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16th annual Wildlife Festival hosts record number of visitors

Submitted by Kathy Barrett



Steve Gentry, at right, looks on as children sample honey. Photo Wade Barrett

More than 1,000 people of all ages, hundreds more than last year, streamed into the Wildlife Festival at the Wagner Ranch Nature Area on Sunday April 23 to celebrate Earth Day.

Soon children were catching water boatman bugs in the pond with dip nets, while others were feeding grass to the friendly goats. Gorgeous parrots from the Contra Costa Avian Society were riding on shoulders, and families were cooking biscuits in solar ovens with Wendy Helms and The Trust in Education Institute. The splendid weather and mesmerizing drumming and singing by Chester Miner and the Native American Cherokee Elders contributed to the atmosphere of fun and exploration.

For 16 years the Friends of the WR Nature Area have invited the community to enjoy the wisdom of local environmental groups like Friends of Orinda Creeks, Parents for a Safer Environment, and Sustainable Contra

Costa, and celebrate Earth Day. Young artists paint ceramic tiles for the entrance bench, make nature crafts and wear the beautiful tattoos by Coyote Brush Studios and face paintings by the Orinda Juniorettes. Joan Morris invited visitors to ask questions about wildlife and had them observe the structures of several abandoned bird nests. Kricket, of Raw Soap, offered samples of her organic olive oil soaps, and groups of curious children were asking Orinda Bee Man, Steve Gentry, a million questions.

That was just some of the fun activities offered at the festival. For more details about the Friends visit its website www.fwrna.org.



Jack Howell describes how solar cookers are used in Afghanistan

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