

HIGH DESERT MUSEUM

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Upcoming Exhibit Showcases the Navigational Feats of Wildlife

Animal Journeys: Navigating in Nature Opens September 8, 2018

Bend, OR — A new exhibit exploring the remarkable ability of animals to navigate over short and long distances opens at the High Desert Museum on September 8.

Animal Journeys: Navigating in Nature, an original High Desert Museum exhibit, looks at the techniques scientists are implementing to unravel the mysterious phenomena that enable different species to find their way in the world. It also investigates the internal mechanisms and biological forms of maps and compasses used by animals, shares insight into the conservation challenges created by human impact, and examines ways humans can read the landscape to navigate solely with natural cues.

Animal navigation piques the interest of scientists across many disciplines, from physics to neuroscience. There have been some major breakthroughs — such as the finding that dung beetles use the Milky Way for orientation in order to move in a straight line — but so much is still unknown about how different species find their way. Donald M. Kerr Curator of Natural History Louise Shirley dedicated the past year to researching the topic, talking to scientists around the world about their work and developing the interactive exhibit.

“My hope is that visitors come away from this exhibit in awe of the natural world, its intricacies and its mysteries,” Shirley said. “It has been an incredible experience exploring the scientific research and findings, from the simple Emlen funnel created in the 1950s to study birds’ migratory instincts to today’s tiny trackers that are small enough to place on a beetle’s back.”

The exhibit includes hands-on activities designed to challenge, inspire and educate visitors. It not only explores the way different species perceive the world and navigate through it, but also highlights how humans, too, can find their way by paying closer attention to their surroundings. People may not be able to sense the Earth’s magnetic field as some animals do, but we can read our environment, looking to the stars, the sun or landmarks for clues.

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“Natural navigation reveals many hidden but vital connections between an animal and its environment,” Shirley said. “By learning how animals find their way, we can begin to recognize how we could be impacting those abilities and develop more effective conservation actions.”

“*Animal Journeys* provides a connection between visitors to the High Desert landscape and the wildlife that must navigate it for their survival,” said Museum Executive Director Dana Whitelaw, Ph.D. “We’re excited to expand Museum visitors’ understanding of how animals are able to navigate using nature and the importance of this research in understanding our own role in the present and responsibility to the future.”

Exhibition runs through July 14, 2019 and is possible with support from The Bulletin and the James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation.

For more information, visit highdesertmuseum.org/animal-journeys.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM:

THE HIGH DESERT MUSEUM opened in 1982 and brings regional wildlife, culture, art and natural resources together to promote an understanding of the natural and cultural heritage of North America's high desert country. The Museum uses indoor and outdoor exhibits, wildlife in natural habitats, and living history demonstrations to help people discover and appreciate the high desert environment. The Museum is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and is a Smithsonian Affiliate. highdesertmuseum.org

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