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SPORTS 12 THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER • MONDAY, SEPT. 15, 2008

GO AND DO

BOATING

Sunday

Morning Breeze Music Cruise: 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Enjoy the beauty of the Pacific Ocean and jazz music from FM 88.5 KSBK. \$19-\$35. Includes weekend admission. Ocean Institute, 24200 Dana Point Harbor Drive, Dana Point. Reservations and information: 949-496-2274 or oi@ocean-institute.org

CYCLING

Saturdays

All-level 25-45-mile rides. 7 a.m. Meet at Ladera Cyclery, 25662 Crown Valley Parkway, Mission Viejo. 949-429-7784.
• Recumbent 12-mile ride. 8 a.m. Currently 10-20 rider group, all ages welcome. Meet at Richard's Cyclery, 11943 Valley View, Garden Grove. 714-379-2717.

HIKING

Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays

Outdoor Fitness Adventure Club: 8:15 a.m. 60-,

TODAY'S SPOTLIGHT: NATURE



CINDY YAMANAKA, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

HAIRY SITUATION: Heidi Keller, executive director of the Donna O'Neill Land Conservancy, holds her tarantula, Velvet, 5. The slow-moving female Mexican Redleg Tarantula likes to eat crickets and other insects. She was introduced to night hikers at the Donna O'Neill Land Conservancy.

Tarantula more friendly than creepy

Have no fear and consider these hairy arachnids guardians of the wilderness.

By SHAWN PRICE
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

The creepy crawl sensation that you're probably already feeling is because of the widespread and uneasy feeling people get about spiders. Especially tarantulas (see the photo).

But before you go to grab a broom or use your hiking boot to squash these fine guardians of the wilderness, consider the tarantula. Consider them your friends. Consider them a barrier between you and insect-borne disease. Consider them another attraction of the wild spaces along the trail.

And now is the prime time to see them.

TARANTULA FACTS

Tarantulas are the largest known spiders.

They have a habitat that spans almost half the world, from the South-



SCARY SENSATION: Executive director Heidi Keller informs hikers that her pet tarantula, Velvet, probably doesn't like the feel of Keller's smooth skin when she picks her up. The group saw two tarantulas in the wild at The Donna O'Neill Land Conservancy.

western United States to Central America, the tropics and most of the Southern Hemisphere.

Tarantulas are active all year, but late summer and early fall is mating season, and you'll see them along the trail at dusk.

Tarantulas molt like other similar creatures. When

they do, they can also replace internal organs and re-grow any of their eight legs. If you're an arachnid, it's a woman's world. Females are bigger, live longer and often eat their mates. Females can live to be 30. Males can die soon after mating, at about 20.

Their bodies are covered

in what looks like hair but is actually little barbs that can be used to fire into an enemy if they feel threatened. The hairs can itch if you get them on you.

They don't live like most spiders, burrowing into the ground, sometimes taking the dens left by other animals.

They are nocturnal and don't hunt the same way other spiders do, with webs. They stalk prey the way a tiger does. They will create things similar to

webs, but they're more like trip wires that alert the spider of nearby prey.

No, tarantulas are *not* harmful to people. They only eat other pests like crickets, cockroaches, mealworms or mice.

They have venom, but a tarantula bite is less annoying than a bee sting. Only people who might have allergic reactions have gotten ill from a tarantula bite. Tarantulas are even becoming pets.

The parasitic pepsis wasp is one of the tarantula's few enemies. The wasp can paralyze and lay its eggs on the tarantula's body. When they hatch, the larvae eat the tarantula while it's still alive.

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WEEKS AT THE GATE

SMOKERS WANTED



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Qualified participations must be between 18 and 75, may receive study medication or placebo (inactive look alike pill), smoking cessation counseling and study-related exams.

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