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## Wagner Ranch Nature Area Wildlife Festival offers public a glimpse of rare resource

By Sora O'Doherty

The public will once again have an opportunity to visit the Wagner Ranch Nature Area from 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Sunday, April 28, for the 2019 Wildlife Festival. The nature area is located near Wagner Ranch Elementary School at 350 Camino Pablo in Orinda. The free event is family-friendly, but according to school district policy, dogs are not allowed in the Nature Area.

The historic ranch and 18-acre nature preserve is rarely open to the public. There will be a variety of activities for all ages, especially kids. Wildlife fun at the Frog Pond will feature red-legged frogs and resident western pond turtle, Mr. T. There will be animals to visit in the garden, including friendly goats and beautiful parrots. In addition, visitors will be able to try hands-on nature arts and crafts, science magic, earth day games, or get a temporary nature tattoo from Coyote Brush. A tour will take in the meadows, woodland, ponds and streams, as well as the historic home site of Theodore Wagner, California's first surveyor general. Tours of the historic ranch will be given every half hour starting at noon. Tours start from the Tour Table with Professors Emeritus Reg Barrett, John Helms, and others. Visitors can also meet solar oven specialist, Wendy Helms; Master Gardeners, and Doc Hale, mountain lion whisperer and environmentalist.

Guests are welcome to bring their own picnic lunch or visit the four food trucks on site including: El Gran Taco Loco, Guys Tri Tip, Mini Street Burger, and Izzy A's frozen desserts. All trucks offer a vegetarian option. The trucks will be located near the entrance to the festival, with seating just inside the gates. There will be musical performances by Orinda Intermediate School Strings and Jazz Band, and ALMA Music. Children can pick up wildlife passports and get them stamped at the stations for a free honey stick at the Friends of the Nature Area Station. Also near the entrance adults can check out the native plants for donations.

Toy bug hunts will take place in the garden at 1 and 3 p.m. Children kindergarten age and younger can take home toy critters. Free timed tickets will be available for pond explorations, which will take place every 30 minutes starting at 11:30 a.m.

Activities in the Central Area will feature Native American Singers and Drummers, Cynthia Brian, author and actor, environmentalist Jim (Doc) Hale, Aeroponic Gardens with Gwen O'Neill, Girl Scout and Boy Scout Project Demonstrations; Wildlife Columnist, Joan Morris; Wildlife Tattoos by Coyote Brush Studios; face painting by Orinda Juniors; Sustainable Contra Costa; OIS Green Team hands-on activities; Orinda Historical Society; Friends of the Moraga Adobe; and the Old Yellow House - net-zero historic home on Moraga Way. There will also be nature fun by the East Bay Municipal Utility District, tile painting, and nature art. Daniel Phillips will present Chemistry Magic and Steve Gentry will present Buzzing with Honey Bees. Friends of Orinda Creeks, Friends of the Wagner Ranch Nature Area, and Plein Air Artists will also be present.

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