

# HIGH DESERT MUSEUM

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## Gray fox becomes newest animal ambassador at Museum

BEND, OR — Visitors returning to the High Desert Museum after its three-month closure will meet a new mammal in the Museum's care — an approximately 12-month-old, female gray fox.

The as-of-yet unnamed fox arrived at the Museum shortly before the facility's closure to the public. She was found severely malnourished and with a seriously injured hip as a pup in southwestern Oregon. She was brought to Bend after surgery to remove part of her femur.

The fox also was wearing a collar around her neck when found. Professional wildlife rehabilitators determined she is habituated to humans, meaning she doesn't have adequate fear of humans to be able to survive in the wild.

The Museum's reopening day on June 17 marked the first time the general public has gotten to see the fox. She is one of the first new mammals to come into the Museum's care in several years.

"This gray fox is inquisitive and very active," says Museum Executive Director Dana Whitelaw, Ph.D. "We're sure visitors will be delighted with her. And more importantly, the fox serves as an ambassador for her species. We know visitors will take away an appreciation for the important role foxes play in the High Desert ecosystem."

The fox is in an outdoor habitat that's specially designed for her needs. The exhibit includes a hollow log, an above-ground shelter, a ground-level shelter and a below ground-level den, as well as two climbing structures, a resting shelf and a variety of rocks and other logs.

"This fox is very playful," Museum Curator of Wildlife Jon Nelson says. "She loves to climb and is extremely agile despite her hip surgery. Gray foxes are both cursorial and arboreal—meaning they both run and climb. The exhibit space we have constructed affords her ample opportunity to do both, and she makes full use of the space to play."

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Gray foxes range throughout much of North and Central America. They're omnivores that typically grow to weigh between eight and 15 pounds, eating small mammals, birds and insects as well as fruit and vegetation. They readily climb trees with their strong, hooked claws.

At the Museum, the fox enjoys a diet of rats, mice and birds as well as a range of vegetables, seeds, nuts and some fruit. The fox is being crate and target trained to facilitate her care. She receives a wide variety of enrichment—Nelson says catching live crickets and playing with a Kong toy are among her favorites.

The naming of the fox will be an auction item at this year's Virtual High Desert Rendezvous, which takes place on Saturday, August 29. Learn more about Rendezvous at [highdesertmuseum.org/hdr](http://highdesertmuseum.org/hdr).

In the wild, gray foxes are believed to live roughly six years. Animals often live longer when in the care of zoos and other similar facilities.

## ABOUT THE MUSEUM:

THE HIGH DESERT MUSEUM opened in Bend, Oregon in 1982. It brings together wildlife, cultures, art, history and the natural world to convey the wonder of North America's High Desert. The Museum uses indoor and outdoor permanent exhibits, wildlife in natural habitats and living history demonstrations to help people discover and appreciate this diverse region. The Museum is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, is a Smithsonian Affiliate, was a 2018 finalist for the National Medal for Museum and Library Services and is the 2019 recipient of the Western Museums Association's Charles Redd Award for Exhibition Excellence. [highdesertmuseum.org](http://highdesertmuseum.org)

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