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“Bear In Mind: The Story of the California Grizzly” exploring the complex history of the state’s most iconic symbol opens Feb. 16 at the California Museum

Traveling exhibit reveals the grizzly’s enduring cultural legacy through artifacts on loan from The Bancroft Library and California Academy of Sciences such as Monarch, who inspired the state flag’s illustration as one of the last California grizzlies

Sacramento, Calif., (Feb. 9, 2016) – Traveling exhibition “Bear In Mind: The Story of the California Grizzly” chronicling the complex history of the state’s most iconic symbol, the grizzly, opens on Tues., Feb. 16 at the California Museum. Once common across the state, the huge and powerful grizzly is one of California’s best-known symbols. Through artifacts and ephemera on loan from institutions including The Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley, the California State Library and the California Academy of Sciences, the exhibit reveals the grizzly’s enduring cultural legacy over the last 200 years.

At their peak, an estimated 10,000 grizzlies inhabited the state, making California’s grizzly population one of the densest on the North American continent. During the 1850s, the grizzly was seen as an enemy to the progress of the Gold Rush pioneers and an unwelcome symbol of the state’s untamed terrain and lawlessness. In response, California settlers killed thousands of the bears between the 1850s and the early decades of the 20th century.

By 1924, habitat loss and hunting had driven grizzly bears to extinction in California. Yet the grizzly lives on as a central character in the state’s history and cultural mythology. A symbol of California’s independence, strength and adaptability, it is a popular icon used in advertising, trademarks and ephemera related to the state.

“The extermination of the California grizzly offers insight into choices we must make now and in the future,” said California Museum Executive Director Amanda Meeker. “Some are obvious – you save the California condor if you can. On others, opinions differ – does the value of saving the Delta smelt outweigh the benefit of water deliveries to agriculture? Is the recent return of the gray wolf to our state something to celebrate or to fear? This exhibit brings those issues to the forefront and challenges visitors to consider the often turbulent relationship humans have with nature.”

For the first time since the exhibit’s statewide tour began in 2008, the California Museum’s installation of “Bear In Mind: The Story of the California Grizzly” will include a display of Monarch, who as one of the last California grizzlies rose to

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national prominence when he was captured in Ventura County for newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst and became the icon of the *San Francisco Examiner* in 1889. Living in captivity for 22 years in San Francisco until his death in 1911, "Monarch of the Dailies" came to symbolize not only Hearst's media empire and San Francisco's recovery after the 1906 earthquake but grew to embody Californians' ideals of independence, strength and adaptability, leading to his selection as the model for the illustration on the state flag adopted by the California Legislature in 1911.

"No other grizzly bear is as well-known as Monarch in California history," said California Museum Curator Bruce Stiny. "Since his legacy continues to educate people on the importance of protecting endangered species nearly 100 years after his death, he is probably the most significant bear in not just in California but in American history."

Produced and toured by Exhibit Envoy, "Bear In Mind: The Story of the California Grizzly" was developed by The Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley and Heyday Books, with support from the William Randolph Hearst Foundation and Bank of the West. Continuing at the California Museum through June 19, 2016, the exhibit will next be displayed at the Mt. Shasta Sisson Museum in Mt. Shasta, CA. For more information, visit CaliforniaMuseum.org/Bear-Mind.

ABOUT CALIFORNIA MUSEUM

A self-supporting 501(c)3 non-profit, the California Museum — home of the California Hall of Fame — engages, educates and enlightens people about California's rich history and unique contributions to the world through ideas, innovation, the arts and culture. Through interactive, innovative exhibits and programs, the Museum inspires visitors to make their own mark on history. Open Tues.-Sat. 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; Sun.: 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.; closed Monday. Admission: adults \$9.00; college students & seniors \$7.50 with valid ID; youth 6-17: \$7.00; children 5 and under free. For more information, visit CaliforniaMuseum.org.

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Exhibit press kit available for download at:

<http://www.californiamuseum.org/press-kit/bear-mind>

Press images available for download at:

<http://www.californiamuseum.org/photo-gallery/bear-mind>

Interviews & exhibit tours available by request submitted via:

<http://www.californiamuseum.org/media-inquiries>

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