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SPORTS 12 THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER • MONDAY, MAY 12, 2008

GO AND DO

BIATHLON

Sunday:

2008 Zoot Playa del Run Aquathlon & 5k Run series: 9 a.m. Swim and run or just foot race at Santa Monica. Cost: \$20-\$40. Registration and information: www.playadelrun.com/ or www.active.com.

RUNNING

Saturday:

San Pedro Marathon, Half Marathon and 5K: 7 a.m. Point Fermin Park, San Pedro. Cost: \$25-\$50. Registration and information: www.active.com

WHALE WATCHING

Daily:

- Dana Wharf Whale Watching: 10 a.m., noon and 2 p.m. Cost: \$19-\$29. Dana Wharf Sportfishing, 34675 Golden Lantern, Dana Point. Reservations and information: www.danawharfsportfishing.com or 949-496-5794.

- Davey's Locker Whale Watching: 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. Monday-Friday; 9 a.m., noon and 2:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Cost: \$20-\$25; 400 Main St., Balboa, Newport Beach. Reservations and information: www.daveyslocker.com or 949-673-1434.

- Newport Landing Whale Watching:

TODAY'S SPOTLIGHT: BAT HIKE



FILE PHOTOS: MARK AVERY, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

UP THERE: Stephanie Remington, left, points out a bat as she leads people on a bat walk in the San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary last year in Irvine. At right pointing out a different bat is Josh Lithgow, 15. 'I've never seen bored people at a bat walk,' Remington said.

WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

Popular area nature group excursions point out that bats are necessary and not evil.

By **SHAWN PRICE**
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

One of the world's most feared animals is also one of the summer's hottest attractions.

The rabid popularity of the summer bat walks remains a statement on curiosity and knowledge overcoming fear. Along the way, a lot of people have found a new way to enjoy a summer evening. Several scheduled walks are sold out, and the rest are likely to fill up in a few weeks.

The person responsible for it all is bat expert Stephanie Remington. She leads each walk from May through August, illuminating the twilight sky with information about a creature demonized for centuries.

"Some questions never completely leave," Remington said. Part of her task each night is to erase the misconceptions people have and illustrate what a critical role bats play in controlling the insect population. A little information goes a long way.

"There are so many acts of vandalism against bats," she said. "I ran into a man years ago who thought bats were vermin and you should exterminate them. He said after we talked, 'I realize now I can let them do their thing.'"

Donna O'Neill Land Conservancy executive director Heidi Keller understands the battle with myth that Remington wages all summer long.

"It's an animal people have

Bat walks

At the San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary

7 p.m., Friday, May 22 (Ages 6 and older)

7 p.m., Thursday, June 5 (adults only)

7 p.m., Thursday, Aug. 28 (adults only)

\$6-\$12

Reservations and information:

949-726-0858 (a waiting list is also kept for next year)

At the Donna O'Neill Land Conservancy

7:15-9:15 p.m., June 28

7:15-9:15 p.m., July 12

6:45-8:45 p.m., Aug. 23

\$10-\$15

Ages 8 and older.

Reservations and information:

949-489-9778.

At Laguna Coast Wilderness Park

7 p.m. Sunday, July 6

Free.

Reservations and information:

949-923-2235

Bats online

Stephanie Remington's Web site:

www.ocabats.com

Bat Conservation International:

www.batcon.org

heard about at Halloween and seen in movies," Keller said. "She's very clear that it's not true and they're very beneficial animals. Some play the same role as hummingbirds. People who come have open minds but they don't know much about them. After that fear is transformed it's 'wow, these animals are cool.' But how are they ever going



LISTEN UP: Alexandra Lithgow, 13, uses a sonar device to listen for a bat's echo location sounds as Stephanie Remington holds Harrison, an hoary bat, who was found with a broken wing in Newport Beach. He will never fly again, so Remington, who nursed Harrison back to health, uses him to give people a close-up view of a bat during a class.



THAT ONE: Tate Indvik, 6, points out his favorite kind of bat on a chart before going on a bat walk in the San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary.

to know if they don't go on the hike?"

Remington starts each evening with a slide show and brief talk about what bats really look like and what they really do, then she leads the group out to see them for real, and, to hear them with detecting devices that change the bat's high frequency sounds in to chirps hu-

mans can hear.

"I've seen tired people but I've never seen bored people at a bat walk. They get excited, because they have the ability to watch them from a distance and it makes more sense to them," Remington said. "It's just nice to have some mysteries solved, especially if it's something that originally caused fear."