



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023



SANTA CRUZ MUSEUM
of natural history

connecting
people ^{with} nature
and science



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Established 1905
Independent Nonprofit since 2009

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends of the Museum,

We live in a dynamic and changing world. In 2023, our work has reflected the excitement of local scientific discoveries, storms, and environmental shifts through innovative programs that educate, inform, and inspire.

The Museum has been spotlighted this year as a trusted resource for a growing list of organizations. Scientific and governmental agencies collaborate with our team to interpret regional natural history for audiences ranging from local students to visitors from around the world. Our ongoing collections work benefits and inspires researchers, scientific illustrators, and educators, and is integrated into new exhibits. As we receive significant new acquisitions to conserve, our team will continue to enhance the accessibility of our collections.

Our multifaceted programs and immersive exhibitions bring together people of all ages and backgrounds to learn about this region's rich natural history, from first peoples to fire and fungi. I am grateful for the Museum's staff and their commitment to creating diverse opportunities for all people to deepen their understanding of science and nature.

There has never been a more important time for our mission: *connecting people with nature and science* to inspire *stewardship of the natural world*. I invite you to spend time with us, in nature and at the Museum.

Thank you for your support of this vital work.



Felicia B. Van Stolk
Executive Director



CONVERSATION THAT INSPIRES CONSERVATION

- Warming over land and the ocean
- Increased year-to-year variations in annual precipitation
- Increasing peak stream flows in all seasons
- Multi-year drought

Photo: Nate Mantua from NOAA at *Perils in Paradise* public program



"Nature is not a place to visit, it is home."

– Gary Snyder

EDUCATION



 **4,090**

K-12 students participated in FREE Museum field trips, classroom education, and online programs.

 **211**

School Programs this year had local students spending **5,776 hours** outdoors with us!



142

Children participated in our **Nature Explorers Camps**, more than 10% through our scholarship program.



164

Students attended our **17 After School Programs** provided at no cost to families.



"I loved it, the kids loved it, the parent volunteers loved it, so impressed! Exactly what I was looking for."

– Teacher, DeLaveaga Elementary



14,280
Total Program Participants

8,136
Community Connections

1,816
Volunteer Hours

162
Outreach Programs

22
New South County Programs

**PUBLIC
PROGRAMS**

7 Photo: Mike Grone from CA State Parks and researcher Alexii Sigona lead members on a tidepool walk.

EARTH STEWARDS PROGRAMS

Our Earth Stewards Project (ESP) provides high school students with opportunities for service learning in our community. At the same time, they build relationships with environmental and land management organizations that need volunteers, interns, and employees. Participating in these programs, and making a positive impact during their final years of primary education, supports these students' social and emotional health. It also allows them to consider career paths that benefit their communities and the environment.



Photo: ESP supporter Barbara Benish working with students.





COMMUNITY HAPPENS HERE

Throughout the year, we provided opportunities for people to come together, learn, and find community. From workshops offering skills to community gatherings celebrating nature, most of our programs are free -- and they are making an impact. The Museum stands out as a place for individuals and partner organizations to share a love of nature and be inspired to protect it. Our mushroom-themed programs helped over 800 people connect with the fantastic world of fungi. When extreme weather events impacted our region, we met the moment by quickly creating programs to support families affected by flooding, a day of information on storm resources, and educational programs on the historical context of these events and how each of us can consider our climate future.

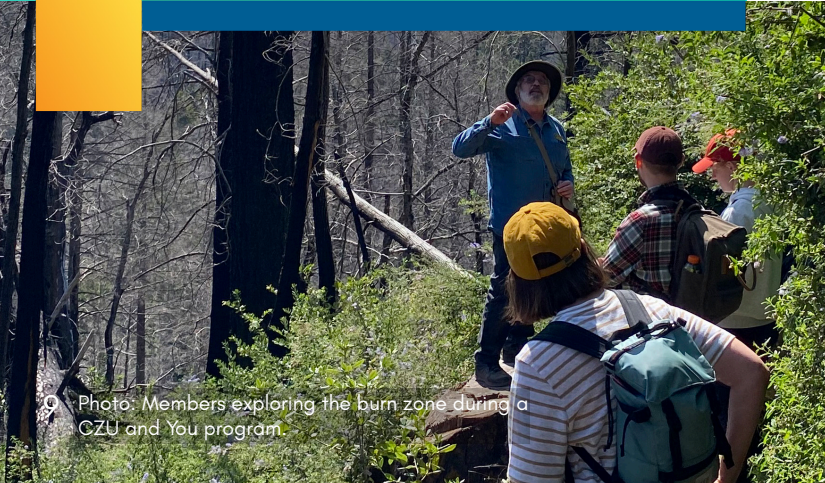


Photo: Members exploring the burn zone during a CZU and You program.



293



New Members

147,714



Website Page Views

16,581



Museum Visitors

2,420,786



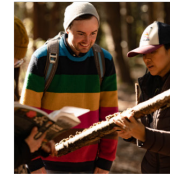
Social Media
Organic Reach

118



Years of Service

CONNECTING
AS WE GROW





Artwork by Megan Ghekow

More people visited the Museum than ever this year. Our celebrated *The Art of Nature* exhibit featured 45 artists this spring, the most we have ever been able to display. Each year this exhibit is different and inspiring. We were thrilled to showcase 3-D artwork, including origami flowers, clay mushrooms, and resin-printed nudibranchs. Our correlating public programs were highly attended and gave participants the opportunity to learn from the artists and to immerse themselves creatively.

EXHIBITS

"A wonderful experience. It is a tiny museum but it is so interesting for kids and adults. Environmental and biodiversity issues are addressed in an educational way."

- Google Review, May 2023

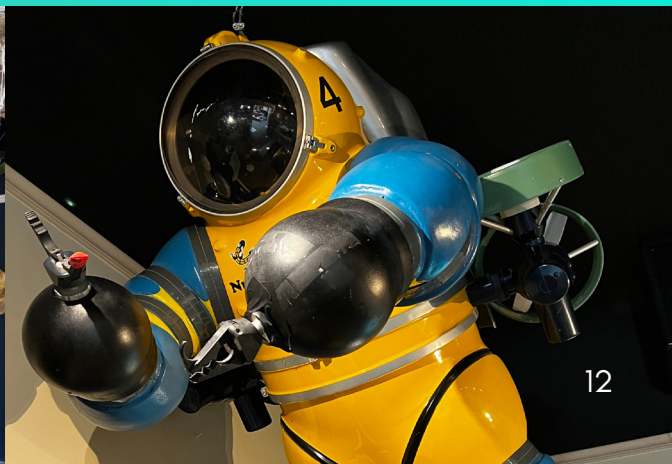


Artwork by Patricia Larenas



This year we produced two new original exhibits. *Maritime Mysteries and Monsters* featured collections items and collaboration with local ocean research organizations. With donor support, the tapertail ribbonfish cast was conserved and received a new case. Returning to public display, the ribbonfish made the exhibition a perfect backdrop for our annual Museum of the Macabre celebration. *The Inner Lives of Shells* showcased recent additions to our extensive seashell collections, highlighting shells native to our region and how a changing climate and human behavior impact the remarkable species that dwell within them.

INSPIRE UNDERSTANDING





The Museum team has been thrilled to support the discovery of a molar from a **Pacific mastodon** (*Mammut pacificus*) found and recovered from Rio Del Mar State Beach. The fossilized tooth is only the second recorded mastodon specimen from Santa Cruz County. A mastodon skull found in Aptos in 1980 (seen below) is already part of the Museum's permanent collections. In collaboration with California State Parks, we look forward to learning more about this ancient elephant-like creature and what it can tell us about our region's natural history. As research continues, we'll provide updates on the preservation and exhibition of this fascinating find with a story that captured the world's attention.

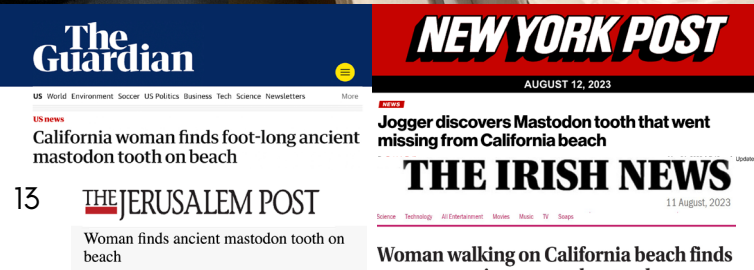


Photo: James Stanton and paleontology consultant, Wayne Thompson, with the mastodon skull they discovered and identified in 1980.

Amidst mastodon mania, there has been a lot happening in our collections. Former Museum staff member Sally Legakis, and spouse, Brian, volunteered to help digitize and rehouse 165 important fragile egg specimens from our founding collections. Wayne Thompson, a volunteer and previous staff member, signed on as Paleontology Collections Advisor. Archivist Debra Roussopolis became our first dedicated historic collections processing volunteer. The Museum received the American Institute for Conservation's Collections Assessment for Preservation, or CAP, to help improve collections care, making 2023 an exceptionally productive year.

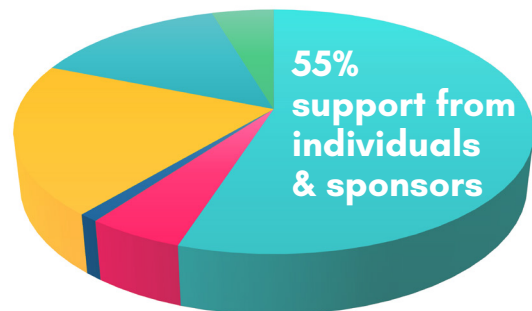
S. C. 113. San Lorenzo River, Santa Cruz, Cal.



STEWARDED HISTORY

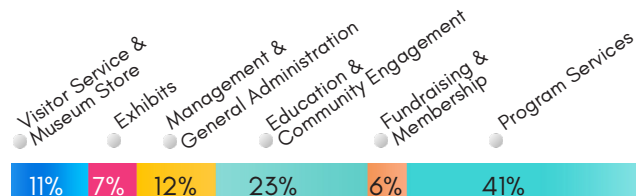
FINANCIAL HEALTH

Revenue



■ 20% earned income ■ 4% foundations ■ 14% released from restriction
■ 55% support from individual sponsors ■ 5% other ■ 1% government funds

Expenses



Board of Directors

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*retired after serving full term - we are grateful for their service

**new member

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inspire stewardship
of nature across generations.**



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