

Murrelet the star at Big Basin event

Endangered Species

Weekend celebrating winged creatures a draw for birders

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BOULDER CREEK » The headliner for this weekend at Big Basin Redwoods State Park was the redwood-loving seabird, the mar-

bled murrelet.

The endangered species, whose first North America nest was discovered high in the redwoods at Big Basin 40 years, was willing to share a little limelight on Sunday.

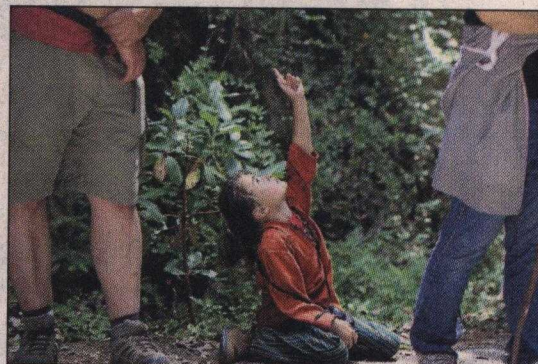
"Guess what, guess what? I saw a ladybug," one of the curious and hardy small children taking part in the "Butterflies and Other Wings" hike excitedly said to a group docent.

Nature enthusiasts, families and outdoors embracers flocked

to the state's oldest park this weekend for a series of educational talks and hikes about birds, butterflies and other winged creatures at the ninth Wings Over the Basin celebration.

Phil Gordon, 79, of Hayward said he returned with his wife to Big Basin to recreate their 2005 experience in seeing marbled murrelets. The couple was among about 40 people gathered Sunday morning for the wrap-up to a se-

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Eight-year-old Sierra Glassman of Santa Cruz points to a California Sister butterfly at Big Basin Redwoods State Park on Sunday.

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ries of docent-led tours.

"This morning we were rewarded with hearing five of them," said Gordon, who teaches an Ohlone Audubon Society bird-watching class for older adults. "It's interesting that they've got the word out. I've led nature walks for a good part of my life. There's a lifelong lesson when you realize you can learn things with all of your senses."

Precocious Sierra Glassman, 8, of Santa Cruz, was quick to take National Park Service Biologist Paul Johnson up on his offer to answer group questions. She said she was curious why she saw a butterfly sitting still on a leaf with its wings folded up one day.

"I could pluck it up like this," Sierra said, demonstrating. "Why wouldn't it be hiding?"

Johnson said butterflies are "cold blooded," and rely on sunlight and warmth to help power their muscles. Perhaps, he said, the butterfly got caught in an unexpected cold patch.

Sierra's mother, Peilan Glassman, said her daughter is such a bird enthusiast that the family has taken her around the world to places like Australia and



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Wildlife enthusiasts gather around National Park Service Biologist Paul Johnson to catch a glimpse of a dead insect at Big Basin Redwoods State Park on Sunday during the "Butterflies and Other Wings" tour.

the Galapagos Islands to see different species up close. Monterey Bay, among the top-ranked birding locations in the country, could do well to hold more children-friendly birding events for those like her daughter, Glassman said.

Park docent Karen DeMello said the walk's attendance had nearly doubled since its last occurrence, and this year showed heavier youth involvement.

"It feels really magical to be with a group of people looking at these winged animals instead of just power hiking. It's noticing the details," DeMello said. "Sometimes you forget that this is a destination place for people all over the world, because it's right in our backyard."

Walk participant Jan Hintermeister, who is a docent himself, said Big Basin has something special — its

large trees.

"(Wings Over the Basin) brings together a bunch of nature people, plus there's campers and the families," said Hintermeister, of Santa Clara. "It's great to spend the weekend."

For more information on future Big Basin Redwoods State Park events or the marbled murrelets, visit bigbasin.org and wingsoverthebasin2014.weebly.com.