

Del Mar Hills students celebrate Earth Day at San Dieguito Lagoon

Del Mar third graders participated in a "hands on field trip" at the San Dieguito Lagoon on April 16 hosted by Southern California Edison (SCE) in partnership with the city of Del Mar's Lagoon Committee, The Del Mar Foundation, U.S. Fish & Wildlife and USGS. Learning about the lagoon is a six-year tradition, as the Del Mar Hills Academy of Arts and Sciences joined together with the city of Del Mar's Lagoon Committee to celebrate the region's largest unique, coastal estuary. With SCE's nature preserve's construction more than halfway completed, the Del Mar Hills School students toured the lagoon as part of their environmental education this year. "Giving these young environmentalists the opportunity to see what we teach them about nature in the classroom can make an impression that lasts a lifetime", said Nancy Swanberg, the elementary schools' science teacher.

The third graders prepared for the field trip by studying the unique adaptations that plants and animals have in order to survive in this local ecosystem. They also created "Lagoon Day" posters that featured birds commonly seen in the coastal lagoon. For the field trip, five specialized stations were posted every fifty yards along the San Dieguito River that highlighted wetlands construction, vegetation, water quality, and fish and wildlife. One station even encouraged the kids to write poetry about the natural beauty of the lagoon. Every twenty five minutes, groups of ten kids would move excitedly to a new station to learn first hand about how the environment can be protected and restored. Samir Tanious, SCE's project manager, said, "Seeing the kids' faces light up when they actually touched one of our bird models, planted a seedling or tested the river water's salinity has been ample reward for our participation." He continued, "We wanted the emphasis to be on fun, the environment and learning by doing." SCE invited scientists, biologists, hydrologists and construction personnel familiar with the project to give the kids an outside classroom where they could get their hands both dirty and wet as a way to learn first hand about the plants, animals, birds and vegetation that inhabit the new nature preserve.

Against the backdrop of expansive views of the lagoon and its abundant wildlife, experts from US Fish and Wildlife and USGS

worked interactively with the students at each of their respective stations along the nature preserve's new boardwalk. Students used binoculars to observe wildlife, including a wild osprey whose hunger timed perfectly with the students so they could experience a real life lesson on how raptors catch fish by diving in local rivers. Southern California Edison invited their local contractors, Marathon Construction and RECON, to demonstrate how construction takes place in sensitive habitats. The children were taught how to plant indigenous species that are being specially grown for the wetlands. As a souvenir of their day at the lagoon, the third graders were encouraged to take the seedling that they planted home to grow.

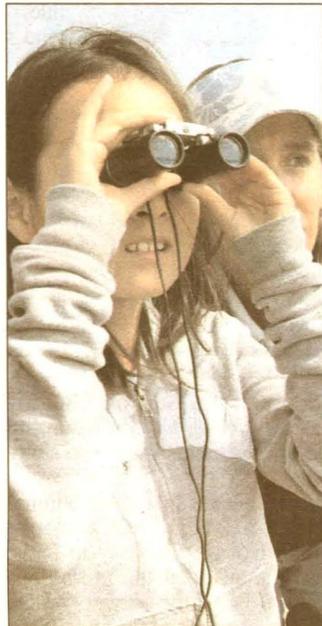
The student's posters were displayed at the Earthsong Bookstore from April 17 - 23 and again at the Lagoon Day lecture on April 27 at 6:30 p.m. at the Del Mar Powerhouse. The public is encouraged to attend this event. The poems that the students wrote at the lagoon during their field trip were presented at a special reading at the Earthsong Bookstore in Del Mar on April 23.



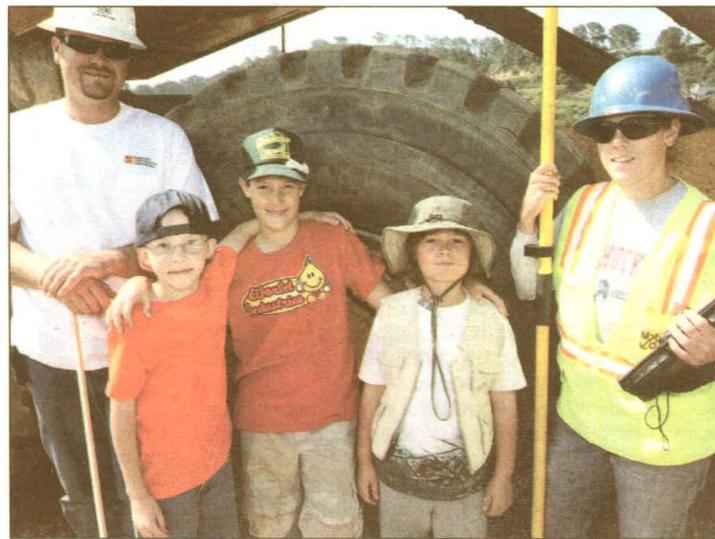
Andrea Sleet, Stavi Augur, Mikael Thomson



Cathy Lu, Nicole Martindale, Jennifer Nguyen, Michael Burton, Daniela Benson



Student Noe Kitagawa, looks through binoculars guided by Susan Wynn from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to spot shore birds



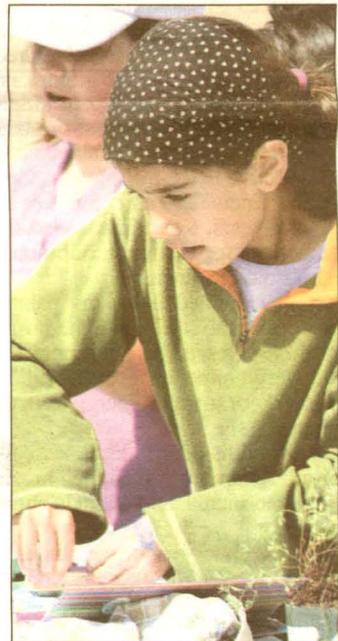
Michael Burton, Keith Robertson, Cal Weinbaum, Jasper Sutton, Daniela Benson



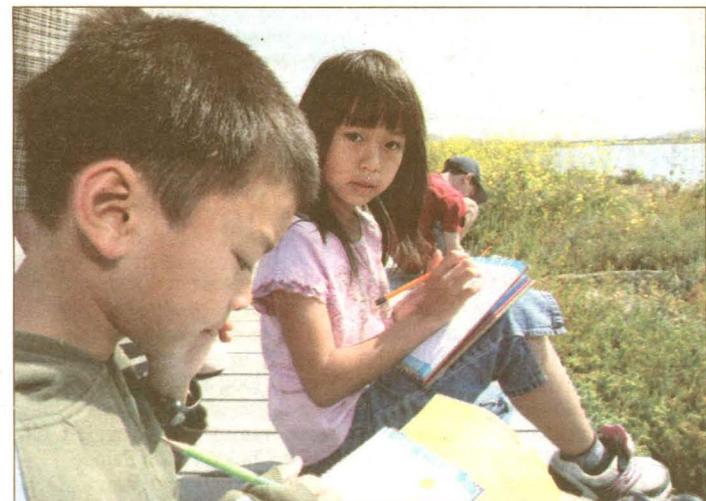
Biologists Susan Wynn and David Zoutendyk from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service explain the bird habitat at the San Dieguito river area.



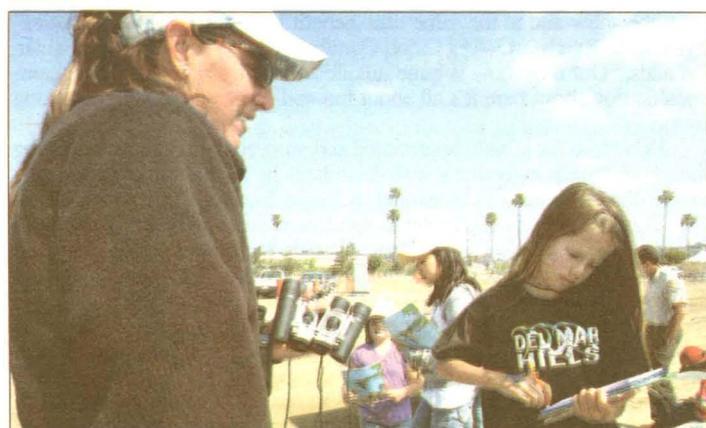
Ron Fay, Water Quality Specialist, U.S. Geological Survey office, provides a demonstration to show the lagoon's stages of salt water content.



Gabi Dinkin



Alexander Hong, Annie Nuyen work on Haiku Poetry



Susan Wynn from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service makes comments as student Bree Belshim takes notes.



Nancy Swanberg (Science Teacher), Kelly Sarber (Edison Media), Pete Tomsovic (RECON), Samir Tanious (Edison Project Manager), Ron Fey (USGS), Danielle Benson (Marathon Construction), Joe Ellis (Marathon Construction), David Zoutendyk (US Fish and Wildlife), Susan Wynn (US Fish and Wildlife), Michael Burton (Marathon Construction)