The Old Campground

By Ron Rasmussen, SWAP Chair

One can imagine the thoughts of early visitors to what is now the Elfin Forest. The view from Bush Lupine Point across the bay to the sand spit and Black Hill is truly wonderful, and approaching strangers could have been seen while they were still some distance away. The bay and ocean waters provided abundant fish, and in the surrounding hills were bears, deer, and other small game for variety. There was plenty of wood for fires and temporary shelter. What a great place to set up camp.

Now, no campsites are allowed in the Forest, but there is plenty of evidence that it was at one time a very popular stopover. On your next visit to the Elfin Forest, look carefully at the ground along the boardwalk and other trails. The fragments of seashells that you see are evidence that native peoples used this area periodically as a campsite. These “shell middens” likely grew over hundreds or even thousands of years and contain shells from the ocean as well as the mud flats. According to archeological studies, until about 1,000 years ago fish and shellfish provided over 50% of the protein diet for the people. These camps likely were temporary, possibly used during the warmer months, since there is little evidence of permanent dwellings having been constructed. As the climate became cooler and the bay continued to shrink, the people moved to more inland regions and depended less on fishing. More recently, a few semi-permanent shacks were built during the depression years (1930s-1940s), but these are now gone.

Although visitors cannot now “sleep over”, it is easy to imagine how native peoples used the Forest for temporary shelter and as a base for hunting and fishing. Note, especially, that the native vegetation and the ancient oaks are still here, even though the Forest was used as a campsite. Because of the fragile vegetation and unstable sandy soil, “camping”, as we know it today would be unacceptable in the Elfin Forest. Compare the Forest to the layout of the Morro Bay State Park Campground to the north across the mudflats. A similar pattern of asphalt roadways, fire pits, and sanitary facilities would destroy the character of the Elfin Forest. Nevertheless, we occasionally find evidence that someone would like to set up housekeeping in the Forest. Trash, sleeping bags and even a tent have been found recently. When visiting the Elfin Forest, enjoy it for what it is: a unique example of the coastal dunes and chaparral, that has a long history of enjoyment by native peoples as well as recent visitors like ourselves.

Sarafian/Meyer Obtain Endangered Species Permit

By Pete Sarafian, Conservation Chair

On June 29, 2005 Pete Sarafian and Bob Meyer were awarded an endangered species permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The permit will allow work in the Elfin Forest that includes surveying for, and moving endangered Morro Shoulderband Snails. The permit ultimately will allow herbicide use on weeds that cannot be removed by hand such as smilax (*Asparagus asparagoides*). The permit is the culmination of at least five years of effort that included financing and project management by San Luis Obispo County Parks Department, and recovery plan formulation by the Morro Group, Inc.

Visitors to the Elfin Forest ...

The Hathaway family, who recently moved to Los Osos from Bakersfield, are regular visitors to the Elfin Forest. They enjoy looking at birds, and taking their Yorkshire Terrier, Bridget, for a walk. Left to right are Frances Hathaway (age 91), Vernon and Maria Hathaway. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.
Let’s All Pull Together!

Weed Warriors are such busy souls. They have no time for weed control. And that is why in times like these, there are so many blasted weeds!

If you could spare a few hours Sat., then bring your gloves and boots and hat.
To do a restoration dance, The Elfin Forest to enhance.
Yours in the bond of weeding.

-- Pete Sarafian

SWAP First Saturday Work Parties

Are held at 9 a.m. to noon on the first Saturday of each month. Volunteers should meet at the north end of 15th Street. Dress for sun and wind and bring work gloves if you can. Some work gloves, tools and drinking water are provided. Call 528-0392.

Where To Call, Where To Write

If you have questions about SWAP activities or want to volunteer, please call 528-0392 and leave a message. A recorded message will have information about our 3rd Saturday Walks, Work Saturdays, and other events.

If you have questions, concerns or comments about any problems in the Elfin Forest, call or write:
Chuck Lowe, SLO County Parks Supervising Ranger,
1087 Santa Rosa Street, SLO, CA 93408, (805) 781-4417.

Owners of dogs off-leash can be cited. If you witness dogs off-leash, vandalism or obvious crimes, call the County Sheriff at 781-4550.

SWAP at Family Fun Fest

By Pat Sarafian

Once again our wonderful booth volunteers responded to the call on Sunday, June 5. From 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, Second Street in Baywood Park was filled with young and old folks enjoying the variety of events celebrating Family Fun Fest.

At 6:45 a.m. Ron Rasmussen, Pete and Pat Sarafian began to set up the booth display. Long-time faithful supporters, the soft-spoken yet energetic couple Curt and Sandra Beebe opened up our booth as the first shift workers, getting it off to a roaring start.

First-time booth workers, Donna Banks and her mother Nancy Severson (long time SWAP supporter and a spark plug lady of 85) teamed with Pat Sarafian during the next shift. Donna, one of our Weed Warriors, did an excellent job promoting the efforts of the Weed Warriors, and managed to get a few folks to add their names to the Volunteer Signup list. Volunteers are really needed to help out on the first Saturday of each month for a work day in the Elfin Forest. Around mid-day, the wind picked up and seemed determined to blow everything over, but our unflappable booth workers kept everything in order.

T-shirts, mural prints created by our local artist Barbara Rosenthal, Bob Meyer’s beautiful photo note cards with envelopes, and our fantastic new revised Pocket Guide were all on sale. Scott Danielson and his daughter Rosaly, along with Katie Davis, had a good time working together. Both Scott and Katie are primary school teachers. Rosaly did a great job passing out brochures and getting Fun Fest visitors to guess the contents of the Mystery Socks, which hold surprises that might be found out in the Elfin Forest.

Folks coming by also enjoyed trying to identify where their home might be on the large 1937 aerial photo display of our area. Finishing up the last shift for the day were Madeline and James (better known as JT) Taylor, and June Wright. Their faithfulness in helping out is so very appreciated. This dynamite trio not only did their 2-hour time at the booth but stayed around to help Ron Rasmussen dismantle the booth, load everything onto the truck, and return it all to the SWAP storage shed.

Our volunteers’ service to SWAP is so very much appreciated. A BIG THANKS to ALL for contributing to a very successful and fun day!
San Luis Obispo County Prehistory

By John W. Parker, Ph.D.

Ed. Note: Dr. Parker will lead SWAP’s Third Saturday Walk in the Elfin Forest on August 20, at 9:30 a.m. He’ll talk about the Chumash and other long-ago inhabitants of the Forest. See walk description on page 5.

Radiocarbon dates, obsidian hydration analysis, and stylistic artifacts all indicate that people have been living in this area as early as 9,800 B.P. (before the present). The Chumash language is part of the Hokan language family. Researchers consider the Hokan languages to be the oldest in the New World. Evidence from Northern California indicates that Hokan speakers were here as early as 12,000 to 14,000 years ago.

During the last 3,000 years before European contact, the Chumash culture in San Luis Obispo County had well-defined village territories with a regional government system and class structure. Main villages (housing 200 or more people) were used most of the year and situated to take advantage of the most abundant resource areas. The reliability of coastal resources (shellfish, sea mammals, birds, and fish) seems to have focused much of the population along the coast. Hunting and acorn collecting camps in the mountains would have been used in the fall and spring. A trade, exchange, and food taxation system made sure that everyone had enough to eat, even during drought years. Shell and stone bead currency formed a money economy. As part of the economy, items were bought from members of one village and either used or sold to another. Dramatic evidence of this economy has turned up in local sites where pieces of obsidian (volcanic glass) have been discovered. These stone tool pieces came from as far away as the Oregon border and east of Yosemite. Both shell and soapstone beads have been found in most sites inhabited within the past 1,000 years.

By 1500 A.D., European-introduced diseases such as measles, mumps, chickenpox, influenza, and tuberculosis were already taking their toll on the local natives. It is estimated that one-third of San Luis Obispo’s Native American population was already dead by the time the first European explorer sailed up the coast. During the early 1800’s, those few that were left were either forced or voluntarily moved to the Spanish Missions, taking with them only memories of their traditional culture.

Dr. John Parker to Speak at SWAP’s Annual Meeting

The Los Osos/Morro Bay Chapter of SWAP will hold its Annual Meeting and Volunteer Appreciation on Saturday, October 15, from noon to 2:00 p.m. As in past years, our meeting place will be at the Church of the Nazarene, 1480 Santa Ysabel at South Bay Blvd. in Los Osos.

Our guest speaker this year will be archaeologist John Parker, Ph.D., whose topic will be “Morro Bay Chumash Culture Before and After European Contact.” SWAP’s hard-working Weed Warriors, booth workers and other volunteers will be honored, and the SWAP Treasurer and Conservation Chair will give their annual reports.

SWAP BOARD OF DIRECTORS
The Board of Directors of the Los Osos/Morro Bay Chapter of Small Wilderness Area Preservation (SWAP) consists of the following members:
- Ron Rasmussen, Chair
- Pete Sarafian, Vice Chair
- Bob McDougle, Treasurer
- Yolanda Waddell, Secretary
- Bob Meyer, Member at Large
- Pat Sarafian, Member at Large

SWAP BOARD MEETINGS
The SWAP Board of Directors meets on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Coast National Bank, 1193 Los Osos Valley Road. The next meetings are Monday, August 8, and Monday, September 12.
All Board meetings are open to the public.
To confirm the date, time and location (which are subject to change), phone 528-0392.
Dry Weeds Drop Seeds

With the advent of the summer dry season, the SWAP Weed Warriors were called out in May, June and July to catch up with the weeds in the Elfin Forest. The efforts were mostly gathering weed seeds before they fell to the ground. With heavy rainfall, the weeds had gotten ahead of us this year. The Warriors had to make up for lost time. Only with the persistence of our Wonderful, Weekend Weed Warriors and some well-timed assistance from the California Conservation Corps (CCC) could we catch up with our invasives this year.

In May the Warriors attacked grasses on the 11th Street trail in an overlook area known as Butterfly Hill. In June the Warriors worked the highway embankment on South Bay Boulevard and mopped up invasive grasses in areas worked earlier by CCC crews. In July the Warriors visited the Morro Bay State Park section of the Forest and pulled out Italian thistle that had been weed whacked earlier in the year by State Parks personnel.

The volunteers for this period included Jay Bonestell, Steve Cake, Donna Chance, Charles Leberman, Bob and Sharon Meyer, Ron Rasmussen, Pete and Pat Sarafian, Yolanda Waddell, Jean Wheeler and Linda Young. Much thanks to all of you for helping restore the Elfin Forest to native conditions. Special thanks again go to Dr. Tom Richards for providing expertise, monitoring for the endangered Morro Shoulderband Snail.

CCC Irrigates Revegetation Plants

SWAP encountered a last-minute change of plans this summer. The previous contractor that SWAP had used to water seedlings couldn’t provide watering services again this year. Already in June, a large number of plants from last year’s large revegetation project were showing signs of heat stress. A quick call to the CCC arranged for substitute personnel to do the watering. Starting in mid-June a trio of young Corps members came out for two days at a time to water nearly 1,000 surviving plants. They will be out in the Elfin Forest watering twice each month until the winter rainy season.

Thank you to the CCC for saving the revegetation project this year!

Plant Inventory Reveals Good Survival Rate

In June, SWAP Conservation Committee members Bob Meyer and Pete Sarafian did a revegetation project plant inventory. Roughly 1,650 native seedlings were planted in 2004 in the largest revegetation project in Elfin Forest history. Bob and Pete determined that an average of 64% of the seedlings survived the year. This compares favorably with typical revegetation projects in other areas around California having a survival rate of about two-thirds. The plant count showed that natives such as sagebrush, mock heather, coastal buckwheat, wallflower and black sage did much better than the average. In some cases, the seedlings had grown so large that the wire protective cages had to be removed from them. Conversely, ceanothus and silver dune lupine did poorly. The inventory also provided evidence that sowing native seeds last year resulted in many small native plants coming up during the winter. Hopefully, many of these will survive as well and help to fill in bare sand areas.

“He that plants trees loves others beside himself.”
Dr. Thomas Fuller (1654 - 1734), Gnomologia, 1732

-- articles by Pete Sarafian, Conservation Chair
WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

Third (and Second) Saturday Walks

August 20, 9:30 a.m. - Archaeology Walk

Renowned archaeologist, Dr. John Parker, will tell us about the long-ago inhabitants of the Elfin Forest and the Central Coast. As he leads us along the boardwalk, he’ll take us back to the times of the ancient people who preceded the Chumash, and will show us how archaeologists can determine the rise and fall of the ocean’s level by studying human habitations. He’ll show examples of technology development through the ages, and will give us a word image of everyday life in the Elfin Forest during the time of the Chumash, including stories about Chumash money, economy and trade. This walk will open up a complex world of the Elfin Forest’s inhabitants for us, one that we would never suspect while walking along the boardwalk today.

September 17, 9:30 a.m. - Reptile Walk

Join herpetologist and Cuesta College biology instructor Ron Ruppert as he tours the Elfin Forest in search of the Coast Horned Lizard and the various resident reptiles and amphibians. Since it is often difficult to find the real thing, Ron will bring some reptile skins and perhaps a live critter or two so walk participants can see what some of those small and retiring Forest inhabitants look like. Learn how these elfin creatures survive and protect themselves from predators and, yes - boys! By the way, there are no rattlesnakes in the Elfin Forest.

October 8, 8:30 a.m. - Pre-Big Sit! Walk
(Second Saturday - Note earlier time)

This Second Saturday walk, beginning at 8:30 a.m., will be a pre-Big Sit! walk. (The actual Big Sit!, an international event coordinated by the New Haven (Connecticut) Bird Club, will take place on Sunday, October 9.) Birder Jim Royer, who coordinates the Elfin Forest Big Sit! at Bush Lupine Point, will lead the Saturday walk. Join Jim in finding and identifying 40 to 60 species of birds throughout the Elfin Forest. This walk is for those who just enjoy looking at birds as well as for more experienced birders. You’ll come away knowing more about birds, their calls, their habits and habitats.

October 15, 9:30 a.m. - Literary Stroll
(Third Saturday)

Do you enjoy having someone read to you? Here’s your chance! Take a literary stroll through the Elfin Forest with Robert Pavlik. Bob has an interesting job -- he’s a historian for Caltrans, and his book collection includes many by California natural history writers. As you stroll along the boardwalk with him, Bob will introduce you to a variety of authors and poets who have written about natural history, and will apply their perceptions to the Central Coast.

Calling All Birders: Your Skills Are Needed!

Break out those binoculars and spotting scopes and join other experienced shorebirders for the Morro Bay National Estuary Program’s Volunteer Monitoring Program (VMP) fall shorebirding effort. The VMP is seeking volunteers with shorebird identification experience for a census on Saturday, August 27 from 8:30 am to noon. Under the coordination of the Point Reyes Bird Observatory, shorebird surveys were conducted in Morro Bay between April 1988 and August 1994. Using the same protocol, the VMP has continued the effort with spring and fall surveys since 2003. Birders will be observing from land with spotting scopes, from kayaks or canoes on the water, from the Sandspit, and from Morro Strand from Morro Rock to the Rocky Point (Northpoint).

Collecting these data will provide a view of the variability of shorebird numbers seasonally and annually, with the overall goal of tracking long-term trends. Shorebirds are an important bio-indicator of the health of the bay and the Pacific Flyway.

If you are interested in participating, please call Ann Kitajima or Annie Gillespie at the NEP office at 772-3834. Please respond by August 12 to participate.
Bonnie’s drawing for this issue represents a second species with “ouchies” scattered randomly over the surface of the stem. “Ouchies” with this distribution are derived from the surface layer of the stem (epidermis) and are known as prickles. The other common genus with prickles is the California blackberry (*Rubus ursinua*) which was discussed in the August-September 2004 issue. This “ouchie” is our common California rose (*Rosa californica*).

The California rose is moderately tall with rather stout curved prickles and pointedly tipped leaflets. California rose is locally common throughout our area, ranging north into Southern Oregon, south into Northern Baja California and east to the mid elevations of the Sierra Nevada. California rose favors stream banks or seeps and woods edges. In the Elfin Forest, it is most easily seen from the northwest corner of the Boardwalk loop near where the spur to Siena’s View overlook branches off. This area has the most optimal soil moisture availability in the Elfin Forest.

Most readers probably recognized the drawing as a rose right off. Its flowers are very characteristic. The five large, pink to red petals, many stamens and prickly stem give it away. The reddish fruits are called hips and might bear some explaining. They are what botanists call an accessory fruit. This is because the fruit’s flesh is not derived from ovary tissue. The many ovaries within a rose flower mature into many dry double-layered structures, often mistakenly called seeds, like its relative the strawberry. The outer layer is the fruit wall and the inner layer is the seed coat. Botanists call this fruit type an achene. The many achenes are enclosed by a fleshy red layer that develops from a vase-shaped structure derived from the fused bases of the stamens, petals and sepals. Botanists call this structure a hypanthium, calyx tube or floral cup.

The rose flower and hip have a long history of use by humans as food and medicine. A tea was made from the petals and both humans and wildlife ate the hips. One World War II story tells that the English were having trouble getting citrus into the country due to the German submarine activity. This meant they had trouble getting enough vitamin C, so they went on an active search for a local source. They were surprised to find it in a plant that every respectable English person had in his or her garden, the rose. I read that rose hips have more vitamin C, calcium, phosphorus, and iron than oranges. One can guess that a lot of rose hip tea was consumed during the war years. Rose hip tea is available from local health food stores and my references indicate that all of the rose species can be used in this way, but that some are more palatable than others. Personal experience can recommend wild rose hips as a pleasant nibble during late summer and fall hikes.

Bonnie’s drawing and this article were inspired by a plant we purchased at a local plant sale. Since it is a plant of moist soils, it is more at home in a watered garden. It should be planted in full sun, but it can tolerate partial shade. It doesn’t seem to have any soil preference.

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**Forty-Fourth in a Series**

**California Rose**

*By Dirk Walters, Ph.D.; Drawings by Bonnie Walters*

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**Elfin Forest Sightings**

SWAP Conservation Committee member Bob Meyer maintains, “You just never know what you’re going to find in the Elfin Forest. For instance, take a look at the pictured item found in the revegetation area just to the north of Bush Lupine Point. It’s a shark egg case!”

Bob muses, “Does that mean we need to add a new species to the recently published Elfin Forest Pocket Guide? Does it also mean we should post signs saying ‘BEWARE land sharks’? No, since the egg was found on a heavily used raccoon trail it probably means that some raccoon went fishing at low tide in one of the mud flat channels and got himself a nice really baby Horn Shark snack.”

Coyote sightings continue as Pat and Larry Grimes report, “right near the intersection at Siena’s view we were face to face with a coyote right in the middle of the enclosure to your right as you walk downhill toward the celestial meadow. That was a first for us. We had just noticed some fur near the edge of the boardwalk and had been commenting how the plentiful food must be supporting more bunnies which would eventually draw predators and there he was!”

Also, most likely drawn by the presence of the large rabbit population, a bobcat was observed trotting in the Elfin Forest west of Bush Lupine Point. A Los Osos resident saw it in late May/ early June, per Pete Sarafian.

This being a wet year, the Elfin Forest’s orchid, the Rein orchid (*Piperia elegans*) (photo at right by Yolanda Waddell, digitally improved by Bob Meyer) put in an appearance along the Orchid Trail, above South Bay Boulevard. When the orchid is in bud, it looks much like a thin asparagus stalk, but when it blooms (see photo), there is a row of dainty greenish-white orchids running the length of its stem.
Thank You to Our New and Renewing Members

Compiled by Wendy Brown, SWAP Database Coordinator

NEW MEMBERS:
Mary Baker
Gary Giannico*

Al Normandin
Charles and Anne Olsen*

RENEWING MEMBERS:
Thomas H. Alden & M. Sinel*
Pat Brown*
Steve & Sue Burns*
Diane Clement*
Jan Clucas*
Paul Crafts
E. Craig Cunningham
David & Evelyn Dabritz*
Elsie and Jerome Deitz*
Francesca Fairbrother
Frank Freiler*
Sterling & Virginia Gottlieb*

Susan & Pascal Grimaud*
Charles W. Hallstrom*
Beverly Hardy*
Mary Harrison*
R.J. & Paula Henderson*
Joseph Johnson*
Heidi Kausch*
Mike & Melissa Leahy
Norman MacGillivray*
Barbara Machado*
Sheila C. Montooth*
Morro Group, Inc.*

Denise Fourie & Mike Multari*
Barbara Murray*
Ray O’Dell*
Brenda Ostrander*
Nancy G. Page*
Joan V. Powell*
Nancy E. Ruhl*
Carolyn Schanberger*
Deborah E. Schreiber*
Dr. Jan W. Simek*
Jeri Walsh*
Bonnie & Les Wamsley*
Ruth L. Zank

*Thanks to those listed above who donated more than the $12 membership dues.
The additional donations will be used for special projects in the Elfin Forest.

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SWAP Shoppers Order Form

1. MURAL SHIRTS (Older Design) - circle sizes
   Words on shirt: “El Moro Elfin Forest Natural Area,
   Small Wilderness Area Preservation, Los Osos, California”
   ___ Short Slv. T-Shirt (med., Lg, XLg, XXLg, XXXLg) @ $15.00 = _____
   ___ Long Slv. T-Shirt (med., Lg, XLg, XXLg, XXXLg) @ $17.00 = _____
   ___ Sweatshirt (med., Lg, XLg, XXLg, XXXLg) @ $25.00 = _____

2. MURAL SHIRTS (New Design) - circle sizes
   ___ Short Slv. T-Shirt (Sm, Med, Lg, XLg, XXLg, XXXLg) @ $15.00 = _____
   ___ Long Slv. T-Shirt (Sm, Med, Lg, XLg, XXLg, XXXLg) @ $17.00 = _____
   ___ Sweatshirt (Sm, Med, Lg, XLg, XXLg, XXXLg) @ $25.00 = _____

3. PHOTOS OF THE ELFIN FOREST
   Original photo note cards by Bob Meyer ___ @ $3.00 = _____
   Original photo postcards by Bob Meyer ___ @ $1.00 = _____

4. MURAL PRINTS
   signed 5 1/2” X 17” prints by artist, Barbara Rosenthal
   ___ Black matted Mural @ $20.00 = _____

5. NEW POCKET GUIDE
   Useful 56-page guide of plants & animals of the Elfin Forest @ $2.00 = _____

SUBTOTAL (Prices include tax) _____
Shipping cost if outside of Los Osos/Morro Bay each Pocket Guide $0.90 = _____
all other items $2.50 = _____
TOTAL OF ORDER _____

(Please print when filling order — and indicate HOW MANY)
Name ____________________________________________________________
Phone (with Area code) ________________________________
Address _________________________________________________________
City/State/Zip ___________________________________________________

Make checks payable and mail to:
SWAP, P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412-6642.
Call-in orders may also be made: (805) 528-0392

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New Item!

SWAP has recently published a 56-page Pocket Guide update titled, “Plants and Animals of the Elfin Forest Natural Area.” It contains lists of the Forest’s mammals; reptiles and amphibians; birds; common arthropods including a separate list of butterflies and moths; gastropods; a descriptive list of vascular plants, mushrooms; and a 56-species list of lichens. There is also a Habitat Map of the Elfin Forest.

The Pocket Guide sells for $2.00.
MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name____________________________________________
Address___________________________________________
City/State/Zip__________________________________________
Phone  __________________________________________

Q New Member  Q Renewing Member
Q Member $12  Q Defender $100
Q Steward $25  Q Champion $250
Q Protector $50  Q Guardian $500
Q Life Member $1000
Q I want to help, please call me!

Memberships include a subscription to
SWAP’s bimonthly newsletter, Oakleaves.
All donations to SWAP are tax-deductible.
EVERY membership counts!
Make checks payable to: SWAP.
Mail to: Small Wilderness area Preservation,
P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412-6442.

Boardwalk Vegetation Trimmers Needed

The shrubs next to our boardwalks and trails keep encroaching on our walkways. SWAP could use some help in trimming back these rambunctious plants. If interested, please leave a message for Pat Sarafian at the SWAP message phone, 528-0392. She will train you and then work together with you when time is convenient for you both. This is needed only a few times each year.

Volunteers Also Needed For Oktoberfest

SWAP will have a booth at the Baywood Park Oktoberfest on Sunday, October 30. We need volunteers to talk with visitors, give out literature, and sell T-shirts. If you can work a two-hour shift between 9:00 am and 4:00 pm on that day, please call SWAP’s message phone at 528-0392. Give your name, shift preference, and phone number. Someone will respond to your call within 24 hours.

Join us -- you’ll have fun!