assistant Liz Flint, J.D.

Before the new lab: It was challenging to prep fossils in a shared space.

What's a prep lab?

LF: It's where we take the dirt off the fossils. Right now, I'm removing rock—a.k.a. matrix—from an invertebrate specimen. It's very slow, careful work to reveal the fossil embedded in the rock without causing damage. Although this specimen isn't on display, preparing it will give researchers access to the features they want to study.

What's new about this space?

JH: We share a lab with the Department of Vertebrate Zoology. It turns out, my paleontology volunteers don't want to smell dead animals that are being preserved. And the curatorial assistant preparing vertebrate specimens doesn't like working in a dusty place where it's difficult to keep pulverized fossil matrix out of her taxidermy, either. The new fossil prep lab is a distinct enclosed space.

LF: It's the prep lab our specimens deserve: not only separate, but well-equipped. We have air scribes, which are like tiny jackhammers for removing rock, an air scrubber to capture dirt, manual tools for working by hand—things like dental picks and brushes—and adhesives and consolidants to bind fragmented specimens.

JH: Critically, since this process generates a lot of dust, we have equipment and PPE protocols to prevent inhalation. Best of all, we've got excellent microscopes now. I love them so much.

Do you really need a microscope to work on a mammoth skull?

JH: There's been a movement afoot to encourage people to do all their fossil prep under magnification, even if you're working on big stuff. You want to see how the needle of your tool is affecting the matrix, and have a good sense of how close you're getting to the fossil so you don't accidentally gouge it. With the lighting setup on these new microscopes, you can have different modes to get angled lighting. It's so cool, and much more convenient than the old fiberoptic boxes with lights on wires that never stay where you need them.

What happens to the matrix?

JH: We aren't automatically discarding it. A big acknowledgment in fossil prep over the years has been, hey, the matrix is really important. Sometimes we keep it on the specimen in a particular spot—to provide support or to allow it to be studied in place in the future. Often we're jarring the matrix that is removed, and cataloging that with the specimen. Then in 20 years, if someone says, "I'd like to go through that looking for pollen," cool, we've got it! So we're exposing the fossils while conserving data.

Top: Hosting the student art contest at my first World Oceans Day
Middle: My colleague Betsy Mooney and guests on the Wet Deck
Bottom: Gazing into a Swell Shark's world

TEACHING LOVE OF THE OCEAN

by School & Community Programs Specialist Kennedy Rivera

Education at the Sea Center brings out a childlike wonder and curiosity that is the basis of authentic understanding and respect for the world around us. School programs are not the only form of education at the Sea Center. In fact, much of the education we provide comes from our everyday interactions at exhibits.

As they walk through the doors of the Sea Center, children and adults alike stare at the Gray Whales suspended from the ceiling and pose with the Polar Bear. Within seconds, they're welcomed into dialogue about these wonders by our interpretive exhibit volunteers. These volunteers are the backbone of the Sea Center, providing education through the conversations they have with our guests. Interpretive talks, animal feeding presentations, and storytime readings offer education that's engaging and inspiring, offering everyone the magic and science of the Santa Barbara Channel. Interpretive programs are one of my personal favorite educational opportunities we offer here at the Sea Center. Seeing people light up when the octopus comes out to feed, or hearing children react to the books during storytime shows just how meaningful these experiences are for people.

It was a pleasure to run this school group's field trip. Photo by the author

Swift Trapania nudibranch on the Wet Deck. Photo by the author

Of course, school field trips are among the most impactful ways we educate. One teacher from Montecito Union School shared that students "look forward to this trip every year! It is such a dynamic program and even though all of my students had been there before they all learned something new." We are inspiring the next generation of environmental stewards. "We teach students how to apply scientific skills to their ordinary beach trips," adds Sea Center Naturalist Hannah Keaton. "Students who don't have easy access to ocean activities get to explore the water with their peers and form a deeper connection with our local environment."

Our educational offerings are magnified during free events such as Underwater Parks Day. These festivals provide exciting activities and conversations with local community partners free of charge. At the most recent Underwater Parks Day on January 18, eleven community partners and nearly 1,800 guests joined us to celebrate marine protected areas.

Throughout the day, so many interactions started with the question "Have you been here before?" and the answer "It's our first time!" Children squealed with excitement as they "shook hands" with a sticky anemone, and adults laughed as they fulfilled childhood fantasies of touching a shark. Free days like these allow the Sea Center to reach so many people, sharing the importance of our collective marine stewardship.

Whether it's through special events, school programs, or day-to-day interactions, the Sea Center's educational activities foster an authentic connection to the world around us. We are so grateful for Members like you who make it possible. We hope to "sea" you soon at the Sea Center.

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

Above: Coyote Clay loaded up for adventure

Right: Campers at the Museum and Sea Center

Photos by Lily Efstratis and Clay Sipiora

BE SMART, MAKE MISTAKES

with Nature Adventures Manager Clay Sipiora, M.S.

What do you do here, and how and why do you do it?

CS: In our camps and classes, we get kids outside and we celebrate science, using all the resources of the Museum and Sea Center. We teach them how to read a diorama. We show them how to find information in books, and I bring in speakers so they can meet experts. We stimulate questions and give guidance about where to find real answers. When kids are curious, they ask questions, they search for answers, and they can effect their own change. I want kids in Nature Adventures to leave with more questions about the world than they walked in with. Why? For the sustainable future of life on the planet.

Specimens from the Museum's extensive collections are great teaching aids for campers (like this Lined Shore Crab).

You worked at Wilderness Youth Project (WYP), another local nonprofit we love.

CS: At WYP I was support staff. I crafted, I explored, I played. WYP and Nature Adventures are two sides of the same coin. WYP is more based in social-emotional experiences of nature and explores different locations. We're science-based and in two specific locations. The overlap is caring for the land, caring for children, and experiencing nature to its fullest!

What are you seeing in kids these days?

CS: I'm seeing kids' anxiety going up. A lot of kids come in extremely afraid of making mistakes, getting dirty, and the unknown. We need to let them try things, fail, and make that a positive experience. Science is trial and error. It's also the artistic method. We try something, we make a mistake, we learn from the mistake, we revise, we try it again.

The Backyard is a great area to practice making mistakes.

CS: Sure. In our changing perception of childhood, we're increasingly afraid of minor injuries, but it's important for kids to explore nature in a space like the Backyard that allows them to take risks and challenge themselves. I grew up with a big, wooded backyard where I got ticks and poison ivy and boo-boos, but overall, I was safe.

That exposure also develops respect for nature.

CS: Absolutely. That's what I envision Nature Adventures as holistically: we're learning respect. Socially, for each other. We're also learning respect for the place: the creek and the water there, the slippery rocks, the frogs and the tadpoles, the plants all around us. Respect for the institution and our work. When kids meet people who work in exhibits, they develop more respect for the exhibits and staff. And it's inspiring to them to think this is a job they could do.

It takes a village to teach all these lessons in such a fun way.

CS: While I'm the manager of this program, it's only possible because of the instructors. They are the heart and they bring the ideas to the kids. Our students go up to 12 years old, but we have 13–17-year-old volunteers, and mostly young adults as instructors. I want to help them develop their own voices to advocate for the environment.

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

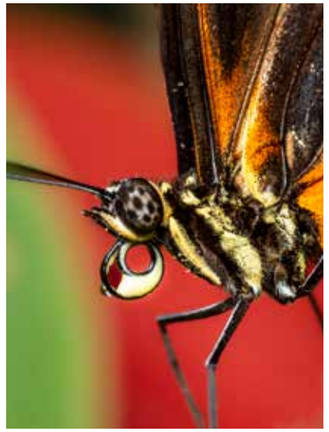
A Tiger Longwing settles down for the evening.

BUTTERFLY PAPARAZZO: A PHOTO ESSAY

by Curator Emeritus of Facilities Gary Robinson

Banded Orange Butterfly

I have volunteered in the Sprague Butterfly Pavilion every year since retiring from the Museum in 2018. I mostly operate the interior entry door, letting visitors into the exhibition space. Occasionally, a butterfly wanders into the entry vestibule and I net it and return it to the pavilion. In theory, I volunteer because I have free time and a science education, so I am equipped to support the Museum's educational mission. But to be frank, the real reason I do this is because I'm selfish.



Pollen Cocktail shows a Tiger Longwing in a moment that raised questions for me. Was this butterfly eating pollen, or just caught with some on its nectar-sucking proboscis? According to recent research, butterflies in this genus—*Heliconius*—may be unique in their consumption of pollen.

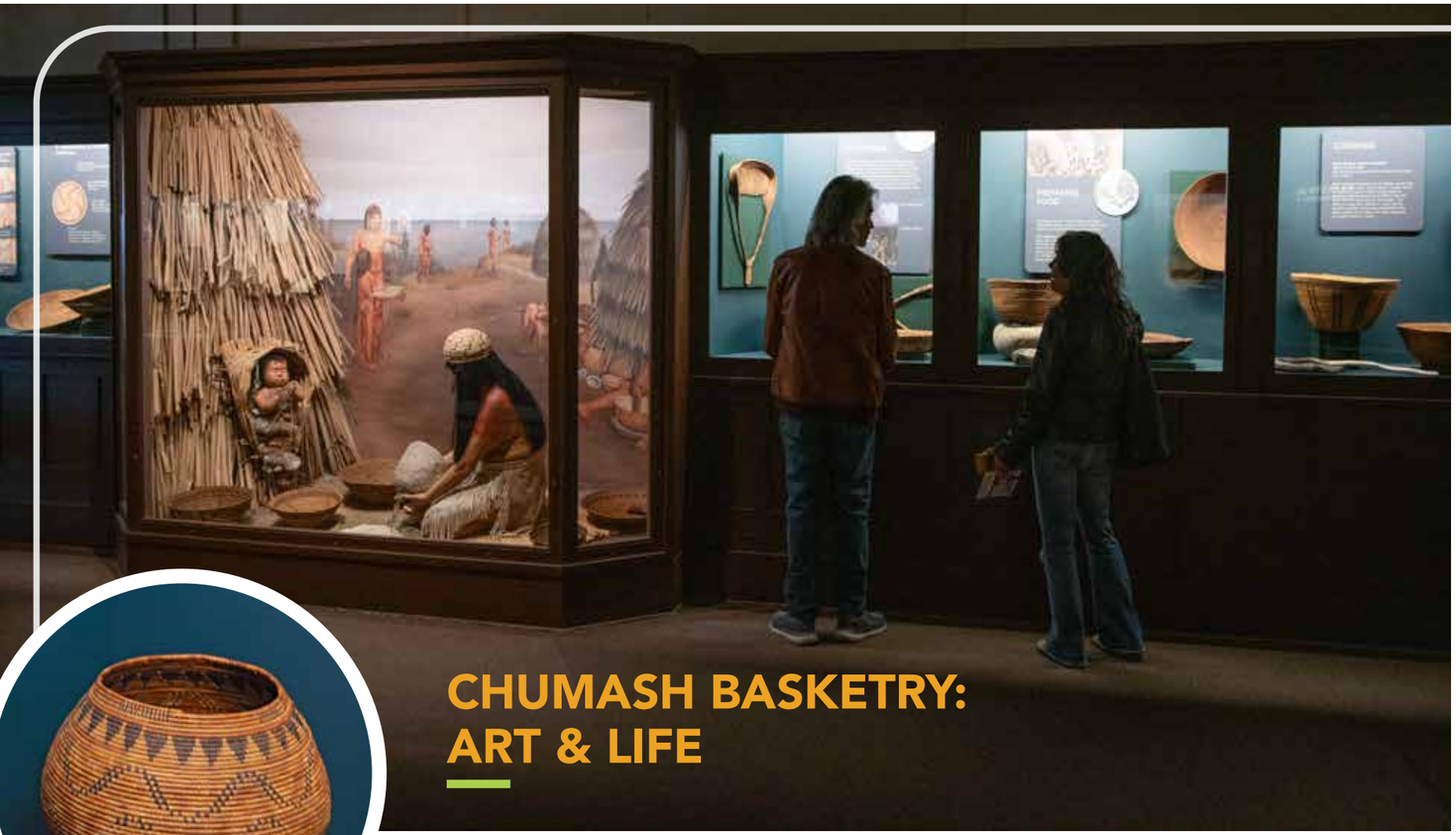
I crave access to the living butterflies to feed my addiction to photography. "Addict" may be too strong a word. Enthusiast, devotee, admirer, fanatic, maniac, nut—these words might better describe my condition. I love the whole photographic process and I have kinda anointed myself as associate documentarian of the butterflies. If you share my mania, look out for opportunities the Museum is offering to appease your photographic cravings on June 10, July 29, and August 19.

Undaunted by paparazzi, the butterflies engage in their natural behaviors like flying, feeding, and mating. I like to point out coupled butterflies, often overlooked by guests. If a visitor wishes to know more, the biologist in me unleashes the reproductive details. For the safety of agriculture and natural ecosystems, we are only permitted to have adult butterflies. The pavilion can't include host plants that would support the growth of caterpillars, but that doesn't stop our butterflies from laying beautiful eggs. Eggs (like those on the cover) can be identified to species based on size, color, and structure.

Topsy Turvy catches a mating pair of Sarah Longwing butterflies. Evidence of mating butterflies is a symmetric composition of two individuals, one female and one male, attached at the tips of their abdomens, with heads facing opposite directions. At the time, I didn't realize it was a mating pair, since one butterfly is on top of the leaf and the other is below.

I provide my butterfly images to the Museum for whatever purpose desired. Otherwise, I fear my photographic work would languish on my computer and eventually fall into the void of forgotten zeros and ones. Far better to share them. I hope they inspire you to look closer at the wonders of nature.

To make moments like these part of your summer routine, join us at **sbnature.org/volunteer**.



CHUMASH BASKETRY: ART & LIFE

Top: Guests in the new exhibit

Circle: Nineteenth-century "treasure basket"

A new exhibit at the Museum features the living art of Chumash basketry, a tradition with deep roots in the region. For thousands of years, baskets played essential roles in all aspects of traditional Chumash life. Modern Chumash weavers carry on those traditions, creating baskets entirely by hand and teaching their children. The new exhibit highlights the connections between those living traditions and the natural world, in the first comprehensive exhibition featuring the world's largest collection of Chumash baskets. The only previous major exhibition of Chumash basketry was held in 1964, at UCSB.

Chumash Basketry: Art & Life demonstrates the creative variety of uses and designs in traditional basketry, from technological marvels like the tightly woven baskets for storing water and cooking, to baskets as art. Select modern works by contemporary Chumash weavers, including Samantha Sandoval and Susanne Hammel-Sawyer, put the abundant historic examples in the context of continuing traditions, and the words of Chumash elders and weavers are interspersed throughout the exhibit, expressing the personal significance, joys, and challenges of basketry.

Hat by contemporary weaver Lisa Valencia

Nineteenth-century gambling trays

"Baskets are more than beautiful objects," says Curator Emeritus of Ethnography Jan Timbrook, Ph.D. "They offer a window into Native peoples' partnership with the natural world, their deep knowledge, their everyday life, beliefs, creativity, history, and resilience. It has been my extraordinary privilege to have cared for and learned from these uniquely special cultural icons for more than 50 years, and to be able to share this knowledge with the wider world."

Using specific native plants that are managed, harvested, and prepared for weaving, Chumash weavers promote conservation and respect for the environment. Guests at the Museum can read about the plants and learn to recognize them, deepening their sense of connection between landscape and culture. The ethnobotanical information in the new exhibit complements the Museum's permanent living exhibits in the Sukinanik'oy Garden of Chumash Plants.

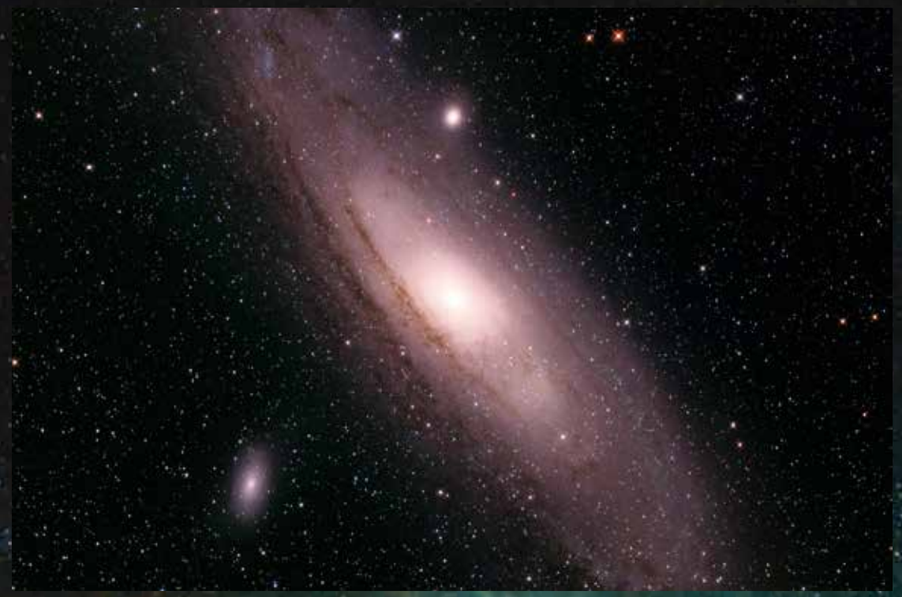
The new exhibit was organized by Dr. Timbrook, who has long worked in close collaboration with Native communities. The author of *Chumash Ethnobotany: Plant Knowledge Among the Chumash People of Southern California*, her expertise in anthropology, botany, and art has long served the Museum's work to educate and inspire.

On February 3, the Santa Barbara County Archaeological Society presented a free lecture on Chumash basketry by Timbrook at the Museum. The talk was attended by a large, appreciative audience that included several contemporary weavers and other history-makers whose contributions to knowledge revival were noted during the evening. During an extensive Q&A, Timbrook fielded questions on topics ranging from the nuts and bolts of weaving to modern museum practices. To view a recording of the talk, visit **sbnature.org/youtube.**

Chumash Basketry: Art & Life is included with Museum admission, and Members are always free. The new exhibit is scheduled to remain on view during a multi-year process of planning updates to the older exhibit spaces in that part of the Museum campus.

FROM STARGAZING TO SCIENCE

by Astronomy Programs Manager
Ila Jade Komasa
Astrophotography by the author



M31 Andromeda Galaxy

M42 Orion Nebula

Did you know that there are more stars in the universe than grains of sand on all of the beaches on Earth? Each one holds its own story. My own story begins with astronomy—my earliest memories are of gazing up in wonder at the night sky, dreaming of distant worlds. I pursued my love of space through college, diving headfirst into research. Now I work at the Museum and continue astrophysics research on the side, splitting my time between studying the mysteries of the universe and sharing that curiosity with others.

My current research focuses on the life cycles of stars. From their fiery birth in nebulae to their transformations into white dwarfs, neutron stars, or black holes, their processes illuminate the fundamental mechanics of the universe. It's humbling to know that the same elements created by stars are flowing through us. We're so small, but also part of something vast and interconnected. My goal as an educator is to help others see the beauty of this cosmos and our place in it. Astrophotography is another way I express this, blending art and science.

One of my favorite tasks is to create and present live planetarium shows, weaving stories with stunning visuals to immerse audiences in the wonders of space. Whether it's exploring black holes, tracing constellations, or traveling to distant exoplanets, I want every show to be an unforgettable journey. We also host public observing at our Palmer Observatory, giving guests a firsthand look at the night sky. Watching someone see Saturn's rings or the craters of the Moon for the first time is always magical—it reminds me why I fell in love with space in the first place.

NGC 2237 Rosette Nebula

I work with our School Programs team to design interactive lessons that align with educational standards and bring space science into the classroom. Driven by the belief that science belongs to everyone, we strive to spark curiosity in young learners and show them that science is both exciting and attainable. Seeking even more opportunities to talk about space and share current scientific breakthroughs, I launched Astronomy After Hours, a monthly event exclusively for Members. This program features special-topic planetarium shows that dive deep into the latest discoveries.

None of the Astronomy Programs we offer at the Museum would be possible without the dedication and talent of the entire team of astronomy staff and volunteers. Their hard work brings cosmic ideas to life, ensuring that our programs are impactful and accessible. I am endlessly grateful for the support to keep astronomy alive. I hope you'll celebrate the support you provide as a Member by joining me at our next Astronomy After Hours.

Background image: **NGC 2070** Tarantula Nebula

Ciircle: **NGC 6643** Spiral Galaxy

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

SANTA BARBARA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Presents

FLORA & FAUNA

THE 25TH ANNUAL MISSION CREEK GALA • 4/12/25

The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History's twenty-fifth annual Mission Creek Gala: Flora & Fauna took place April 12 at the Museum. Under the giant Coast Live Oak, 207 guests enjoyed a lovely creekside reception. Fleischmann Auditorium was transformed to a woodland scene, with the centerpiece—a majestic oak tree—rising from the heart of the room. The visionary design, brought to life by Joy Full Events, Inc. and Hogue & Co., transported attendees into a world that combined nature and elegance. Five spectacular tableaux, each sponsored with remarkable generosity, added the final amazing touches to the scene: Moss & Mushroom, Mountain Lion Den, Rattlesnake Canyon, Poppies & Lupine, and Citrus Orchard.

Museum Board Chair Salvatore Milazzo welcomed guests and set the stage for an entertaining evening. Speakers included two participants in the Quasars to Sea Stars work/study/intern program for teens. Dorian Scheim shared details about their time in the program and Sophia Copeland spoke passionately about why the Museum is so important. Museum President & CEO Luke J. Swetland made an appeal to the crowd and quickly raised $300,000.

The sold-out event was a huge success for the Museum raising $665,000 in total for the Museum's outstanding nature and science education programs. The Gala Honorary Committee consisted of Stacey Byers, Sheri Eckmann, Venesa Faciane, Lucy Firestone, Elisabeth Fowler, Heather Hambleton, Ken Kelly, Amanda Lee, Bobbie Kinnear, Karen Nicholson, and Susan Parker.

The annual Mission Creek Gala has raised more than eight million dollars for school programs since it began in 2000.

1- Marissa and Bryan Garber, Rob Hambleton, Tory Milazzo, Melissa McCann, Heather Hambleton, and Casey McCann enjoying the cocktail reception

2 - The auditorium décor was centered around the majestic oak tree in the middle of the room.

3 - Citrus Orchard tableau guests Brenda Reiter, Hank and Mari Mitchel, and Tom Cusack

4 - Nolen and Karen Nicholson hosted a Farmers & Merchants Bank table.

5 - Tom Craveiro, Liz Anderson, and host Keith Reichel at the Rattlesnake Canyon tableau

Photos by Clint Weisman and Baron Spafford

Top left: John Maximus, commercial artist, 1950

Peggy Maximus, interior designer, 1945

Left: Print collection room

Right: Maximus office

Drawn from Nature

THE MAXIMUS LEGACY

NEW EXHIBIT OPENS

by Gallery Curator Linda Miller

This spring we are celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the Maximus Gallery and antique natural history print collection. The exhibit, *Drawn from Nature, The Maximus Legacy* is now open.

The Maximus Wing, built in 1995, includes an intimate gallery, office space, and climate-controlled collection room. Thanks to the vision, dedication, and financial support of our patron, Peggy Maximus, our Museum is one of the few places in the world to have a gallery dedicated to showing rare examples of early scientific illustration: a combination of history, science, nature and art.

Hermit Thrush, *Birds of America* by John James Audubon, 1829

Gene with a nautilus purchased when he was 16 years old, to which he credits his passion for mollusks. Photo by Andrea McFarling

SCIENCE KNOWS NO DISTANCE

by Philanthropy Officer of Legacy Giving Andrea McFarling

Eugene Coan, Ph.D., hasn't stepped on our campus in a decade, yet his contributions to our Collections & Research Center and mission are profound. Gene lives in Florida now, but his involvement with the Museum is as strong as when he first came to UCSB in the early 1960s.

After moving to the Bay Area where he received his Ph.D. from Stanford, Gene dedicated himself to protecting, preserving, and restoring the environment through various roles at the Sierra Club. For 43 years, Gene worked in the Sierra Club's international program on topics like law of the seas, ocean dumping, strip-mining, marine conservation, offshore drilling, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, wildlife and endangered species, energy policy, and political organizing.

Meanwhile, Gene continued in science in his spare time. As a global expert on marine bivalves, he has specialized on their taxonomy and the history of malacology. As a SBMNH research associate, Gene has authored three books (shown below at left) with mentee of 50 years Curator Emeritus of Malacology Paul Valentich-Scott on bivalve seashells on the West Coast of North and South America, and the two named their latest bivalves in 2022.

When I recently visited Gene in Florida, he shared that his legacy gift to the Museum is designated to the study of the taxonomy of Bivalvia and the curation of the bivalve mollusk collection. We are most grateful to Gene and honored to continue this important work.

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

MAKE A DEEPER CONNECTION

by Philanthropy Officer of Leadership Circles Diane Devine

Ever wonder how you can expand your local impact as a supporter of science and nature?

Through our Leadership Circles of Giving membership program, you can help ensure the future of nature education, advocacy, and conservation in our region and beyond.

Leadership Circles Members support all our work at the Museum & Sea Center, including:

- Exhibitions that inspire like *Butterflies Alive!*, our revamped mineral exhibit, the Wet Deck, and *Fashion Fatale*. These exhibits spark curiosity and provide opportunities for visitors of all ages to explore the wonders of nature.
- Educational initiatives that reach thousands of students across California. We've welcomed schoolchildren from over eleven counties, and we continue to inspire young minds with hands-on learning experiences that make a lasting impact.
- Conservation efforts that help to protect our local marine ecosystems, like the Sea Center's participation in the restoration of endangered White Abalone.
- Technology and accessibility improvements like our upgraded planetarium with state-of-the-art projection and connectivity. We now offer clearer, more up-to-date views of the cosmos and seasonal shows for all to enjoy every day.
- A sense of community fostered by free programming like Star Parties, Underwater Parks Day, and other recurring events that create a welcoming environment for all to connect with science and nature.

As a Leadership Circles Member, you also enjoy a variety of other unique benefits, including invitations to exclusive events featuring our scientists and collections.

Learn more at **sbnature.org/leadership-circles**.

MUSEUM LIFE

1. Legacy Award recipient Paul Wieckowski with family and friends at the Museum.
2. One of the many perks of membership is access to the Museum's free family festivals every spring and winter.
3. The annual Legacy Award was presented to John Powell, Paul Wieckowski, Michael Glassow, and Peter Sawyer, pictured here with Luke Swetland at the annual Leadership Circles of Giving Dinner.
4. Guests at the Sea Center use scientific tools on the Wet Deck, with help from a volunteer.
5. Members of the Mission Creek Legacy Society enjoyed a thank you dinner in August.
6. The Museum's signature fundraiser is the annual Santa Barbara Wine + Food Festival®. Tickets are on sale now for the June 28 event.
7. Guests get up close with *Euoplocephalus* in Prehistoric Forest.
8. Craig Nelson was one of 15 featured artists at The Artist's Table event. All table guests receive a piece art from their featured artist.
9. The teen program Quasars to Sea Stars includes experiences like hiking in the Sierras. Pictured here are our teens taking a scenic break.
10. The first annual Mission Creek Beer Festival in November 2024 was a great time for all our guests. Tickets are on sale for the October 18, 2025 event.
11. The annual Leadership Circles of Giving dinner in January brought out many of the Museum's generous supporters, including Trustee Hiroko Benko, Gary Simpson, Lynn Kirst, Jill Nida, and Mary Jane Cooper.
12. Adult endangered White Abalone at the Sea Center. Photo by Juan Minera

Photos 1 and 3 by Clint Weisman. Photos 5, 6, 8, 10, and 11 by Baron Spafford

SANTA BARBARA MUSEUM of NATURAL HISTORY

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SBnature Journal is a publication of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. As a Member benefit, issues provide a look at the Museum's exhibits, collections, research, and events. The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History is a private, non-profit, charitable organization (tax ID no. 95-1643378). Our mission is to inspire a thirst for discovery and a passion for the natural world.

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

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Cover photo: Tiny eggs of a giant owl butterfly on the vein of a leaf. Photo by Gary Robinson