

What's new at the Havasu Museum of History?

By Michael Zogg
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When the Lake Havasu Museum of History finally re-opens on Saturday there will be multiple new exhibits and programs for people to take in.

One of the exhibits came directly from the work staff and volunteers have been doing in the collections department while the museum was closed. Executive Director Hannah Rangel said Dennis Miller, a volunteer at the museum, spent a lot of time going through and organizing all of the various maps that the museum has – which date back to 1908. The museum has a wide variety of maps in its collection, including hand-drawn maps, topographical maps, physical maps, road maps and maps showing the movements of native peoples that led them to settle along this stretch of the Colorado River.

“He felt these maps staying in those drawers for decades was not appropriate – we needed to do something,” Rangel said.

Rangel said Miller took the lead on putting together his first exhibit, and museum staff lent their expertise and helped him arrange the new exhibit on the museum floor that also incorporates some antique land surveying equipment.

The Museum of History has also been working closely with the Lake Havasu Gem and Mineral Society and Havasu Rocks to put together various geological displays featuring different rocks and minerals that can be found in the desert, as well as jewelry and art created with those materials. Rangel said the Gem and Mineral Society will also take the lead on several after school programs planned in the coming weeks including jewelry making, wire wrapping and rock hounding.

Live animals

Visitors will also see a brand new live animal exhibit, which is expected to be a lasting addition to the museum.

Rangel said she felt this is a good time to bring live desert animals to the museum, noting that there are no local zoos and the Bureau of Land Management has closed the animal area it used to operate. Rangel said she hopes the live animal exhibit will help the museum reach out to younger generations.

“The younger kids – 10 to 12 years old – will enjoy a little of the London Bridge and a little about (Havasu founder Robert) McCulloch, but it is not going to be something that really excites them to come back,” she said.

In addition to having the animals on display in the museum, Rangel said there will be weekly live animal programs every Saturday where they will bring out one of their animals to teach about different kinds of desert adaptations, proper handling, and which animals make appropriate pets.

“When you bring out an animal you just see people open up,” Rangel said. “It is also a really good approach to teach people who are afraid of certain animals about the importance of those animals in our environment. For example – tarantulas. Everybody hates a tarantula but they are very docile and are very non-threatening. They are actually very good for the environment – they are good for pest control – so it is actually really good to have tarantulas in your yard.”

Charlsey Frahm, the museum’s new Director of Collections, credited her past experiences with live animal programs at museums in Las Vegas for helping her get over her fear of snakes.

Rangel said the museum currently has a uromastyx (a type of lizard), a baby Kenyan sand boa, and a baby red legged tarantula.

“Originally I wanted to get some Mojave Desert animals, but they are not available for purchase,” she said.

Rangel said the museum has also partnered with animal control, which has agreed to contact the museum and give them the opportunity to take exotic animals that cannot be released into the wild. She said currently such animals are generally euthanized.



Havasu Museum of History to reopen in April after renovations



Lake Havasu Museum of History primed for grand re-opening

Michael Zogg

Reporter