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Our corner of the Earth

Umatilla, Echo students explore nature in their own back yards



Staff photos by E.J. Harris

TOP: McNary Heights Elementary School students walk on a road between two man-made ponds in the McNary Wildlife Nature Area during a Earth Day activity on Thursday in Umatilla. **ABOVE:** Umatilla High School senior Yessenia Garcia helps Adrian Correa and Jairo Carranza make a water filter out of sand, rocks and charcoal Thursday during an Earth Day field trip at the McNary Dam in Umatilla.

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

Sometimes the best way to learn about the Earth is to just go out and explore it. Umatilla students spent Thursday doing that on their annual Earth Day field trip. McNary Heights Elementary School students hiked down to McNary Lock and Dam for a day of lessons and games about nature, science, and conservation. From high school students and scientists, they learned about how animals camouflage themselves from predators, and how trees help clean the air.

A group of Umatilla High School students taught about air, water and land pollution.

"We want to show them how hard it is to get rid of pollution," said sophomore Roberto Lugo.

The students had put together some filters made of plastic bottles, sand and rocks. Elementary schoolers could pour colored water through the filters.

"It should come out clear," said UHS junior Ruben Murguia.

Students also learned about the role trees play, contributing everything from food to clean air. Esmerelda Horn, who works for the city of Umatilla, shared with students the city's effort to become a Tree City USA.

"We need a lot of trees to help us filter our air," Horn said.

Horn told students that at the first Arbor Day in 1872, in Nebraska, one million trees were planted.

Students learned that camouflage isn't just blending in with your surroundings.

Pablo Ames, a UHS junior, was dressed in head-to-toe camouflage, an example of "cryptic coloration," or coloring that helps animals blend in to avoid predators.

He also passed around photos of a bright blue frog on a brown branch.

"This is an example of 'warning coloration,'" Ames told students. "The animal is using the color on its body as a warning sign."

Students visited stations run by Blue Mountain Wildlife, which rescues and rehabilitates injured birds of prey. They toured the fish collection station, and talked to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers park rangers.

Karen Sheller, a second grade teacher who has spearheaded planning of the event for the past 10 years, said students always enjoy the chance to get out

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Science as conversation starter

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Americans trust science, but they don't always trust in science findings.

Gail Wells of Oregon State University's extension services office challenged students Thursday at Blue Mountain

Community College, Pendleton, to explore that gap and understand how it can shape government policies.

Wells is a science communicator. She said society was more accepting of science when she was a young girl, and today science can be controversial. She said she developed her presentation, "In

Science We Trust (or do we)," to look at why that happened. The event was part of the college's Arts and Culture Festival.

Most of the 40 or so people in attendance were college students and almost all women. Wells asked them from time to time to

See SCIENCE/3A

Is it spring yet?

An alpaca with a heavy winter coat stands in a field off Highway 395 on Thursday south of Pendleton. Alpacas are New World camelids found in South America. Their hair is called fleece, and it can come in 22 different natural colors.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Deadline looms to register for May 15 primary election

By CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE
Capital Bureau

SALEM — The deadline to register in time to vote in the May 15 primary election is Tuesday, April 24.

As officials prepare more than 2 million ballots for election day, it doesn't hurt to double check to make sure you're registered.

"A lot of people think they're registered when they're not registered," said Marion County Clerk Bill Burgess.

You can see if your registration is active, and see the status of your ballot, at <http://www.oregonvotes.gov> and clicking on the green "My Vote" button.

You can also register to vote at the website. If you'd rather register in person,

you can do so at your local county elections office.

Oregon's constitution says you must be registered to vote at least 20 days before an election to vote in that election. April 24 is also the deadline to select a political party if you want to vote in either the Democratic or Republican primary.

Oregon does have an automatic voter registration law that, if you are eligible, registers you to vote if you go to the Department of Motor Vehicles and perform a "qualifying transaction," such as renewing your driver's license.

At this point, it's best to register either online or in person at a county elections office.

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