



SANTA CRUZ MUSEUM of natural history

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MUSEUM HONORS FOUNDER AND 2023 LAURA HECOX NATURALIST WITH FREE COMMUNITY CELEBRATION *CONNECTING WITH NATURE, HISTORY, AND COMMUNITY*

SANTA CRUZ, CA — JANUARY 16, 2023 — The Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History will celebrate the birthday of its founder, Santa Cruz naturalist and lightkeeper, Laura Hecox, on Saturday, January 28. The event will include outdoor activities with local community partners, leaders, and historians, kicking off the day's events with the presentation of the Museum's 2023 Laura Hecox Naturalist award.

"Laura Hecox Day is a wonderful way to celebrate our founder and the Museum's legacy of sharing nature and science with the community. Honoring Susan Blake's exceptional ability to share our region's natural wonders with people from all walks of life is an excellent way to highlight the benefits of nature connections and science education to help foster environmental stewardship," says Felicia Van Stolk, the Museum's 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 2023 recipient is Susan Blake, California State Parks Interpreter at Año Nuevo and Coordinator of its Docent Program. After losing her home and long time position in Big Basin to the CZU Lightning Complex Fires of 2020, Ms. Blake continues to make a positive impact by educating and inspiring others through her work at Año Nuevo State Park, where continues sharing her skills and enthusiasm through training docents and engaging thousands of annual visitors.

The award will be presented to Ms. Blake during an award ceremony at 11:00 AM, immediately followed by a family friendly celebration in the park. California State Parks, Santa Cruz Public Libraries, and others will join the Museum to provide games, activities, historic and interpretive displays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. [Learn more about Laura Hecox Day 2023.](#) *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 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, January 28.*

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, and 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 and science to inspire stewardship of the natural world. Founded in 1905 with the collection of Santa Cruz lightkeeper and naturalist Laura Hecox, it is the oldest public museum in Santa Cruz County. The Museum features hands-on educational exhibits, indoor, outdoor, and online events for people of all ages to discover and learn about science and the natural history of this region. The life-size gray whale model outside the Museum, created in 1982, is a cherished Santa Cruz landmark, 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.