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Membership



When we apply for grants to finance our work in the Elfin Forest, agencies want to know how many members SWAP has. The more members we have, the greater is our ability to obtain grants for continuing restoration of the Elfin Forest. One thing you can do to help us keep our numbers up is to check the currency of your own membership. Check the renewal date located next to your name on the address label of this issue. Then urge friends to join SWAP by sharing this newsletter with them and taking them on a walk in our Elfin Forest.

You can use the membership form at the right for your renewal or for new memberships for your friends. Our basic membership fee of \$25 covers our operating costs and brings members this bimonthly newsletter, the *Oakleaves*. Donations above that level provide funds to help us with projects to control weeds, prevent erosion, and restore habitat. Thanks for your help!

MEMBERSHIP FORM

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City/State/Zip

Phone

☐ New Member

☐ Member \$25

☐ Steward \$50

☐ Protector \$75

☐ Seniors & Students \$15

☐ Life Member \$1000

☐ Renewing Member

☐ Defender \$100

☐ Champion \$250


☐ Guardian \$500

☐ 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.

06/08

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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



please report Elfin Forest sightings. See page 7.

Protecting Forest and Bay
With Mutt Mitts:
A Community Effort

By Yolanda Waddell

After a Third Saturday walk a few months ago, I came across Heidi Kausch, shown in the photo on page 3, cleaning up the end of 15th Street with her “Pooper Scooper.” She has three dogs and cleans up not only after them, but also after other dogs that either run loose or whose owners aren’t watchful.

Heidi and numerous other neighbors of the Elfin Forest care enough about the Forest to make sure that dog droppings, even those left behind by dogs with careless owners, are picked up. They understand that dog waste is not only unsightly, but can carry disease-causing pathogens, including Salmonella and Giardia. If the waste isn’t picked up, rainstorms can wash the pathogens into the Morro Bay Estuary.

No one is more aware of the need for picking up pet waste than SWAP member Sandra Beebe, who with husband Curt, has

Mutt Mitts continued on page 3

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OAKLEAVES

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 ❖ JUNE / JULY 2008

Harold Weiman
– In Memoriam



Pat and Harold Weiman.
Photo courtesy of Pat Wieman and Andrea Unger

By Yolanda Waddell

I first met Harold Weiman in 1978 when I joined the newly formed Morro Bay Museum Docents. Harold was one of the organizers of the program. He was my idea of a Renaissance man: a naturalist and artist, he had a kayak-making and rental business, had been a city recreation director in San Bernardino, wrote a newspaper column and books, and had a great supply of good stories and ideas. He and his wife Pat were much-loved members of the Morro Bay Community. They supported many causes, including the Natural History Association and SWAP, gladly lent out their kayaks that were left over from their rental business, and enjoyed living close to the Morro Bay estuary. Harold wrote a weekly newspaper column in the Sun Bulletin called “Meanderings,” that later became a book.

After a few years with the Museum Docents, I left to join a group of my neighbors in Los Osos who wanted to preserve a beautiful parcel of land adjacent to the Morro Bay Estuary. The 90-acre parcel was called the Otto Property after its original owner, Richard Otto. It was then owned by his widow, Shirley Otto, and we knew that a number of developers were interested in the property.

Harold Weiman continued on page 2



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 / Co-Treasurer
Pete Sarafian, Vice Chair
Yolanda Waddell, Secretary
Pat Akey, Member at Large
Debbie Levi, Member at Large
Bob Meyer, Member at Large
Pat Murray, Member at Large
Bob McDougale, Acting Co-Treasurer

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, June 9
and Monday, July 14.

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.

Harold Weiman *continued from page 1*

By 1985, our group realized that if we were going to save the Otto Property, we would have to buy it from Mrs. Otto. It was at that time that Harold Weiman encouraged us to become a chapter of Small Wilderness Area Preservation or SWAP. He and Pat had been members during the time when a previous SWAP chapter had saved a piece of land east of the estuary called the Baptista Ranch.

It was because of Harold's encouragement that we formed the Los Osos/Morro Bay Chapter of SWAP. In 1987, we supported a move by State Parks to purchase the northern 50 acres of the parcel; and by 1994, under the leadership of our President, Rose Bowker, we had raised \$1.6 million to buy the southern 40 acres. Had it not been for Harold Weiman's foresight and encouragement of our small and quite amateur group (as well as Shirley Otto's patience with our efforts), there would be houses and streets instead of coastal dune scrub, coast live oaks and the boardwalk to give access to them.

While SWAP was working to save the Elfin Forest, Harold wrote three books and a script for an award-winning slide-tape program, "Parks Are For People," that was played for museum visitors for many years. His book: *Estuary: A Natural Wonderland* is still sold in the museum and local bookstores. In it, Harold describes the estuary as "...a great mixing bowl – the place where land and sea overlap, where the ingredients of new life are brought together..." His style was both poetic and accurate.

In 2001, Harold and Pat left their home of 34 years and moved to the Seattle area to live closer to their children. Last December, Harold broke his hip and on March 15, 2008, he died peacefully at age 90. Pat wrote, "Harold was deeply loved by his children, Jim and Beth, and by Pat, his wife of 64 years. Harold and Pat never tired of each other. Harold was a man of great heart, enthusiasm and humor."

All of us who knew him will agree with Pat. The things he accomplished: the Morro Bay Museum Docent Program, our SWAP Chapter and through it the Elfin Forest, his books, poetry and paintings, will be appreciated for generations to come.

*Harold describe(d)
the estuary as
"...a great mixing bowl
– the place where land
and sea overlap,
where the ingredients
of new life are brought
together..."
His style was both
poetic and accurate.*

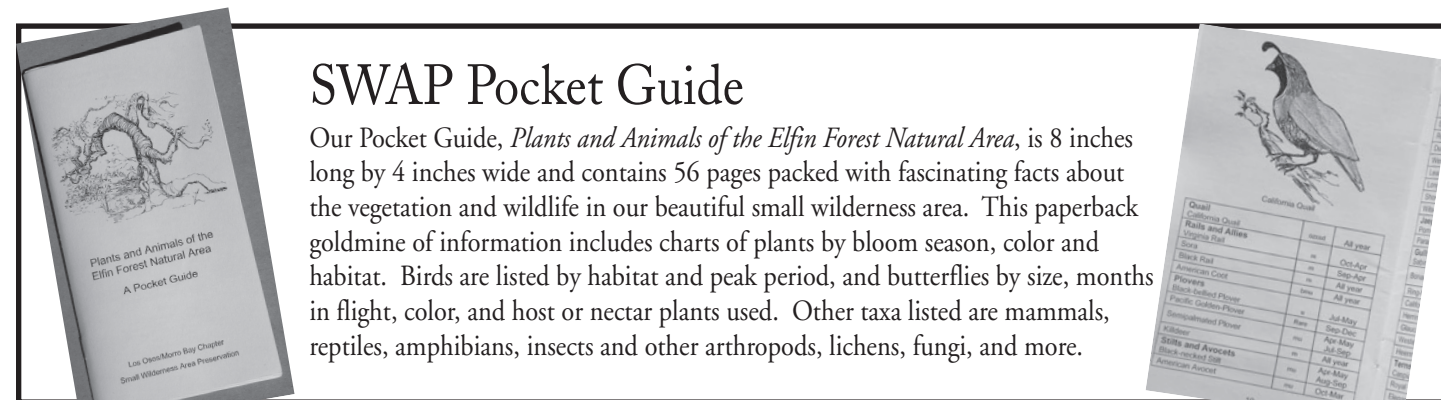
Our Thanks (Again!) to Interim Co-Treasurer Bob McDougale

Seven months ago, Bob McDougale returned from "retirement" from the SWAP Board to temporarily handle our Chapter's accounts while we searched for a new Treasurer. Past Treasurer Pat Akey left the job last Fall to become Chair of a very busy Education Committee. Chapter Chair Ron Rasmussen and Bob acted as Co-Treasurers; Ron kept the checkbook and paid bills, and Bob did the accounting.

Bob was Treasurer of the Los Osos/Morro Bay Chapter of SWAP from 1998 through 2005. During that time he served for a year as Chair of the Board as well, and from 2001 through 2005 also was Treasurer of Statewide SWAP.

As of June, Bob is retiring again. When he left SWAP, he joined the Board of San Luis Obispo League of Women Voters as Development Director, and is an active member of the Basin Street Regulars, an organization that promotes traditional jazz (also known as Dixieland jazz). In spite of his busy schedule, Bob made time to crunch SWAP income and expense numbers on his computer and present the Board with a financial report each month.

As we did when Bob retired at the end of 2005, we thank him for the gift of his time, energy and skills to SWAP. We also hope that by the time you read this, we'll have found a new chapter Treasurer. We'll keep you posted.



SWAP Pocket Guide

Our Pocket Guide, *Plants and Animals of the Elfin Forest Natural Area*, is 8 inches long by 4 inches wide and contains 56 pages packed with fascinating facts about the vegetation and wildlife in our beautiful small wilderness area. This paperback goldmine of information includes charts of plants by bloom season, color and habitat. Birds are listed by habitat and peak period, and butterflies by size, months in flight, color, and host or nectar plants used. Other taxa listed are mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects and other arthropods, lichens, fungi, and more.



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 lichens and 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 = \$_____

Shipping cost if outside Los Osos/Morro Bay

Pocket Guides & Note Cards: \$1.00 = ____

All other items: \$2.50 = ____

TOTAL OF ORDER \$_____

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

Name: _____

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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.

Thank You to Our New and Renewing Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter, SWAP Database Coordinator

NEW MEMBERS:

Wayne Ferguson Mimi Whitney Hafft

RENEWING MEMBERS:

Pat Akey	Cindy Konrad*
Priscilla Akin	James & Esther Landreth*
Jerry Ambrose*	Mike & Melissa Leahy
Arthur & Lillian Armstrong*	Ronda & Larry LeBrane
Randy Ball	Mary Leizear
Gordon Black	Jean & Marlene Mathias
Eleanor Brown	Robert & Ceil McDougle*
Kathleen Budge*	Susan McGinty
David & Linda Chipping*	Wendy McKeown
Diane Clement*	Susan McTaggart
George and Janice Clucas*	Bob & Sharon Meyer*
Bill Davies	Beth & Sheldon Miller*
Margaret Diehl	Roy Moss
L.R. Erickson	Richard Parker
Margaret Fox	Wilson & Carolyn Pendery*
Phyllis M. Foulstone	Mary & Arthur Pruitt*
Frank & Gail Freiler*	Stanley Reichenberg*
Nada Fuller	Rita Robinson
John & Joy Gault	James Ross
Richard & Charlotte Gordon	Ron Ruppert & Shaunna Sullivan
Larry & Pat Grimes*	Carolyn Schanberger
Tom & Rita Hadjiyane	H.E. Schuchardt
Alta Hall	John Severson
Charles W. Hallstrom	Robert & Mia Simmons
Leslie Hanna & Dan Miller	Charles & Sally Sitton*
Marlin & Connie Harms	Margaret Smith
Arylane Hill	Constance Snapp*
Vivian Hodge	Lani Steele
Susan Howe	Bonnie & Vladimir Von Rauner
Dr. Steve Jio & Family*	Margaret Weiss*
Rich & Prisila Johnson*	Jean D. Wheeler*
Aya Kimura	Rosemary Wolter
Sally & Randy Knight*	Linda Young
Claudette Kolk	

NEW LIFE MEMBERS:

Judith Burcher (current member)
Jane & Melville Hodge (new member)
Dirk & Bonnie Walters (current member)

*Thanks to those listed above who donated more than the \$25 membership dues. The additional donations will be used for special projects in the Elfin Forest.



SLOSEA Monitors Water Quality in Morro Bay National Estuary

By Jean Wheeler

Have you noticed those tall poles sticking up from the mud flats of the estuary beside wooden decks with railings? At least two are visible from our Elfin Forest boardwalk. Have you wondered what they are? These and two other such stations in Morro Bay continuously monitor water quality for SLOSEA, which stands for San Luis Obispo Science and Ecosystem Alliance.

SLOSEA is an integrated group of scientists, resource managers, and stakeholders supporting sustainable and resilient marine resources on the California Central Coast. The program is administered by the Biological Sciences Department of California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, and the Cal Poly Corporation. Major funding is provided by The David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

One of the two stations near the Elfin Forest is just offshore from South Bay Boulevard, and monitors the water coming from Chorro Creek. The closer one lies between Siena's View and Morro Bay State Park, in a channel receiving water from both Chorro and Los Osos Creeks. Each station is powered by a solar panel, visible near the top of the pole, which supports a submerged box of instruments. One device measures conductivity (from which salinity can be calculated), temperature, and depth of water. Three other sensors measure oxygen, nitrates, and chlorophyll and turbidity. There is also a current meter mounted separately upstream from the box. These two stations were installed and operational by the end of November, 2007.

The other two stations in the estuary are located offshore from Baywood Park (visible from the Elfin Forest with strong binoculars) and near the T-pier in Morro Bay. Results of the monitoring, including 7-day graphs, are published on the web-site: <http://slosea.com/> The information gathered from these continuous monitors will be very helpful in making management decisions affecting sustainable use of our marine resources in the future for our Central Coast. As the SLOSEA motto puts it, Science serving marine ecosystem health.

Mutt Mitts continued from page 1

installed 32 Mutt Mitt dispensers in Morro Bay and Los Osos, including seven at the entrances of the Elfin Forest.

Since 2000, Sandra has coordinated the Morro Bay Mutt Mitt Program. She uses funds provided by Morro Bay National Estuary Program grants, the County Water Board, Spencers' Fresh Market, the Morro Bay Power Plant and individuals to purchase large quantities of Mutt Mitts, thus getting a better price on them. For more information about the Program, see www.sandrabeebe.com.

The effectiveness of the Mutt Mitt Program can be seen in the decrease of dog droppings in the Elfin Forest, where the trails used to be lined with it. SWAP receives boxes of Mutt Mitts from Sandra Beebe once a year or so, and members of the Mutt Mitt Committee, under the leadership of Dorothy Norwood, see to it that each dispenser is kept full. The trash baskets attached to the Mutt Mitt dispensers are generally full of the little white plastic bags turned inside out, and if a dispenser becomes empty, someone will leave a message on SWAP's answering machine. County Parks staff empties the trash baskets.

According to Sandra, it costs \$500 to support one dispenser for approximately one year. She is constantly in need of funds to purchase more Mutt Mitts. Some businesses and individuals come up with creative ways to raise the funds. Morro Bay Realtor Jenny Brantlee produced a "Best of Bay" Pooch Pageant in Morro Bay in May, and donated the proceeds to the Mutt Mitt Program. Other businesses and organizations take up collections among their staffs and friends. The result is that Mutt Mitts are free to users all the way from Cloisters and Del Mar Parks in north Morro Bay to the Elfin Forest, Sweet Springs and Montana de Oro in Los Osos.



Debbie Levi greets a visitor at the SWAP booth during the Green Living Expo on April 26 in San Luis Obispo's Mission Plaza. Despite unusually hot weather, many people stopped to learn about SWAP and the Elfin Forest. In the background are booth workers Marty Levi and Ron Rasmussen. Other SWAP volunteers who staffed the booth under Pat Murray's coordination were Pat Akey, Pete Sarafian, Yolanda Waddell and Mimi Whitney.



Heidi Kausch keeps the end of 15th Street next to the Elfin Forest clear of dog droppings with her "pooper scooper." Like many Elfin Forest neighbors and visitors, she cares both about the appearance of the Elfin Forest and the effects of dog feces on the environment, and takes action. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.



Mutt Mitt Committee Chair Dorothy Norwood (left) received a year's supply of Mutt Mitts for the Elfin Forest from Morro Bay Mutt Mitt Program Coordinator Sandra Beebe in May, 2007. Pretty soon Sandra will place an order for more with funds that she receives from various sponsors including the MBNEP and Morro Bay realtor Jenny Brantlee.

Solstice to Solstice in the Elfin Forest

By Jean Wheeler, Ph.D.



Our Elfin Forest is an excellent place to enjoy and study big seasonal differences in where we see the sun at dawn, noon, and sunset and how these differences affect our plants and animals.

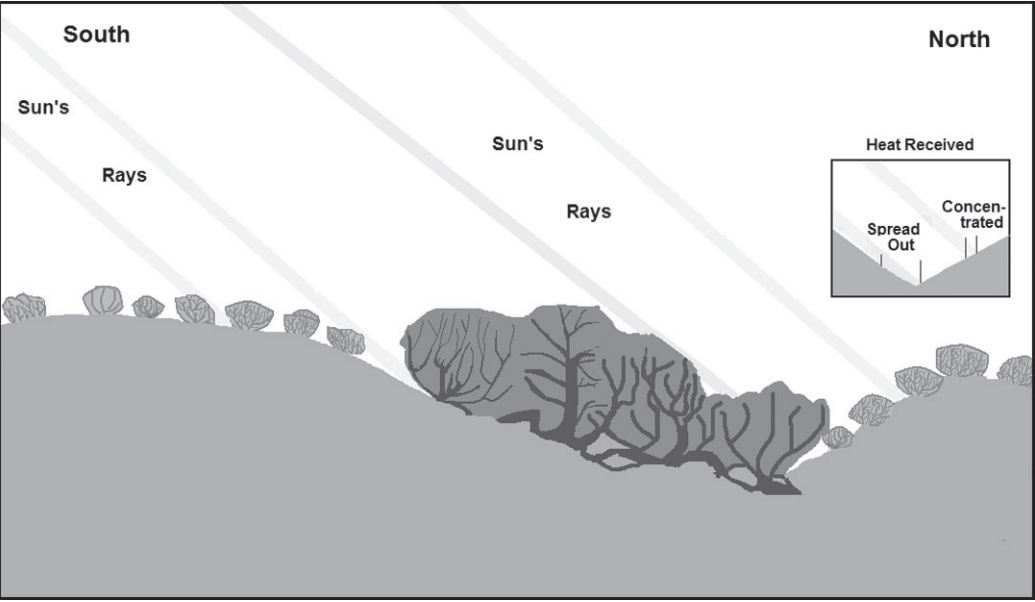
We think of the sun rising in the east, being overhead at noon, and setting in the west. But that is amazingly far from the truth! In summer, it rises well north of due east, is high in the southern sky at noon but never directly overhead, and sets considerably north of due west. In winter, it rises way south of due east, climbs barely a third of the way between the horizon and the zenith, and sets well to the southwest. The photo at the top of this article, by Barbara Murray of Los Osos, is a composite of pictures taken at sunset on various dates between the December solstice (to the south, at the left) and the June solstice (to the north, at the right).

The sun angle at noon varies by 47° (more than half of the 90° possible angle between our horizon and the zenith) from a low at our latitude of about 31° in December to a high of about 78° in June. This is caused by the 23 ½° tilt of the earth's axis from the plane of its orbit around the sun. The overhead noon sun appears to move one degree of latitude about every four days between the

Tropics of Capricorn and Cancer, 23 ½° of latitude on either side of the Equator. It seems to “stand still” when “turning around” at the tropic lines in December and June, hence “solstice” which means “the sun stands still.” We’re about 12° latitude farther north than the Tropic of Cancer (near Mexico City), so our June sun is 12° less than directly overhead.

These changes in our local sun angle and related changes in length of daylight hours cause major seasonal differences in the amount of heat our plants and animals receive from the sun. And, of course, the highest and hottest sun angles and longest days come during our summer dry season, making it even harder to cope with the lack of rain.

As the diagram below shows, south-facing slopes in the fossilized sand dunes of our Elfin Forest aggravate the drought problem. Facing the concentrated rays of the sun, they are drier, and can only support short and sparse shrubs of dune scrub or maritime chaparral. But north-facing slopes slant away from the sun. They are cooler, retain more moisture, and support more vegetation, notably our pygmy oak woodlands—the Elfin Forest.



WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST Third Saturday Walks

June 21, 9:30 a.m. – Marsh Walk

It's a little-known fact that the El Moro Elfin Forest includes 23 acres of marshland. This month, botanist Dr. Dirk Walters will take us for a tour of the salt marsh at the edge of the Elfin Forest. Mud boots are a must for this one! We'll begin at the usual meeting place at the north end of 15th Street, and take the boardwalk and some sandy trails down to the marsh. We'll learn how plants that grow in the marsh manage to survive in both salt water and fresh water environments. Dirk will introduce us to plants that like to get their feet wet: Salt Grass, Frankenia, Bird's Beak, Marsh Rosemary, and the predominant plant, Pickleweed. It will be a walk that you'll long remember. This walk will last 2 to 3 hours.

July 19, 9:30 a.m. – Archaeology Walk

Join renowned archaeologist Dr. John Parker to do some time traveling into the pre-Spanish past of Central Coast inhabitants, the Chumash and their ancestors. Walking along the boardwalk, he'll tell us the fascinating story of the ancient peoples who preceded the Chumash and explain how archaeologists can determine changes in the ocean's level by studying human habitations. He'll show us examples of technology development through the ages, sing and play a Chumash percussion instrument, and give us a word image of everyday life in the Elfin Forest during the time of the Chumash. We'll learn about Chumash money, economy and trade. This walk will reveal a complex world of the Elfin Forest's past inhabitants, one that we would never suspect while walking along the boardwalk today.

August 16, 9:30 a.m. –

Digital Photo and Birding Walk

Do you have a digital camera that mainly takes pictures of family events and parties? Morro Bay Museum docents Mike Baird and Kevin Cole will help you to develop your outdoor photography skills with a mini instructional photo tour on the Elfin Forest boardwalk. All skill levels are welcome. They will cover the problems of dealing with light contrast in an oak grove, getting a good close-up photo of the Forest's native flowers, and catching birds and butterflies in flight. Bring your tripod and macro lens if you have them. Many digital cameras have macro settings. Bring binoculars as well, since both leaders are birders and will identify some of the Elfin Forest's birds.

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.



Dr. Matt Ritter's topic for his 3rd Saturday walk in March was the shrubs and trees of the Elfin Forest. Here he discusses plant succession in the Celestial Meadow, which once looked much more like a meadow, with shorter plants. Dr. Ritter also noticed that the Elfin Forest has, not one, but two species of Dudleya. An article about the "new" Dudleya will appear in a future issue of Oakleaves.

Photo by Bob Meyer.



The weather was cold, cloudy and windy this year for Pat Brown's April butterfly walk. No butterflies ventured out, but Pat used her excellent visual aids to show visitors what they would see on a warmer day. Caterpillars of the Variable Checkerspot butterfly were active on Sticky monkeyflower plants, giving walk participants a chance to see the butterfly in its larval stage. Photo by Dave Bowlus.



The Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch, a chapter of SWAP, held their annual Wildflower Show on April 26 and 27 in Cambria. Over 400 species of wildflowers were gathered by 13 volunteers between the Monterey county line and the southern edge of the Morro Bay estuary. They were identified by plant specialist D.R. “Doc” Miller, and displayed in vases and bottles with identification cards stating the plant family, scientific name and common name. Oakleaves Editor Jean Wheeler visited the show and is shown taking a close look at a lupine. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

Coming Up in the Elfin Forest

Text and Photo by Jean Wheeler

Although the exuberant springtime bloom in the Elfin Forest is past, summer still puts on a fine show of flowering shrubs and herbs. Perhaps the most noticeable color in July and August is the yellow of the Deerweed. The orange of Sticky Monkey Flower is also still much in evidence. Silver Dune Lupine hosts the caterpillars of the Morro Blue Butterfly and usually continues to show lovely blue flower spikes into July. Thriving at the viewpoint named for it, isn't it lovely to see how well it's spreading in the area SWAP has revegetated along the south edge of the boardwalk near Bush Lupine Point? Black Sage still has white to lavender blossoms showing, while many have already dried to black pom-pom balls circling the stems. At the inland end of the boardwalk, Chamise shows white flower spikes. Adding color in the understory are yellow spikes of the succulent Coastal Dudleya; blue in Wooly Star (subject of Dirk Walter's article on page 5); and pink in spikes of California Hedge Nettle (pictured here) as well as in Cobwebby Thistle (a native, unlike the alien and invasive purple Italian Thistle). White flowers include Pearly Everlasting in the understory, the tiny white flowers of short grayish-green Croton plants next to paths, and white flowers and ferny-looking leaves of Horkelia in open areas.

Many birds of the oak woodlands, maritime chaparral, and coastal dune scrub are busy in the Elfin Forest all year, and likely to be feeding young in these summer months. Perhaps that California Thrasher will again raise a clutch in the mock heather near the Fairbanks Monument. Look for flycatchers such as the Black Phoebe and the Western Kingbird; wrens including Bewick's Wren and the noisy but elusive Wrentit; California and Spotted Towhees; Chipping, Lark, Savannah, Song, and White-crowned Sparrows; Black-headed Grosbeaks; Orange-crowned, Yellow, and Wilson's Warblers; Brewer's Blackbird and the Brown-headed Cowbird; House and Purple Finches; and the Lesser and American Goldfinches. Some ducks and shorebirds such as willets and killdeer are still common in the waters of the estuary, even though the huge flotillas of waterbirds seen in the winter have departed.



OAKLEAVES

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: Sandra Beebe, Dave Bowlus, Betsy Kinter, Debbie Levi, Bob Meyer, Barbara Murray, Ron Rasmussen, Pete Sarafian, Cal Poly SLOSEA, Yolanda Waddell, Dirk and Bonnie Walters, Pat Weiman, and Jean Wheeler

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If possible, all copy should be submitted by e-mail to:
ywaddell@kcbx.net AND jeanwheeler@charter.net.

Sixty-first in a Series

Wooly Phlox or Wooly Star

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

Bonnie's drawing for this issue of the *Oak Leaves* is a beautiful plant that shows up in the Elfin Forest in late May or early June. It is *Eriastrum densifolium* var. *densifolium*. It is of some interest that most flower books for amateurs don't mention this plant at all, yet it has as many common names as there are local floras. In Clifton Smith's, *A Flora of Santa Barbara County, Ca.*, it is called Mesa Phlox; in *The Dune Mother's Wildflower Guide* it is Dunes Blue Phlox or Wooly Blue Star; and in Mary Coffeen's *Central Coast Wild Flowers* it is simply Wooly Star or Eriastrum. I have also heard it called simply Wooly Phlox.

The genus name, *Eriastrum*, refers to the silvery wooly hairs (eri-) surrounding the star-like (-astrum) flowers. In our variety, the leaves are also covered with the silvery hairs. Most references note its likeness to the genus, *Gilia*, but note that it differs primarily in wooly phlox flowers producing sepals of different sizes. Our coastal variety grows in open areas within stabilized coastal dunes from Monterey County south where it forms tight to straggly gray mounds usually covered with pale blue flowers. White flowered plants are also reported, but I personally have not seen them. The plant produces herbaceous shoots from a woody root crown. It is, therefore another one of those plants sometimes treated as an herb and sometimes as a shrub.

In the Morro Bay area, Eriastrum grows in open areas within stabilized coastal dunes. How can there be open areas within

Elfin Forest Sightings

Every once in a while, our Weed Warriors will find something really interesting while digging and pulling weeds. On the first Saturday in April, Ron Rasmussen was digging veldt grass at the end of 11th Street when his shovel brought up something shiny and wiggling, a California Legless Lizard.

As can be seen in the accompanying photo, the lizard, about 7 or 8 inches long, looks much like a small silvery snake. Unlike a snake, the Legless Lizard has movable eyelids and instead of laying eggs, the female bears one to four live young between September and November. It can also purposely detach its tail to trick predators. Legless lizards burrow through the sand and leaf litter, feasting on sowbugs, ants, insects and insect larvae. They are not happy when brought out into the light. This one quickly burrowed out of sight when Ron released it.

California Legless lizards are found only in California and northern Baja California. They are currently designated a California Species of Special Concern.



stabilized dunes? It's not easy, and this is why I suspect that one never finds more than a few patches of it. Heavy use of a dune area breaks up the fragile surface crust that can resist the wind which allows the sand to start moving. I know of only one area in the Elfin Forest where it has appeared almost every year that I can remember. It is to the left of the path from 15th Street to the boardwalk and just before the boardwalk. Recently, a protective fence has been placed around the area in order to protect it and the other plants occupying the area.

Our coastal Wooly star is somewhat of an oddity in the genus Eriastrum. All other California members of this genus are annuals. Further, most of them are inhabitants of interior deserts. Even the other varieties of our species are denizens of dry interior mountains and valleys. In other words, this plant is one of several coastal dune species that are widely separated from their desert relatives. In most, like the dune almond (*Prunus fasciculata*), a case can be made for Native Californians carrying or trading these useful plants that they then planted or allowed to escape into the coastal dunes. However, I think it would be difficult to make that case for this plant as I can find no reference to any human uses for the plant. In her book, Mary Coffeen relates a story of a friend and her collecting seed and trying to grow it. They reported no success and even asked their readers to report if they had had any. Obviously the authors of the treatment of Eriastrum in the *Jepson Manual* also thought it worthy of the garden. However, they, too, note the difficulty in cultivating it. It would certainly make a beautiful garden plant for a sunny, sandy patch.



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.

2009 SWAP Calendar Update

By Debbie Levi, Calendar Committee Chair

The Calendar Committee is busy preparing SWAP’s 2009 calendar complete with artwork from talented painters, some photos, and educational information. There will also be a “This month in the Elfin Forest” item on each calendar page.

Artwork that was submitted for inclusion in the calendar was received by the end of May, and will be selected by the second week of June. Also during June, committee members will be writing text for the calendar, and will choose some photos for the “date” pages of the calendar. Text, digital images of paintings, and photos will be sent to our graphic artist Katy Budge early in July, and after the finished calendar is proofread it will be turned over to our printer, Anita Rouse of Hart Impressions, early in August. The calendar will be ready in late August. A preview event is scheduled for Saturday, September 6, 2008. Look for further details in the August/September issue of Oakleaves.

Some generous sponsors have contributed to help defray calendar printing costs. They are Shabin Alimnari, Coast National Bank, Bob Davis Real Estate, Los Osos Fitness, Main Mini Storage, Morro Bay National Estuary Program, Ron Roundy, Sage Ecological Landscaping, San Luis Obispo County Parks, A.M. Scott Construction, Judy Tewell / Rexall Drugs and Jim Weldon Insurance.

Further donations are still needed to make the SWAP calendar successful. If anyone knows a local business owner who would like to join in our fundraiser, merchant participation will be acknowledged in Oakleaves, in the calendar, and in press notices. Anyone interested, please contact Debbie at 805-528-1911.

Let’s All Pull Together

There once was a non-profit called SWAP,
For whom conservation was top.
Each month they would huddle,
Doing things-not so subtle,
And all work so hard; they won’t stop!
We now are enjoying our summer,
But gross lack of rain is a bummer.
The weeds could care less,
They don’t seem to stress,
Some grow as high as a Hummer!
We still need your help to survive,
Because the weeds all seem to thrive,
They hardly diminish,
So we need to finish,
(Them off) so natives don’t take a dive.

*Yours in integrated pest management,
Pete Sarafian.*

NOTICE: An(t)archist Needed

By Pete Sarafian, Conservation Chair

With the war on weeds and maintenance of previous revegetation taking up all the Conservation Committee’s time, there is another conservation project that could use a volunteer for only a couple of hours per month. SWAP needs a person to go out into the Elfin Forest a few times a month to locate and/or exterminate Argentine ants. These ants are the tiny little buggers that love to infest our kitchens and bathrooms in search of food and water. Unfortunately, the invasive Argentine ants are pushing the native Harvester ants out of the Forest. The Harvester ants are the large red ants with a nasty bite that are the main diet of our cute little Coast horned lizard (a.k.a. Horny toad). If the Harvester ants disappear, so will the Horny toad. Fortunately, the Argentine ants can be killed with a relatively harmless chemical, borax. This could be a project for either an adult or a responsible child, especially during summer vacation. It would be quite a notable conservation project that could attract media attention, if desired. Applicants are welcome to call the SWAP phone at 528-0392. Training, materials and encouragement will follow.



Rose’s Grove Boardwalk Extension Update

By Ron Rasmussen, SWAP Chair

Plans for the proposed extension into the Rose Bowker Grove are almost completed. Architects Mark Dariz and Paul Wolff, who designed the main boardwalk, are preparing the final drawings. Archaeologist John Parker, who has conducted regular third Saturday walks, has reviewed the site and found no evidence that the proposed work will disturb any artifacts. The California Conservation Corps’ (CCC) John “JT” Taylor, who guided construction of the main boardwalk is preparing an estimate of the cost for materials and labor. Dan Dugan of Tenera Environmental Sciences is preparing a report on the possible impact of the project on the biological effects, if any, in the grove. In the latter case, the focus is on the possible disturbance of the Morro Shoulderband Snail and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service will need to approve the plans. None of the persons who have visited the grove and reviewed the preliminary design have expressed any negative opinions, and in fact have been uniformly supportive of the project.

Once the design and environmental reviews have been completed an application will be submitted to the California Coastal Commission. We hope that the Commission will expedite approval. When approval is obtained, funding will be sought to initiate construction. If all goes well the extension should be completed this year.

If any of our members have comments about the project, now is the time to let SWAP know. Write to P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412 or call us at 805-528-0392.

Weed Warriors Vex Veldt

By Pete Sarafian, Conservation Chair

To undo the damage due to human folly, the Wonderful Weekend Weed Warriors are waging war on veldt grass again this spring. The grass was introduced to the central coast thanks to the University of California. Originally intended to improve cattle forage in sandy coastal ranches, it has overrun thousands of acres in San Luis Obispo County alone. It seems as though this pest plant will never go away. Progress in the Elfin Forest has been slow and continuous for the past seven years, but the war is not yet over. Both the April and May work parties concentrated on the vestiges of veldt left around the periphery of the park.

The April work party attacked veldt grass near the 11th Street entrance. Work here had started earlier in the year, but plenty of grass remained to be removed. The crew consisted of Dave Bowlus, Steve Cake, Richard and Prisila Johnson, Bob and Sharon Meyer, Ron Rasmussen, Yolanda Waddell and Mimi Whitney. They pulled and hauled out several bags of seeds and weed debris. Less than a full work party’s capacity remains to be pulled in this area. Nice job, volunteers. You came through for the Forest again!

The May work party attacked veldt grass in the largest dense patch that is left. This is the infestation between the 15th and 16th Street entrances. This crew consisted of Steve Cake, Rich Johnson, Pete Sarafian, Yolanda Waddell, Mimi Whitney and Norma Wightman. The front line of grass has been moved back nearly to the barrier marking an old waterline that was placed along the southern park boundary years ago. This front of the war has been moved back over 100 feet in the past seven years. Veldt grass removal has achieved several acres of nearly grass-free area in the southern part of the park. Thanks to all our dedicated volunteers, we’re winning the war slowly. Thank you!!



In May, Rich Johnson teamed up with Norma Wightman to dig and then check clumps of veldt grass for the presence of Morro Shoulderband Snails. Any snails found were taken by Conservation Chair Pete Sarafian, who has a State snail permit, to a safe place. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.



Two CCC crewmembers, Rebekah Harris (left) and Larissa Fullmer, finished the job of clearing veldt grass from the 11th Street entrance area, in May. They are members of a Watershed Crew, sponsored by the MBNEP, that removes invasive plants and does erosion control in the Morro Bay Watershed. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.



Bent over their work, the April Weed Warriors removed many bags of veldt grass from the area around the 11th Street Elfin Forest entrance. Clockwise from the front are Dave Bowlus (plaid shirt), Bob Meyer, Rich Johnson, Steve Cake, Prisilla Johnson, Sharon Meyer and new Weed Warrior Mimi Whitney (broad-brimmed hat near fence.) 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 best. 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.