



## Exhibits Guiding Principles

The Exhibits at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History celebrate nature, interpret our ecological and social past, and shed light on the future. Our conversations begin with the Santa Barbara region and expand to the world beyond.

We're a regional museum that puts nature into a local and a global context.

We present local specimens and ecosystems and use them as a focal point for broader thinking and discussion. Examples: natural selection, evolution, biodiversity. While our local ecology is the preferred entry point for conversations, it is sometimes necessary to reference species and ecological systems from distant lands. In other words, regional natural history is our primary lens, but not an exclusive one.

Linkages to local natural history are highly desirable but there is flexibility when needed to make a point or to embellish a story. We curate and interpret local and world-wide specimens in our collections and are conducting research that is relevant on a global scale.

We are a place of **evidence-based** science and are not afraid to convey what science supports, even if considered controversial by some. We are a scientific organization but not a political one. We do not advocate for a particular policy, but we do convey the scientific facts behind topics that may be debated in the political area.

We believe that providing access to real things is a core strength and one that we celebrate and leverage. We have a role in helping our visitors understand the fundamental ecological concepts that drive life on earth, and that humans are inextricably linked to the natural world. From prehistoric societies to our modern world, humans have changed, and changed with the natural world. We have much to learn from our past. We have much to consider about our future.

We seek to inspire, engage, educate, and challenge our visitors to better understand their relationship with natural world. We do this by sharing (and showing) compelling stories and authentic artifacts in remarkable and unique ways. How we choose to communicate evidenced-based science is a critical aspect of our charge. We serve as a trusted, neutral resource for knowledge even when (or especially when) that knowledge may be provocative.

We present a balance between the beauty of nature and concern for the natural world; of data that may raise alarm, but also of hope and the resilience of natural systems.

We believe in the power of stories to engage our audience. Successful engagement leads to outcomes such as: "I never knew," "That's amazing," or "I want to work to make things better." Our exhibits can and should lead to a desire to know more and provide the tools to learn more. Pursuit of new knowledge can be immediate in the exhibit, but should be enduring as well.

Our museum is "Naturally Different." We're nestled in a natural landscape, not an urban center. Hawks, newts, frogs, bugs, and fish live here. Our campus is more than a collection of exhibits, it's a functioning ecosystem.

For this and other reasons, we seek to link the indoor and the outdoor experience in powerful and genuine ways. Our outdoor exhibits point inward, our indoor exhibits point outward to the Museum's grounds and beyond to your backyard, a nearby park or the wilderness. The museum experience we create is an active one where you can observe, but also participate in exploration, discovery and real science. We provide the opportunity to study nature here and enjoy it everywhere.

We are authentic, and the outdoor experience we provide is every bit as important to our mission as the indoor exhibits. Through our exhibits we convey that YOU have an inner scientist waiting to get out. YOU are capable of making observations that matter. Before Einstein was a scientist he was a patent clerk and before that he was "just a kid." Science is just as much within your reach as it was for E.O. Wilson, Jane Goodall, Neil deGrasse Tyson or anyone else with a passion for discovery.

On Technology: We are comfortable using the tools of our age to address the problems of our time. But technology is just one of the tools in our kit and should be used only when it presents the best solution.

When technology is used, great care will be expended to *integrate* it into the exhibits so that it "fits" and "feels" consistent with the feel of the built space.

Just as Santa Barbara is unique, our Museum is unique and we carry those differences with pride. We continually strive to stand out, and deliver exhibits and ideas in ways that others cannot, or have not yet thought to. We are ecologically, organizationally, and naturally different.