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Socal Wildflower Fest draws more than 300

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ORANGE – The Socal Wildflower Fest and hike-a-thon attracted nearly 300 to Irvine Regional Park on a blustery Saturday for wildflower hikes, backpacking tips, yoga, clinics on outdoor skills, and gourmet cooking on the trail.

Stephen Weller, a UCI professor in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and the president-elect of the American Society of Botany, showed participants how to easily identify local wildflowers.

And nature hikes were offered for all skill levels. On a beginners' walk led by OC Hiking Club organizers Kathy Bergh of Tustin and Jeannie Tarlton of Garden Grove, hikers saw wildflowers and plants, including California sage, wild radishes, purple nightshade, wild cucumbers, California poppies, buckwheat, cactus and poison oak. Tarlton leads about three hikes a week for the club, and Bergh leads about four a month.

In one of the clinics, Neil Fricke of Norwalk demonstrated how to hit the trail for overnight or extended trips with the lightest and smallest possible backpack. Fricke does an overnight trip with a backpack weighing about 22 pounds, 9 ounces.

Thank You All!

Our first annual SoCal Wildflower Fest with almost 300 participants (both children and adults) was a great success with attendees from our community partners and the youth they serve. Participants were able to enjoy wildflower hikes, outdoor skills clinics (offered by OCHC's outstanding Hike Organizers), wildflower face painting, and awards from our Wildflower Photo Contest awards with the OC Register (this year is the first year we have had an entry category specifically for kids 18 and under). Our honored guest speaker on "Local Wildflower Identification," was Dr. Weller from UCI, Dean of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and President Elect of the American Society of Botany. Building on this year's success, in 2012 we hope to reach even more families and children's organizations.



Springtime: no time sweeter for the serenade of songbirds.

By Dan Hazard, OCHC Member



As an outdoor enthusiast I enjoy combining two or more interests on one event. Today, I joined Pat Wells for a trek through the Bolsa Chica wetlands, home to a cornucopia of colorful flowers and a variety of water fowl and other birds. We spotted everything from tiny humming birds, hawk-like kestrels, several species of ducks and nesting great blue herons. Several hikers brought binoculars, spotting scopes and bird identification books to help ID the subjects and give us a closer view.

Next time you're in the field or just in the back yard, stop, close your eyes and listen to the serenade of songbirds. It's sure to bring a smile to your face.

REI SPECIAL FOR OCHC MEMBERS ONLY!

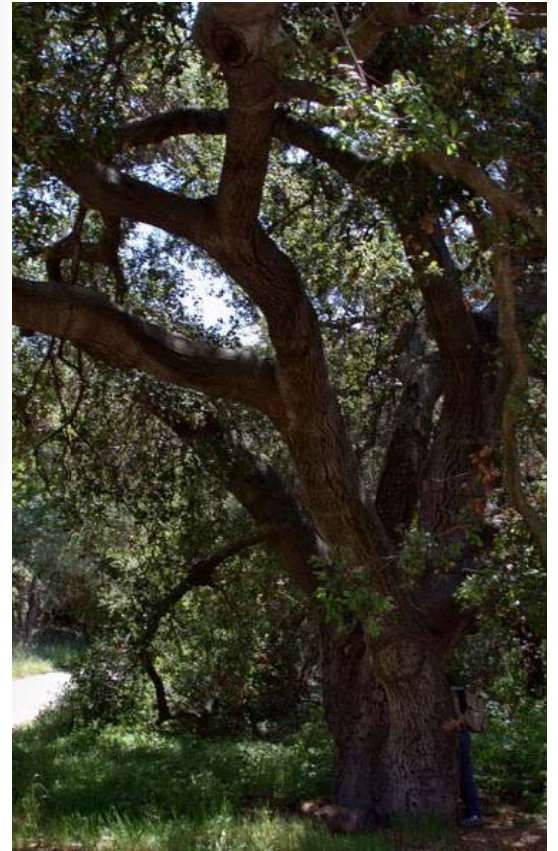
Learning to backpack for the first time? OC Hiking Club Members receive 25% off the cost of cost of first time equipment rental at REI.

*Members must provide a printout of the OC Hiking Club event posting at the time of rental.



SECOND SUNDAY - O'Neill Park - Nature photography from the Heart w/ René - April 10, 2011

René was fabulous! He took the time to really explain photography in general and helped each of us understand our own cameras. He gave a lot of good tips etc. It was like sitting in a photography class. Afterwards, we took our hike and practiced what we learned. I LOVED IT!
~Tina, OCHC Member



Don't miss the next Second Sunday
event scheduled for June 12th!

Quinoa Bars

From A Fork in the Trail

Makes 10 servings



These bars have a nice crunch from the quinoa and a tropical twist with the combination of orange and coconut.

2 tablespoons butter
3/4 cup quinoa
2 egg whites
1/4 cup honey
1/2 cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1/4 teaspoon pure orange extract
3/4 cup rolled oats
1/2 cup wheat germ or oat bran
1/4 cup shredded coconut, toasted

Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 9 x 9 inch pan with parchment paper so that the paper goes up the sides of the pan as well. Melt the butter and spread it on the parchment paper. Rinse the quinoa in a fine strainer under cold water for at least 3 minutes. In a nonstick frying pan toast the quinoa, stirring frequently. As soon as some of the seeds start to pop remove the quinoa from the pan and set it aside to cool.

Beat the egg whites in a large bowl. Melt the butter and add it to the egg whites. Mix in the honey, brown sugar, cinnamon, and vanilla and orange extracts. Add the rolled oats, wheat germ, and the toasted quinoa. Stir until well combined. Pour the mixture into the pan and spread it into the corners. Bake for 35 to 45 minutes, until the center is set and the edges are browned.

Remove the pan from the oven and place it on a wire rack to cool. When slab is cool, turn pan upside down and dump bars onto a large cutting board. With a sharp knife cut the slab into 10 bars. Individually wrap the bars in waxed paper and put them all together in a ziplock freezer bag. Store the bars in the freezer, for up to three months, until you're ready to use them.

Tip

To make the parchment paper easier to manage, place a little butter in the bottom of your pan and then place the parchment paper in the pan. The butter underneath will hold the paper in place, making it easier for you to butter the top of the paper.



Bridge to Nowhere with Mike C.

OCHC Business Directory

Reach more customers **AND** get a tax deduction! The OC Hiking Club is creating a Member Business Directory where you can promote your business or organization to more than 6,000 local customers. Contact Kate at sponsorship@oc-hiking.com for more information.

Sponsor Kids in Need of Nature!

Is your company looking to make a difference in the life of a child? Corporate sponsorships are needed for the OC Hiking Club's Kids in Need of Nature program. Contact Kate at sponsorship@oc-hiking.com for more information. All donations are tax deductible.

Suki Reed in the OC Register!



Suki Reed, President of OC Hiking Club, is a writer for the Orange County Register. Past articles include topics such as hiking for stress relief, camera tips, and favorite local hiking spots. Look for her articles on the back page of the Outdoor Section every Monday. Past articles can be found at:

<http://www.ocregister.com/fi/search?q=suki+reed>

WHITING RANCH ABLOOM

By Suki Reed, OCHC President, as published in the Orange County Register

Fire as part of the cycle of life has breathed a newer brighter life into the wildflowers this spring.

Only two years ago the hills of Whiting Ranch Wilderness Park were decimated by intense yellow, orange and red flames; however the hillsides are now celebrating spring with brilliant splashes of these very same hues.

The fires have served to fertilize the soil, germinate seeds and remove dense vegetation that would otherwise compete for sunlight, and the flowers are showing their gratitude with blooms galore. If you would like to witness this beauty, come visit this nearby park. While you are there you may want to take a walk-up "Dreaded Hill" (I'm not making this name up) where there more than 15 flower types in less than 1 mile of trail.

Whiting Ranch is nestled in the Santa Ana Mountains in the city of Rancho Santa Margarita. In combination with the adjoining Limestone Canyon Park the area covers about 4,300 acres.

The parks' grassland hills also include some steeper slopes for the brave hiker. The wildflower photos here were taken on the Dreaded Hill which shoots about 1,600 feet up. The view from this hill seems infinite - you can see Catalina on a clear day. Once you reach the top of the hill, there is a bench where you catch your breath and enjoy the view.

Flower lovers will be delighted to find a wide array of flowers in the park some of which are even edible. Take a flower identification guide if you plan on nibbling. The flower season passes quickly, so grab your camera and go exploring. Some of the flowers in bloom right now include: California Poppy; Miner's Lettuce - edible; Black Mustard - edible; Yucca - edible; Prickly Pear - edible; Indian Paintbrush; California Bluebells; Flannelbush and Spanish clover.

Beginners: Stroll along the lower trails.

Intermediate/Advanced: Take a walk-up Dreaded Hill.

How long: Thirty minutes to two+ hours, depending on where you go.

What to bring: Comfortable shoes, plenty of water, sunscreen and sun hat, a snack and your camera.

If you haven't gone hiking for a while don't let the beautiful flower leprechauns seduce you into walking too far, lest you wear yourself out.



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A BIG thank you to OC Parks for their generous sponsorship of the MileMarker newsletter!