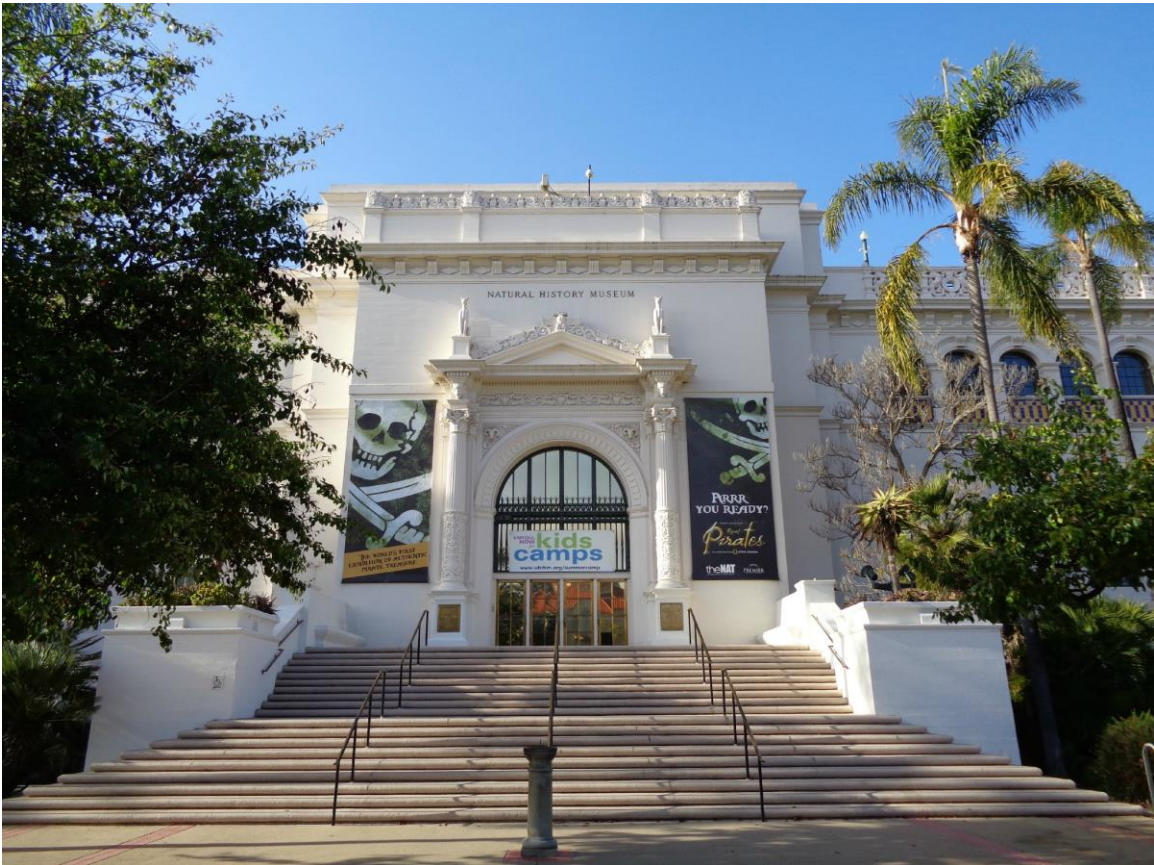


San Diego Natural History Museum Volunteer Introduction



Mission

To interpret the natural world through research, education, and exhibits;
to promote understanding of the evolution and diversity of southern California
and the peninsula of Baja California;
to inspire in all people respect for the environment.

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SAN DIEGO NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in volunteering at the San Diego Natural History Museum. We are proud of our over 700 volunteers who contribute over 59,000 hours annually to further the mission of our museum. We have a vibrant and diverse volunteer program and know that you will want to become part of the team.

Introduction to the Museum

Our Mission

To interpret the natural world through research, education, and exhibits; to promote understanding of the evolution and diversity of southern California and the peninsula of Baja California; to inspire in all people respect for the environment.

Significance of San Diego County as a Biodiversity Hotspot

San Diego County is considered a hotspot of biological diversity and contains more threatened and endangered species than any other county in the continental United States. The county supports over 380 rare and sensitive species, nearly 40 of which are listed as endangered or threatened, and a unique assemblage of vegetation communities, including: coastal sage scrub, chaparral, riparian habitats, oak woodlands, vernal pools, grasslands, and coastal salt marshes. The principal causes of species endangerment in San Diego, as elsewhere in California, are the direct destruction and fragmentation of habitat.

Our Niches

- Collections-based natural science research and education.
- Timely environmental information relating natural history to present-day environmental and cultural issues.
- “Sense of Place” education programs.
- Comprehensive teacher training and science curriculum development for schools.
- Dynamic national and international natural history exhibitions.
- Science literacy for the broad range of our constituents.
- Diverse offerings of family educational opportunities.
- Accessible regional environmental resource with in-depth collections, computerized central database, natural science library, and diverse natural history research interests.
- Biodiversity research in our region of international significance.
- Creative collaborations with the business community, as well as other natural history, educational, and environmental organizations.

Brief History of the Museum

- 1869 First formal meeting of people interested in natural history was held.
- 1874 San Diego Society of Natural History was established.
- 1875 The Society established the Volunteer County Weather Service, the first weather service in the county.
- 1885 Society petitioned the city of San Diego to protect the Torrey Pines area.
- 1912 First museum was opened on Sixth Avenue.

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1917 Museum moved to Balboa Park, residing in the Nevada building.

1921 Society started having nature walks.

1927 The Society initiated a move to help create the Borrego Desert Park.

1933 Construction began on original building at the present site (funded by Miss Ellen Browning Scripps with the assistance of public subscriptions).

1943 The Museum was closed and taken over by the US Navy as a hospital annex during WWII.

1949 The Museum reopened.

1957 The Foucault Pendulum was donated by J.W. Sefton.

1960 The Klauber Rattlesnake Collection, the largest in the world, was donated to the Museum.

1967 The Covey began—established as a fundraising organization for Museum. Started what is now the Docent program.

1973 The Florida Canyoneer program was formed.

1974 The Museum first became fully accredited by the American Association of Museums. The Docents became an independent volunteer program.

1978 The C4U nature guides were organized as an independent volunteer program.

1991 Dr Michael W. Hager became the Museum's Executive Director.

1992 Strategic Planning Process began for the 1992–2002 plan, included defining mission and expanding Museum building.

1996 The Biodiversity Research Center of the Californias was established. Strategic plan for 2002–2012 begun.

1999 The Society celebrates its 125th anniversary.

2001 Grand opening of expanded Museum.

2005 Museum Whalers program was formed.

2005 Museum leadership expanded to include Chief Operating Officer and Institutional Advancement to insure Museum's financial future.

2006 *Fossil Mysteries* opens, the Museum's first permanent exhibition

2007 The highly successful exhibition, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, puts the Museum on the international map.

2010 Opening of *All That Glitters: The Splendor and Science of Gems and Minerals*. A two-year exhibition features exquisite jewelry and gems and minerals of the San Diego region.

2015 Opening of *Coast to Cactus in Southern California*, permanent exhibition.



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The Biodiversity Research Center of the Californias

Introduction

The San Diego Society of Natural History has engaged in scientific field work and systematics research since 1874. The extensive scientific collections (7.3 million specimens) of the **Biodiversity Research Center of the Californias** (BRCC) represent a permanent record of our natural heritage. They contain materials that support the research of many scientific disciplines, including those working to define and preserve biodiversity and monitor global change.

Scientific collections are a continuing investment by society in the effort to understand the natural world. In the face of disappearing habitats, species extinctions, and the destruction of geological and paleontological sites, the specimens in our collections have become nonrenewable resources.

Purpose of the BRCC

- To understand and interpret--through research and collecting--the uniqueness of the biodiversity of Southern California and the peninsula of Baja California while maintaining a global scientific perspective.
- To serve as the leading center for the scientific study of natural history, biological diversity, and evolution within our region;
- To collect and preserve scientific specimens for research and as a continuous record of the changing world for future generations;
- To foster cooperative efforts in natural history research throughout our region;
- To provide dynamic leadership in natural history research through publications, expeditions, lectures, and field studies.

Birds and Mammals

Beginning with the collection of pioneer mammalogist Frank Stephens, acquired in 1910, the **Birds & Mammals Department** holdings have grown into a major resource on bird and mammal species of western North America, including Baja California. Its taxonomic coverage includes 90% of the world's bird families and 58% of its mammal families, a coverage extended by the museum's status as a repository for specimens from the San Diego Zoo.



In 1997, the department began work on the Bird Atlas of San Diego County, a six-year project to survey the county in detail both for breeding and non-breeding birds. This project concluded in 2004 with the publication of the *San Diego County Bird Atlas* written by Philip Unitt, the Curator. Philip Unitt is a specialist in subspecies identification of California birds, author of *The Birds of San Diego County*, and editor of *Western Birds*, the regional journal of ornithology for western North America.

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The department also embarked on a re-survey of San Jacinto, retracing the steps of scientists from University of California who completed a survey of the mountain in 1908. This project will enable the department to make a detailed comparison of how the region's wildlife has changed over a century. Such a comparison, covering all species of vertebrates, will reveal what species may be of conservation concern on this island of montane forest, isolated by desert and urbanization.

The Department of Birds and Mammals is under the care of Curator Philip Unitt, a specialist in subspecies identification of California birds, author of *The Birds of San Diego County*, and editor of *Western Birds*, the regional journal of ornithology for western North America.

Botany

The herbarium in the **Botany Department** houses a research collection of 250,000 specimens of native and naturalized plants of the southwestern United States (especially southern California) and northwestern Mexico (especially Baja California). The collection consists primarily of vascular plants, with significant holdings of marine algae, mostly of the eastern North Pacific.



There are about 400 type specimens. The type specimen database is searchable online.

The San Diego County Plant Atlas is an ongoing project that is managed by the SDNHM Botany Department. The Plant Atlas has been undertaken in cooperation with educational institutions, local conservation groups, and agencies that represent both the public and private sector. The goal is to provide the public a permanent record of the plant species present in the County by preserving physical samples of plants, along with information about their current distribution. The Plant Atlas project aims to become the comprehensive source of scientific information documenting the floristic diversity of the county, and provides a valuable resource for scientific research and education.

The curatorship of the Botany Department is endowed as the **Mary and Dallas Clark Chair of Botany**. The collection is in the care of Jon P. Rebman, Ph.D., Curator, who is a specialist in the systematics of the Cactaceae (particularly the genus *Opuntia*) and in the floristics of the peninsula of Baja California, Mexico.

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Entomology

The **Entomology** collection holds over 900,000 labeled specimens, primarily of insects and arachnids, with small holdings of various other terrestrial invertebrate specimens. The collection is especially strong in Coleoptera (Beetles) and Lepidoptera (Butterflies/Moths), with smaller but important holdings of Diptera (Flies) and Neuroptera (Lacewings). Material is representative of San Diego County and southern California, with additional specimens from the southwestern United States.



Of further interest are the collections from northwestern Mexico, primarily Baja California, that have been added over much of the past 60 years. A smaller specialized collection containing insects of forensic importance is also available.

The Entomology Department is supported in part by the John A. Comstock Entomology Fund. The department is under the care of Michael A. Wall, Ph.D., Curator. Dr. Wall is also Director of the BRCC. Dr. Wall's research focuses on two main areas: 1) the taxonomy and systematics of Heteroptera (e.g., stink bugs, plant bugs, assassin bugs, etc.) and 2) the natural history and ecology of insect-plant interactions (e.g., pollination, seed dispersal). Currently, he is taking part in a National Science Foundation Planetary Biodiversity Inventory for Plant Bugs.

Herpetology

The Department of Herpetology focuses on biodiversity research and is home to the Amphibian and Reptile Atlas of Peninsular California. The Atlas documents amphibians and reptiles from southern California and Baja California using both Museum collection data and observations from citizen scientists. This binational effort brings biodiversity information to your fingertips and grows with the help of its many participants. With the use of digital photography, citizen scientists can upload their observations and record which species live in their neighborhoods and parks, or on the region's islands and mountain tops. More detailed knowledge of our diversity will allow us to better understand and conserve species.



The Atlas also provides a gateway into the department's biodiversity databases and collections. The department houses more than 76,000 catalogued specimens dating back to the 1890s. Over 57% of the collection comes from California and Baja California, making it one of the largest resources for this area. The collection is well represented with specimens from throughout the southwest United States, northwest Mexico, and islands worldwide. All cataloged specimens are computer databased, and we are currently producing high resolution photographs of each specimen.

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The department is supported, in part, by the Laurence M. and Grace G. Klauber Endowment for Herpetology. The Curator is Bradford Hollingsworth, Ph.D.

Marine Invertebrates

The **Marine Invertebrates Department** holds approximately 5 million specimens of marine invertebrates, emphasizing mollusks and crustaceans of southern California, Baja California, and the eastern Pacific in general. Included are worldwide collections in selected mollusk and crustacean groups. The collection holds 134 primary and 700 secondary type specimens.

Recent growth in the collection includes vernal pool invertebrates, largely from California's Central Valley region, and the acquisition in 1988 of more than 80,000 lots of benthic marine invertebrates donated by the Marine Review Committee of the California Coastal Commission. This is the largest collection of southern California benthic marine invertebrates in existence.

The Marine Invertebrates Department is supported in part by the Herbert N. Lowe Conchology Collection Fund. The collection is presently under the care of Dr. Paisley Cato, Curator of Collections, with the assistance of departmental associates.



Paleontology

The **Department of Paleontology** houses collections of fossil vertebrates, invertebrates, and plants collected primarily from Mesozoic- through Cenozoic-aged sites in southern California and northern Baja California, Mexico. Especially significant are the department's collections of marine vertebrates.

Presently the collections include over 108,000 numbered species lots. The specimens have been recovered from a total of 2,890 recorded collecting localities, primarily from southern California and northern Baja California, Mexico. There are 578 primary and 537 secondary types. The collection is under the care of Tom Deméré, Ph.D., Curator of the Paleontology Department.

The Paleontology staff, through PaleoServices headed by Dr. Tom Deméré, has provided consulting services since 1981 for many San Diego County residential developers on Caltrans roadway construction projects, and City of San Diego pipeline replacement and construction projects.



Thousands of significant fossils have been salvaged from construction sites in San Diego, Orange, and Imperial counties. These fossils are now permanently housed at the Museum where many are, or have been, on public exhibit. Researchers from around the world have studied many of the salvaged fossils and numerous scientific papers have been published on these specimens.

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Many of these fossils are on display in *Fossil Mysteries*, the first permanent exhibition in 25 years. This exhibition invites visitors to dig into the rocks of our region from dinosaur times to the Ice Ages and explore mysteries of Earth and life. Discover what the fossils reveal about San Diego's fascinating past.

Research Library

The Museum maintains a complete natural history reference library, with greatest strengths in the historic research interests of the institution: botany, entomology, geology, herpetology, ornithology, mammalogy, marine invertebrates, and paleontology. The 56,000 volume collection includes both standard and obscure references, journals, and maps.

Photographic prints and slides, the Klauber Special Collections Library, works of art on natural history subjects, and an archive of materials related to the Museum's history of scientific exploration and research are also in the collection of the Research Library.

The library is supported in part by the Mildred Hughes Meeder Endowment and the W. W. Whitney Family Research Fund. The library is under the care of Library Director Margaret Dykens.

Margaret Dykens also served as curator for *Plant Portraits: The California Legacy of A.R. Valentien*. This exhibition displayed 80 stunning watercolor paintings of California plants painted in the early 1900s by Albert R. Valentien. In conjunction with the exhibition, Ms. Dykens authored a full-color book about the watercolors, the artist, the historical context of his work, and the importance of conservation of native California habitats. It was published in 2003 by the Irvine Museum in collaboration with the San Diego Natural History Museum.



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Education

The San Diego Natural History offers a wide range of educational opportunities for schools, families, and adults.

School Programs

TheNAT is dedicated to providing quality science education to students in our community. By focusing on Earth and Life Sciences, and adhering to California State Standards (and looking ahead to the Next Generation Science Standards, NGSS), our classes are led by Museum-trained Docents and professional educators who bring passion and enthusiasm for natural history to students throughout San Diego County. With many classes and programs to choose from, e.g., “Read a Rock,” “Incredible Insects,” and the overwhelmingly popular “Autumn Harvest,” our educators and Docents work with students and share the **actual specimens** that are thousands and sometimes even millions of years old!



Other Programs

Opportunities for all ages include volunteer-led Canyoneer nature walks, lectures and films, and whale-watching cruises in conjunction with Hornblower Cruises and Events. Family fun includes Ms. Frizzle, the wacky science teacher, on Sundays, Family Days, birthday parties, Nature and Me story time and spring, summer and winter camps.

Binational Education (PROBEA)

Proyecto Bio-regional de Educación Ambiental, A.C., (PROBEA – Spanish acronym for Bio-regional Environmental Education Project), a program of the San Diego Natural History Museum, is a bi-national collaboration between multidisciplinary partners seeking to inspire teachers and community workers through environmental education. PROBEA’s mission aims to strengthen communities through trainings and active involvement in the bioregion; build relationships between neighbors through collaborations; and share ideas and resources. Since 1993, PROBEA has designed and presented environmental education workshops with practical local applications. In addition to the participants learning the material presented, the workshops are also designed to develop their abilities to teach others. To date 4,720 teachers (who teach 205,000+ students) in Baja California, Baja California Sur, Sonora and Sinaloa, and 406 promotoras (community workers) have participated in PROBEA workshops. In addition, more than 22,000 individuals have participated in capacity building workshops and community events.

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Volunteer Program

Science Volunteers

The science volunteers assist our curators in Botany, Herpetology, Entomology, Birds & Mammals, Paleontology, Marine Invertebrates and our Research Library to manage and maintain the collections. A background in a particular area is recommended, though training may be available. Most departments are open weekdays from 8:30 AM–5 PM. No weekend or evening work is available.



Canyoneers

Canyoneers interpret natural history by leading free, guided nature walks for the public throughout San Diego County. These are primarily weekend hikes for the public, with some

school hikes for small groups of school children. Canyoneers help the public to appreciate the region's special places.



Docents

The Docents are volunteers who receive training from Museum staff and local experts on the flora, fauna, climate, and geology of San Diego County and Baja California, Mexico. They interpret this information to school and general public groups through interpretative carts, guided tours and outreach programs.

Exhibit Volunteers

Exhibit Interpreters enhance the visitor experience working throughout the public areas. Duties include directing visitors throughout the Museum and encouraging visitors' curiosity about the natural world by engaging more fully with the exhibits. Exhibit Interpreters work in both permanent and traveling exhibitions.

The Covey

The Covey has been the Museum's auxiliary group for over 45 years. Its goal is to support and benefit the Museum. The Covey holds bimonthly luncheons with a speaker from one of the science departments.



Department Volunteers

Departmental volunteers help in the various operational departments with clerical work, data entry, mailings, and other office work. Some jobs are one-time efforts such as converting a computer system or reorganizing a file. Many people have some special skills or talents for which we may have a niche.

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Museum Whalers

This is a seasonal opportunity from mid-December to mid-April for gray whale cruises and June to September for blue whale cruises. Museum Whalers are trained by Museum staff and marine scientists to provide naturalist interpretation on the Hornblower Whale and Dolphin Watching Cruises.



Youth Volunteers

Opportunities for youth (16–18) include camp aides for our spring, summer, and winter, camps and science internships in conjunction with local high schools. Volunteer Camp Aides are responsible for insuring that our campers have an enjoyable and safe experience.

Internships

The Museum does not currently offer paid internships for college or high school students. To qualify for an internship, you must be enrolled in an internship program through a high school or college. The museum offers internships for juniors and seniors in high school through established relationships with local schools. High school students earn school credit for these internships.

Volunteer Guidelines

Reference and Background Checks

Volunteers must provide two references (one non-relative and former employer or volunteer supervisor). The Museum reserves the right to perform background checks on all volunteers who work with the general public.

Placement

Volunteer interests and desires, as well as the Museum's needs are weighed to insure the best match possible. Volunteers will not be assigned to make-work tasks nor will they be given a volunteer position they do not wish or for which they are not qualified.

Volunteer Name Badges

Upon beginning service, the volunteer will receive a photo ID. The photo ID should be worn while volunteering.

Scheduling

Scheduling is handled by the assigned Department, Volunteer Group, or through an online volunteer application.

Logging Volunteer Hours

All volunteers are asked to record the hours worked. Instructions will be provided at the beginning of volunteer service. Hours are recorded in an online application.

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Length of Service & Training Requirements

Each volunteer group and position has training and required lengths of commitment as outlined below:

Group	Training	Commitment
Canyoneer	Ten weekly Saturday classes	Two years upon completion of training; guide minimum of 6 hikes a year. Advanced training 3rd Wednesday of each month
Covey	None	One year
Docent	Six months of Wednesday classes, September through March	Two years upon completion of training; weekly service; 10 hours per year continuing education
Museum Whalers	Eight weekly classes, October through early December	One season upon completion of training; three whale cruises per month
Science Departments	Varies by department	Six months; One four-hour shift per week
Exhibit Volunteers/Ambassadors	Varies by exhibit	Three months; 2 ½–3 hour weekly shift
Administrative Departments	On the job	Negotiable

Benefits for Volunteers

Many of our volunteers tell us that their biggest reward comes from being a part of something they believe in. Our volunteer program offers more.

- 15% discount in our Museum Store
- 10% discount at the Dino Café
- Free admission to the Museum while actively volunteering. Show your photo ID at the Visitor Services Desk upon entering.
- Notices of free events throughout Balboa Park and San Diego
- Special volunteer-only movie nights, lectures, and parties
- VIP passes upon request

On-The-Job Training

Besides the introduction and formal training for Docents, Canyoneers, or Museum Whalers, volunteers receive on-the-job training to help them with information and tools to perform volunteer duties. On-the-job training may be provided by a staff person, scientist, a qualified volunteer, or the Director of Volunteer/Intern Services as appropriate.

Volunteer Handbook

At the beginning of your volunteer service, you will be given a copy of the Volunteer Handbook which contains policies that apply to both paid and unpaid staff. These policies include a code of conduct, harassment policy, computer use, and others. You will be asked to acknowledge receipt

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of the handbook by signing the last page and returning it to the Director of Volunteer/Intern Services.

Dress Code

The Museum requires that all paid and unpaid staff present a professional appearance, dress and hygiene that are consistent with their job responsibilities, and with consideration for safety, organization image, productivity and interaction with the public. Individual departments may have specific requirements with regard to dress guidelines. The volunteer photo ID should be worn at all times while volunteering for Museum-sponsored functions. Volunteer staff is expected to confer with their department head or volunteer group if in doubt about the appropriateness or acceptability of any particular dress or grooming.



Personal Belongings

Volunteers are cautioned not to bring valuables into the Museum. The Museum is not responsible for loss of personal property. Lockers for storage of personal property are located in the Volunteer Room. The Museum provides locks. The lockers are for day use only.

Breaks and Refreshments

Eating is not allowed in the exhibitions of the Museum although a bottle of water with a lid is acceptable. The Volunteer Room can be used for lunch and snacks. Volunteers are responsible for leaving the Volunteer Room neat and clean after each use.

Resignation

Volunteers are requested to notify their immediate supervisor two weeks before leaving if at all possible and also notify the Director of Volunteer/Intern Services. The staff appreciates your time, talents and interests, and knows that changes may occur.

Dismissal

All volunteer positions are at-will and can be terminated with or without cause or notice.

References

Many employers recognize volunteer work as valid job experience. Volunteering also provides a current personal reference regarding job skills. This can be very useful in obtaining paid employment. Letters of reference will be provided upon request.

Quick References

General Museum Information

Mailing Address
P.O. Box 121390
San Diego, CA 92112-1390

Street Address

1788 El Prado

SAN DIEGO NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

San Diego, CA 92101
Main Telephone: 619.232.3821

Website

www.sdnhm.org OR sdnat.org

Director of Volunteer/Intern Services

Janet Morris
619.255.0245
jmorris@sdnhm.org

Holidays when Museum is Closed

Thanksgiving	Fourth Thursday in November
Christmas Day	December 25

Museum Hours

General Public	Daily 10 AM–5 PM
Volunteer Office Staffed	Daily 8:00 AM–4:30 PM

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What is where?

Level B—Traveling Exhibition Space

- Legler Benbough Exhibition Hall (for traveling exhibitions)
- Vivarium (controlled access)
- Exhibits Shop (controlled access)
- Herpetology Collection (controlled access)

Level 1—Atrium

- North (Main) entrance—near fig tree
- Charmaine & Maurice Kaplan Theater—giant screen movie theater—east side
- Museum Store—east side, next to theater
- Education Department—west and south side
- Exhibit space—south side
- Volunteer office—southeast corner (access through *Water* exhibition “Staff Only” door)
- Staff elevator—near Volunteer Room

Level 2—Permanent Exhibit Space

- South (old) entrance—off El Prado by fountain
- East door—employee entrance only
- Exhibit spaces on west and southwest and east and southeast
- *Fossil Mysteries* and *Coast to Cactus*
- Level 2A—Exhibits (Accessible only by staff elevator.)

Level 3—Biodiversity Research Center of the Californias

- Paleontology—east side
- Birds & Mammals—west side
- Research Library—south side
- Botany—southeast corner—just above Volunteer Room
- Skulls

Level 4—Administration

- President/CEO
- Finance, Development, Membership and Marketing
- Exhibit Space—Balcony
- J.W. Sefton Boardroom

Thank you for your interest!