



OAK LEAVES

A PUBLICATION OF THE LOS OSOS / MORRO BAY CHAPTER OF SMALL WILDERNESS AREA PRESERVATION
P.O. BOX 6442, LOS OSOS, CALIFORNIA 93412-6442 ❖ (805) 528-0392 ❖ OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2015

SWAP Members Are Stewards of the Elfin Forest

By Ron Rasmussen, SWAP Chair

When in 1994 SWAP became caretaker of the Elfin Forest, SWAP's membership automatically became its stewards. At that time the goals were stopping the spread of noxious non-native plants, encouraging the regrowth of natives, and controlling access by visitors. In the past 20 years much has been accomplished and now additional activities are underway. Most of these activities depend on the continued support by SWAP members. Some examples are:

CONSERVATION. Weeds are a continuing problem and monthly work parties address their control. The boardwalk was built in 1999 and now requires continuous maintenance. Trash is also a problem that is addressed by SWAP members.

EDUCATION. The Elfin Forest is now more in its native condition, and students from elementary through college levels regularly visit the Forest to learn how environmental conditions (rather than human behavior) affect the habitat. For example, habitats in the Elfin Forest range from very dry "Coastal Dune Scrub" at the south edge to "Riparian" at the north edge along Los Osos Creek and "Maritime Chaparral" on the higher eastern edge. The kinds of plants and animals present vary with the habitats. Free monthly

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SWAP Annual Celebration

Date: Saturday, October 10, 2015

Time: Noon to 2:30 p.m.

Place: Morro Shores Mobile Home Park

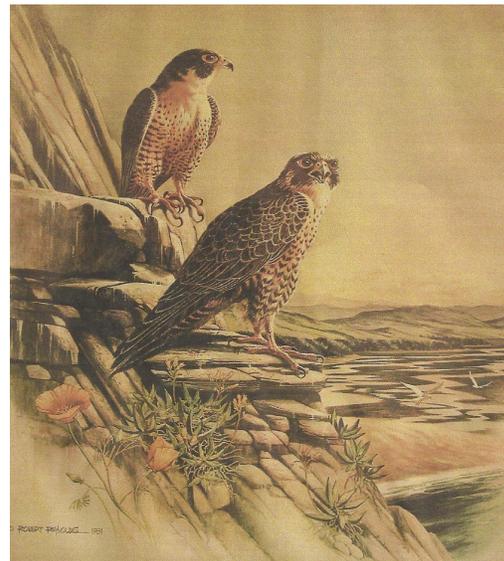
Community Room, 633 Ramona Ave., Los Osos

Speaker: Bob Isenberg, Pacific Coast Peregrine Watch

"Life and Loves of the Peregrine Falcon"

SWAP members and the public are invited to our annual "SWAP Meet" to hear naturalist and bird behaviorist Bob Isenberg speak about Peregrine Falcons, especially those that roost, nest and raise their young at Morro Rock.

Prior to Bob Isenberg's talk, SWAP Chair Ron Rasmussen will conduct a brief business meeting that includes election by SWAP members of candidates for our Board of Directors. The candidates this year are incumbents Pat Akey, Patricia Murray and Yolanda



Waddell, and Board member nominee Skip Rotstein. Board members are elected for a two-year period. A light lunch will be provided for those attending. There is no charge for this event, but donations will be accepted.

Masters of Morro Rock by Robert Reynolds (1981)

Photo by Ron Rasmussen.

Silent Auction of Robert Reynolds Print

The photo accompanying this invitation shows a painting of a pair of Peregrine Falcons. There will be a silent auction of a signed print of this painting during the Annual Celebration. The winning bid will be announced after Bob Isenberg's talk.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*of the Los Osos/Morro Bay Chapter of
Small Wilderness Area Preservation (SWAP)
consists of the following members:*

Ron Rasmussen, Chair

Jan DiLeo, Treasurer

Yolanda Waddell, Corresponding Secretary

Carrie Arnold, Recording Secretary

Pat Akey, Member at Large

Vicky Johnsen, Member at Large

Pat Murray, Member at Large

Skip Rotstein, Member at Large

The SWAP Board of Directors meets monthly at 7 p.m. at the Community Room, Morro Shores Mobile Home Park, 633 Ramona Ave., Los Osos.

The next meetings are

**Thursday, October 8,
and Thursday, November 12.**

All Board meetings are open to the public.

To confirm the date, time and location

(which are subject to change),

call (805) 528-0392.



CONTACT SWAP

If you have questions about SWAP activities or want to volunteer, please call

(805) 528-0392 and leave a message.

A recorded message will give 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: Mark Wagner

SLO County Parks Supervising Ranger

1087 Santa Rosa Street, SLO, CA 93408

(805) 781-1196

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

or Mark Wagner at 781-1196.



SWAP Joins Morro Bay Merchants Street Fair

In July, we received an invitation from Neil and Lorraine Farrell, coordinators of the Morro Bay Merchant Association's Summer Street Fair to participate with our booth. They wanted to create an "Eco Corner" of the street fair, with environmental groups like SWAP. The SWAP Board agreed to join the Fair, held on Sunday, August 2nd.

Ron Rasmussen, Jan DiLeo and Dave Moran set up the booth. Shifts were taken by Katie and Gerry Davis, Lannie Erickson, Vicky Johnsen, Chris Van Beveren, Yolanda Waddell and Beth Wimer. Vicky Johnsen, Ron, and Yolanda and Jay Waddell did the take-down.

The weather was lovely, a number of visitors were interested in the Elfin Forest, and we sold some merchandise. Thanks to all who helped. In the attached photo (by Yolanda Waddell), Vicky Johnsen talked to a young visitor who wanted to buy a refrigerator magnet.



SWAP Adds Caps to Our Merchandise

After volunteering for the Morro Bay Bird Festival in January, Vicky Johnsen brought to the SWAP Board meeting a cap that she had purchased at the Festival, and liked very much. The Board agreed that it would be a fine idea to have an Elfin Forest cap for volunteers to wear, and to sell as merchandise. Vicky checked with some local sport apparel and screen printing firms, and found the cap that we liked at Dolphin Shirt Co. in San Luis Obispo. We settled on two colors: forest green and burgundy. The design on the front of the cap is in gold stitching and says "Elfin Forest Natural Area" and the SWAP oak tree logo is stitched below. Cost of the cap is \$15. For a photo of the two new caps, see our order form on page 11. The caps also can be purchased at SWAP's booth at the Los Osos Oktoberfest on Sunday, October 25 (see page 12). Thanks to Vicky for coming up with a great idea!

Hamill Family Foundation Gives Generous Gifts to SWAP

By Yolanda Waddell

In April, 2014, SWAP's Treasurer, Jan DiLeo, received a rather puzzling phone call from the Hamill Family Foundation in Chicago, asking for verification of our non-profit status. Jan provided the information, and a short while later a check for \$1,000 arrived. We were told in the accompanying letter that a Los Osos resident had recommended the contribution to them.

This year, in July, the Hamill Family Foundation sent a check for \$2,000, recommended by the same Los Osos resident, who prefers to remain anonymous. It was certainly most unusual for a foundation in Chicago to send contributions to a small non-profit in Los Osos, California. I decided to do some research.

I learned that the Hamill Family Foundation was founded by "Corky" Hamill, a conservationist and community leader who passed away in 2013 at age 99. He was active in Openlands, a non-profit dedicated to protecting the natural and open spaces of northeastern Illinois. Members of his family can request that Hamill Family Foundation funds be contributed to worthy conservation projects.

The SWAP Board is most grateful to have received contributions from the Hamill Family Foundation. I was told by our local benefactor that SWAP displays what the Hamill Foundation stands for: a strong passion for nature and conservation. He says, "The Elfin Forest is incredible," and thanks us for our efforts to restore it to its original state – a small wilderness.



Vicky Johnsen and Ron Rasmussen presented information about the Elfin Forest to Cuesta College biology students.
Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

Cuesta College Biology Class Walk

Shortly after the Cuesta College Fall Semester began in August, we received a request from biology instructor Steve Hendricks for a guided walk for his Environmental Biology Lab class. His class consisted of 22 students, mostly non-biology majors. Ron Rasmussen and Vicky Johnsen offered to be the docents for the group.

Ron informed Steve that they would cover "the origin of the Forest and the variety of habitats that have resulted from environmental conditions, e.g. the height above sea level, exposure to sun and wind, and access to ground water. During the day few animals other than birds and lizards are up and about." They also told the class about the governmental agencies that have management responsibilities in the area, the Chumash middens, and effects of the boardwalk as environmental mitigation.

In addition to Ron's handout, a habitat map of the Elfin Forest, Ron set up a display of two aerial photos, one taken in 1988 and the other in 2011, showing the return of the Forest to a more pristine condition after many years of care by SWAP.

Stewards *continued from page 1*

Nature Walks are scheduled and are posted on SWAP's bulletin board along the boardwalk, the website, and in *Oakleaves* and other local publications. SWAP also offers free docent-led walks to special groups.

INTERACTION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS.

Because the Elfin Forest is located on Morro Bay, the activities of SWAP are of interest to the Morro Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP). Therefore, SWAP's control of erosion and animal wastes are important. In that regard, SWAP's members provide funds for "Mutt Mitts" that are available at each entrance to the Forest.

Whether you are a contributing member, an active member or both, you are to be congratulated on being a steward of that very special small wilderness, the El Moro Elfin Forest Natural Area.

Thinking of Switching to Online *Oakleaves*?

Tired of looking at that pile of newsletters and magazines waiting to be read? If you use your computer a lot, we encourage you to take a look at the online *Oakleaves* at www.elfin-forest.org. Being able to see the 20 or so photos in full color makes it a very attractive alternative to the black-and-white printed copy. If you miss an issue for some reason, it is there, waiting for you. Simply click on "Forest Library," then "Oakleaves Index" and finally the year and month of the issue that you want to read. Just e-mail us at oakleaves@elfin-forest.org with the subject: Switch me to online.

Soils of the Elfin Forest, Part 1

By Lynn Moody, Ph.D.; Illustration by Jean Wheeler

Soils form the basis of every terrestrial and many aquatic ecosystems, including natural and managed communities. Ecological functions of soil include serving as a medium for plant growth and habitat for organisms, recycling of organic matter and nutrients, purification and storage of water, carbon storage, and as a medium for human development.

These functions are intimately interrelated. Recycling of nutrients directly affects soils' function as a medium for plants – plants obtain water and all their essential nutrients from soil, with the exception of carbon and oxygen. Soil also serves to anchor plant roots, provides some buffering from temperature extremes, and is habitat for microorganisms that in turn have some very important functions for plants. The Elfin Forest is a mosaic of plant communities that have evolved along with the soils in response to environmental and temporal factors unique to this part of the California coast.

In Pedology (the science of soil formation), we say that soils form in response to five soil forming factors. This ecological principle was set down by Dr. Hans Jenny of the University of California, Berkeley, in 1941. These soil forming factors are parent material (the geological materials that soils form from and in), topography (the shape of the landscape), climate (the long-term assemblage of weather conditions), and biological activity (the action of plants, animals, and microorganisms). The fifth soil forming factor is time – that is, how long the soil has been forming.

Elfin Forest soils are forming in Pleistocene-age (about two million to 10,000 years before the present) sand dunes, emplaced during sea level lows during the Ice Ages. These sand dunes are composed of fine and very fine sands (with a few coarser layers and lenses), and mineralogically consist of about 1/3 quartz, 1/3 feldspars, and 1/3 “other” minerals. Topography in the Los Osos area was similar to the present time, with elevations from sea level to a few feet above, although the Morro Bay estuary itself did not exist until the Holocene (most recent) geological era.

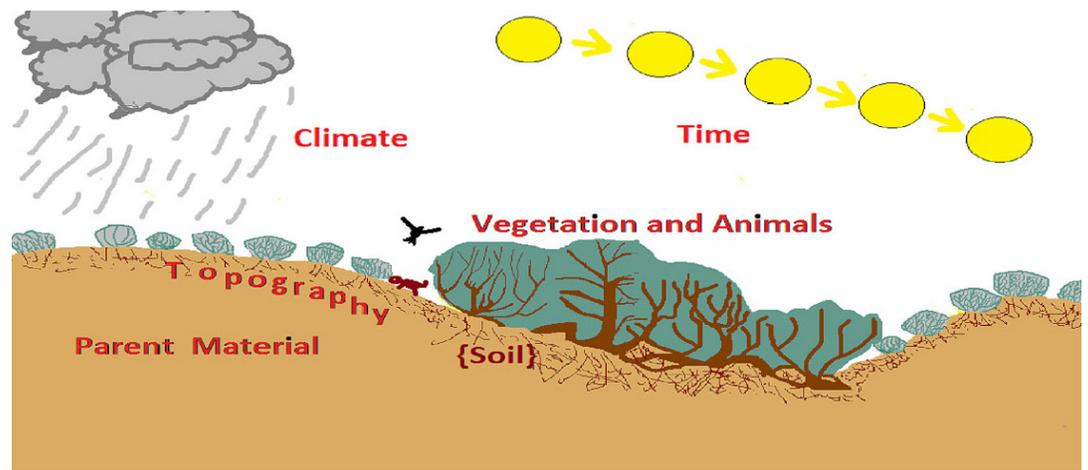
The climate in the coastal California area throughout the Pleistocene and into the present era most likely has been about what it is now – semi-arid possibly with periods rainier than now, average temperatures mostly in the 50 to 60 degree F range, frequent fogs, rare frosts, and winds dominantly from the northwest.

The biota of the dunes from their emplacement to the present time was probably similar to what it is now, with some changes in large animal life. The Chumash people seasonally occupied what is now the Elfin Forest, and they did indeed have an influence on the soils. They deposited mollusk shells and other plant and animal remains in middens which are now incorporated into the soils.

In the 1970's and 1980's, the soils in this area were all mapped as the Baywood series in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Survey of San Luis Obispo County, Coastal Part. The Baywood series was first described and officially established in 1928. The series type location is in Baywood, California in San Luis Obispo County, also home of the Elfin Forest. The series extends within a few miles of the coastline from Sonoma County southward to Santa Barbara County.

Soils in the Baywood series are deep, sandy, and excessively drained (meaning, they do not retain water and show no features related to a water table within 1.5 meters of the surface). The surface soil often is water repellent when dry; but after moisture does penetrate the surface, the soils exhibit very rapid permeability. Except for a darkened surface horizon, the Baywood series soils show very little profile development. In some locations, the subsurface has lamellae, which are thin layers or bands of clay accumulation. This clay accumulation is pedogenic – that is, a soil forming process, as opposed to a geologic process.

Two characteristics of these sandy soils stand out: low water holding ability (we say the soils are “droughty”) and low in fertility (nutrient content). How do plants cope with the challenge of low nutrient content? The coping strategies are wonders of ecological adaptation!



The Five Soil-Forming Factors

Ed. Note: This article will be concluded with Part 2 in the next issue, December 2015/January 2016.

Mock Heather

By Dirk Walters, Ph.D.; drawing by Bonnie Walters

Ed. Note: Revised by Dr. Walters from December 1999 issue.

Bonnie's drawing for this month is of mock heather (*Ericameria ericoides* or *Haplopappus ericoides*). In our area, mock heather is a dominant shrub of stabilized dunes. So common is it here, and so rare is it in other situations, that the presence of significant numbers of mock heather can be used as an indicator of stabilized dune scrub. In the Elfin forest, it is common in the drier areas where the soil is very sandy and drainage is high. The species should be in full bloom as you read this. Shortly, as it finishes its bloom the plants will become literally covered with white fuzzy fruits. The fuzz is the result of the bristle-like calyx (pappus) and functions as an aid in wind dispersal of the fruit (achenes). The species ranges along the coast from Point Reyes to Los Angeles County.

Mock or false heather is a member of the sunflower family or Asteraceae (Compositae). This family is characterized by bearing its tiny flowers in flower-like clusters called heads. Within the head are two types of flowers. Most conspicuous in mock heather are the 6-8 ray flowers, which display their three, fused petals as a long yellow strap. Ray flowers possess a fertile pistil, but no male parts or stamens. The second type of flower is found in the center of the head. Its corolla is shaped like a tube with five regularly spaced teeth on top. These flowers are perfect (bearing both stamens and pistils) and are called either tube flowers based on their corolla or disk flowers based on their position in the head.

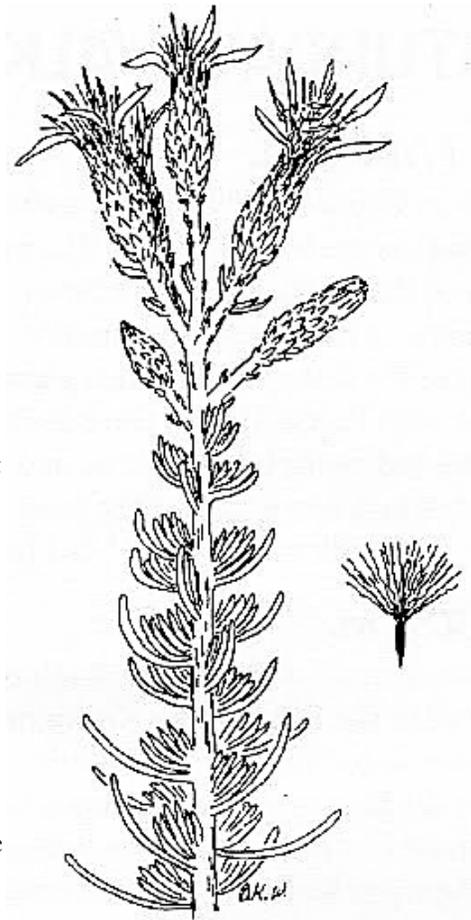
Disk flowers are restricted to the head's center and are often so bunched together as to form what appears to be a solid disk in the center of the head. The yellow flowers in the heads are surrounded by several over-lapping series of bracts that can be mistaken for sepals. These heads can be mistaken for ordinary flowers because the bracts resemble sepals, the ray flowers resemble petals, and the disk flowers resemble the rest of a flower. Such a flower cluster (inflorescence) can be termed a false flower or pseudoanthium. Actually, it is the heads that serve as the reproductive unit recognized by insect pollinators and not the individual flowers. Plants bearing flowers in heads are very common in our area as well as in the rest of California. Roughly one in four or five plants in California bares a head inflorescence.

Both the genus name, *Ericameria*, and the specific epithet (*ericoides*) come from the same root, 'Eric' or 'Erica'. *Erica* is the genus commonly known as heather. This genus dominates much of Northern Europe on heath land or moors where soils are usually waterlogged, very acidic and not very productive. Human activity is the reason there are so many heaths and moors. Much of what is now covered by heather was originally forest, but the forests were cut and then the land grazed with cattle, sheep and goats. After the forest was removed, the water table rose and saturated the surface soil. Under these conditions, only the heather could return.

Heather is a flowering shrub in the same family as our manzanitas. The one defining characteristic of heather is their leaves. They are usually very narrow to almost needle-like. Further, secondary leaves are produced in the axils of the primary leaves such

that they form dense clusters at every node. A second look at Bonnie's drawing will show that our mock heather's leaves are also almost needle-like and are certainly forming flat clusters at each of the nodes. Thus it's the leaves of mock heather that account for the root name (*Erica*). The rest of the genus name, 'meria', refers to a succession of parts, probably referring to the appearance of the leaves at successive nodes. The suffix, 'oides', simply means 'looks like or resembles'. Therefore *Ericameria ericoides* translates into the heather-leaved plant that resembles heather.

You could say this is overkill. But some might recall that this plant was originally called *Haplopappus ericoides*. The most common name for members of its former genus was golden bush. Thus, our mock heather becomes merely a golden bush that resembles heather. When a species is moved from its former genus to a new one, the Rules of Botanical Nomenclature state that the existing species name (*ericoides*) follow it to its new genus. So *Haplopappus ericoides* becomes *Ericameria ericoides*.



OAK LEAVES

is published six times per year beginning in February.

Co-editors are Yolanda Waddell and Jean Wheeler;
layout is by Katy Budge. Editing assistance by Pat Grimes.

Contributors to this issue: Marilyn Freiler,
Craig Johnsen, Vicky Johnsen, Betsy Kinter, Dr. Lynn Moody, Ron Rasmussen, Skip
Rotstein, Lisa Schicker, Yolanda Waddell, Dirk and Bonnie Walters,
and Jean Wheeler.

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Weed Warrior Report

Text and photos by Yolanda Waddell

July 11th – Moving Sand and Pounding Nails

In July, the first Saturday fell on July 4th, so our work day was moved to July 11th. There was another broken stringer on the boardwalk and rusted nails to be replaced, so Bob Meyer, Ron Rasmussen and Conservation Chair Skip Rotstein took care of the carpentry. Sand on the 13th Street trail had piled up against the step to the boardwalk, almost covering it. An erosion control crew consisting of Prisila Johnson, Rich Johnson and Ellen Wilson dug out the step and then moved shifting sand away from erosion control bars on several trails. Sandy trails need constant maintenance, and this trail will need more work after the rains (hopefully) arrive.



Some of the July Weed Warriors did trail maintenance. Shown (L-R) are Prisila Johnson, Ellen Wilson and Rich Johnson.

August 1st – SWAP “Gave a Day for the Bay”

With its August First Saturday workday, SWAP joined the “Give A Day for the Bay” project sponsored by the Morro Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP). One Weed Warrior team, using safety vests, gloves and orange trash bags provided the County Transportation Department, collected 12 bags of trash and some large items such as a “woofers” speaker along South Bay Boulevard. Members of the trash pickup team, coordinated by Ron Rasmussen, were Allison Benton, Jay Bonestell, Lannie Erickson, Barrett Holland, Prisila Johnson, Rich Johnson, Kerry Lattimore (from Bakersfield), David McDonald and Yolanda Waddell. Afterwards, County Transportation personnel picked up the bags and other trash for disposal. SWAP thanks Julia Myers of County Transportation for giving us a trash pickup permit and providing the vests, gloves and bags.

Another team under the leadership of Conservation Chair Skip Rotstein, set off in kayaks from Baywood Pier to conduct shoreline cleanup along the bay edge of the Elfin Forest. Much to their surprise they found an aluminum rowboat stuck in the reeds, and filled it with floats, nets and other debris, mostly from one of the oyster farms in the bay. They returned to Baywood Pier after three hours of cleanup work with a boatful of amazing trash (see photo). The owner of the oyster farm was contacted, and took away the trash. Skip phoned the number on the boat to the Harbor Patrol, who looked up and contacted the owner. Participating in the shoreline cleanup were Dave Bowlus, Dan Callaway, Melanie Callaway, Tony Salome and Skip Rotstein. Rachel Pass, MBNEP Outreach and Communications Coordinator, later said, “We really do think your organization did a wonderful job with the two cleanups.”



For SWAP’s Give a Day For the Bay project, Conservation Chair Skip Rotstein (left) and his crew kayaked along the Elfin Forest shoreline and gathered a boatful of debris. Shown with Skip are (L-R) Dave Bowlus, Dan Callaway and Melanie Callaway.

SWAP First Saturday Work Parties

We invite you to join us on any first Saturday from 9 a.m. to noon at the north end of 15th Street in Los Osos to enjoy satisfying physical activity in fresh air amid lovely surroundings. Please dress for wind, fog, or sun. Layers work well. Long pants and long shirt sleeves are good. Sturdy shoes are a must. Take care not to park in front of driveways or mailboxes. To request more information, call (805) 528-0392.



Wearing safety vests to be visible to oncoming cars and cyclists, trash collecting Weed Warriors (L-R) Lannie Erickson, Allison Benton, Rich Johnson, Prisila Johnson and Ron Rasmussen posed for the camera.



Elfin Forest Sightings

A year ago, we had too many photos for our October, 2014 *Oakleaves*, and had to leave out this spectacular photo (above) of Mock Heather in bloom, taken by Vicky Johnsen. September and October are the months when this important native shrub is in full bloom. We encourage you to read Dirk Walters' very informative article about Mock Heather on page 5 of this issue, and then visit the Elfin Forest with a hand lens to take a look at and enjoy the amazingly complex little flowers of *Ericameria ericoides*.

Dune buckwheat flowers start out white, gradually aging to pink and finally rust-colored. This photo (below) was taken by Marilyn Freiler during the pink stage for this bush.



More Beer Bottle Booty

In late August, we received a phone call informing us that there was a pile of boxes that had been left just outside of the 11th Street Elfin Forest entrance. SWAP members Vicky and Craig Johnsen went to investigate, and found that the boxes were filled with beer bottles and cans.

Vicky reported: "Attached is a photo (taken by Craig Johnsen) of what Craig and I collected this afternoon, approximately 80 bottles, all in cardboard cases, just outside and west of the trail entrance to the Elfin Forest on 11th Street. We took the lot to the recycle in back of Haggens but the line was very long and the one poor soul in charge announced she couldn't get to anyone else today. So we have them in our recycle bin, which is quite large. Either there was one heck of a party or someone was too lazy to do more than just dump the bottles in the nearest place."

Our thanks to Vicky and Craig for taking the initiative and removing the beer bottle trash even though it was outside of the Elfin Forest fence. This is the second instance in four months of beer bottles being left behind instead of being disposed of in a responsible way. In our June/July issue, we reported that in April, Pete Sarafian removed 70 beer bottles from the hillside at Butterfly Hill, and Pat Brown took them away in 5-gallon buckets.

Please Report Elfin Forest Sightings

Have you observed any unusual birds in the Elfin Forest? Mammals? Reptiles? Amphibians? Insects? Interesting activities or footprints of wildlife in our Elfin Forest? Unusual plants? Taken a good photo? Please report any interesting sightings to your *Oakleaves* editors at: oakleaves@elfin-forest.org for inclusion in future issues under "Elfin Forest Sightings." You can also leave a message on SWAP's answering machine, (805) 528-0392.

Let's all pull together

By Lannie Erickson

A tiny mouse gathers seeds
Dropped by heavy headed weeds.
Sand slides where the mouse has tracked,
Into the hikers' boots' impact.

The loosened grains of sand sift down
The face of dunes, toward our town.
Time moves on, the seasons change.
We cannot Nature's tides arrange.

As Elfin Forest we enjoy,
From time to time we must employ
A few small tricks to stabilize
The soil from which the small oaks rise.

Coming Up in the Elfin Forest

Text and Photos by Jean Wheeler

If you “must go where the wild goose goes,” then Morro Bay National Estuary should be your target at this time of year. Four species of geese are listed in our Pocket Guide (sold on page 11). The most commonly seen, the Canada Geese, are at peak numbers from October to April with migrants from Canada and Alaska arriving in October, if not before.

Our famous Brant Geese typically leave a certain southern Alaska estuary in one large flight on a storm’s strong winds out of the northwest in late November or early December. In past years two to three thousand of this species could be seen feeding in the eel-grass beds in our bay by early December. However, in the last few years far smaller numbers have been seen. Apparently with global warming, many more are staying at their “mustering” estuary in southern Alaska throughout the winter instead of flying on to the southeast.

All ten species of dabbling ducks and at least seven of nine species of diving ducks have reached peak populations by October or November. All five grebe species are at peak from September or October until March or April. Western gulls are year-round residents, but five other species of gulls join them here only in fall through spring. The American Avocet also returns to peak population numbers in October.

In summer from Bush Lupine Point and Siena’s View, expanses of open water are seen between small clusters of resident waterbirds. But by November, the estuary has become crowded with the thousands of birds arriving to spend the winter or passing through in migration to tropical regions.

On land, the Elfin Forest also plays host to brush or woodland birds migrating through or wintering. Fox, Lincoln’s, and Golden-crowned Sparrows join our year-round White-crowned Sparrows from October to March or April. Ruby-crowned Kinglets also settle in for the winter. In the same months, our summer Swainson’s Thrushes have gone south, but are replaced for the winter by incoming American Robins and Hermit Thrushes. Yellow-rumped Warblers also peak in these months. Say’s Phoebe joins its year-round relative, the Black Phoebe, for a winter visit. A dawn or dusk walker in the Elfin Forest may be lucky enough to see or more likely hear a wintering short-eared owl. Birds one may be lucky enough to see passing through in small flocks on their way to the tropics include Cedar Waxwings, Western Tanagers, and Pine Siskins.

While October and November are minimal in colorful flowers, returning rains (and even an El Nino this winter?) should be greening up the Elfin Forest in preparation for wonderful floral displays in the winter and spring months to come. Perhaps the most commonly seen



American Shovelers November 16, 2013.



Ducks crowding the estuary, seen from Siena’s View, November 16, 2013.

flower in October is Mock Heather — see Dirk Walter’s article on this species on page 4 and the photo by Vicky Johnsen on page 7. A few of the species which normally do continue to show some blossoms in October and November are California Sagebrush (white), Dune Buckwheat (white flowers aging to pink or rust — see the photo by Marilyn Freiler on page 7), California Asters (pinkish to lavender-white petals and yellow central disks), Coyote Brush (white male and yellow female flowers), and Seaside Golden Yarrow. Finally, the formerly white but now dead blossoms of Black Sage remain on their stems like black pompons, honoring the Halloween season!

WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

Third (and Second) Saturday Walks

October 10, 8:30 a.m. – Pre-Big Sit! Bird Walk (Second Saturday – Note earlier time)

Jim Royer will lead us on a bird inventory walk in preparation for the Big Sit! on Sunday, October 11. This international event hosted by Birdwatcher's Digest (www.birdwatchersdigest.com) pits participating groups of birders against one another to identify the most species of birds in one day. Our Big Sit! will take place at Bush Lupine Point. Join Jim on Saturday in finding and identifying 60 or more species of birds throughout the Elfin Forest and in the Morro Bay estuary. Regardless of your birding experience, you'll come away knowing more about birds, their calls, their habits and habitats.

October 17, 9:30 a.m. – Weather & the Elfin Forest

John Lindsey, the PG&E Weather Man based at Diablo Canyon, will give a fascinating walk and talk about weather on the Central Coast. John, an authority on coastal weather, will help us to understand why the geography of San Luis Obispo County plays an important role in where rain falls, and how much or how little. This year, with El Niño rains in the forecast, John might share some insights on what to expect, and how it could affect the Elfin Forest.

November 21, 9:30 a.m. – Tuning in to Nature Writers

Do you enjoy being read to? Here's an opportunity to stroll around the Elfin Forest boardwalk and hear the thoughts and words of famous natural history writers. Historian Robert Pavlik will share selections from the works of Robinson Jeffers, Wallace Stegner, Rachel Carson, Gary Snyder, and other writers and poets from this and past centuries. As you follow Bob along the boardwalk, stopping here and there for a reading, he will provide you with a delightful menu of descriptions and impressions to enjoy in the Elfin Forest environment. He'll also bring a handout of his readings for those who want to read further.

Walks in the Elfin Forest begin at times stated above at the north end (1100 block) of 15th Street off Santa Ysabel in Los Osos. Wear comfortable shoes, long sleeves and pants to avoid poison oak and mosquitoes. Park carefully, avoiding driveways and mailboxes, and leave pets at home. The easy paced walks last 1-1/2 to 2 hours. For more information call (805) 528-0392.

*Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth
find reserves of strength
that will endure as long as life lasts.*

~ Rachel Carson ~



In August, Adrienne Harris (center), Executive Director of the Morro Bay National Estuary Program, told walk participants about the Morro Bay estuary, its watershed and how they can protect this vital natural resource. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.



Archaeologist Barry Price (2nd from right) focused his July archaeology walk on stories of the Chumash and ancient peoples of the Central Coast, and how they explained the environment around them with their tales. Photo by Ron Rasmussen.

Amblin' down the Boardwalk



Pen and Ink wash by Connie Harms

Thank You to Our Generous Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter,
SWAP Database Coordinator

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The Hamill Family
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*Thanks to those listed above who donated more than the \$25 (regular) or \$15 (senior or student) membership dues.

The additional donations will be used for special projects in the Elfin Forest.

If you recently sent a donation to SWAP and don't see your name in this issue's

New and Renewing list, be assured that your gift will be acknowledged in the next bimonthly issue.

Gifts are processed by two different volunteers before reaching our editors, and newsletter copy deadline is one month before the date of the issue.

Ann Calhoun – A Remembrance

By Yolanda Waddell, Photo by Lisa Schicker.

We called her Commando Ann. In the late 1990s, she was the dispatcher of the “SWAP SWAT Weed-Killing Team” (in later years called Weed Warriors), phoning a list of regulars each time a workday in the Elfin Forest was scheduled. Of course, Ann would be out there with her gloves and shovel, ready to pull weeds, clear a trail, or do any other necessary land maintenance project.

This past summer, on July 9th our beloved Commando, Ann Calhoun, lost her battle with pancreatic cancer at age 72.

Ann was born in Sacramento on April 6, 1943, to Marvin and Mary Hughes. Her family lived in Coachella Valley while she and her younger sister, Joan, were growing up and going to school. Ann majored in art during her high school years and was class salutatorian when she graduated from Coachella Valley High in 1961. After high school she attended the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. While there, she met her husband-to-be, David Calhoun; they married in 1965.

After a brief sojourn in Texas while David was in the army, Ann and David settled in Los Angeles. David was a county probation officer and Ann became a homemaker and gourmet cook. After David's sudden death at age 39, Ann went to college at Cal State Long Beach, earning a Master of Arts degree in 1982. She became Manager of the Simard/Haim Gallery in Los Angeles (since closed) featuring works by culturally diverse emerging artists. Ann brought many artists to the gallery who later became nationally known.

In 1985 Ann moved to Los Osos, switched careers and became a writer. She helped to start a local newspaper called *Bear Facts* as writer and editor, and later began her column, “Calhoun's Can(n)ons,” first published by the (now defunct) Morro Bay *Sun Bulletin*. The column continued through the years in local newspapers and eventually became a blog at calhounscannon.blogspot.com.

In the early 1990s Ann became aware of SWAP's campaign to purchase the Elfin Forest, and pitched in. She organized volunteer columnists to write a “View From the Elfin Forest” series published by the *Sun Bulletin*. She worked booths, made phone calls, helped with mailings – she would say, “yes,” no matter the job. Ann was given SWAP's Volunteer of the Year Award in 1996, and kept going with gusto. Of course she was always a regular paid-up SWAP member – her name is included in the list next to the Elfin Forest mural on the Rexall Pharmacy wall. Ann put her art abilities to work in helping to paint the Elfin Forest mural as well as the other three murals in Los Osos.

Ann's greatest loves were her dogs. Over the years she housed a clan of basenjis, three greyhounds, a whippet and a sloughi. Seeing the need for an off-leash dog park, Ann and like-minded dog lovers founded Parks4Pups to encourage dog parks. Their first success was the off-leash dog park at El Chorro Regional Park that opened in 2001. After that, promoting dog parks and writing her blog occupied much of Ann's time, but she continued to help with SWAP booths and phoning when needed.

Ann's life went on apace until February of this year, when she learned that she had stage 4 pancreatic cancer. She prepared for death as best as she could, with the help of her sister Joan, her neighbors and friends. Her last post on Calhoun's Can(n)ons was on June 17. She ended it as follows: “The precious, fragile thing you hold in your hands every second, well, that's it. Life. Treasure it.” This was Ann's message to all of us. SWAP sends our heartfelt condolences to her sister, Joan Hughes, and to Joan's family.





Get a Head Start on Holiday Gifts with SWAP Including our Brand New Caps!

These brand new caps, available in two colors, as well as our coffee mugs, T-shirts, sweatshirts, and wall prints are wonderful gifts for your loved ones. Note cards, Post-cards, and Pocket Guides make good stocking stuffers! A gift donation or life membership in the name of your relative or friend would also be much appreciated.



SWAP Shoppers' Order Form

See Photos of All Items at www.elfin-forest.org

All Prices Include Sales Tax

1. MURAL SHIRTS

Mural design by artist Barbara Rosenthal on both front and back. Words on shirt: "El Moro Elfin Forest Natural Area" above mural and "Small Wilderness Area Preservation" and "Los Osos, California" below mural.

Circle Sizes:

- Short Slv. T-Shirt (S, M, L, XL) @ \$20.00 = \$ _____
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2. ELFIN FOREST NOTE CARDS

Original print note cards

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Indicate No. per View(s):

All 5; Don Klopfer Trail; Ocean View;
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3. POCKET GUIDE

Useful 56-page guide to plants and animals of the Elfin Forest. Lists for mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, arthropods including moths and butterflies, gastropods, vascular plants, lichens, and mushrooms. Some with charts for seasonality, color and more.

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Signed prints by artist Barbara Rosenthal, image size 4 1/2 x 16 1/2 in; mounted on foamcore

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Address Service Requested

Take a look at our new Elfin Forest cap! See page 11.

Please check renewal date on your label.

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Booth Workers Needed for Oktoberfest

Los Osos will be celebrating its annual Oktoberfest this year on Sunday, October 25 on Second Street in downtown Baywood Park, from 9 am to 4 pm. SWAP will participate by setting up a booth among others that feature many kinds of arts and crafts, as well as ethnic foods. We'll talk to visitors about SWAP, distribute literature, and sell T-shirts, sweatshirts, coffee mugs, our beautiful new caps, guidebooks, notecards, etc.



We need volunteers to staff our table at this event. If you can work a two-hour shift between 9:00 am and 4:00 pm on this day, please call SWAP's message phone at 528-0392. Give your name, shift preference, and phone number. Join us, you'll have fun!

MEMBERSHIP FORM

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- | | |
|--|--|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Seniors & Students \$15 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member \$1000 | |

I want to help, please call me!

Memberships include a subscription to SWAP's bimonthly newsletter, *Oakleaves*.

Check here to receive the online version only.

All donations to SWAP are tax-deductible.

EVERY membership counts!

Make checks payable to: SWAP

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