



O A K L E A V E S

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 ♦ FEBRUARY / MARCH 2008

School Days: Lessons From the Elfin Forest

By Ron Rasmussen, SWAP Chair

When you visit the Elfin Forest it is easy to appreciate the variety of plants and animals, and the views of the bay and surrounding hills. With a little imagination it is possible to gain much more from a visit and to learn something new about our environment.

In school we may have had courses in biology, chemistry, physics, math, and so on. For some, the lessons from these courses came together in courses such as ecology or environmental studies. The Elfin Forest provides a living example for the latter where biology, chemistry, etc., interact to enhance, or sometimes to degrade a dynamic ecosystem.

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Some of the scouts in Troop 214 and their adult leaders stayed for a group photo after a job well done, cleaning the Elfin Forest Mural. Troop 214 is under the scout leadership of senior patrol leader Carson Szaret with the guidance of Scoutmaster Karl Davis.

They meet every Tuesday night at 6:30 p.m. in the school house in South Bay Community Park, and complete many community service projects each year. Photo courtesy of Troop 214.

Elfin Forest Mural is Looking Good

By Yolanda Waddell

In 1992 our SWAP chapter was in the thick of raising funds to buy the south 40 acres of the Elfin Forest. Unfortunately, even many Los Osos and Morro Bay residents had never heard of or seen the Forest. One idea was to introduce an image of the Forest in the form of a mural, similar in size to two other recently painted murals in the community. SWAP member Mary Coffeen suggested to chapter President Rose Bowker that we apply for a World Wildlife Fund Innovation Grant to produce the mural. Rose applied, and SWAP was one of 32 Innovative Grant recipients nation-wide that year. A check for \$2,700 arrived, and the process of producing the mural began.

Local artist Barbara Rosenthal designed the mural, and the

Mural continued on page 3



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
Pat Akey, Treasurer
Yolanda Waddell, Secretary
Debbie Levi, Member at Large
Bob Meyer, Member at Large
Pat Murray, Member at Large

The SWAP Board of Directors meets monthly
on the 2nd Monday at 7 p.m. at
the Community Center of
Sea Oaks Mobile Home Park,
1675 Los Osos Valley Road.

The next meetings are
***Monday, February 11
and Monday, March 10.***

All Board meetings are open to the public.
To confirm the date, time and location
(which are subject to change), call 528-0392.



CONTACT SWAP

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
or Chuck Lowe at 781-4417.

"School Days" *continued from page 1*

One of the most striking facts about the Elfin Forest is the variety of living organisms that are present. Our Pocket Guide lists more than 200, and a few new species have been found recently. This variety is the result of interactions among organisms and their environment and involves chemistry and physics as well as biology.

For example, all organisms have a unique chemistry. Plants require certain nutrients, and may produce chemicals that are nutrients for other species. They also may produce toxic chemicals (e. g., Poison Oak) or deterrents that inhibit the growth of other plants in their vicinity. Flowering plants produce attractants in the form of odors or showy colors. Similar examples can be cited for the various other species in the Forest.

The physical environment is also extremely important for the preservation of the Forest. Without the proper ranges of temperature and humidity the forest could not exist. Because rainfall is limited to a few months in the year, another source of water is important for the forest. The land slopes from the hills on the south into the bay. The force of gravity brings underground water from those hills to the Forest. Many plants have a very deep root system that can tap into this water and thus survive through the dry season.

Soil Science is another subject that can tell us something about how the Forest can survive and grow. The Forest is located on a large sand dune that was formed thousands of years ago. When rain falls on the sand it rapidly sinks below the surface, which then dries out and becomes a loose layer of sand. As any good farmer knows, if the surface of the ground is not compacted but is broken up, the subsurface moisture cannot move upward by capillary action and evaporate. The subsurface water is then a reservoir for the plants. When the sandy soil of the Forest is compacted by off-trail activity this will directly impact the plants by reducing the ability of the soil to retain subsurface moisture.

On the other hand, if too much rain falls, erosion can become a major problem and the forest's soil could end up in the bay. To minimize erosion SWAP has placed barriers at several locations in the Forest. By directing excess runoff away from potential trouble areas, the water can then be absorbed into the sand and recharge the subsurface reservoir.

The above are a few examples of how the knowledge gained in school can enhance your visits to the Elfin Forest. As SWAP and its volunteers continue to care for the Forest, we consider all of these subjects as they may relate to our activity. You can be sure that we will not do anything that might harm the Forest.

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Mural *cont. from page 1*

Los Osos Community Organization (LOCO), a group dedicated to producing murals in Los Osos, helped SWAP to find a wall. Gary and Judy Tewell of the Los Osos Rexall Drug Store agreed to let us use the east side of their building for Barbara's mural. After Barbara had drawn outlines on the wall, a crew of SWAP volunteers coordinated by Ann Calhoun assembled to paint the background, sky and other parts of the mural that didn't require too much artistic skill. Barbara filled in the details, and a clear acrylic plastic plaque was attached with over 2,000 names of individuals and businesses who had contributed to preserving the Elfin Forest. On Sunday, June 5, 1994, Barbara signed the mural and it was dedicated in a ceremony held in the parking lot, followed by a celebration in the Elfin Forest Celestial Meadow.

By 2006, twelve years later, the sun, rain, wind and salt air had dimmed the mural. The Lucite plaques with names embossed in gold were badly clouded. Barbara Rosenthal agreed to donate her time to restore the mural. She contacted Cyndi Beaudett, committee chairman for Los Osos Boy Scout Troop 214. On a foggy evening in August, 2007, after months of delay caused by construction on the drug store and packed schedules, about 20 Scouts and 8 adult troop leaders met Barbara in the drug store parking lot. Utilizing buckets, brushes, water hoses and elbow grease, the Boy Scouts of troop 214 cleaned the mural in about two hours. Immediately it looked brighter, back to its original intense greens, blues and browns. Barbara then touched up areas where paint had chipped off, and finally Ron Rasmussen and Bob Meyer re-attached the clear acrylic plastic panels that Bob had carefully cleaned. Our readers are welcome to visit the mural and read the names on the Lucite panels. It reads like a recent history of the citizens of Los Osos and San Luis Obispo County. Our thanks to Barbara Rosenthal, to the scouts and adult leaders of Troop 214, and to Bob Meyer and Ron Rasmussen for doing an excellent restoration job.



(Top photo) Artist Barbara Rosenthal touches up areas on the Elfin Forest mural where paint has flaked off during years of weathering. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

(Middle photo) Bob Mayer (left) and Ron Rasmussen fasten cleaned clear acrylic plastic donor plaques to the wall over the mural. The plaques are made of clear acrylic plastic so that the mural can be seen through them. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

(Bottom, at right) A group of Troop 214 Boy Scouts and their adult troop leaders apply water and elbow grease to remove years of dust and dirt from the Elfin Forest mural. Photo courtesy of Troop 214.



Salamanders of the Elfin Forest

By Jean Wheeler; photos courtesy CaliforniaHerps.com



Both of the salamanders listed for the Elfin Forest in our Pocket Guide (sold on page 11) are small, slender amphibians with long tails that live in aquatic or moist areas. They breathe through moist skin rather than lungs. So they are most likely to be active in rainy months like February and March. Both are among the amphibians that can regenerate their tails if broken off when escaping predators.

Arboreal Salamanders (*Aneides lugubris*, shown above) are 2-1/4 to 4 inches long from snout to vent and up to 7 inches in total length. Their color is reddish to purplish brown, with yellow spots above. The legs and feet are short, but longer than in the slender salamanders. The toes are fairly large and rounded or even squarish to aid them in climbing and we would find them in our pygmy oak woodlands. Males, like the one pictured, have large triangular heads. They are sit-and-wait predators, eating small invertebrates, and even slender salamanders.

Slender Salamanders (shown below right) are nearly limited to California, and recent DNA studies have led to reclassification into quite a few more species than formerly. The name of California Slender Salamander (*Batrachoseps attenuatus*) is now restricted to a species on the coast from the Bay Area north. South of the Bay Area, there are now a number of species, often living very close together yet genetically separated for millions of years. One is listed for San Simeon Creek area only. The most widespread along the Central Coast and listed for a site in the Irish Hills is one called the Black-bellied Slender Salamander (*Batrachoseps nigriventris*). Perhaps this one is ours--the picture looks very like one I saw when turning over a block of wood during a school walk last spring. Smaller than the Arboreal Salamander, they look much like big red earthworms. They have slender heads, are about 1-2 inches long from snout to vent, and have a tail up to twice that long, worm-like grooves around the body and tail, and legs so tiny they can be hard to see. They are also sit-and-wait predators, eating small invertebrates at night and in wet weather, retreating under logs or underground when the air gets dry.

Both species lay clusters of eggs in moist places and the young hatch fully formed.



Birder Doug Stinson checks his tally sheet for the number of species that he has spotted in the Elfin Forest during the Audubon Christmas Bird Count.

Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

Christmas Bird Count in the Elfin Forest

The Morro Coast Audubon Society (MCAS) held its annual Christmas Bird Count on December 15, in 2007. As in past years, birder Doug Stinson, who is also an employee at Wild Birds Unlimited, did the count for the Elfin Forest and the edge of the estuary adjacent to the Forest. Doug reported that he spotted about 57 species, all of them "the usual ones" (for an expert birder, that is). He went on to say that he saw five Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, a Sharp-shinned Hawk, Anna's Hummingbirds displaying with their swooping dives, and large numbers of White-crowned Sparrows. In the bay he saw Wigeons, Pintail Ducks, Green-winged Teals, and about 200 Avocets. The total MCAS count area yielded 201 species for all of the birders participating, undoubtedly one of the highest counts in the nation, as it always is. The annual Audubon bird counts provide information about the health of bird populations in the western hemisphere.

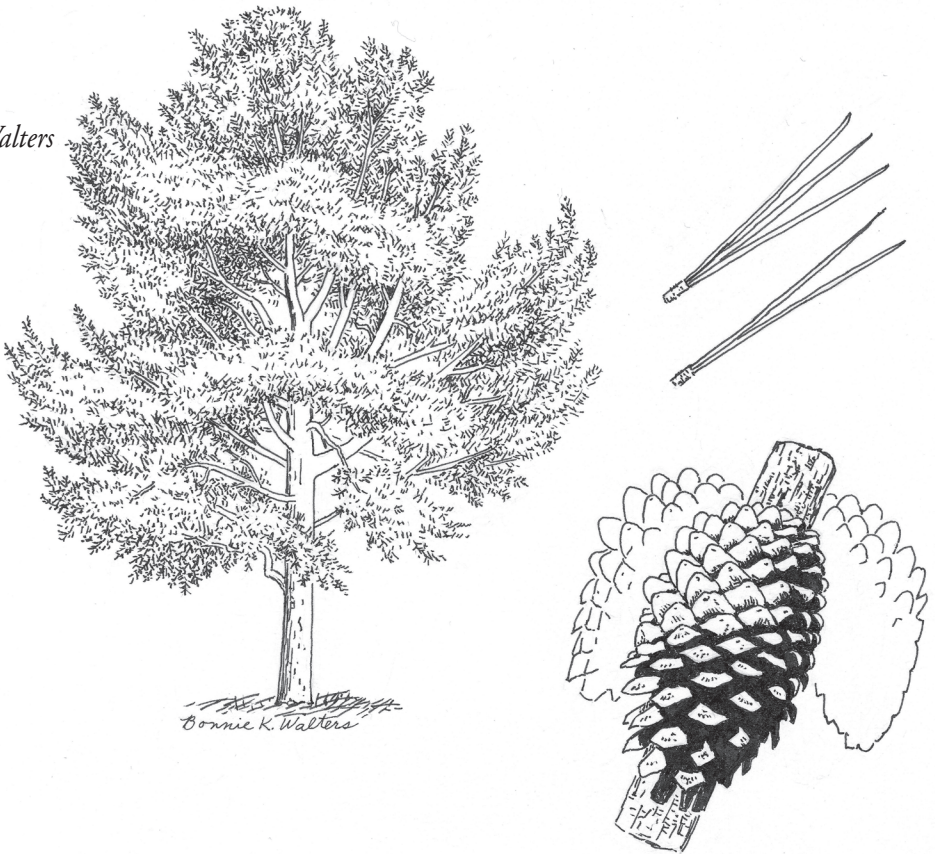


Monterey Pine

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

The plant profiled for this issue of *Oakleaves* is a tree that is extremely rare in the Elfin Forest. I've heard that one seedling or sapling is present. I don't know where exactly, but I assume it is near where a single small tree existed until it died several years ago. In fact, there was a movement to remove this species from the Elfin Forest species list until the youngster was found. Monterey pine (*Pinus radiata*) is the only pine found in the Elfin Forest so it wouldn't be hard to recognize. It is certainly not visible from the board walk. This pine usually has three 'short-ish' (2-3 inches or 5-7 cm.) needles in a bundle with each individual needle somewhat triangular in cross section. Unfortunately, Monterey pine also produces some two-needle bundles which is the common condition of the other native pine in the Los Osos area. That tree, bishop pine (*Pinus muricata*) is similar but has the exposed ends of its cone scales pointed. Monterey pine cone scales (at least at the base of the cone) are rounded. All of my references stress the 3-needle bundles as being characteristic with a few mentioning the 2-needle condition in passing. I, for one, have been very unlucky in this regard. It seems that whenever I examine a Monterey pine fascicle it has only 2 needles. It can be very frustrating if you are as unlucky as I am, and this is your first encounter with this tree.

Monterey Pine is a California native, but not a Morro Bay area native. There are three separate native stands of Monterey pine along the California coast—Santa Cruz, Monterey, and Cambria areas. Individual trees in the three stands are very similar in growth form and needles. However, the cones produced in the three stands can be told apart. Cambria's cones are the largest. So from which stand did the Morro Bay (and Elfin Forest) plants come? They probably came ultimately from the Monterey population. I say ultimately because when I first came to California in 1969, I heard a rumor that most of the Monterey pines in the nursery trade came from plants imported from New Zealand. Why New Zealand? First, we must remember, that native stands of Monterey pines are relatively short trees with branching trunks and thick, long basal side branches. This causes their rounded canopy profile which is unlike pines' usual triangular profile. Branching growth pattern produces lumber of very low quality. New Zealand was seeking a tree they could use for lumber. Monterey Pine grew well there, so their foresters began a selection program to increase lumber quality. They found a (single) tree that was fast growing and possessed a straight trunk as well as being adapted to plantation living. Monterey Pine is now widely planted on all the habitable continents of



the Southern Hemisphere, where it is a leading source of lumber and paper pulp. It is my understanding that, at least in the past, nursery trade Monterey pines were descendents of trees the New Zealanders had selected for lumber.

I think one last item must be mentioned. The California Native Plant Society places the native stands of Monterey pine in its list 1B--considered endangered. How can a species widely cultivated around the world be considered endangered? This has to do with genetic variability. Individual trees in cultivation are all derived from a relatively few parents that had the desirable traits. Therefore, all nursery and forestry stock has relatively little genetic variation. This contrasts with individual trees in native stands. Even though these stands only contain a few thousand individual trees, the genetic variation has been shown to be tremendous. It is this genetic variation of a very important economic plant that is endangered, not the species itself. As long as the genetic variability of the native stands exists, there is potential genetic diversity for improving current stock.

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? Please report any interesting wildlife activity or plants that you see to Jean Wheeler at jeanwheeler@charter.net for inclusion in future *Oakleaves* issues under "Elfin Forest Sightings." You can also leave a message on SWAP's answering machine, 528-0392.

Many Hands Make Good Signs: A Cooperative Educational Project

By Yolanda Waddell

Eric Wier, an Environmental Resources Specialist with County Public Works, needed to produce an informational (read regulatory) sign about the Morro shoulderband snail along the new Santa Ysabel Street walkway in Los Osos. That was a requirement by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Eric mentioned the sign to Jan DiLeo, County Parks Planner, who suggested that he consider turning a rather ordinary, "thou shalt not step on dune snails" sign, into a more interesting interpretive panel, perhaps more than just one. She referred him to Terre Dunivant of Gaia Graphics, who had designed such excellent projects as the the Morro Bay National Estuary Program's (MBNEP's) map of the Morro Bay Estuary (given out free of charge at SWAP information booths), and a beautiful interpretive panel for the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve in Cambria.

Working with Cheryl Lesinski of the MBNEP as writer and Sue McGinty of Los Osos as editor, Terre developed four striking interpretive panels using themes based on the topic, Endangered Habitat and Wildlife. She enlisted help from several SWAP members for information and photos: Marlin Harms, Bob Meyer, Pete Sarafian, Ron Ruppert, Tom Richards and Dennis Sheridan. The completed panels, encased in high pressure laminate, have the titles, "Pushy Plants" (about invasive species); "Where is the Morro Bay Kangaroo Rat?" (about the possibly extinct mammal using photos taken by Dr. Aryan Roest and provided by his daughter Michele Roest); "Sharing Our Home" (about habitat protection using 1937, 1973 and 2003 aerial photos provided by the MBNEP); and, the topic that started it all, "Special Snails" about the Morro shoulderband snail. Bob Meyer's photos of the snail are featured in the last panel, and Bob vetted the snail facts. The four completed panels were installed along the Santa Ysabel Blvd. walkway, and another set can be seen along the El Morro Street Linear Parkway.

The project was funded by San Luis Obispo County Parks and also with a \$5,000 educational mini-grant from the MBNEP (coordinated by Cheryl Lesinski). This project, though not directly related to the Elfin Forest, is an excellent example of how government agencies, working with a talented graphic artist, a good writer and a sharp-eyed editor, and tapping the knowledge and expertise of local citizens such as our SWAP members, can produce positive, powerful and beautiful messages that will inform all passers-by.

Elfin Forest Visitors



Cuesta College biology instructor Ron Ruppert (second from right) brought his Natural History class to the Elfin Forest on a December field trip. College classes can often be seen following their instructors on a tour of the Elfin Forest. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

"When one tugs at a single thing in nature,
he finds it attached to the rest of the world."

~ John Muir

Rare & Special

Coastal Dune Scrub habitat is home to many types of plants and animals.

In this photo you can see pink and yellow owl's clover (*Castilleja*), bushy green mock heather (*Ericameria*), and a single tall columbine thistle (*Cirsium*) in the center. The yellow flowers in the background are non-native mustard.

Living among the branches and leaves are many species of animals that evolved with this habitat. Some have become endangered as their habitat has vanished.

It is important to preserve this rare and special habitat, and the species that live here with us.

Special Snails

We share our habitat with a very special snail – the Morro shoulderband snail (*Helminthoglypta walkeri*). You may have heard about this snail because it is an endangered species, which means that its population has dropped so much it is in danger of becoming extinct.

Maybe you wouldn't miss a snail, but it isn't just a snail that's in trouble. An entire habitat is being lost as the Coastal Dune Scrub disappears.

Why the disappearing act? Just like these snails, people enjoy living in Coastal Dune Scrub. We have moved into the habitat and pushed native species into smaller spaces. The good news is that many areas of Coastal Dune Scrub have now been protected, and people have learned to be careful with nature.

How YOU can help endangered snails

- Stay on established pathways and trails so you won't trample plants or disrupt wildlife that may be rare or endangered.
- When walking your pets in natural areas, keep them on leash and on established trails. Bring a bag so you can pick up after your pets.
- Limit or avoid pesticide and herbicide use, especially before a rainstorm. Sprinklers too can wash chemicals off yards and into natural areas.
- Learn about native habitats. This area is rich in natural resources, and there are many local groups devoted to protecting the environment.

Please watch where you step, especially during wet weather. Look at this. Morro shoulderband snails do most damage when the ground is wet.

Look carefully at the photo. The shell of the Morro shoulderband snail has a dark stripe that follows the spiral along the rim. Do you find it strange that that same stripe that this is an endangered Morro shoulderband snail, you're right. The photographer was very careful not to touch this rare creature.

If you were a snail, your eyes would be at the end of your long stalks or tentacles. The short stalks are for touch.

Your shell would grow new ridges at the open end as your soft body grew inside. Morro shoulderband snail shells have deep ridges on the shell and are much stronger than that of a garden snail.

Some Plant and Animal Species Are Protected By Law. In the Morro Bay region of the Central Coast, there are many species of plants and animals that are endangered or have special status. It is important to learn about them and protect them. For more information, contact the Santa Ysabel Street Linear Parkway, 1000 Santa Ysabel Street, Los Osos, CA 94026. Phone: (805) 688-1000. Website: www.sylp.org

One of four interpretive panels produced for the Santa Ysabel Street walkway and the El Morro Linear Parkway, this one includes snail photos by Bob Meyer and a photo of coastal dune scrub in bloom by Marlin Harms, both active SWAP members. Image courtesy of Terre Dunivant.

Weed Warriors Erase Erosion

By Pete Sarafian, Conservation Chair

The Wonderful Weekend Weed Warriors worked in December to wipe out water damage to the wildlands of the Elfin Forest. Prior to the first heavy rains in mid-December, our work crew installed ten 4x4 pieces of untreated lumber to function as erosion bars. Previously, SWAP installed straw wattles. The wattles would only last for a year or two before deteriorating to the point of becoming worn out and unusable. In an effort to make such erosion controls less maintenance intensive, SWAP is now using untreated lumber which should last at least five years, installed in the sand.

The California Conservation Corps and San Luis Obispo County Parks installed chemically treated lumber and round posts in the past. These last a long time, but are potentially toxic to wildlife other than termites. It is not known what their long term effect might be on the federally listed and endangered Morro Shoulderband Snail (*Helminthoglypta walkeriana*). For this reason, the 4x4s are being tried. The warriors installed them along the Orchid trail at the top of the South Bay Boulevard highway embankment, at the highest point in the park near the 17th Street trail intersection with the boardwalk, and along the closed cross trail that used to connect the upper and lower halves of the boardwalk loop. A work crew that included Dave Bowlus, Steve Cake, Bob and Sharon Meyer, Ron Rasmussen, Dar Reynolds, Pete Sarafian and Yolanda Waddell installed the water bars. It was a tough but marvelously executed job with excellent participation. Good job and well done!

Following the first heavy rain storm in mid-December, the new erosion bars seemed to be doing their job just fine. The worst washout occurred at the 12th Street entrance to the Forest. It washed away most of the wood chips placed at the street end for parking. Apparently more erosion bars will be needed along the 12th Street sand trail, and wood chips also need to be replaced.

Let's All Pull Together

I can't believe it's 2008!

2007 has been simply great!

You've given so much,

That in a real clutch,

We could simply call off our next date.

But just a minute, not so fast!

Although the last year has passed,

More is left to be done.

You can't cut and run.

Our project remains partial and vast.

The recent rains cut a few furrows,

And critters continue their burrows.

We must stop the erosion,

And exotic explosion,

While enjoying our view of the Morros.

*Yours in integrated pest management,
Pete Sarafian*



Under the watchful eyes of (L-R) Steve Cake, Dar Reynolds and Sharon Meyer, Dave Bowlus hammers an iron rod to anchor an erosion control board during the December work party.

Photo by Yolanda Waddell.



Ron Rasmussen, Conservation Chair Pete Sarafian, and Dave Bowlus install an erosion control board across a trail in the Elfin Forest.

Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

SWAP First Saturday Work Parties

SWAP First Saturday Work Parties are held at 9 a.m. to noon on the first Saturday of each month. Please dress for wind, fog, or sun. Layers work well. Long pants and long-sleeved shirts are good. Sturdy shoes are a must. Meet at the north end of 15th Street at the Elfin Forest entrance. Take care not to park in front of driveways or mailboxes. Call 528-0392.

Creativity Blossoms in the Elfin Forest

By Debbie Levi, Calendar Committee Chair

Friends meet in the Elfin Forest for both conversation and the opportunity to enjoy the beauty of nature. Throughout history people have recorded their observations in different ways. Photographers express their connection to nature with beautiful photographs, artists use canvas, musicians mimic natural sounds, and writers attempt to capture their natural surroundings with words. Recently, a local poet named Mary Kleeman met with a group of friends for their weekly walk along the Elfin Forest boardwalk. These are her impressions:



Abundance

By Mary Kleeman

Friends gather for our weekly trek through the Elfin Forest,
twice around, mixing two by two,
then single file along narrow boardwalk passages
through this magical miniature wilderness.
Conversations drift, changing with weather and seasons.

With time or osmosis we learn snow-white chamise,
Mock heather, California sagebrush, known as cowboy cologne.
Pygmy oak trees decorated with lace lichen
naturally dominate the landscape,
leaving space for twisted reddish Morro manzanita.
Bright sticky monkey flower and wooly blue star
and pearly everlasting
gently outshine coffee berry and bracken fern, and deerweed.
Lingering we watch tide water. Who's visiting here today?
Peeps turn in flight reflecting light, gray to white.
In muddy sandbars sit flocks of sanderlings,
cinnamon teals, maybe godwits or mallards.
Sudden flight, we listen to wings whirring.
Chortling crrrronk calls for attention.
Black brants stop in the estuary on their winter way to Mexico.
Mating for life, feeding, resting side by side,
Migrating wing tip to wing tip.

Still bay water mirrors cloudy, blue skies.
Misty fog lifts. Cold wind whips gray rough intruding current.
Abundant life, familiar as faces and voices of faithful friends.



Coming Up in the Elfin Forest

By Jean Wheeler

With the winter rains having finally arrived, February and March should see colorful wildflowers opening against a vibrant green background. Perhaps most striking are the red Fuchsia-flowered Gooseberries at the peak of their bloom, with red also showing in California Peonies and Red Sand Verbena.

Yellow and orange are well represented including Seaside Fiddleneck, Golden Yarrow and Seaside Golden Yarrow, California Poppies, and Sticky Monkey-flowers. At the peak of its blooming season, our Morro Manzanita has lovely white bells often blushing slightly pink. White flowers also adorn the Buckbrush Ceanothus, Toyon, Hollyleaf Cherry, California Blackberries, and Croton. A native vine that has small white blossoms with yellow centers is Wild Cucumber. These vines are all over the Elfin Forest in February and March; but don't confuse them with the highly invasive Cape Ivy, which has a shiny leaf with yellow flowers.

These months feature wonderful birding opportunities in the Elfin Forest. Basically all of our winter water birds are still here by the thousands at least through February. This includes all Ducks and Geese, all Wading Birds, and all Grebes listed in our Pocket Guide (sold on page 11). American Avocets, and most Sandpipers are also here through March.

Among the shrubs and trees, our year round birds are here of course (California Quail, both species of Towhees, and the California Thrasher to name just a few). Our winter visitors (such as Ruby-crowned Kinglets, American Robins, and several species of Sparrows) are nearing the end of their visit and will soon head north or up into high mountains. They'll be joined by migrants passing through from wintering sites in Middle and South America (such as Rufous and Allen's Hummingbirds). Some of our summer birds (including House Wrens and all of our species of Swallows) will be returning from their holidays in the tropics to get to work again building nests for this year's family. What a great time of year to visit the Elfin Forest, whether for a few short strolls or for many hours of fascinating study!



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Yolanda Waddell, Dirk and Bonnie Walters, Jean Wheeler.

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ywaddell@kcbx.net AND jeanwheeler@charter.net.

WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

Third Saturday Walks

February 16, 9:30 a.m. –

Fungus Foray

For our fourteenth annual Fungus Foray in the Elfin Forest, intrepid leader and fungophile Dennis Sheridan will take us on an exploration of the Elfin Forest floor for wood bluetts, black elfin saddles, earthstars, golden caps, boletes, poisonous amanitas and many other fascinating fungi. Bring a magnifying lens and, if you have a mystery mushroom in your yard, bring a sample for Dennis to identify. This is not a mushroom collecting walk, as all plants in the Elfin Forest are protected by law. Only a very heavy rain will cancel the walk, and if it hasn't rained, Dennis will give us an equally fascinating walk about the lichens that grow abundantly in the Forest.

March 15, 9:30 a.m. –

Larger Plants of the Elfin Forest

Dr. Matt Ritter, Cal Poly botany professor and Conservatory Director, will give a tour and talk about the oaks and dominant shrubs found at the Elfin Forest. He will describe the interesting features of these plants and their role in the unique vegetation found in the Forest. Matt has recently published a book, *Plants in the San Luis Obispo Area*, that describes more than 1300 native species. To learn more about the larger plants in the Elfin Forest, take the opportunity to hear this dynamic speaker.

April 19, 9:30 a.m. –

Butterfly Walk

Join butterfly enthusiast Pat Brown on a tour of the Elfin Forest from a butterfly's point of view. Pat has taken many photos of butterflies in all stages of development from eggs to mature butterflies, and will share them along with any fascinating butterfly facts. She'll point out some of the plants that are host to butterflies, and will lead you to hang-outs of Variable Checkerspot, Moro Blue, Swallowtail, Hairstreak and other butterflies that make the Elfin Forest their home. She will also share information about butterfly books, web sites and butterfly-related materials. She recommends that you bring a hand lens and a pair of close-focusing (5-10 ft.) binoculars.

Walks in the Elfin Forest begin at 9:30 a.m. (unless otherwise noted). Park at the north end of 15th Street off Santa Ysabel in Los Osos and walk up the path at the end of the street to the boardwalk. The walk will begin at that point. Wear comfortable shoes, long sleeves and pants to avoid poison oak and mosquitoes. Please park carefully, avoiding driveways and mailboxes. Please leave pets at home. The easy paced walks last 1-1/2 to 2 hours. For more information call (805) 528-0392.

all 3rd Saturday Walks Photos at right by Yolanda Waddell



Janine Kirkpatrick and Sketch Walk leader Barbara Renshaw focus in on a Mock heather plant as their subject for a detailed sketch.



During Barbara Renshaw's sketch walk in November, Janine Kirkpatrick (L) assisted by Wilma Sparling took a rubbing of a Coast live oak trunk. Both women live in Atascadero.



Dr. Jean Wheeler led a geography-related Solstice Walk in December. Here she is saying that the angle of the sun at our position on the earth causes south-facing slopes to receive more sun and be drier, and north-facing slopes to receive less sun and retain water longer.

Thank You to Our New and Renewing Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter, SWAP Database Coordinator

NEW MEMBERS:

John Giles Marcia Munson*

RENEWING MEMBERS:

Donna and John Banks*
Judith and Robert Bean*
Karen Beatty and Frank Ausilio*
Carolyn Boomer*
Alice L. Cushing*
Pauline Dewitt*
Cheryl Dove*
Tim and Kathy Dugan*
Fran Edwards*
Linda Faust*
Aeron Arlin Genet*
Donna and Howard Krueger*
Lois and Frank Martinez*
Marilyn Moore*
Jim and Barbara Murray*
Randall and Shirley Palmer*
Billy R. Pewitt*
Joan V. Powell*
Sylvia Rosenberg*
Dr. Jan W. Simek*
Shirley Sparling*
Barbara Spiegelman*
John Steinbeck*
Elizabeth Will and Ben Burgoa*

DONATIONS:

Ann M. Lawrence* — Big Sit! Donation

SPECIAL GIFT:

SLO County Community Foundation
(Barry VanderKelen, Ex. Dir.)
from the George and Janice Clucas Fund*

**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.*



Debbie Levi, dressed as a SWAP elf, and Ron Rasmussen worked to sell the 2008 Elfin Forest calendar at the Los Osos Holiday parade in December. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

Final Sale for 2008 Calendar; 2009 to Feature Artists

By Debbie Levi, Calendar Committee Chair

Only a limited quantity of the 2008 Elfin Forest calendar is left. ***The calendars are now on sale at \$10.00 each.*** You can order them with the form on page 11 of this issue of Oakleaves, and they are also available at the Los Osos Chamber of Commerce.

We thank everyone who purchased calendars as it truly helps our conservation projects in the Elfin Forest. Also, SWAP will be donating a portion of the remaining calendars to local public schools in an effort to encourage environmental awareness, and to develop a relationship between our Education Committee and the schools.

The Calendar Committee looks forward to publishing a 2009 calendar featuring views of the Elfin Forest and close-ups of its vegetation and wildlife by local artists (painters). The Committee requests that interested artists contact us at: calendar@elfin-forest.org We will supply further details in the April/May Newsletter.

(at right) Emily Polk was pleased to receive a 2008 Elfin Forest calendar from our chapter, and encourages all SWAP members to buy one or more. Photo by Jean Wheeler.



Mural Shirts Make Great Gifts!

Mural Shirts, available as long or short sleeved T-shirts or as thick, comfortable sweatshirts are wonderful gifts to family, friends, or to yourself! Barbara Rosenthal's beautiful mural design is on the back as well as on the front.



SWAP Shoppers' Order Form

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 (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 = \$_____

2. PHOTOS OF THE ELFIN FOREST

Original photo note cards by Bob Meyer

____ @ \$3.00 or ____ 5 @ \$14.00 = \$_____

Original photo postcards by Bob Meyer

____ @ \$1.00 = \$_____

Indicate No. per View(s):

____ All 5; ____ Don Klopfer Trail; ____ Ocean View;

____ Wild Hyacinth; ____ Horned Lizard; ____ Dudleya

3. POCKET GUIDE

Useful 56-page guide to plants and animals of the Elfin Forest. Charts for bloom season, form, color, and habitat for 200 vascular plants plus lists of 56 lichens and 36 mushrooms known to occur. Habitat and peak months seen are charted for 187 birds. Also listed: 28 common mammals; 10 reptiles; 4 amphibians; 19 butterflies and moths (charted by size, months in flight, color, and host plants); 104 other arthropods and 7 gastropods.

____ @ \$2.00 = \$_____

4. ELFIN FOREST MURAL PRINTS

____ signed prints by artist Barbara Rosenthal, image size 4 1/2 x 16 1/2 in; mounted on foamcore @ \$20.00 = \$_____

5. 2008 ELFIN FOREST WALL CALENDAR *NOW ONLY \$10!*

Enjoy all year round these wonderful pictures of the Elfin Forest by outstanding photographers!

____ @ \$10.00 = \$_____

Shipping cost if outside Los Osos/Morro Bay

Pocket Guides & Note Cards: \$1.00 = ____

Calendars & all other items: \$2.50 = ____

TOTAL OF ORDER \$_____

(Please print when filling order, and indicate how many of each)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone (w/area code) : _____

Make checks payable and mail to:

SWAP, P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412-6442.

Call in orders may also be made: (805) 528-0392.

Treasurer Needed -- see back cover!

Los Osos / Morro Bay Chapter
 SMALL WILDERNESS AREA PRESERVATION
 A Non-Profit Public Benefit Corporation
 P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412-6442
 (805) 528-0392 www.elfin-forest.org



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Trea\$urer Needed

Treasurer Pat Akey, a retired teacher, has moved to the very important position of Chair of the Education Committee. Chapter Chair Ron Rasmussen is now handling the checkbook, making deposits and paying bills. Past Treasurer Bob McDougle has agreed to do our bookkeeping, including monthly financial reports in the interim.

So -- do you enjoy working with numbers? Are you familiar with a computer program that keeps accounts and provides financial reports? And most important, do you have 2-3 hours a week (plus a 2-hour Board meeting once a month) that you would be willing to give to our chapter? If your answer to all three is yes, then WE NEED YOU! We can provide a thorough orientation and cookies at every Board meeting. If you're interested, please leave a message at 528-0392, and someone will get right back to you.

Dues Increase Reminder

Note! With the approval of our members, the chapter dues increased to \$25 a year beginning January 1, 2008. Seniors and students can pay a reduced fee of \$15 per year. Thank you for your support of the Elfin Forest.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

☐ New Member ☐ Renewing Member

☐ Member \$25* ☐ Defender \$100

☐ Steward \$50 ☐ Champion \$250

☐ Protector \$75 ☐ Guardian \$500

☐ Life Member \$1000

☐ 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.

* Seniors & Students \$15/year

02/08