

Hunting and Fishing Day draws crowd

BY RAY CHANDLER
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SENECA— Petting black rat snakes and a baby alligator might not be everyone's favorite things, but they for Riley Shepard on Saturday they were even better than shooting arrows from bows and learning to cast a rod and reel.

The 7-year-old from Wallaha was among the estimated more than 800 visitors to the National Hunting and Fishing Day exposition Saturday at the Duke Energy World of Energy center off S.C. 130 near Seneca.

The event marked the third year of the National Fishing and Hunting Day exposition. This year the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources was joined in sponsorship by Duke Energy, Upstate Forever, Clemson University 4-H Shooting Sports, Trout Unlimited, Clemson Extension 4-H, the South Carolina Wildlife Federation, the Harry Hampton Wildlife Fund, the Weatherby Foundation and Calm Waters Kayak Tours in Ware Shoals.

The exposition ran from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m., and all activities were free.

Events included kayaking, fishing, archery, air rifle shooting, fly fishing and fly tying, exhibitions of re-



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Reid Potts, 2, of Westminster looks at moths and butterflies at National Hunting and Fishing Day at Duke Energy World of Energy in Seneca. Visit www.independentmail.com to see more photos of the event.

trieving dogs, simulated deep-sea fishing, exhibits of live animals, butterfly gardening activities, exhibitions of honey bees at work and exercises in camouflage. More than a dozen groups hosted stalls offering information on natural

resources and outdoor activities, including the Foothills Trail Conference, Ducks Unlimited, the Oconee County Parks and Recreation Department, the Keep Oconee Beautiful Association and the Friends of Lake Keowee Society.

"That's not something you see every day," said Garrett Mitchell of Sandy Springs as he touched the pelt of a mink at the South Carolina Trappers Association exhibit.

Nearby were a mink and beaver that were fixed by a taxidermist in permanent poses.

Helped by a staff of volunteers, natural resources department employees demonstrated many aspects of outdoor sports, nature-based recreation and appreciation of nature.

Young and old alike took part in the introduction to kayaking and fishing. Natural resources department employees prepared a short course for kayakers had

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used a net to transform a small portion of the lake off a pier into a fishing lagoon.

Benjamin Lemke, 12, from Windsor, Ontario, was visiting relatives in Clemson and attended. He had never tried hooking a catfish before but succeeded in attracting one after a crash course in casting. He wasn't bothered that it was catch and release.

"They look icky," he said of the fish.

Part of the purpose of the exposition is so those taking part can live and learn.

"National Hunting and Fishing Day is a day for Americans to celebrate their outdoor heritage and participate in wildlife-related, outdoor activities," said natural resources department spokesman Mike Willis in a statement. "DNR and South Carolina Wildlife Federation always plan this educational event that offers hands-on, outdoor learning opportunities for every age group, outdoor-oriented people and urbanites alike. From the novice to the experienced outdoor enthusiast, National Hunting and Fishing Day will offer activities that the whole family can enjoy."

Promoting South Carolina's natural resources is also key to economic development, according to Willis, because natural resources and activities related to them contribute nearly \$30 billion each year and 230,000 jobs to the state economy.