



OAK LEAVES

A PUBLICATION OF THE LOS OSOS / MORRO BAY CHAPTER OF SMALL WILDERNESS AREA PRESERVATION
P.O. BOX 6442, LOS OSOS, CALIFORNIA 93412-6442 ❖ (805) 528-0392 ❖ APRIL / MAY 2013

The Value of Volunteers

By Ron Rasmussen, SWAP Chair; photos by Yolanda Waddell

The Elfin Forest was saved by volunteers. Not only SWAP, but many residents of Los Osos and the surrounding community recognized the importance of this treasure and raised or contributed the funds to save the Forest from developers. Their names are posted next to the mural on the Los Osos Rexall Store on Los Osos Valley Road.

With the purchase of the Forest and its transfer to San Luis Obispo County as a County Park, the need for a permanent staff of volunteers became clear. A condition of acceptance by the County was that SWAP would remain as steward for the Forest. In July of 1994 SWAP agreed to a 10-year "Adopt-A-Park" commitment to take care of the Forest. This agreement was renewed in July of 2004, and is due to expire next year. Since the initial agreement it has become increasingly difficult to meet this challenge.

SWAP's Board of Directors consists of three named officers: a Chairperson, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. Currently there are two additional At-Large Directors. The Board has established standing committees and subcommittees to deal with specific tasks in the Forest. Some are Conservation, Weed Warriors, Mutt Mitts, Education, Trail and Boardwalk Maintenance, and Third Saturday Nature Walks.

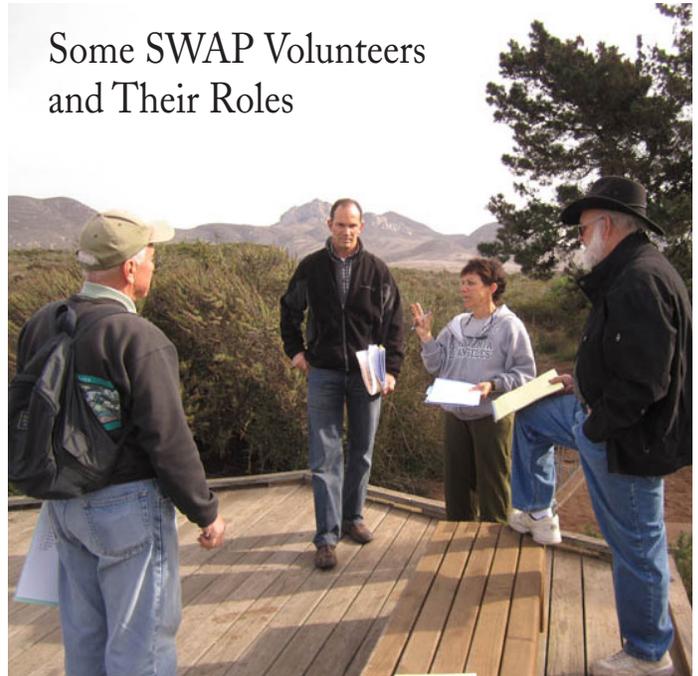
It is sometimes necessary to form Ad Hoc committees to deal with new or unforeseen problems. Recall the damage caused by a runaway truck near the 11th street entrance to the Forest on New Year's Eve, 2011. To repair the damage, the destroyed rail fence was

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Some SWAP Volunteers and Their Roles



SWAP Conservation Committee meets about the boardwalk. From left to right are: Conservation Chair and Board Chair Ron Rasmussen; Senior Parks Planner Shaun Cooper; Jan DiLeo, who is also Treasurer; and Bob Meyer who is also SWAP's Web Master.



Docent Pat Akey talks to a group of Baywood School first graders. Pat is also Education Committee Chair and a member of the SWAP Board.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

Ron Rasmussen, Chair
Jan DiLeo, Treasurer
Yolanda Waddell, Secretary
Pat Akey, Member at Large
Pat Murray, Member at Large

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

The next meetings are
**Thursday, April 11,
and Thursday, May 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:

Mark Wagner

SLO County Parks Supervising Ranger
1087 Santa Rosa Street, SLO, CA 93408
(805) 781-1196

Owners of dogs off-leash can be cited. If you witness dogs off-leash, vandalism or obvious crimes, call the County Sheriff at 781-4550 or Mark Wagner at 781-1196.

Volunteers *continued from page 1*

replaced and new native plants were placed in the ground that was torn up by the truck. These plants now need periodic hand watering in order to become established. Volunteers will continue this watering at least through the coming summer.

More recently the SWAP Board and Conservation Committee have coordinated the re-finishing of the benches, installation of hand rails on boardwalk access steps, new steps at two locations and black cable fencing at several locations. Construction work is done by the California Conservation Corps (CCC), but funds and initial planning are contributed by SWAP volunteers.

Of course the County has contributed support, but it has been SWAP that has identified most of the needed work. Without SWAP volunteers these improvements are unlikely to have been done.

Although preservation of the Elfin Forest is the primary concern of SWAP, it is also necessary to keep our membership and the community informed of our actions. Standing committees exist for Membership, Property and Records, Publications, Publicity, and Website (www.elfin-forest.org). For example, because of our limited pool of volunteers, SWAP's Secretary serves as acting chair of both Membership and Publicity committees and also as the Co-editor of SWAP's *Oakleaves* newsletter. The Property and Records committee consists of one person.

Now the challenge for SWAP AND THE COMMUNITY is whether the Elfin Forest will continue to be cared for as it is now, or will it degenerate to a weed covered wasteland as was its fate before SWAP became its steward. As noted above, the present Adopt-A-Park agreement expires in July of 2014. Whether it will be renewed is not clear. Only with new volunteers will the Elfin Forest continue to be the treasure that it is now. Please consider how you can help. Monetary donations are much appreciated, but direct participation is really necessary to ensure a bright future for the Elfin Forest.

Monthly SWAP Board Meetings are open to the public. They are held on the second Thursday of each month from 7-9 p.m. in the Fireside Room of Morro Shores Mobile Home Park, 633 Ramona Avenue, Los Osos. To see what's currently going on, check the dates in the column at left and attend a SWAP Board meeting.

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Thinking of Switching to Online *Oakleaves*?

With every issue, more of our members opt to view *Oakleaves* on the Elfin Forest web site instead of receiving a paper copy. As of January 2013, 134 members are receiving Online *Oakleaves* only. At a cost of about \$2 per copy, that saves SWAP roughly \$278 when it publishes each issue. The \$278 is then used to pay for plants, watering systems, symbolic fencing and other maintenance needs in the Elfin Forest.

If you are most comfortable reading a paper copy of *Oakleaves*, we understand. However if you use your computer a lot, we encourage you to take a look at the online version 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. Try it – you may like it.

CNPS Article Features SWAP & Elfin Forest

By Yolanda Waddell

SWAP's many hard-working volunteers are rewarded for their labors by seeing the Elfin Forest free of weeds and in bloom, watching fence lizards sunning on the boardwalk rails and hearing the voices of scrub jays, quail and other feathered residents. It is a dream realized, and it doesn't occur to most of them that we are being observed. Thus it was a pleasant surprise to read David Chipping's article in the California Native Plant Society Bulletin (Vol. 43 / No. 1, January-March 2013) titled "Getting Real About Weed Control."

David Chipping is President and Conservation Chair of the San Luis Obispo Native Plant Society chapter, and is active with the San Luis Obispo County Weed Management Area. He begins his article, "Here in San Luis Obispo County, the invasive weeds are forcing us into smaller and smaller areas of weed-free landscape." With funds for weed management in county and state park lands being reduced or eliminated, Chipping says that the hope lies in preserving small areas that contain excellent samplings of California native plants.

Chipping writes, "We draw inspiration from another San Luis Obispo County organization with which CNPS has a close association. Small Wilderness Area Preservation (SWAP) has dedicated itself to the maintenance of a 90-acre preserve called the Elfin Forest, a dune scrub filled with its share of nasty invasive species. With a known boundary and an attainable goal, volunteers have been restoring the parcel for over 25 years, and it is now a great example of coastal dune scrub."

Our weed control methods of hand pulling invasive plants like veldt grass, spraying others such as cape ivy when we have to, and getting grants to hire the CCC (California Conservation Corps) to help us, is commended by Chipping. He says, "While this approach is not new, it could be followed more often." He encourages each CNPS chapter to choose a small weed-infested area that contains sensitive habitat, and work to make it weed-free, saying, "Persistence is critical, as otherwise the weeds will win the war by attrition." SWAP appreciates the compliment of being mentioned in an article in a statewide publication. We too need to remember that persistence in our efforts is what keeps the Elfin Forest in good shape; the veldt grass lurks just beyond its borders.



This double photo contrasts restored Elfin Forest coastal dune scrub (left) and degraded veldt grass-infected scrub (right) on opposite sides of South Bay Boulevard in Los Osos. Photos by David Chipping.

Special Events in April California Native Plant Week

From April 14 to April 21, California Native Plant Society chapters and associated organizations all over the state will celebrate California's native plants with special events. The San Luis Obispo County CNPS chapter's events can be found at www.cnpslo.org. SWAP will mark the week with Pat Brown's "Butterflies and Native Plants" walk – see page 9.



Earth Day, April 21

Earth Day 2013 will be presented by the Earth Day Alliance at El Chorro Regional Park and the San Luis Obispo Botanical Gardens on Sunday, April 21 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. In 2012, more than 2,000 San Luis Obispo County residents came out to celebrate Earth Day. For information, see the Alliance web site, www.earthdayalliance.com.

Coastal Bramble Hairstreak Butterfly

Text and Photo by Jean D. Wheeler, Ph. D.

This bright green butterfly is small but easy to identify, the only green one among 26 species of butterflies and moths listed on our website (elfin-forest.org). It may be seen flitting around the boardwalk or paths leading to it. The wingspan of the Coastal Bramble Hairstreak (*Callophrys dumetorum*) is only about an inch across (field guidebooks list from 7/8 of an inch to a maximum of 1 ¼ inch).

In color they are mostly green with brown patches, especially on the forewing. The brown patches vary in shade as well as size, mostly light brown in ones I've seen here, but darker in some photos on the internet or in guidebooks. In the Elfin Forest, the green varies from a delicate light or dull shade but definitely green to a very brilliant green, especially near the body on the undersides of both wings. The undersides of the wings are easy to see because they usually perch with their wings nearly closed, as in my picture, so upper sides are hidden but the undersides obvious. Most Hairstreak butterflies have thin hairlike tails projecting below their hind wings, but Bramble Hairstreaks lack tails.

Solid colors of many butterflies come from pigments in their cells. But the greens on the Coastal Bramble Hairstreak and other iridescent or metallic hued butterfly species are not caused by color pigments. Instead scale cells on the surface of the wings are so structured that they refract light rays as water droplets do for rainbows, in this case transmitting the green waves to our eyes.

The taxonomy of genus *Callophrys* is very confused. There is much disagreement among butterfly experts as to number of species and geographic limits, let alone what to name them. Some authors list several species of "bramble hairstreaks." Populations called "bramble hairstreaks" by some authors are given a different common name with the same genus but a different species name by other specialists. Butterflies, like most animals, show noticeable variation within species, and adjacent populations in genus *Callophrys* typically grade into and overlap one another in characteristics. Incomplete and ongoing speciation presumably accounts for this confusion.



Geographic distribution of this or these species extends from Puget Sound into Baja California, eastward into the Cascade and Sierra Nevada ranges, and (for some populations given this species name by some specialists) even beyond into the Intermontane states. We can perhaps take comfort that most authors do designate the population on our Central Coast as *C. dumetorum*.

These butterflies live in scrub forests and brushlands on our central coast. Females lay tiny green eggs singly on leaves, flowers, or fruit on various species of wild buckwheat or deerweed. In the Elfin Forest hosts are dune buckwheat (*Eriogonum parvifolium*) and deerweed (*Lotus scoparius*), both of which are common around most of our boardwalk. Males perch or patrol near these plants seeking unmated females. Larvae live on those food sources through several instar (developmental) stages. These caterpillars are usually described as green--or even reddish after molting into later instars. I could not find size statistics for eggs, caterpillars, or pupae, but with this small butterfly they would be tiny. Coastal Bramble Hairstreaks fly in the Elfin Forest in March and April. They overwinter as brown pupae in the debris below the host plants.

One Reason Why Veldt Grass Is a Problem

By Yolanda Waddell

During the February 2nd Weed Warrior work party, one of our tasks was to pull veldt grass (*Ehrharta calycina*) seedlings that were sprouting on the slope above South Bay Boulevard. It is impressive that a 2-inch-tall plant already has roots that are twice as long as the plant itself. This is one of the characteristics that makes veldt grass a very successful plant and a formidable weed.

Even in sandy soil, it is difficult to hand pull a well-developed veldt grass plant because of its dense root system. When veldt grass reaches the size shown in the photo taken by David Chipping on page xx, it must be dug up with a shovel. Left undisturbed, a veldt grass plant will increase in size and root development until it is restricted by its veldt grass neighbors. The plant is a perennial, so cutting the plant back, as was done to the plants in the right-hand photo on page 3, will not harm the roots. Soon new stems and leaves will grow and the plant is in business again.

Veldt grass roots support the plant by soaking up moisture that, in their absence, would help native plant seeds to sprout. They also are space hoggers. Weed Warriors are always rewarded for their veldt grass removal work by seeing native plant seedlings growing where once there was only veldt grass.

If you would like to learn more about veldt grass and its management, visit the Elfin Forest web site, www.elfin-forest.org (don't forget the hyphen) and look up veldt grass topics in the Forest Library subject index. Also, you can find Pete Sarafian's full set of articles about invasive plants in the Elfin Forest by clicking on "Conservation" then "SWAP's Collection of Weed Management Techniques." Next go to "General Techniques and Various Common Weeds" and finally the set of 11 articles on veldt grass and other invasives written by Pete for *Oakleaves* in 2000-2001.

Asparagus Fern or Bridal Creeper

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

This month's plant is a South African native (*Asparagus asparagoides*) that has become naturalized in Southern California where it has the potential to become a major weed species as it already is considered in some localities in New Zealand and Australia. Years ago it had become a major infestation in the oak grove near Bush Lupine Point in our own Elfin Forest but it is great to report that after much hard work by the Weed Warriors, it appears to have been mostly eradicated. While reading up on this plant, I discovered that an excellent article about its removal is already present on the Elfin Forest Web site (www.elfin-forest.org). It's worth taking a look.

I asked Bonnie to draw the plant with flower buds only because plants currently available to us are at that stage. I suspect that, if deadlines weren't a consideration, a plant with fully open flowers might have been found since its blooming period is from December through April. But more importantly, the vegetative state of this species is so distinctive that the smallish non-descript flowers are often overlooked anyway.

A word of warning: written descriptions of this plant in many books are totally deceptive. Frequently, what looks like leaves are in fact flattened stems, which botanists often term cladodes. How does one know they are 'flattened stems' and not the leaves they actually look like? All vascular plants have the same leaf-stem morphology. First the stem is divided into alternating nodes where the leaves are attached and internodes where there are no leaves. The exterior nodal structure includes the leaf and a bud found in the upper angle between the leaf base and the stem. When the bud germinates it produces a new stem which can produce leaves. This means that a given portion of stem can produce a leaf only once or that leaves are produced only during the first year of that particular stem's life.

Remember, buds produce new stems only. So a re-examination of Bonnie's drawing shows the green flattened stems (cladodes) arising from the angle of a small grayish scale. That scale is all there is to the true leaf. Using flattened stems for leaves is considered an adaptation to drought conditions. As an example of how confusing this can be, one only has to look at the identification keys in the New Jepson Manual. The keys from group to family to genus to species all assume that you know that the leaves are those tiny insignificant, hardly visible scales under the things that everyone but a botanist would assume were leaves but aren't.

The plant has a number of common names as might be expected of a plant used by humans. Its primary use is in floral arranging. Its thin stem and abundant dark green cladodes together give it a kind of filmy or ferny appearance which explains the 'asparagus fern' name. Its long use in bridal bouquets explains its African names bridal-veil creeper or merely bridal creeper. Other names that I've seen include Gnarboola, Smilax or Smilax asparagus. The last two names should be forgotten as they indicate it is related to the genus, *Smilax*, which it is not. I assume Gnarboola is its name in its native South Africa.



The genus, *Asparagus*, belongs to a group of monocots that produce flowers with a perianth of six sterile elements that are more commonly called sepals and petals. Flowers of this genus have 3 greenish-yellow sepals and 3 identical greenish yellow petals. When sepals and petals are identical except for position (sepals are always the outer whorl and petals interior to the sepals) botanists use the term 'tepals'. There is a large assembly of tepal plants including the lilies, amaryllis, tulips, onions, and garden asparagus. The list could go on and on. The problem with this group is that all their flowers are built on the same plan and whenever this happens taxonomists often can't agree on family or even ordinal boundaries. For example a search of my library and the internet finds this genus placed in the lily family (Liliaceae – order Liliales) or the Asparagus family (Asparagaceae – Asparagales). Added to this, the current distinction between these orders has to do with different DNA sequences and unique chemical constituents found in their seed coats, neither one of which is a particularly good field character. *The New Jepson Manual* puts this plant in the Asparagales.

Please Report Elfin Forest Sightings

Have you observed any unusual birds in the Elfin Forest? Mammals? Reptiles? Amphibians? Insects? Interesting activities or footprints of wildlife in our Elfin Forest? Unusual plants? Taken a good photo?

Please report any interesting sightings to your Oakleaves editors at: oakleaves@elfin-forest.org for inclusion in future issues under "Elfin Forest Sightings." You can also leave a message on SWAP's answering machine, (805) 528-0392.

Education Corner

By Pat Akey, Education Chair

In January, SWAP's Education Committee organized a walk for Steve Hendricks' Cuesta College Environmental Biology Laboratory class. Dr. Jean Wheeler led the walk, focusing on the ecology of the Elfin Forest. As she and the students proceeded along the boardwalk, she discussed the effects of our coastal climate, weather and lack of water on the organisms that live in the Forest. In addition she talked about the Forest's plant communities, the restoration that is being done, and governmental agencies involved with the Elfin Forest.

Also in January, our three new education docents: Chris Van Beveren, Vicky Johnsen and Frances Meehan continued their preparation for giving walks in the Elfin Forest. Vicky and Frances joined the Cuesta College biology class to take advantage of Jean Wheeler's instructive and inspirational walk on Elfin Forest ecology.

In February, Chris Van Beveren, who is an excellent birder, led a training walk on bird identification for docent trainee Vicky Johnson as well as for Pat Akey and Yolanda Waddell.

If you are interested in becoming an Elfin Forest docent, contact me at pata@elfin-forest.org or leave a message on the SWAP phone, 805-528-0392.



Jean Wheeler gave an inspiring walk and talk about Elfin Forest ecology to a Cuesta College environmental biology class in January.



Chris Van Beveren (left, with spotting scope) gave an excellent docent training bird identification workshop for new SWAP docent Vicky Johnsen and other docents.



These red mushrooms of genus Russula were all over the floor of Don Klopfer Grove on Dennis Sheridan's 3rd Saturday Walk in February. Photo by Jean Wheeler.



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: Pat Akey, Dave Bowlus, David Chipping, Devra Cooper, Deborah Denker, Betsy Kinter, Ron Rasmussen, Pete Sarafian, Yolanda Waddell, Dirk and Bonnie Walters, and Jean Wheeler.

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Let's all pull together

By Yolanda Waddell

There were some Weed Warriors so amazingly strong that the veldt grass knew it wouldn't last long. They yanked and they dug that invasive *Ehrharta*; There have been no other warriors like them since Sparta. When they were done their leader said, "Onward! Now we must make sure our new plants are watered." They hauled water and poured it on plant after plant Until the job was done and then they did chant, "Go, Weed Warriors, Go!"

Weed Warrior Report

Text and photos by Yolanda Waddell

Warriors Plant Seedlings and Pull Weedlings

January 5 – It was a great way to begin the New Year. Thirteen Weed Warriors met native plant specialist Dagmar Collins (whose business is called SLO Starts) at the 11th Street entrance of the Elfin Forest. Their task was to transplant 57 seedlings grown by Dagmar into the area that was damaged on New Year's Eve in 2011 by a wayward pizza truck. The driver of the truck had lost consciousness and drove through the fence at the end of 11th Street, continuing sixty feet into the Forest. Two oak trees and a number of native shrubs were flattened.

One team of Weed Warriors constructed chicken wire fences to protect the young plants from rabbits, while other teams dug holes, filled them with water and then installed a variety of young plants including black sage, mock heather and California sagebrush. When the damaged area was planted, there were some seedlings left over, so the planting party moved to the 16th Street Elfin Forest entrance. There are some bare areas near that entrance, and the diligent crew planted and watered the remaining plants.

Thanks to the following Weed Warriors for giving a gift of new plants to the Elfin Forest: Jay Bonestell, Jan DiLeo, Lannie Erickson, Taylor Furnis-Lawrence, Adam Grantham, Prisila and Rich Johnson, Bob Meyer, Dave Moran, Ron Rasmussen (Conservation Chair), Cris Rose, Shana Thompson and Yolanda Waddell. Thanks especially to Dagmar Collins for growing the young plants from seeds that she collected in the Elfin Forest, and for guiding the planting process.

February 2 – The native plant seedlings that were planted on January 5th need to be watered every two weeks, so the February Weed Warrior crew filled special watering bottles made by Conservation Chair Ron Rasmussen, and set them next to the young plants at the ends of 11th Street and 16th Street. The bottles, suggested by Dagmar Collins, release water more slowly than pouring from a bucket, allowing a more thorough soaking of each plant.

After all the plants were watered, the crew headed over to the slope above South Bay Boulevard to pull the hundreds of young veldt grass plants that were beginning to sprout. Their goal was to remove the plants before they could produce seeds, thus preventing many more weeds.

The energetic crew of plant waterers and pullers included Jay Bonestell, Lannie Erickson, Jack Fanselow, Vicky Johnsen, Bob Meyer, Tilitha Rivera, Ron Rasmussen, Yolanda Waddell and Sean Wilson.

SWAP First Saturday Work Parties

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



Shana Thompson plants a native seedling during the January work party.



Weed Warriors (R-L) Prisila Johnson, Rich Johnson and Jan DiLeo (behind Rich) fabricate plant cages out of chicken wire to protect the native plant seedlings from hungry rabbits.



Tilitha Rivera and Sean Wilson carried water to thirsty seedlings near the 16th Street entrance during the February work party. At right are SWAP Conservation Chair Ron Rasmussen and behind him, a new Weed Warrior, Jack Fanselow.

Coming Up in the Elfin Forest

Text and Photos By Jean Wheeler

April and May are the best months to look for “flying flowers” in the Elfin Forest. Of the 26 species of butterflies and moths listed on our website (elfin-forest.org), only the Monarch Butterfly is not listed for at least one if not both of these two months. Pat Brown leads an outstanding 3rd Saturday Walk each April (see page 9), focusing on butterflies and the plants that support them and their caterpillars. Among the species often seen are the yellow and orange Gabb’s Checkerspot in the photo below, and the green Coastal Bramble Hairstreak, pictured as the subject of my natural history article on page 4 of this issue.

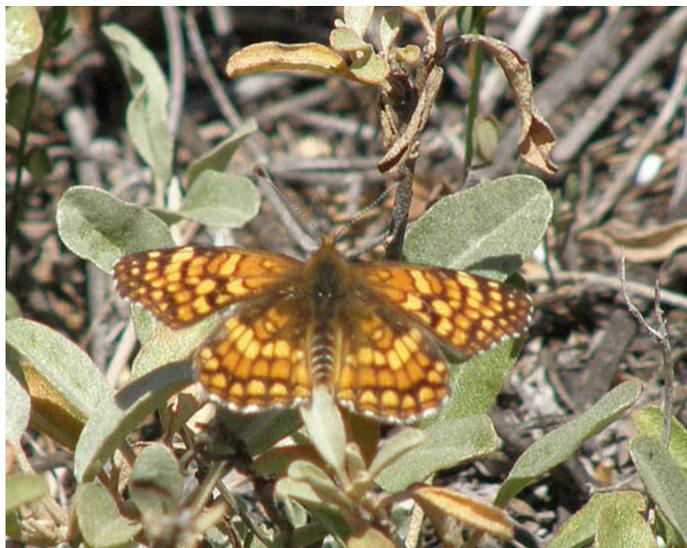
Female butterflies hunt plant species that will support their caterpillars. Males patrol near those host plants seeking females not yet mated. Butterflies may also look for mates on open hilltops, serving as their “singles bars.” One such hilltop between oak groves south of Bush Lupine Point along the sand trail from the boardwalk to 11th Street is nicknamed “Butterfly Hill.”

The wildflowers attracting all these butterflies come in many colors. Yellow to orange flowers include California poppies, deerweed, fiddleneck, golden yarrow, suffrutescent wallflowers, and sticky monkey-flowers. Cobbwebby thistles and California hedge nettles have pink flowers. Red fuchsia-flowered gooseberries are nearing the end of their long blooming season but Indian pinks (red flowers appearing cut by pink shears) should continue to bloom all summer.

Blues are provided by blue dicks in the understory and the blue spikes on silver dune lupine shrubs. Purple nightshade plants add that color, while Pomona milk vetch has creamy flowers on low plants.

White to lavender flowers abound on ceanothus (buck brush or California Lilac) or are clustered like pompoms on black sage. Also white-flowered are California croton, chamise, wedgeleaf horkelia, and wild cucumber. California blackberry and poison oak each have white flowers and three leaves now, but the blackberry plants have thorny stems.

Coffeeberry, hollyleaf cherry, and toyon are all tall shrubs with tiny white or yellow flowers at this time of year along the lower boardwalk between the Fairbanks Monument and the boardwalk



spur to Siena’s View. The flowers are hard to see, but the larger and colorful berries they become on these shrubs later in the summer will be much more noticeable.

Look for our many birds also flitting among the flowers and butterflies. Especially likely to be seen and heard are the bright blue Western Scrub Jays, orange-black-white Spotted Towhees, chattering flocks of tiny fuzzy gray Bushtits, and the large brown California Thrasher with its long down-curved beak. Hummingbirds dart out to catch insects for their youngsters, as well as hovering to suck nectar from flowers. Resident California Quail can be heard calling “chi-CA-go.” Among arrivals or migrating through in April or May from winter retreats farther south are Warbling Vireos, Hooded Orioles, Black-headed Grosbeaks, and Yellow, Townsend’s, and Wilson’s Warblers.

What a colorful and exciting time to visit the sand trails and boardwalk of our small wilderness area!



(Top) The bubbly mass on the log is brilliant yellow-orange (you can see all these photos in color on our website elfin-forest.org) and this gives the fungus the name “witches’ butter.”

*(Bottom) “Turkey tails” are orange-brown-beige in color.
Photos by Devra Cooper.*

Elfin Forest Sights and Sounds

There is always something new to see or hear during a visit to the Elfin Forest. February was a very good month to spot many different species of fungi, popping up after the rains came. Our annual Fungus Foray, led by Dennis Sheridan, yields a visual array of colorful mushrooms and other types of fungi. Some of those can be seen in the photos above, and on page 6.

One of the sounds that thrills some and strikes fear in others is the howl of coyotes. There has been a resident family of coyotes in the Elfin Forest who vocalize occasionally during the night, and once in awhile during the day when fire engine or ambulance sirens inspire them to answer. Pete Sarafian recently reported being serenaded by our coyote family. Their presence in the Elfin Forest is a sign that the web of life is complete out there, with plenty of food for all including the coyotes.

WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

Third Saturday Walks

April 20, 9:30 a.m. – Butterflies & Native Plants

In honor of California Native Plant Week, butterfly enthusiast Pat Brown will lead a walk from the point of view of a hungry butterfly. As you tour the Elfin Forest with her, Pat will introduce you to several native plants and talk about the butterflies that sip their nectar and the caterpillars that eat their leaves. Pat has taken many photos of butterflies in all stages of development from eggs to mature butterflies, and will share them along with fascinating butterfly facts. She'll lead you to hangouts 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.

May 18, 9:30 a.m. – Wildflower Walk

Whether or not there have been April showers, the Elfin Forest always has May flowers because the Forest's hardy native plants are used to doing without water. Dirk Walters will take us on a delightful tour of every blooming plant that is visible from the boardwalk in the Elfin Forest. There will be bright yellows of Fiddlenecks, Rush-roses, Deerweed, Golden Yarrow and of course California Poppies. White Popcorn flowers, Pearly everlasting and Yarrow plants are in abundance too, as well as pink Cobwebby Thistles and blue Wild Hyacinths. The Silver Dune Lupines at Bush Lupine Point should be covered with pale blue blossoms, and alive with honeybees and Moro Blue butterflies. Treat yourself to a springtime experience in Nature's own garden.

June 15, 9:30 a.m. – Digital Photo & Birding Walk

Do you have a digital camera that mainly takes pictures of family events? Do you know how to take Panoramic shots with your iPhone? Photography experts Jerry Kirkhart and Mike Baird will co-lead this SWAP-sponsored walk to help you develop your outdoor photography skills. All skill levels are welcome. During their photo tour on the Elfin Forest boardwalk, Jerry and Mike will cover the use of all types of digital cameras as well as iPhones for landscape, macro and telephoto photography. They will give tips on solving the problems of light contrast in an oak grove, getting a good close-up of the Forest's native flowers and catching birds and butterflies in flight. Bring your tripod, macro lens and cell phone, if you have them. They prefer to work with digital single lens reflex (DSLR) cameras, but many point-and-shoot cameras have macro settings. If your point-and-shoot camera has a macro setting, please review that function before coming, as they are all different. Lastly, bring binoculars so we can also identify birds in the Elfin Forest. Bring water and wear layers in case it is windy.

Walks in the Elfin Forest begin at times stated above. Park at the north end of 15th Street (16th Street for wheelchairs) off Santa Ysabel in Los Osos. Walks begin on the boardwalk at the end of the 15th Street path. 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.



George Trevelyan, owner of Grassy Bar Oyster Co. that has its oyster beds in the Morro Bay Estuary, tells a rapt audience about the science and challenges of oyster farming.

Photo by Jean Wheeler.



Fun guy Dennis Sheridan displays an Elfin Saddle mushroom at the beginning of SWAP's annual fungus foray.

Photo by Dave Bowlus.

Thank You to Our New and Renewing Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter, SWAP Database Coordinator

RENEWING MEMBERS:

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Jerry Ambrose* | Jerry & Judith Kirkhart* |
| Bob & Linda Bailey | Ms. Christine A. Lancellotti* |
| Rosemary Baxter | Babara Machado* |
| Charles E. Blair | Alan & Elaine Olson* |
| Kay Blaney* | Carrie Pardo |
| David Bowlus & Beverly Boyd* | Nicholas & Dorothy Pier* |
| Katy Budge* | Joan V. Powell* |
| Paul Crafts | Darlene M. Reynolds* |
| Dr. Ellen Davies* | Bob & Barbara Schwenoha |
| Bernard & Fran Deitchman* | Nancy Stephens* |
| Alice Dobias* | David & Helianthe Stevig* |
| Thomas & Michele Esser* | Tomoko Sugano |
| Linda Faust* | SWCA Environmental Consultants* |
| Bruce Gibson | Theo & Edith Waddell |
| Joyce Heller* | Yolanda & Jay Waddell* |
| Steve & Jill Jobst* | Michael Walgren |
| Gene & Mimi Kalland* | |

DONATIONS:

Jennifer & Larry Levine
The Wolf Family

In memory of Dorothy Norwood:

Alice V. Dobias

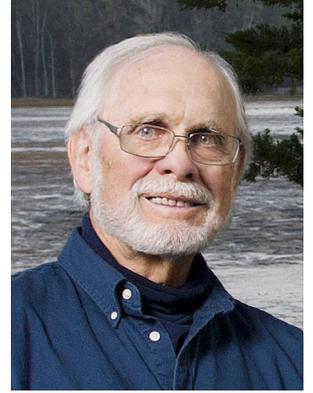
In memory of Stuart Denker:

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Dr. & Mrs. B.C. Burns | Mrs. John Flynn |
| Roger E. Carmody | Rachael Yon |
| Dr. & Mrs. John Denker | |

**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.*

Remembering Stuart Denker, Artist

By Yolanda Waddell;
photo by Deborah Denker

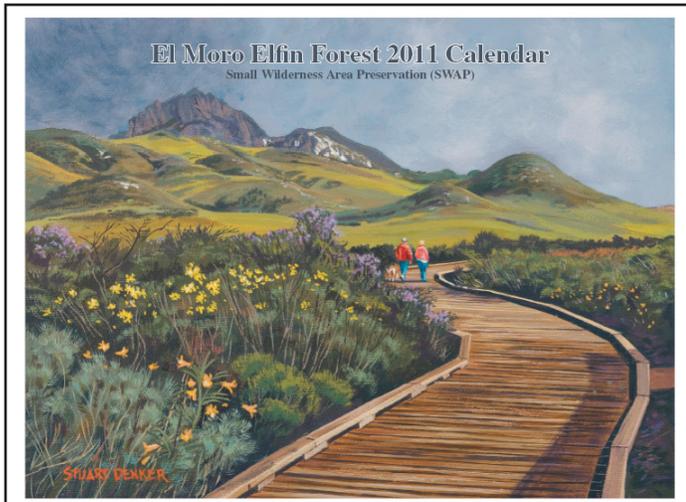


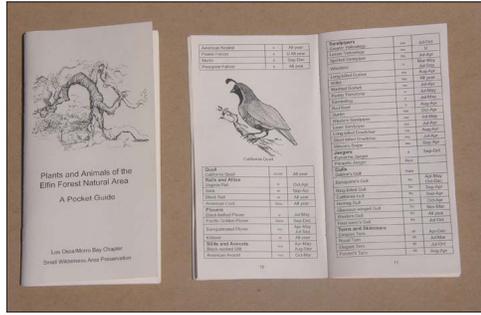
Many of us who are involved with SWAP were deeply saddened at the news that our friend, Stuart Denker, had died from complications of Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma in December. Stuart and his wife Stephani retired to the Central Coast in 2000, after leading an active professional and cultural life in South Pasadena. Among many endeavors, Stuart had been an instructor at the Chouinard Art Institute, a designer for Smith and Williams Architects, and had his own design consulting firm.

When Stuart and Stephani moved to their home on the bay in Baywood Park, Stuart began painting full time. His representational fine art paintings of Central Coast landscapes and the estuary hold one transfixed, drawn into the scene that he has beautifully portrayed.

Some members of SWAP became acquainted with Stuart when the Calendar Committee decided that the 2009 Elfin Forest calendar should feature fine art. The committee sent invitations to local artists to submit images of the Elfin Forest. Two of Stuart's submissions depicted a scene in the large lower grove known as the Don Klopfer Grove. He added a bit of whimsy to each by including a hawk observing two doves in one, and two crows observing each other in the second painting. One of the paintings, the one with the hawk and doves, was featured on our January page. In 2011, the Calendar Committee produced another fine art Elfin Forest calendar. Again Stuart delighted the committee with two wonderful paintings. One, "Elfin Forest Boardwalk," shown at left, became our calendar cover. The other, "Inside the North Grove," became our November main page." The gnarled Coast live oak trunks and branches draped with gray-green lace lichen, perched on a grassy slope create an unforgettable image.

Stuart and Stephani have been long-time SWAP members, and in Stuart's obituary, Stephani named SWAP as one of the organizations to receive contributions in Stuart's memory. We are honored to receive funds in honor of this wonderful artist. And we extend our deep condolences to Stephani and their three daughters, Deborah, Lisa and Carla and their families. Stuart will live on, both in his images and in our memories.





Useful Pocket Guide Only \$2

About 4 by 8 inches, SWAP's Pocket Guide is packed with fascinating information. Charts for 200 vascular plants include scientific and common names, months in bloom, colors, and habitats. Also listed are lichens, mushrooms, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. Peak months are given for birds and size, months, color, and host plants for butterflies. Other arthropods listed with interesting comments include spiders, crustaceans, dragonflies, crickets and beetles.



SWAP Shoppers' Order Form

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

All Prices Include Sales Tax

1. MURAL SHIRTS

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

Circle Sizes:

- ___ Short Slv. T-Shirt (S, M, L, XL) @\$19.00 = \$___
- ___ Short Slv. T-Shirt (XXL, XXXL) @\$22.00 = \$___
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- ___ Sweatshirt (S, M, L, XL) @\$25.00 = \$___
- ___ Sweatshirt (XXL, XXXL) @\$27.00 = \$___

2. ELFIN FOREST NOTE CARDS

Original print note cards

___ @ \$3.00 or ___ set of 5 @ \$14.00 = \$___

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.

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4. ELFIN FOREST MURAL PRINTS

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

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5. ALPHABET BIRD BOOK

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

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Combat Alien Plants—Join Weed Warriors (see page 7)

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Urgently Needed - A Few Good People

Help SWAP Chapter support the Elfin Forest with just a few hours a month of your time.

Become a Board member – visit a Board meeting on the second Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. and try us out. See page 2 for dates. Call 772-9514 or e-mail ron@elfin-forest.org.



Join our Publicity Committee. If you are comfortable with computers and the internet, just 2-4 hours a month will help SWAP with our outreach. E-mail yolanda@elfin-forest.org.

Become a Weed Warrior or join our Conservation Committee. Work parties are the first Saturday of every month from 9 to noon. E-mail ron@elfin-forest.org or call 805-528-0392.

Service to the community is a way to spread happiness and to be happy!

MEMBERSHIP FORM

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

I want to help, please call me!

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

Check here to receive the online version only.

All donations to SWAP are tax-deductible.

EVERY membership counts!

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