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An Announcement About Cruz, Our Resident Mountain Lion

We are heartbroken to share that Cruz, our beloved 13-year-old mountain lion, was humanely euthanized on Thursday, November 14, 2025.

Advanced Age and Health Issues

At his advanced age, he had been dealing with challenges like arthritis, for some time. A combination of his age-related issues and medical conditions meant his health was declining. Yesterday morning, after an extensive medical examination, it was deemed necessary to humanely euthanize him. Our veterinary and animal care teams made this decision only after determining there were no reasonable options to maintain his comfort or quality of life. We know Cruz had fluid in his chest, but the cause is still being determined, and we will not know the exact diagnosis until his necropsy results come back.

Although Cruz lived a long and fulfilling life, he didn't always have it easy. He joined the Desert Museum in 2013 as a five-and-a-half-month-old rescue from San Jose, CA. He was found as a malnourished cub, nursed back to health by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and determined unsuitable for reintroduction into the wild. The Arizona Game & Fish Department helped facilitate his adoption to the Desert Museum. He debuted on exhibit to the public on May 20, 2013. When Cruz arrived, he had his vision and was able to map out his enclosure well. However, the malnutrition he faced before finding a home here resulted in a lifelong degenerative eye condition. Over time, his condition progressed and he became blind.



A Desert Museum Icon

Cruz has been the face of our organization for over a decade. From watching him relax on his rock to capturing breathtaking photos of him, he's been loved and adored by thousands. We understand this news is hard to hear, as Cruz has been a fan favorite for both visitors and Desert Museum staff/volunteers alike. In many ways, our 120-pound Cruz was much like a typical housecat—he loved playing with boxes, soaking up sun rays, napping, and grooming his beautiful coat. As a cub, Cruz loved goat milk, chasing rock squirrels, and lazing in the sun. If you've visited the Desert Museum, you know lounging on his rock in the sun remained one of his favorite past times.

A Desert Museum Icon (continued)

His last full day (Wednesday) was a good one—his arthritis wasn't acting up, and he was able to move about, play with a box and shred it to pieces, and relax in his favorite spot. We feel he left with his dignity and are grateful he was able to have one last good day.

We are deeply grateful for the time we had with Cruz, and happy the Desert Museum was chosen as his home.

Honoring His Legacy

"It has been an honor for our team to care for Cruz during his time at Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, and a privilege watching him grow up here. Cruz captured the hearts of both staff and guests. He was a remarkable ambassador for mountain lions and the Desert Museum. I am thankful to our vet and animal care team who have provided Cruz with exceptional care throughout the years. Cruz will be greatly missed." Shawnee Riplog-Peterson, *Curator of Mammalogy and Ornithology*

As we grieve Cruz, we invite the public to mourn the loss of this icon with us. Join us in honoring his life by sharing your memories, photos, and condolences in the comments of our social media posts. We know his legacy will live on through the lasting impact he had on our community. With very heavy hearts, we thank you for your continued support and compassion during this difficult time.

About the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum

Founded in 1952, the Desert Museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization widely recognized as a model institution for immersive and innovative interpretation of native plants and animals in their natural habitat. The 98- acre Desert Museum in Tucson, AZ is regularly recognized as a top-tier facility due to its pioneering approach to interpreting the complete natural history of a single region. It is a zoo, aquarium, botanical garden, art institute and gallery, and natural history museum, all rolled into one. The mission of the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is to inspire people to live in harmony with the natural world by fostering love, appreciation, and understanding of the Sonoran Desert. To learn more, visit www.desertmuseum.org and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).