

# Wildlife

LINDSAY WILDLIFE MUSEUM | WINTER 2015

# Wonders



## Inside:

Lindsay celebrates  
60 years of inspiring  
and eye-opening  
wildlife encounters



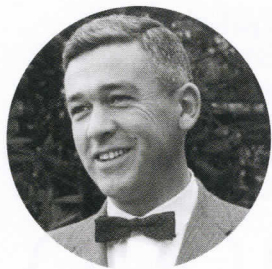
# 60

## YEARS

OF WILDLIFE ENCOUNTERS

Lindsay Wildlife Museum celebrates six decades of education, rehabilitation and commitment—all driven by a deep respect for our wild neighbors

Topaz, a golden eagle found near Lake Topaz in the Tahoe region, is one of the newest additions to the Exhibit Hall.



{ Alexander Lindsay }

**On a summer day in 1953, a pack of little boys with crew cuts straight out of *Stand by Me* pedaled their bikes to a place where, if you weren't afraid, you could meet a coyote face-to-face. Or a raccoon or a barn owl, or a rattlesnake.**

That's where, to the delight of his own young children and their friends, Alexander "Sandy" Lindsay collected wild animals in enclosures on his property overlooking Walnut Creek.

One of those boys, Barney Howard, can still picture the smiling, happy-go-lucky Sandy Lindsay: a man who loved the look of wonderment on kids' faces when they met these animals for the first time. "He wanted to educate kids," Howard says, "and he had this vision to create a place where they could come to learn about wildlife firsthand."

That was the genesis of Lindsay Wildlife Museum, which opened as the Diablo Junior Museum Association in 1955. Nearly 60 years later, Howard says Lindsay probably never could have imagined the ways in which his museum would grow or how an entire community would discover that his vision was also theirs. But he surely would have been gratified to learn that parents, teachers and elected officials would all make the commitment to carry on his work long after his death in 1962.





## What's Next for Lindsay Wildlife Museum?

Lindsay Wildlife Museum enters its 60th year with a vision for the future. "We want to get outside," says Executive Director Norma Bishop. "We want to expand beyond our walls and windows to help people connect with animals."

Many of the museum's milestones have involved physical spaces, like moving into the water pump house at Larkey Park in 1965 and then to the larger current location in 1993. In 2014, museum staff, board members and longtime partners like the City of Walnut Creek began a dialogue on further updates to the center—new outdoor enclosures, new exhibits and new ways to engage animals. Stay tuned for more details in the coming year!

Above: A pair of baby hummingbirds inside the cap of an orange juice container.

rehabilitation hospital that is now the oldest and one of the largest in the country. The hospital offers pioneering health care to more than 5,000 injured wild animals each year.

"When my cat caught a beautiful California quail, I had this overwhelming sense of gratitude after a neighbor told me there was a place I could take the bird," Wendy Raggio recalls. Days later, when she learned the quail didn't pull through, she drove straight to Lindsay Wildlife hospital. "I said, 'What can I do to help?' And that's when I became a volunteer."

With each passing decade, stories like Raggio's multiply. Each year, some 500 volunteers log more than 50,000 hours taking care of animals or teaching visitors.

Howard remembers being one of the first docent volunteers for the museum in the 1950s. He went on to complete a master's degree in vertebrate zoology and enjoyed a long career as a science teacher. Howard still serves on the board of directors, and his wife, Joanne, is the president of the Lindsay Museum Alliance, a tight-knit women's group that has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the museum.

The next generation of budding wildlife enthusiasts is emerging at Lindsay Wildlife Museum through the Interpretive Guide program, which helps kids ages 12-16 learn about animals and explore different career opportunities. The cycle of inspiration continues, Howard says. "Lindsay gave me an early love for animals that shaped my entire life."

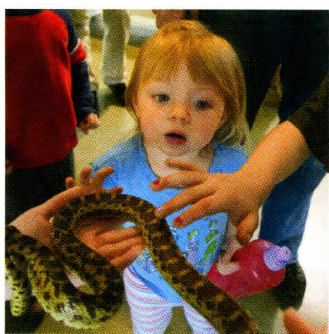
Now, on the eve of its 60th anniversary, the museum has achieved renown as one of the nation's most impactful wildlife education and rehabilitation centers. Early on, the museum established its identity as a center focused on education through providing a home for non-releasable California native animal species that could no longer survive in the wild. Today, each animal ambassador in the live collection—a gray fox, a golden eagle, a great horned owl, and nearly 60 more—comes to Lindsay Wildlife Museum with a personal story.

"Their mission in life is to speak for their species, and at Lindsay Wildlife Museum, we help them share their stories," says Norma Bishop, the museum's executive director. For example, Diablo the turkey vulture teaches visitors that his species is gentle, social and misunderstood. Diablo was shot by an Arizona farmer who mistakenly thought the bird was preying on his livestock. (Turkey vultures eat only dead animals, acting as a cleanup crew that benefits the ecosystem.)

More than 100,000 people every year—including 40,000 schoolchildren—meet these animal ambassadors, often from just inches away. The visitors all go home with a new perspective.

"We encourage visitors to ask themselves, 'How can I coexist with wildlife, including the wildlife in my backyard?'" says Sarah Parnell, manager of interpretive programs.

In 1970, the museum expanded to provide a new outlet for that compassion: a wildlife



Some 40,000 schoolchildren visit Lindsay Wildlife Museum each year, gaining unique experience with more than 60 animal ambassadors, including a gopher snake and a Western pond turtle.





Left: Volunteer Peter Schmidt has a uniquely calming effect on Shadow, an occasionally skittish great gray owl.

## Special Connections

Lindsay Wildlife Museum volunteers are dedicated to the wildlife they care for and establishing unique relationships with the museum's animal ambassadors.

**T**opaz the golden eagle calmly surveys the kids and parents seated before her at Lindsay Wildlife Museum. Her audience is far more excited. They ooh and ahh, awestruck in the presence of this lustrous bird, one of the largest and fastest raptors in North America. Amid the buzz, Topaz remains regal and stoic, perched on the gloved fist of her handler, Dawn Manley.

Manley tells the audience how Topaz came to live at Lindsay Wildlife Museum. She was found on the ground at Topaz Lake, Nev., southeast of Lake Tahoe, with a damaged wing and a serious infection. Topaz eventually stabilized, but like all animals in the museum's live collection, she is not releasable because she could never survive again in the wild. That makes her a perfect fit at Lindsay Wildlife Museum as an animal ambassador, whose job is to educate the public about her species and the need to protect wildlife. By the look of the crowd before her, she's done a stand-up job.

"She's one of the smartest birds of prey I've ever worked with," says Manley, who is the curator of the live collection at the museum. "She's always watching us and taking notes. But she's also very giving and allows us to do so much with her. She stays calm when the museum gets busy, and that comes from her knowing that we'd never let anything happen to her."

Special connections are common between human handlers and the wildlife at Lindsay Wildlife Museum. Personalities mesh, and trust takes root. Shadow, the great gray owl who can sometimes startle easily, softens in the presence of Peter Schmidt, a volunteer who has approached her with a Zen-like quiet for 15 years. Bob the bobcat stirs from his resting place when volunteer Carol Johnson arrives on Wednesday mornings. Johnson fashioned a cat scratcher out of a bottle brush and a wooden dowel, which she pokes through his cage to massage his ears and neck, and help him shed fur in the spring.

Nearly every weekend, Jan Bindas visits Diablo, the affable old turkey vulture. Bindas, a former volunteer for nine years, maintains a deep affection for the bird. Diablo hops over to Bindas on arthritic legs and sits contentedly as Bindas talks to him. "I tell him he's my main man and the toughest guy I know, and my favorite bird of all time," says Bindas. "He's a terrific ambassador for his species, and he's taught people so much."

Rapport can flourish only after extensive time spent with a wild animal, as well as lengthy training on proper care and respect. "These are special relationships, but they're not on our terms," explains Manley. "Once you accept that, you can reach this level of interaction that is amazing and rewarding."