Summer fun kicks off with birds of prey at World of Energy

BY STEPHANIE JADRNICEK
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — Families beat the heat by heading to Duke Energy's World of Energy this week, where Pete Kipp, a falconer with Curtis Wright Falconry, taught a captive audience about birds of prey.

The presentation was the first in a summer series of Wednesdays at the World of Energy — a fun, educational program for children ages 5-12.

Kipp became interested in falconry at the young age of 8. By the time he turned 12, he was already using falcons and other birds of prey for hunting.

He brought two Harris's hawks to the World of Energy's auditorium on Wednesday. The female hawk perched on his forearm as he explained the importance of every part of the natural world.

"Birds of prey are beautiful and fantastic, but they're no more important than the mouse, the snake, the grass and the tree," he said. "In nature, everything has an important purpose and needs our care."

Kipp taught the children how to identify various birds of prey by their wingspan and body shape. For example, a soaring bird with long, angular wings and a streamlined body is most likely a falcon.

He said falcons are the fastest creatures on the planet. In 2005, a peregrine falcon was clocked at 242 mph during a dive.

"They fly up very high, they see prey down below, they close their wings and their body becomes shaped like a missile," Kipp said. "If someone took me up in a plane and pushed me out the door without a parachute, I'd fall at about 120 mph. That's as fast as I could fall — it's called terminal velocity.

"But a peregrine falcon breaks that terminal velocity by cutting through the air molecules with the shape of its body."

At the end of the presentation, a few of the adults volunteered to try their hand at falconry, literally. Each volunteer slipped into a pair of falconry gloves, and the Harris's Hawk flew over and landed on their arm.

Wednesdays at the World of Energy.

Although "Muddy Waters" is completely booked, there are still available spots in the last two programs. Those interested can RSVP for these free activities by calling (864) 873-4600.

"It's important to realize education can be fun. Hopefully, you're being educated and you don't even know it," Duke Energy communications consultant Mikayla Kreuzberger said. "At Duke Energy, we want kids to find education fun from an early stage. Being a part of the community is very important to us, so we look for different ways to bring those educational opportunities to our facility."

stephanie@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6686

World of Energy runs every other week this summer. The next event, planned for June 29, is called "Muddy Waters." It explores the relationship between water and soil in a hands-on lesson from Clemson Extension water resources agents.

Then on July 13, kids will get an up-close experience with a valuable pollinator — the honeybee. They'll view an observation hive that shows various stages of production and try numerous flavors of honey.

The last program, scheduled for July 27, will act as the series' final blast-off. Kids will build rockets out of plastic 2-liter bottles they've brought along and watch their rockets launch from the front lawn at the



REX BROWN | THE JOURNAL

Silas Powell, left, and his sister, Merritt, get a close look at falconer Pete Kipp's Harris's hawk on Wednesday at Duke Energy's World of Energy in Seneca.