



SANTA CRUZ MUSEUM of natural history

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**MUSEUM HONORS FOUNDER AND PRESENTS 2022 NATURALIST AWARD
AT LAURA HECOX DAY CELEBRATION**

A DAY OF CELEBRATION, LOCAL HISTORY, AND FAMILY FUN

SANTA CRUZ, CA — JANUARY 19, 2022 — Continuing a tradition that began in 2017, the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History will celebrate the birthday of its founder, Santa Cruz naturalist and lightkeeper, Laura Hecox, on **Saturday, January 29**. The outdoor event will include Victorian-era activities, community partners, historians, and the 2022 Laura Hecox Naturalist award presentation.

"We are thrilled to be joined by Mayor Brunner and the City of Santa Cruz at this annual celebration of our founder. Laura Hecox Day is an excellent way to celebrate a long legacy of sharing natural history and to honor a naturalist in our community who embodies that value," says Felicia Van Stolk, Executive Director.

The Laura Hecox Naturalist Award recognizes a community member who exemplifies the Museum's mission to connect people with nature and science by helping others to appreciate, understand, and protect the wonders of the natural world. **The 2022 recipient is Mark Hylkema, Supervisor of the Cultural Resources Program and Tribal Liaison/Archeologist for the Santa Cruz District of California State Parks.** Through his work with State Parks, Mr. Hylkema has been devoted to preserving our region's cultural resources and worked tirelessly to save invaluable cultural resources in the wake of the CZU Lightning Complex Fires of 2020.

The award will be presented to Mr. Hylkema during an award ceremony at 11:00 AM.

The Laura Hecox Day celebration will occur outside the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural history in Tyrrell Park at 1305 E. Cliff Drive, Santa Cruz, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, January 29.

The event will include contributions from the Capitola Historical Museum, Natural Bridges State Beach, Pigeon Point Light Station, Santa Cruz Public Libraries, Wilder Ranch State Park, WiSE UCSC, and other community partners. Learn more at santacruzmuseum.org/1-29-laura-hecox-day

About Laura Hecox

Laura Hecox was the keeper of the original Santa Cruz lighthouse from 1883 to 1916.

Ms. Hecox was a self-educated naturalist who shared her passion for science, interest in the environment, and marine life by opening the doors of her home to the public, where she displayed her curated exhibits. In 1904 Ms. Hecox donated her collections to the City of Santa Cruz, which became the foundation of Santa Cruz's first public museum.

In 2017, the City first proclaimed January 29 *Laura Hecox Day* in honor of her birthday. [Learn more about Laura Hecox.](#)

About The Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History

The Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History is an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to connecting people with nature to inspire stewardship of the natural world. Founded on the collection of naturalist Laura Hecox, it is the oldest public museum in Santa Cruz.

The Museum features hands-on educational exhibits, indoor, outdoor, and online events for people of all ages to discover and learn about the world we live in and the natural history of this region. The life-size gray whale model outside the Museum, created in 1982, a cherished Santa Cruz landmark, is often observed with children climbing on and playing around it.

Learn more about the Museum and plan your visit at santacruzmuseum.org

We invite you to follow us on social media to see updates on current events, fun facts about nature, science, and local nature sightings.