

Land of Extremes

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IMPERIAL VALLEY DESERT MUSEUM

Museum expands

with second installment of exhibits

BY NEAL V. HITCH | Special to this Newspaper/Imperial Valley

Summer may be a slow time in the Valley for many people, but it has been very active for the Imperial Valley Desert Museum. In August, a crew from Weldon Exhibits returned to complete the second installation of exhibit components for Phase I and Phase II of our new permanent exhibit.

Visible storage

The large exhibit case designed for the visible storage of our ceramics collection received its glass in this round of installation. Large glass doors will allow nearly 100 local ceramic vessels to be visible to the public for the first time in over 40 years. Museum staff will now work to install lighting in the cases, build several plinths to raise ceramics to different heights, and this fall the ollas will be transferred to the case.

Also included in the Visible Storage exhibit are two new video monitors. The units play a 12-minute video featuring master Kumeyaay potter Teresa Castro. This video was funded by a grant from the Alliance for California Traditional Arts. The video was edited by our friends at Conveyor Group and is one of the highlights of this round of exhibit installation.



Glass being installed for Visible Storage exhibit. Ollas will be installed over the next few weeks. PHOTO COURTESY OF NEAL V. HITCH

Lake Cahuilla

The interactive object theater for the Lake Cahuilla diorama has been enhanced. The floor finish has been installed, encouraging the visitor to imagine walking along the ancient lake's shoreline. The shoreline leads up to the topographic map that displays visitors' favorite interactive: the Water is Life interactive that tells the story of the filling and receding of Lake Cahuilla by the Colorado River.



Finishing a textured "shoreline" for Lake Cahuilla diorama. PHOTO COURTESY OF NEAL V. HITCH

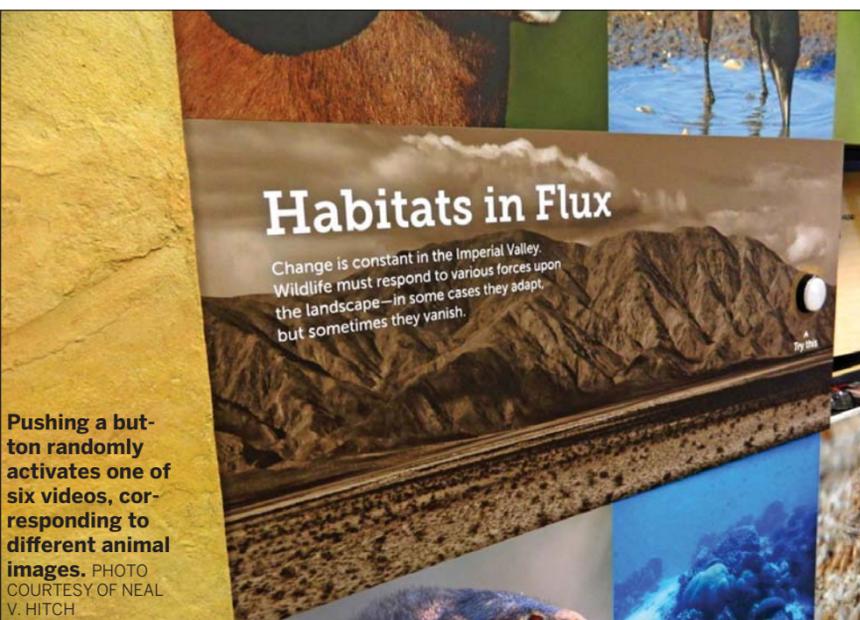
New interactives

Also included in this second round of installation are two new interactive exhibits. One is designed to showcase the power of the Imperial Valley, highlighting the vibrancy and productivity of the Imperial Valley through a multimedia presentation.

The other explores local changing habitats and the animals that are adapting to thrive, or survive, in our desert climate. This interactive includes six video clips put together by Weldon Exhibits that are randomly activated by the push of a button. The dynamic back-lit display is an exciting addition to the Power of Imperial Valley exhibit component. We are excited for visitors to see these never-before-seen parts of the exhibit.



Edited by Conveyor Group, the video featuring master Kumeyaay potter Teresa Castro is a new exhibit highlight. PHOTO COURTESY OF NEAL V. HITCH



Pushing a button randomly activates one of six videos, corresponding to different animal images. PHOTO COURTESY OF NEAL V. HITCH

Looks good, but not quite finished

While the staff still has small finishing touches to complete, including the delicate process of moving ceramics out for the public to see, the first two phases of the Desert Museum's permanent exhibit are by and large complete and ready for public viewing.

Final design and budgeting for Phase III — the Geology of Imperial Valley — will begin this fall. We want to make a big community push to finish the exhibit. We have been very successful in getting this far — we don't want it to be another generation before visitors get to see the geological features that make the county unique. After all, who doesn't want to hear about our active faults and our active volcano!



WE crew installs back-lit displays for interactive habitat feature. PHOTO COURTESY OF NEAL V. HITCH