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SPORTS 10 THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER • MONDAY, JULY 7, 2008

GO AND DO

CYCLING

Saturday

Night Ride in Limestone Canyon: 7 p.m. Headlight with a minimum 12-watt output and 3-hour battery life required. Reservations and information:

www.irvineranchconservancy.org or 714-508-4757.

EQUESTRIAN



MARILYNN YOUNG, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Sunday

Limestone Canyon Ride: 8 a.m. Free. Irvine Land Conservancy, Reservations and information:

www.irvineranchconservancy.org or 714-508-4757.

HIKING

Saturday

• Historic District walk: 10 a.m. Crystal Cove State Park. Meet at Los Trancos Center. Parking: \$10. Reservations and information: 949-494-3539.

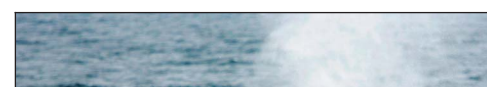
• Trail Clearing: 7-10:30 a.m. Donna O'Neill Land Conservancy. Free. Information: 949-489-9778.

BIRD WATCHING

Saturday

Monthly Bird Walk at Starr Ranch: 8 a.m. Guided two-hour tour of Audubon's Starr Ranch Bird Observatory. Bring binoculars and bird guide. Cost: \$5 or free for Friends of Starr Ranch members. Reservations: 949-858-0309. Information: 949-858-3537 or jshew@audubon.org.

WHALE WATCHING



TODAY'S SPOTLIGHT: HIKING



MADE IN THE SHADE: A family of hikers at the Donna O'Neill Land Conservancy winds its way through the giant oak trees while taking in the scenery. Visitors get a chance to walk the private land and learn Native American skills on the Native Skills Family Hike.

This hike is family-friendly

The walk through the Donna O'Neill Conservancy is a hands-on learning experience.

By **SHAWN PRICE**

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

The sun was held at bay by the shade of the gigantic oak. Its long branches stretched forever it seemed, and there was a whole community of animals living in its welcome and ancient shadow.

A half dozen of us walked the milk thistle field to reach it. It was nature's equivalent of driving out to an old downtown neighborhood. Of course, this was a thriving spot. Birds swooped in and out, and traces of other creatures were everywhere. It was so bustling with life it might as well have been Manhattan.

A family walk a few miles into the back country of the Donna O'Neill Land Conservancy was just that, but it was as much about the families who lived there as the families who were just visiting. Next week's Native Skills Walk for Families enhances this experience.

Yes, the setting is family-friendly and designed to be a hands-on educational morning for children as well as adults. The hiking distance is never far, and the warmer the weather, the shorter the hike. But like most hikes at the land conservancy, the point really is to stop and look. Or in some cases, stop and smell, stop and touch, or stop and hear. Occasionally, there's even a stop and taste.

This basic skill is something modern suburban man has to re-learn. The family hikes serve only as gentle reminders of that.

Wilderness area can seem dark and scary to people who aren't used to it or don't quite understand it. Bringing a child to the wilderness safely sandwiched between mom and dad and a knowledgeable guide can put a child's



STEVE ZYLIUS, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

SOAR POINT: A red-tailed hawk glides through the skies over the Donna O'Neill Land Conservancy. On the Native Skills Family Hike, participants can get educated on identifying various plants and birds.

natural curiosity to good use.

Life around the creek and into the woodlands also fit easily into our short walk. The elderly woman in the group seemed to enjoy hopping the giant log that sprawled across the trail as much as the grade schoolers, even if it took her a little longer. A stop in a meadow to talk about native flowers and the brightly colored, but non-native mustard plant was another opportunity for thought.

Adding the element of survival skills from local native tribes sweetens the deal with an easy crash course in shelter making, and identifying plants and birds. The latter ability is a near essential for anyone trying to move into intermediate hiking.

Being able to tell a lemonade berry from buckwheat or a red-tailed hawk from a turkey vulture is the kind of thing that changes a hike from a simple physical activity to a full five-sense experience. The hike is led by Earthroots Field School instructor Mark Hay, who has taught several survival school classes.

The practice of native skills is also a trip 500 years back in history. Doing what they did, however

Native Skills Walk for Families

When: Saturday, July 19, 9 a.m.-noon

Where: The Donna O'Neill Land Conservancy

Reservations and directions: 949-489-9778.

Cost: \$10-\$15

What is needed: Hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, comfortable clothes, hiking shoes or boots

awkwardly, allows you to see the natural world through their eyes. At least momentarily. They had the same basic needs we do and they used what was there to feed, clothe, hydrate, shelter and entertain themselves.

And knowing what they know makes the unknown a lot less scary, doesn't it?

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