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## A Great Way to Celebrate Earth Day

By Laurie Snyder and Jennifer Wake



A Eurasian eagle owl spreads its wings, perched on the arm of Native Bird Connections owner, Jenny Papka, during the April 19 Earth Day/Wildlife Festival at the Wagner Ranch Nature Area in Orinda. Photo Ohlen Alexander

looked into the eyes of raptors. Jenny Papka, owner of Native Bird Connections, was there with a few of her 15 non-releasable raptors, such as an American kestrel, which is an imperiled species, and a Eurasian eagle owl, one of the largest owls in the world.-

"I'm dedicated to have people see the world through the eyes of the animal," said Papka, whose organization focuses on educating the public about wild birds. "We're divorced from their lifestyle. They're not here to entertain us; their future rests on us."

With its 18 acres of ponds and streams, meadow and forest, the Wagner Ranch Nature Area is a vitally important educational resource for Orinda teachers and their students, as well as a fun place to hang on a lovely spring afternoon. Located adjacent to Orinda's Wagner Ranch Elementary School, the facility includes a one-acre enclosed garden which offers local school children hands-on exploration of concepts they are studying in biology, botany and ecology. Using seeds from the greenhouse, children cultivate flowers, fruits, herbs and vegetables in raised beds. Math, nutrition and social skills are honed as they weigh edible garden harvests and plan potlucks. Students also interact directly with the outdoor world, observing insects at the pond and learning about biodiversity, life cycles and native plants from a trained naturalist.

"In the Nature Area, education in environmental science, history and culture are a seamless whole," says Bill Hudson, president of Friends of the Wagner Ranch Nature Area, which sponsored the event. "The Nature Area provides education not possible in the classroom, experiences such as grinding acorns for mush, making adobe bricks from straw and mud, panning for 'gold' in the creek, and, overall, a freedom to move and to explore at any personal interest level, the variety, constant change, interconnections and purposefulness of life."

And the FWRNA wildlife festival is one of the engines helping to power it all, raising important funds each year to keep the Nature Area open. An entirely volunteer-run organization, FWRNA has been supporting the Nature Center since 1970, and is always on the lookout for new, nature-loving friends. To learn more, visit: [www.fwrna.org](http://www.fwrna.org). For information about Native Bird Connections, visit

Finding the 14th Annual Earth Day/Wildlife Festival last Sunday wasn't difficult. You just needed to follow your ears. The deep tones of Native American drums reverberated through the old growth oak trees at the Wagner Ranch Nature Area, thanks to Chester Miner and the Native American Singers who have been playing their drums at the festival for the past four years. "We just like to play," said Miner. "It lifts everyone's spirit." The group of nine men and seven women, including Steve Dady, Gary Lamb, Dale Idris and Tiona Bosteck, sang some prayer songs and even a rendition of the Spongebob Squarepants theme song to connect with the kids.

"The best thing about drumming is it brings people together," said Dady. "When we all do that from the same place in our hearts, that's what really counts."

"It's all about the people," said Miner.

Adults learned how to cook with solar ovens and mastered the art of composting while kids had their faces painted, ambled through nature-infused scavenger hikes, learned the ABCs of recycling, and

[www.nativebirds.org](http://www.nativebirds.org).

### 10th Annual Lafayette Earth Day Festival and Other Upcoming Outdoor Events

Lafayette will host its 10th annual Earth Day Festival from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, April 26 behind the Lafayette Library and Learning Center. This special anniversary event, hosted by Sustainable Lafayette, Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, Lafayette Library and City of Lafayette, will focus on green transportation options and approaches for living a more sustainable life. The event kicks off with a "Bike Fest" from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. at Stanley Middle School. The Earth Day Festival will also feature live music, art, storytelling, a scavenger hunt, conservation-themed displays, and tasty and sustainable food options. Attendees are encouraged to use green modes of transportation since there is limited parking around the event location. There will be free bike valet service at the intersection of Golden Gate Way and First Street.

Other upcoming outdoor events planned in Lamorinda include:

Cinco de Mayo Fiesta from noon to 6 p.m. Sunday, May 3 at the Hacienda de las Flores at 2100 Donald Drive off Moraga Rd. Adults \$5 and children are free. Live mariachi music, authentic Mexican food, pinatas, games and tortilla making.

The Moraga Community Faire and Car Show will be held from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, May 9 in the town's Rheem Valley Shopping Center - offering a wonderful opportunity for a "family fun day" on the day before Mother's Day with a climbing wall, bounce house, carnival games, music, arts and crafts, local food trucks, a dunk tank, local wine and amazing classic cars.

The Seventh Annual Orinda Restaurant Tour. San Francisco's East Bay area food lovers will again have the opportunity to join a fun, culinary gathering to savor and sample their way through Orinda restaurants from 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesday, May 12 at Theatre Square, hosted by the Orinda Chamber of Commerce. Tickets available at [www.orindachamber.org](http://www.orindachamber.org).

The Lafayette Rotary Club's Annual Concert at the Res from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, May 9 at the new permanent stage at the Lafayette Reservoir. (See page B8 for more detailed information.)

Taste of Lafayette from 5:30 to 9 p.m. on Tuesday May 19 promises to be an amazing night of food, wine, raffle prizes and fun. The tour begins at Lafayette Plaza with a wine and beer reception including appetizers and musical entertainment. Ticket holders go at their own pace to any or all of the participating restaurants. Then return for a dessert reception and coffee at the Plaza from 8:30 to 9 p.m. Tickets are \$45 if purchased by May 9; \$50 thereafter. For info, visit <http://www.lafayettechamber.org/event/taste-lafayette>.



Hypnotic drumming came courtesy of Chester Miner and the Native American Singers. Photos Ohlen Alexander



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