



OAK LEAVES

A PUBLICATION OF SMALL WILDERNESS AREA PRESERVATION
P.O. BOX 6442, LOS OSOS, CALIFORNIA 93412-6442 ❖ (805) 528-0392 ❖ JUNE / JULY 2018

The Case for Community Involvement



SWAP's community involvement includes information booths at local events. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

By Bill McQuilkin, Planning Committee Chair

There are at least three important reasons for increasing SWAP's community outreach. First, to protect the Elfin Forest and its wildlife in perpetuity. Secondly, to expand awareness of the threats to the Morro Bay estuary and surrounding ecosystem. And third to support the seasonal importance of the Elfin Forest to year around and migrating birds.

Community Involvement *continued on page 2*

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SWAP Board Chooses Elfin Forest Projects for 2018

By Jan DiLeo, SWAP Chair

In April 2018, the SWAP Board established a list of projects they will pursue for the next year. By designating key projects, the Board hopes to focus their energy and funds on priorities. This year we have five projects:

1 – Biological Assessment

The Elfin Forest is a unique resource that supports rare plants, butterflies, snails and birds including the federally endangered Morro Shoulderband Snail. Because the Forest contains sensitive species, its ultimate care is regulated by federal and state agencies such as the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. To make sure care of the Forest was consistent with state and federal regulations, County Parks commissioned a Draft Recovery Action Plan for the Elfin Forest in 2003. This plan, prepared by a biologist, served as a tool to enhance existing populations of common and special status plant species within the Forest. This report is now roughly 15 years old. SWAP is in the process of hiring a biologist to complete an updated Biological Assessment of the Forest. The proposed project would provide a 2018 report with plant, wildlife, and habitat maps; an overall review of the health of the forest; and recommendations for future care of the Forest. SWAP anticipates the Biological Assessment will be completed by late summer or early fall of 2018.

2 - Ongoing Maintenance

SWAP's key role is maintenance of the Elfin Forest. Maintenance involves projects such as removing invasive plants (e.g., veldt grass, ice plants, etc.), keeping designated trail corridors open for public access, and boardwalk upkeep. While the biological assessment (noted above) is being completed, SWAP will continue its typical maintenance tasks in 2018. Once the biological assessment is complete, SWAP will continue its ongoing maintenance in addition to undertaking priority maintenance projects identified in the 2018 Biological Assessment.

2018 Projects *continued on page 2*



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

consists of the following members:

Jan DiLeo, Chair

Skip Rotstein, Vice Chair

Dave Bowlus, Treasurer

Bill McQuilkin, Secretary

Pat Murray, Member at Large

Leslie Rotstein, Member at Large

Yolanda Waddell, Member at Large

The SWAP Board of Directors meets monthly
at 2 p.m. on the 2nd Monday of the month
at the Community Room,
Morro Shores Mobile Home Park,
633 Ramona Ave., Los Osos.

The next meetings are

***Monday, June 11,
and Monday, July 9.***

**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: Bob Yetter

SLO County Parks Supervising Ranger
1144 Monterey 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 Bob Yetter at 781-1196.

2018 Projects *continued from page 1*

3 – Living Laboratory

As mentioned above, the Elfin Forest
contains sensitive species and unique
habitats. Under this project SWAP would
contact local colleges and universities
and encourage them to conduct research
within the Elfin Forest. Since most schools
are approaching summer vacation, this
project would likely be organized or start
in the fall of 2018.

4 – Elfin Forest User Survey

Leslie Rotstein, SWAP's Education
Committee Co-chair, will be conducting
a brief user survey to obtain information
about Elfin Forest visitors. Such surveys
help SWAP and County Parks address the
number of visitors, education that should
be offered, and the needs of our visitors.

5 – Review Adjacent Vacant Lands for Inclusion into the Elfin Forest

Near the Elfin Forest and the Morro Bay Estuary are a few small, undeveloped parcels. Some of these parcels contain sensitive habitat. Periodically SWAP reviews these properties or portions of these sites to determine if they should be incorporated into the Elfin Forest and/or protected by a conservation organization. Currently members of SWAP's Board are meeting with agencies such as the San Luis Obispo Land Conservancy, County Parks, and County Planning & Building Department to determine how best to protect adjacent sensitive resources.



*Professor Edward Bobich has done research
on oak physiology in our Elfin Forest.
See article about his most recent work in
December 2017 Oakleaves, page 4.*

Community Involvement *continued from page 1*

The Elfin Forest is a great way to connect individuals and families with: the solitude of nature; the diversity of plants, birds and other animals; views overlooking of the estuary; and walking the boardwalk for exercise. It is also an opportunity to make a difference personally by helping with the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of this forest gem.

Birds in the Elfin Forest and estuary act as indicator species regarding the health of the ecosystem. They add greatly to the enjoyment people experience, and more people can help with monitoring and data collection during the annual bird counts.

The threat of forecasted climate change with increased drought and warmer weather will continue to stress the forest, estuary and wildlife. The Elfin Forest will serve as a "living laboratory" with the benefit of research studies and more volunteer involvement. Our community outreach will make possible greater dissemination of science-based information to a larger community support network.

SWAP members can help by reaching out to friends, neighbors and business associates, to involve more people in supporting the Elfin Forest. Talk about the Elfin Forest and encourage people to look at our website,

Questions? E-mail swap@elfin-forest.org or phone 805-528-0392.

Meet Our County Parks Supervising Ranger

Text and photo by Yolanda Waddell

It was a sunny, breezy April day when I met with County Parks Supervising Ranger, **Bob Yetter**, to talk about his work and the relationship between County Parks and SWAP.

Bob told me that he had just come from Cuesta Park in San Luis Obispo, where a broken water pipe caused County Parks staff to shut off all water to the park. A large group of visitors had made reservations for a gathering in the park the next day; park rangers and other staff were working hard to repair the break. Repairing broken plumbing is one of a myriad of tasks that County park rangers are expected to handle, and a supervising ranger must have the experience and knowledge to oversee it all.

Bob is a native Californian, growing up in Fairfax, a town in Marin County. While in high school, he worked as a seasonal employee in Samuel P. Taylor State Park, a 2,800-acre park with rolling hills, grasslands and tall redwood trees. His next stop was Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, where he earned a bachelor's degree in Natural Resources Management. While a student, he did seasonal work at Lopez Lake Recreation Area. He also met his wife, Kristen, at Cal Poly; they have been married for 35 years.

In 1979, Bob became a full time County Parks Ranger. Since County Parks has a practice of moving rangers from district to district, Bob has worked in all four of the park districts over the years. Huasna includes Lopez Lake and Biddle Park; Salinas District is in the north county, including Santa Margarita Lake Recreation Area; Mesa District includes parks in the south end of the county; and the Pecho District includes parks in San Luis Obispo, El Chorro Regional Park, 19 beach access ways and all the coastal parks, from Los Osos north to Cambria including the Elfin Forest. In all, there are 14,000 acres of County parkland.

Bob was promoted to Supervising Ranger in 2010 while working at Lopez Lake. In 2016, he was reassigned to the Pecho District. In each district there are eight full-time rangers and up to five ranger aides. In addition to being able to do everything that a uniformed ranger does, Supervising Rangers are familiar with all of the county parkland in the district, manage the workload and supervise their employees. They make decisions about projects, manage their budgets, and work with the public and volunteer organizations like SWAP. On page 2 of this newsletter in the information column at the left, is the statement, "If you have questions, concerns or comments about problems in the Elfin Forest, call or write Bob Yetter, SLO County Parks Supervising Ranger, 805-781-1196." Bob enjoys working with people and will address concerns promptly.

Asked about the difficult parts of his job, Bob said that it is hard to accomplish what needs to be done within the fairly tight County Parks budget. Many non-urgent repairs cannot be made and go into a list called "deferred maintenance." Invasive animals like the feral pigs that have been damaging the lower Elfin Forest,



are a serious problem. However, he noted that all parks have inherent dangers that rangers must make people aware of.

On the brighter side, Bob enjoys working with people and volunteers, as well as with his excellent team of rangers and seasonal workers. He said that the relationship between County Parks and SWAP is mutually beneficial. He appreciates the dedication of SWAP volunteers in watching over the Elfin Forest, calling SWAP a "solid group."

I was sad to learn that Bob will retire from County Parks at the end of December, 2019. However, having worked for County Parks for over 40 years, he has certainly earned his retirement. His fly fishing rod will get more use, and he will have more time for his flourishing garden that includes vegetables, herbs, and citrus and stone fruit trees.

Bob encourages SWAP to continue what we are doing, and to try to increase our interpretive efforts. We thank him for being such a good supervisor for our "landlord," San Luis Obispo County Parks.



OAKLEAVES

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Text and Photo by Jean Wheeler, Ph.D.

Ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus*) are a single species second in worldwide raptor distribution only to Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*), which can also be seen from Elfin Forest lookouts. We can often spot an osprey resting like this one on a snag sticking up out of Morro Bay. They nest in treetops or poles over water or along shorelines of lakes, streams, and oceans nearly everywhere in the world, except for Antarctica. Fresh fish constitute 99% of their diet, and they are the only raptors on the North American continent capable of diving into the water to catch them, although diving to only about three feet in depth.

Very large raptors, ospreys are about two feet long and weigh three to four pounds. They are very slender with long narrow wings, arched when flying to give them a shape like the letter “M” seen from below, and trailing long legs. They are mostly brown above and white below with a white head marked by a dark mask across the eyes. The mainly white wings as seen from below are marked with dark feathers at the wrists.

When hunting, they fly steadily or circle high over fairly shallow water, hover briefly, then dive to catch a fish. Osprey success rate appears to be very high, at least 25% according to some studies, and reportedly even as high as 70%. They carry their prey face first back to their nest, which minimizes air drag. Only ospreys and owls have reversible toes, allowing them to carry their prey between two toes in front and two behind. However, ospreys sometimes lose their catch to eagles diving at them to force them to drop the fish, which the eagle may then catch.

Ospreys build their nests over or close to water in the open tops of dead trees, phone poles, channel markers, and very often on nest platforms people build specifically for these birds. Such platforms enable people to observe them more closely and have helped to restore their species presence on bays where they were decimated by egg-shell thinning DDT residues in the early 20th century. Nests get larger every year and can be a dozen feet or so deep and up to 6 feet wide.

This species becomes sexually mature at about three or four years of age, but breeding may be delayed where osprey population is dense or there is a shortage of tall poles or trees with open tops close to water. In courtship the pair flies in high circles with the male diving several times near the nest while often carrying a fish or a stick. They usually mate for life, with one brood per year. Males start the nests and fetch most of the building materials—driftwood, sticks, bark, grass, seaweed, and the like. These are arranged by the female, who lays 2-4 eggs and does the major part of the incubation. She remains with the young when they hatch in a bit over five weeks, while the male brings home the fish. The young fly at about eight weeks.

Most osprey migrate south in winter and may fly over 2500 miles in less than two weeks. European birds winter in Africa and U.S. and Canadian birds go to South America, but a few may remain in our southern states, especially California and Florida. Most Australian resident ospreys don't migrate, but they do get some migrants coming in from Asia.



SWAP Docents Lead Church Group

When Board member Pat Murray learned that her church's (outing) group planned to visit the Elfin Forest on March 10, she told them that we could provide docents to talk about the natural history of the Forest. They gratefully accepted the offer, and were greeted by Vicky Johnsen and Pat Brown at the 15th Street Elfin Forest entrance. Vicky and Pat told their visitors about the five special habitats of the Forest, and identified the wildflowers that were in bloom. For many, the most special moment was when they entered Rose's Grove and experienced its magical environment.

SWAP Docents Vicky Johnsen (center 1st row) and Pat Brown (at right, 1st row) gave a natural history walk for a church "outings" group in April. Photo by Pat Murray.

California Poppy

By Dirk Walters, Ph.D.; Image by Mardi Niles

(Ed. Note: Revised by Dr. Walters from April/May 2002 issue)

The plant species profiled in this issue, is from one of Mardi Niles' wonderful note cards. To view it in splendid color, go to the June/July *Oakleaves* on the SWAP website, www.elfin-forest.org.

The California poppy is our state flower, and April 6th is an official California state holiday designated to celebrate this poppy. It is an educational holiday (i.e. no closed facilities) but it was hoped that teachers would plan class activities around the poppy. I didn't know that California has a California poppy day and has also designated the third week in May as poppy week, did you?

I looked up 'California state flower' on the web and found it was designated as such on March 2, 1903 (Ca. Government Code Section 421). The official text didn't indicate a scientific name, only the 'golden poppy' that can turn the California hillsides golden. There are two problems with this. First is that many of the 12 or so species in the genus *Eschscholzia* fit the color and can turn hills golden. The second problem is that 'golden poppy' is not used by anyone except when referring to the state flower. This is probably because it could be applied to any number of species in the genus, *Eschscholzia*.

So, which species is the state flower? I have little doubt that the 'golden poppy' is what we call the California Poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*). I say this because this species is the most common and widespread of all the California species, and, although not unique to California, the state accounts for most of its range. It is also the most common orange to yellow poppy occurring where most people in California live--the coastal region west of the Cascade-Sierra Nevada-Peninsular-Range axis. The species is found east of this axis too, but its populations there are much smaller and more scattered. Additionally, the other species are likely to be more common there. It is the only yellow to orange poppy in the Elfin Forest occurring wherever there are scattered shrubs. So, is one wrong calling our poppy the California state flower? No, but you may not be right either.

As numerous, widespread and beautiful as *Eschscholzia californica* is, the plant has acquired a number of common names. A few of these include, Flame Flower, la amapola, and Copa de Oro (cup of gold). Some other famous poppies with which you might be familiar are Corn Poppy (*Papaver Rhoeas*), Iceland poppy (*Papaver nudicaule*) and the Oriental (opium) poppy (*Papaver orientale*).

The name 'poppy' can stand for several species. When I submitted a picture for use on the cover of the 4th edition of Dave Keil's and my plant taxonomy book, the picture showed fields with an intermediate layer of California poppies and a top layer of hill-side daisies. The publishers, seeing that we wanted 'poppies' on the cover, wrote back that they couldn't have a narcotic plant on the cover. We had to educate them that California poppy is the California state flower and is so mildly narcotic that it wasn't a problem.

Eschscholzia californica was the first named species of the genus *Eschscholzia*. It was named by German botanist Adelbert von Chamisso after Baltic German botanist Johann Friedrich von Eschscholtz, his friend and colleague on a scientific expedition to California and the greater Pacific circa 1810 aboard the Russian ship *Rurik*.

The species is a member of the Poppy Family or Papaveraceae. Members of Papaveraceae usually have 4 petals but only 2-3 sepals. *Eschscholzia* is unusual in that the sepals (calyx) are fused into a dunce-capped shaped structure. Since the sepals fall off as the flower opens, one can often see the opening flower pushing off the pointed fused calyx. Two other characteristics common in the poppy family are sap that is colored when exuded from a broken stem or leaf and petals that look in need of ironing (crumpled). The California poppy has neither of these. *E. californica's* petals are definitely not ruffled and a broken stem or leaf will bleed clear sap, but orange colored sap can be found in the roots.

California poppies are extremely variable even in the wild. Along the immediate coast, their petals are two-toned with yellow tips and orange at the base. Further inland the orange base expands and the yellow decreases until the petals become pure orange. So variable and overlapping are the species in the wild that the four or so varieties are often difficult to separate. In the garden, California poppies can be found in a wide range of colors from white to blue to red as well as the usual yellow to orange.

Of all the 'golden poppy' species, the California poppy is the most tolerant of human activity. We see it growing in road rights-of-way, pastures, vacant lots, and in our gardens. It was one of the first California species to spread around the world. A very short-lived perennial, it is usually grown as an annual from seed. Since its roots are easily damaged it doesn't transplant well. It is best to grow it from seed planted where you want it to be. It is drought tolerant and if flowers are removed after blooming, the blooming period can last months. It even tolerates those of us who lack a green thumb!



California Poppy
Eschscholzia californica



During the March SWAP work party, Rich Johnson replaced a broken boardwalk stringer. Photo by Prisila Johnson.



In April, Dean Thompson trimmed back this ceanothus bush and others that were encroaching on the boardwalk. Photo by Prisila Johnson.

Weed Warrior Report

By Skip Rotstein and Vicky Johnsen

March 10th – Fix it, Shovel it, Pull it

The work party crew wasn't large – 6 dedicated Weed Warriors showed up on March 10 – but much was accomplished. Rich and Prisila Johnson repaired a broken boardwalk stringer (that holds up the upper boards) on the boardwalk, and replaced a number of rusted screws. Dave Bowlus and Bob Brantley shoveled sand away from water bars on the 11th through 15th Street trails. Conservation Co-chair Skip Rotstein, Barrett Holland and Sharon Rooney worked at removing an infestation of Cape ivy in the western oak groves, north of the end of 10th Street. All in all, it was a productive morning of work. Thanks to Ron Rasmussen for providing home baked cookies for the workers.

April 14th - Warriors Go Where the Work Is

The workday was postponed to the second Saturday of the month after being rained out the previous week. Nine sturdy Weed Warriors worked under a bright Spring sun.

Dave Bowlus and Bob Brantley moved sand from behind the water bars in preparation for the next storm. Rich and Prisila Johnson were our workday photographers before returning to their regular job replacing loose screws in the boardwalk.

Skip Rotstein, Drew Bentz and Lannie Erickson hiked to a remote oak grove off the Habitat Trail. Last year in the grove, Weed Warriors pulled a great deal of cape ivy, bagging and carrying off much of it, but left several piles to die and dry. Skip, Drew, and Lannie dug newly grown ivy shoots, bagged them with last year's dead ivy and carried all the bags to South Bay Blvd. Left behind was ivy intertwined with native poison oak. The group's final chore was to pull a patch of veldt grass on South Bay Blvd.

Dean Thompson pruned brush on the upper boardwalk while Steve Cake pulled veldt grass at the 16th St. edge of the Preserve.

Join 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.

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: oakleaf@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

It's always some thing, sometimes quite a few.
Weed Warriors need help, an aerial view,
To scan out some problems, like invasive plants.
Let's see if some birds can give us new slants.

A crow is talking to a scrub jay and saying
"Exotics must go, but we must avoid spraying.
Let those Weed Warriors get out there and yank
Up the veldt grass and ice plants that make our fields rank."

The perky brown towhee speaks up to the thrasher:
"If folks fall on the boardwalk they could get a rasher.
So who keeps it fixed so people won't fall?
We need our Weed Warriors to answer the call."

Conservation Committee Report

Are Invasive Plants and Pigs A Permanent Part of the Elfin Forest?

By Skip Rotstein, Conservation Committee Co-chair

In April I bushwhacked my way into areas of the Elfin Forest blocked off by fences or not accessed by trails. My purpose was to observe the growth of invasive plants and to look for signs of an invasive animal, the wild pig. I found both. In the lower oak groves closest to 10th St., cape ivy is so dense it climbs and covers the trees. Slender leaf ice plant is sprouting in many places, and asparagus fern blankets the ground. Fresh pig tracks are visible in sand washed in during the recent rain. Pig droppings are plentiful in a game trail through the brush.

We have been fighting a war with invasive plants in the Elfin Forest for over twenty years and feral pigs more recently, and we are not approaching victory. There is no wall to prevent the entry of veldt grass that takes living space, nutrients and water from scrub and grasses. Invasive Italian thistle seeds blow in with the wind, or hitch a ride on birds, other animals, and humans. Ice plant grows slowly and constantly advances from neighboring properties. Wild pigs visit the forest and dig up oak groves and estuary shorelines alike.

Our Weed Warrior work parties successfully clear invasives from areas visible from our boardwalk or accessible from our trails and boundary highway. Our spraying program has limited the growth of invasives in some groves. But the real challenge is clearing invasive plants in areas where nature has responded to less human intrusion by making the forest impenetrable. The challenge is to clear cape ivy where nature has armed it by growing dense mixtures of invasive ivy and native poison oak.

A State Park trap in our area recently caught four pigs. Then pigs stopped going into the trap and trapping was abandoned. A pig trap smarter than the pigs may be too great a challenge.

We have to recognize that invasive plants and pigs are naturalized in the Elfin-Forest and will never be completely eliminated, which means Weed Warriors will have important work to do for a long time to come.



Elfin Forest Sightings: Wild Cucumbers

Wild cucumber (*Marah fabaceus*) is a vine that grows profusely in the Elfin Forest from February to May, and then dies back completely. It produces large prickly green pods that give the plant its common name. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.



*Drew Bentz and Conservation Co-chair Skip Rotstein work to remove the very invasive Cape ivy that was overwhelming an oak grove deep in the Elfin Forest.
Photo by Prisila Johnson.*

Education Committee Report

By Leslie Rotstein, Co-Chair

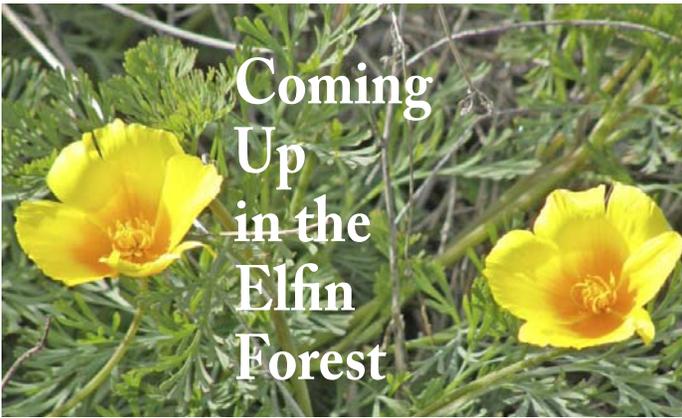
Co-Chair Cheryl Dove emailed an invitation to the SWAP docents to meet to discuss experiences and suggest plans for the next school year. An enthusiastic group gathered, and what became apparent in the first minutes was that we all had a great deal in common; we are all passionate about our treasured Elfin Forest.

We also talked about what makes a good docent walk. Each docent presented a unique interest-catching way to lead walks. Vicky Johnsen has her special spots to share but is ready to grab the visitor's attention with an unexpected sight. Chris Van Beveren has a special game to teach children about Deerweed and Pat Brown is always ready to show off butterflies. It was unanimously agreed that no scripts are necessary. Docents each bring their own special personality and interest level. I looked around the table and saw smiles and excitement over sharing our gem of a forest.

In preparation for the next school year, we will be writing a new docent manual to help experienced as well as new docents. We will also be putting together some hands-on activities for our visitors and will organize a time to get together to work on these projects.

Before departing, we decided to participate in the Celebrate Summer Solstice event at the Morro Bay State Park Campground picnic area on June 23rd. It is organized especially for children and will take place from 11am to 2pm. We'll set up a table with lots of crayons, paper and materials for making an artistic rubbing that the children can take home.

Interested? You do not need to be an expert. You just have to love the forest and working with people. Being in the forest is an exciting learning experience for everyone. You never know what wonderful flora or fauna might suddenly appear. To learn more, send an e-mail to education@elfin-forest.org.



California Poppy



Bewick's Wren

Text and Photos by Jean Wheeler

Although springtime bloom in the Elfin Forest is declining, summer still puts on a fine show of flowering shrubs and herbs. Among the most noticeable colors are the yellow of deerweed and California poppies. Coastal Dudleya flowers are also yellow, topping tall reddish stems above gray-green basal leaves in succulent rosettes. With their long blooming season, orange sticky monkey-flowers are also still in evidence.

Cobwebby thistle produces large pink blossoms at this time of year. Cardinal catchfly has small flower tubes opening bright red petals with edges jaggedly spiked as though cut by pinking shears. Because of those “pinking-sheared edges” they used to be called Indian pinks, but that was confusing given the brilliant red flowers. Look for their little red trumpets with the spiky edges in shady spots under the oaks.

Silver dune lupine usually continues to show blue flower spikes close to the estuary as late as early July. In the understory we can hope to spot the lovely blue flowers of wooly star. They were most notable last year near the junction of 13th Street sand trail with the boardwalk near the Fairbanks Monument. Purple Nightshade should also be in bloom.

Most of our year-round birds are being harassed by their hungry offspring at this season. Most often seen and heard are, of course, the avian sentinels of the Elfin Forest, our large blue California Scrub Jays. They perch on top of shrubs looking, yelling the call for which they are named, and then following any intruder they spot. Listen also for a loud buzz to locate the Spotted Towhee calling from the top of a shrub. He's very distinctive with his black head, rust-colored flanks and rump, and white-spotted wings. His drabber cousin, the totally brown California Towhee, may be seen darting between shrubs or on the ground among them.

Other birds to be observed over or among the shrubs or oak trees include Anna's Hummingbird; flycatchers such as the Black Phoebe and the Western Kingbird; wrens including Bewick's Wren and the noisy but elusive Wrentit; Chipping, Lark, Savannah, Song, and White-crowned Sparrows; and chattering mixed flocks of tiny gray or brown birds including fuzzy gray Bushtits and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, flitting through shrubs and stirring up insects for their dining pleasure. The large brown bird with the big down-

curved beak is the California Thrasher. The fat brown and gray bird with head plumes is our state bird—California Quail.

Other residents especially active on warm summer days are Western Fence Lizards (look for them doing their “push-ups!”), Brush Rabbits, Ground Squirrels, and Coyotes.

On a leash, your dog is welcome. The leash is required to protect our plants and wildlife from disturbance and to protect you and your dog from potentially dangerous action by our coyote packs. They can get aggressive, especially in spring and summer, near canines they consider invasive and potentially harmful to their pups. Feral pigs protecting their young can also be deadly to loose dogs they perceive as a threat.

Summer is such an active and exciting time to visit the sand trails and boardwalk of our small wilderness area!



Elfin Forest Sightings: Peony

In early March, Prisila Johnson found this lush green California peony (*Paeonia californica*) with buds ready to burst into bloom. When fully open, the deep scarlet blossoms shyly hang their heads. Photo by Prisila Johnson.

WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

*June 16, 9:30 a.m. –
Digital Photography
and Native Plants*

Nature and wildlife photographer Donald Quintana will take us on a photographic journey to capture the wild and beautiful world of the Elfin Forest. Using whatever camera you have, you will have an opportunity to photograph birds and butterflies, close ups of plants and flowers, or views of the Forest and bay. Don will discuss the use of light and how best to capture its influence on your subject. He'll also talk about some of the Elfin Forest's plant life. All levels of experience and skill are welcome.

July 21, 8:30 a.m. – Birding by Ear

Join biologist and birder Jessica Griffiths for a walk focusing on bird songs and calls. She will identify all the bird songs heard, and present helpful tips and mnemonic devices for remembering who sings what. This is a good walk for birders of all levels, and non-birders as well. **Note the 8:30 start time.**

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 closed-toe 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.



During his Animal Tracks walk in March, Evan Albright shows the difference between a coyote footprint and a dog footprint.

Photo by Pat Brown.



A large group enjoyed the fascinating information Pat Brown (in cap standing on bench at right) provided about all stages in the lives of butterflies during her April 3rd Saturday Walk.

Photo by Jean Wheeler.



Elfin Forest Happenings

Sketching in the Elfin Forest

From time to time during the year, artist and naturalist Barbara Renshaw leads a sketch and plant walk in the Elfin Forest. In March this year, Barbara guided a group to a location where they could capture our shy California peonies (see photo page 8) that were in full bloom. However, there were many other wildflowers in bloom, one of which the artist in the accompanying photo preferred to sketch.

Thinking of Switching to Online Oakleaves?

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 oakleaf@elfin-forest.org with the subject: Switch me to online.

Thank You to Our Generous Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter, SWAP Database Coordinator

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Nola Barnick
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Diane & Frank Snow*

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James Koga*	

DONATIONS:

Yolanda Waddell in memory of Sam Mednick
Jean Wheeler in memory of Sam Mednick

**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.



Sam Mednick (center), at age 102 couldn't stay away from an opportunity to join in with other folk dancers.

Remembering Sam Mednick

Text by Jean Wheeler and Photo by Carolyn Lemos

Sam Mednick is remembered very warmly by his many friends in our community, and especially members of Bay Osos Folk Dancers and SWAP. He lived a very full, active, and giving life all the way to his passing just three days before his 103rd birthday in March.

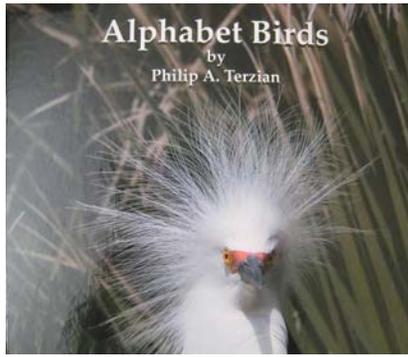
Born in New York, Sam studied drama and ballet at New York City College and was active in theatre work in Harlem during the 1930's. Then he joined the army and fought in the D-Day invasion and the Battle of the Bulge. After the war and moving to Los Angeles, he got a degree in mental health from Valley College and worked at L.A. Veterans Hospital. Upon moving to Los Osos in 1980, he earned a B.A. in Child Development and a Master's in Counseling at age 70 and worked for San Luis Obispo County Mental Health in Atascadero.

Sam and his second wife Shirley have walked in the Elfin Forest since there were only sand trails, and have been supporters of SWAP since 1992. Sam met Shirley while folk dancing in Sherman Oaks. In 1981 they started a folk dance group here, continuing to dance often since turning leadership of the group over to others. Many supporters of SWAP dance with that club, including your Oakleaves Co-Editor (this writer), and our Conservation Co-Chair Skip Rotstein. When I led a solstice walk a few years ago, I was delighted my tour group included Sam, Shirley, and about a half dozen more of our folk dancers.

In his late 90's Sam wowed the Christmas Benefit audience doing repeated knee-to-the-floor moves leading our dance line for a Greek syrto, a feat he repeated at his 100th birthday party! Just last Halloween, less than five months before his passing, he stood in the middle of our dance circle with his hands on his walker and danced with us—I watched his feet moving very short steps but in perfect time and pattern with the figures of the dance! The photo accompanying this article, with Sam's Shirley at the right, was taken right after that dance, and you can see Sam's enjoyment of his success dancing on a walker more than six months after his 102nd birthday! In sending me several photos of Sam dancing with us in recent years, Carolyn Lemos summed up his life quite well, I thought, "He was such a special man!"

Oakleaves has a new E-mail Address

To make it more convenient for Oakleaves contributors to send an e-mail to both of the co-editors at the same time, our internet/web master, Bob Meyer, set up our oakleaves@elfin-forest.org e-mail address. The address worked well for some years until this February, when e-mails sent to the Oakleaves address stopped going through. Bob learned from our internet provider that e-mail spammers apparently had found the address on our website, and sold it to other spammers. There were so many e-mails going to that address that our provider had to take it down. Therefore, Bob changed the name of our address to oakleaf@elfin-forest.org. So far our new address is working well. If you wish to send photos, a letter to the editor, or interesting or unusual sightings with us, please send it to oakleaf@elfin-forest.org.



Alphabet Birds: Wonderful Gift Book for Kids

This wonderful book by Philip A. Terzian has gorgeous pictures of birds, one for each letter of the alphabet. The facing page features a clever little poem for each bird in large-sized text and child-appropriate wording.



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.

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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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With clever verses and superb photos, this book is sure to please young and old.

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Things for Kids to do in the Elfin Forest During Summer

Explore with a camera. Come early when bunnies are **hopping** around and quail are foraging. Send “best” photos to *Oakleaves* (oakleaf@elfin-forest.org) at the end of the summer and we’ll publish them.

Pack a lunch and have a **picnic**.
 Look at the flowers and butterflies.

Become a birder. Take binoculars and a bird guide and see how many birds you can identify.



Become a *writer*. Make a journal about your visits to the Forest, and turn that into a story.

Get exercise. **SHAPE UP** by walking or running around the boardwalk.

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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.

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