



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 ❖ AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2013

Restoration Never Ends

By Ron Rasmussen, SWAP Chair; photo by Yolanda Waddell



Ron Rasmussen (front) and Rich Johnson fill containers to water new native plants in a restoration area at the end of 16th Street.

It is now almost 20 years since SWAP assumed responsibility for managing the Elfin Forest. During that time much has been done to restore the native plants, but this work never ends. Invasive species like veldt grass and cape ivy are a continuing problem. Also, unexpected damage, like that caused by the truck that crashed into the forest about a year and a half ago, needs attention. Some visitors go off the boardwalk, resulting in actual destruction of plant communities. SWAP must continue to deal with these problems.

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SWAP Annual Celebration

Date: Saturday, September 28

Time: Noon to 2:30 p.m.

Place: Morro Shores Mobile Home Park
Community Room,
633 Ramona Ave., Los Osos

Speaker: Botanist Edward Bobich

“Pygmy Oaks Versus Normal Oaks;
How Different are the Oaks in the Elfin Forest?”

The Board of Directors invites members and the public to our annual celebration of the founding of SWAP, acquisition of the Elfin Forest, and of the volunteers who care for the Forest. Our speaker, Dr. Edward Bobich, is currently doing research on Coast live oaks in the Elfin Forest. The title of his talk is “Pygmy Oaks Versus Normal Oaks; How Different are the Oaks in the Elfin Forest?”

Dr. Bobich has taught at Cal Poly Pomona since 2005, and has visited the Elfin Forest many times over the years. He has studied the physiological ecology of plants since graduate school, and has built his research program on the physiological and structural responses of plants to environmental stresses such as those endured by Coast Live Oaks and other plants in the Elfin Forest.

Following Dr. Bobich's talk, SWAP Chair Ron Rasmussen will conduct a brief business meeting that will include recognition of our hard-working volunteers. A light lunch will then be provided for all those attending. **There is no charge for this event.**



Dr. Ed Bobich uses a portable photosynthesis system to measure oak leaf photosynthesis in the Elfin Forest. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.



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

Erick Amaya, 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, August 8,
and Thursday, September 12.**

All Board meetings are open to the public.

To confirm the date, time and location
(which are subject to change),
call (805) 528-0392.



CONTACT SWAP

If you have questions about SWAP activities or
want to volunteer, please call
(805) 528-0392 and leave a message.

A recorded message will give information
about our 3rd Saturday Walks,
Work Saturdays, and other events.

If you have questions, concerns or comments
about any problems in the Elfin Forest,
call or write:

Mark Wagner

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

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

Restoration *continued from page 1*

Revegetation can be accomplished either by simply fencing off the affected area and allowing nature to do the healing or by replanting the area with native plants raised from seed. In either case the recovery process will require years of monitoring and possibly watering until the new plants are grown. Examples of the latter approach can be seen near the 11th and 16th street entrances to the Forest.

Some areas of the Elfin Forest have been impacted by visitors going off the boardwalk or simply randomly wandering through the brush. For these areas it is not practical to attempt revegetation by seeding or new plantings. The installation of the black cable "Symbolic" fencing is an attempt to discourage this kind of behavior, with some success. A small minority of individuals ignore the fencing resulting in continuing negative effects on the fragile plant community. However, the fencing is worthwhile, and in coming weeks some will be installed in other fragile areas.

SWAP believes that visitors should realize that "El Moro Elfin Forest Natural Area" is not a regular County Park. Its main purpose is to preserve an example of pristine California Coastal

chaparral providing a resource to educate all members of the community as well as visitors about how plants and animals interact. This knowledge can then be applied to other natural areas. SWAP hopes to convince visitors of the necessity for preservation of such rapidly disappearing ecosystems in California and elsewhere.

SWAP's formal "ADOPT-A PARK" agreement with San Luis Obispo County for the maintenance of the Elfin Forest will expire at the end of June 2014. Over the almost 20 years that this agreement has been in place, a group of committed volunteers has made the Elfin Forest a true "Nature Preserve." We encourage our membership and others interested in preserving the Elfin Forest to join SWAP in agreeing to care for the Elfin Forest for another 20 years.

The Scrub

By Vicki Houdysbell

If you're a Los Osan
You probably know
Of a land near the ocean
Where wild things grow.

In this Elfin Forest
Of very small trees
Are rabbits and birds
And coyotes and bees.

The wind sweeps the plants there,
They bend and they sway,
And they keep all the sand dunes
From blowing away.

So many things live there.
We want them to stay,
The bracken fern, lizards, the sage and Scrub Jay.
We want them to stay there and not go away.

There are 200 species of dune plants and shrubs,
And together we call them the Coastal Dune Scrub.
There's so much to learn there and so much to know,
Like the names of the plants and the places they grow.

Just like the Lorax who speaks for the trees,
We speak for the oaks and the sagebrush and bees.
We speak for the lupine and all of the shrubs.
We are Los Osans. We speak for the Scrub.

Erick Amaya Joins SWAP Board

Text and photo by Yolanda Waddell

A young man came to Board member Pat Murray's house to give her a landscaping estimate for his employer, Sage Ecological Landscape. He mentioned that he would like to volunteer for a conservation organization, and Pat invited Erick Amaya to a SWAP Board meeting. Erick attended the next board meeting, and came again each of the next few months. In June, Board Chair Ron Rasmussen asked Erick if he would consider joining the Board. Fortunately for SWAP, he said yes and was promptly voted in.

Erick was born in Ojocaliente, Zacatecas, in north central Mexico. Now in his mid-30s, he moved to San Luis Obispo County with his parents in 1990 from their former home in Orange County. He attended Los Osos Middle School, finished 8th grade at Laguna Junior High, and then attended San Luis High. In high school, his drafting teacher encouraged him to consider a career in construction management.

At Cuesta College, Erick earned an associate degree in Construction Technology. While there, he interned with a contractor who taught him timber framing, liked Erick's work ethic, and offered to pay him for his work. After a summer job remodeling cabins in Boulder, Colorado, Erick moved there planning to attend Colorado State University to study construction management. He found a job and a place to live, and then – winter came. As Fall passed into Winter, he was always cold and missed his family.

During a trip home to San Luis Obispo for Christmas, Erick looked at universities to attend in California, and decided on Chico State, later finishing up at Fresno State. Since he always had to work while attending college, he could only take two or three classes at a time, but eventually he had his degree.

In 2007, upon graduation, Erick was recruited by Meade Construction in San Jose, where he worked as an assistant project manager. His boss advised him to “learn how things are put together,” and he learned the practical meaning of managing construction. Due to the recession, Erick was laid off in February of 2009. That's when he decided to go back home and start his own business, Amaya Building Company.

Erick and his younger brother, Octavio have taken on many types of construction jobs. He is especially interested in green technology and straw bale construction. In order to learn more about green technology, especially hardscaping and irrigation, he worked as a project manager for Sage Ecological Landscape during 2012. Now he is forming a partnership with a childhood friend who specializes in building edible gardens.

Erick joined the SWAP Trail Trimmers crew and recently participated in an orientation by County Parks arborist, Chuck Woodard (see article on page 6). He told me he has been taking friends and family for walks in the Elfin Forest for years, and is thrilled that he is now in a position to help with the ongoing preservation of the Forest. He feels blessed to be able to help, and looks upon his work for SWAP as a legacy for his future children and grandchildren.



Elfin Forest Sightings

During an Elfin Forest walk in May, Marty Levi spotted this “proud Quail king surveying his domain.” This has been a good year for California Quail in the Elfin Forest. Many quail “kings” are seen, sounding their “chi-CAH-go” territory calls; and the sound of female quails quietly clucking at their chicks comes from under shrubs along the boardwalk.

Living with Coyotes

By Jean Wheeler, Ph. D.

Photo © Richard Herrmann

San Diego Natural History Museum website

In our October–November 2009 issue, I stated that coyotes (*Canus latrans*) are sometimes heard singing with emergency vehicle sirens and very occasionally have been seen in the Elfin Forest.

However, within the last year, coyotes have been seen much more often not only within the Elfin Forest but in residential areas nearby, especially at dusk or dawn. A number of pet cats have gone missing from street areas at least as far south of the Forest as El Morro Street, and residents suspect they have become prey for coyotes. On one occasion reported to us, a coyote (possibly concerned for pups nearby) followed a woman and her leashed dog in daylight some distance in the Forest, stopping only when she fled beyond the edge of the Elfin Forest property line.

With the potential for continuing and increasing conflict between human and coyote neighbors in our vicinity, I concur with other leaders of SWAP on the need for another article on ways we humans can greatly reduce the likelihood of serious conflicts with this very important leading predator in the Elfin Forest ecosystem.

Attempts to eradicate the coyotes would be very unwise. They are of critical importance in controlling rabbit and rodent populations, and they help regulate numbers of skunks, raccoons, and foxes, other sources of conflict with people and our pets. Also the adaptability and reproductive abilities of the coyote render eradication efforts notoriously unsuccessful despite great cost.

Coyotes eat fruits as well as small mammals and some birds, and are opportunists, seeking the easiest food sources available. In investigating residences near their wilderness, they may find pet food left outdoors, garbage not well secured, fruit lying on the ground, or pet cats or small dogs not accustomed to protecting themselves from predators. A coyote would find these a much easier source of food than wild and cautious rodents or rabbits or tiny wild fruits. Such easy success encourages repeat visits and more extensive incursions into residential areas.

Residents living near small patches of wilderness such as the Elfin Forest can help reduce the attraction to coyotes of their own and their neighbors' homes in a number of ways. Garbage containers should be securely closed, kept in enclosures, and put out for pickup on the morning of collection rather than the night before. Ripe fruit should be picked off trees and from the ground. Cat litter boxes should be indoors, and used litter not discarded outdoors.

Composting should be done in well-secured bins, without using dog or cat wastes or meat, dairy and egg products. Food for



pets should be available only indoors, not in the yard. Bird feeders need to be kept from overflowing onto the ground or the ground raked often to remove food for coyotes or their rodent prey. Artificial water sources can also attract coyotes, especially those with fish.

Vegetables should be grown in yards fenced against coyotes—fences at least 6 feet tall with the bottom 6 inches below ground. A “coyote roller” such as a PVC pipe free to spin around

a wire on top of a fence makes it hard for a coyote to climb over. Clearing bushes and weeds removes cover for coyotes and their small prey animals. Crawl spaces under buildings should be closed off.

Above all, keep pets indoors at night, and avoid letting them roam free even in the day, especially near dawn or dusk. Use a leash even on your own property if it is not securely fenced against coyotes.

When walking your dog in the Elfin Forest or in residential neighborhoods, always use a leash, and not a retractable leash, as those let small dogs get too far from you to be safe from coyote ambush. Carry a noisy whistle or siren, and a walking stick. Never run from any predator—it encourages them to chase. Act big, waving a stick, shouting or using the noise maker.

We need to heighten the natural fear of coyotes toward humans, not reduce it, not encourage them to follow us or visit our homes! Let's keep them where they belong, in the wild areas like the Elfin Forest, protecting us from otherwise burgeoning populations of rodents and other small potentially disease-carrying mammals.

*“If we learn, finally,
that what we need to “manage” is not the land
so much as ourselves in the land,
we will have turned
the history of American land-use on its head.”*

~ Gaylord Nelson, Founder of Earth Day ~

Slender Sea-Side Arrow-Grass

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

Bonnie's drawing accompanying this article is an Elfin Forest plant that will not be visible from the boardwalk. It will not even be visible from one of the prepared trails in the Elfin Forest. This is because it is a plant found in portions of the salt marsh in which no trails have been made. Being part of the salt marsh means that one might also get wet feet trying to find it. Additionally, the plant has a localized distribution within the salt marsh so that unless one knows where it grows, it is easy to make many trips without encountering it.

The plant is a species of arrow-grass (*Triglochin concinna*). It is usually found in areas of the salt marsh with intermediate levels of salt in the soils. Since most of the salt marsh soil is very salty or only slightly salty, that doesn't leave much area that is optimal for arrow-grass to grow. Add to this the fact that, like most salt marsh plant species, there is very low recruitment from seed which means that almost all expansion in the growing area is due to vegetative reproduction. Vegetative expansion occurs via longish, slender horizontal underground stems (rhizomes) that are profusely branched. The end result is a loose patch of what looks like separate plants. Since the plants are all derived from a single ancestor plant, the patch is probably actually a single clone. Various arrow weed species are most common in our coastal salt marshes i.e. Morro Bay, but also can be found in salty depressions in the interior.

According to Hoover's *The Vascular Plants of SLO County, California* and the most recent edition of *The Jepson Manual*, the species found at Morro Bay is the slender sea-side arrow-grass (*Triglochin concinna*). The reason I have to give authority to the name is that not all botanists are in agreement as to the correct scientific binomial. *The Flora of North America Project* lumps our Morro Bay arrow-grass plant into *T. maritima* i.e. plain sea-side arrow grass. According to *The Jepson Manual*, the most conspicuous characteristic that distinguishes *T. concinna* from *T. maritima* is that *T. concinna* forms diffuse patches instead of concentrated clumps. Of course there are other, less subjective characteristics as well, but they require a hand lens to observe.

The family to which arrow-grass belongs is the Juncaginaceae (sea-grass family) which is a small family of monocots consisting of two genera (*Triglochin* and *Lilaea*). Species in this family favor edges on streams, lakes and oceans. Many species have a strong preference for alkaline or salty soils. Note, in spite of the common name, sea grasses, they are NOT grasses. A look at Bonnie's drawing will show that they have tiny, 3-parted flowers typical of the monocots. The tiny flowers have pale greenish white or yellowish petals and sepals. Bonnie's drawing actually shows a fruiting inflorescence. The fruit is unusual as it breaks apart into six separate parts each containing a single seed (botanically, it is a schizocarpic capsule).

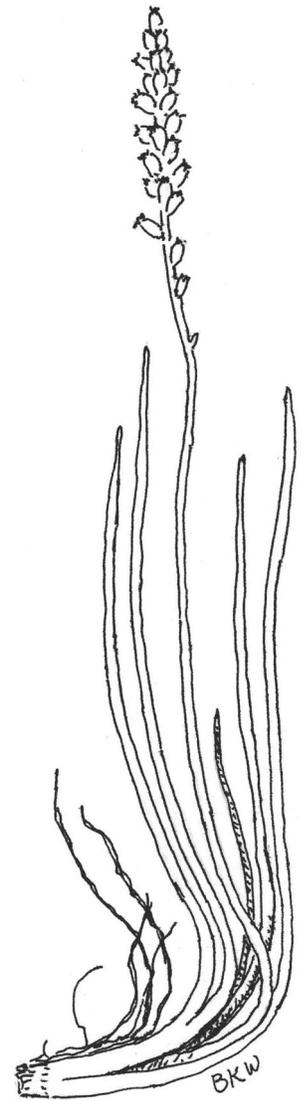
In spite of the similarity of names, habitat preference and growth habit, do not confuse the Juncaginaceae (sea-grasses) with

the Juncaceae (true rushes). The true rush species tend to be larger, more common and more widely distributed. True rush leaves are often reduced to sheaths (i.e. lack blades) and those that possess leaf blades produce blades that are flattened and grass-like (hairy wood or path rushes –

Luzula) where as *Triglochin* leaves are round and hollow in cross section. Secondly, true rushes produce true capsules that break open to release their many seeds individually. Lastly, current plant classifications put the Juncaginaceae in the order Alismatales which is placed with the more primitive monocots whereas the Juncaceae is in the order Poales and is placed among the most advanced monocots.

The main difference separating the two orders is the presence of UV-florescent compounds in their cell walls. True rushes have them; arrow-grasses do not. Admittedly, this is not a field visible character.

Slender sea-side arrow grass is a small plant from a restricted habitat. In spite of this, it has found a limited use as a planting around garden pools. Several web sources also indicate that it is poisonous to some livestock. Why only some? If I read the sources correctly, it is poisonous to those livestock that convert compounds produced in the leaves into the extremely poisonous cyanide containing chemicals.



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



Pat Akey (far right) told the first grade class of teacher Kelli Hughes (far left) that the Coast live oak trees around them were alive over 200 years ago.



During Pete Sarafian's walk for a Cuesta College environmental biology class in July, he explained the stresses that cause Coast live oaks to be very small in some areas.

By Pat Akey, Education Chair; photos by Yolanda Waddell

In May, we gave a school walk for Kelli Hughes' Baywood School first grade class. Pete Sarafian and Pat Akey each led half of the class on a nature walk that focused on the Forest's insects and plants. Accompanying Pete and Pat were docents-in-training Vicky Johnsen and Chris Van Beveren. The students were excited to see "Who lives under this log?" and "Who lives in this bush?"

In July, Pete Sarafian led a fascinating field trip for the environmental biology class of Cuesta College teacher Azalia Contreras. Azalia prepares a set of questions that her students must learn the answers to during the field trip.

The Education Committee has been very active training our new docents: Vicky Johnsen, Frances Meehan and Chris Van Beveren. In addition to learning to identify the plants, birds, mammals and reptiles of the Elfin Forest, they are beginning to design their own "general" nature walks to be given on weekdays or weekends when there is no scheduled 3rd Saturday walk.

We thank Faylla Chapman, past member of the Education Committee and now our advisor, for sharing with us the training process of the State Parks docents.

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.

Trail Trimming Crew Update

By Pat Murray and Yolanda Waddell

In June, the Trail Trimming Crew had the good fortune to receive some very beneficial training from County Parks Arborist Chuck Woodard. Vegetation along the 11th Street trail was impacting the trail, so the crew along with Chuck had their work cut out for them.

Attending Chuck's training and work session were Trail Trimming Crew Chief Pat Murray, Jerry Ambrose, and two new crew members: Erick Amaya and Lannie Erickson. Chuck emphasized the importance of proper pruning of shrubs, so that branches will grow upward rather than outward over the path.

In addition to trimming, the crew removed a root that was rotted from the middle of the trail. Generally roots are not removed if it would damage the tree or shrub to which they are attached. However, a goal of the trail trimmers is to make a trail as safe as possible without doing damage to adjacent plants.

During their afternoon session the crew and Chuck trimmed the entire 11th Street trail and some shrubs growing over the boardwalk at Bush Lupine Point. Pat and the Trail Trimmers are very fortunate to receive advice and instruction from an expert such as Chuck Woodard. Because of it, the appearance of trees and shrubs growing along the Forest's trails and boardwalk will continue to improve.



County Parks Arborist Chuck Woodard, 2nd from left, gave tips on correct methods of trimming shrubs to members of SWAP's Trail Trimming Crew. Photo by Jay Waddell.

Weed Warrior Report

By Yolanda Waddell

May 4 – May seemed to be a very busy month for many of our regular Weed Warriors, as only five showed up: Jay Bonestell, Rich Johnson, Ron Rasmussen, Pete Sarafian and Yolanda Waddell. Pete had agreed to be our snail monitor because our regular snail monitor, Bob Meyer, was in Alaska. After watering the new plants at 11th and 16th Streets, the small crew pulled veldt grass along the slope above South Bay Boulevard. Since we are an all-volunteer group, small turnouts happen sometimes, but plants were watered and some evil grass was pulled, so it was a good day for the Forest.

June 1 – Pete Sarafian alerted us that a Cheat Grass (*Bromus tectorum*) infestation in the large lower grove next to the estuary was dropping its seeds. This was serious because a single Cheat grass plant can produce as many as 300 seeds, and viability of the seeds is 2-5 years. Eleven sturdy Weed Warriors made the trek down to the lower grove (also called the Don Klopfer Grove), filled numerous bags with Cheat grass and made a sizable dent in the infestation. Thanks for “un-spreading” those seeds to Weed Warriors Jay Bonestell, Dave Bowlus, Lannie Erickson, Vicky Johnsen, Prisila and Rich Johnson, Dave McDonald, Bob Meyer, Conservation Chair Ron Rasmussen and Yolanda Waddell.

Let's all pull together

By Yolanda Waddell

Oh Warriors, Weed Warriors we need you on Saturday;
You can help 9 to noon before attending a matinee.
(well, how many words can you think of to rhyme with Saturday?)

There's plenty to do says Ron, the lead Warrior.
He has several jobs and needs some strong carriers.

So see you the first Saturday in our Forest so green.
Bring hats, gloves and shovels –
You know our cuisine – home-baked cookies!



In May, Weed Warriors Rich Johnson (foreground) and Ron Rasmussen worked toward their goal of making the slope above South Bay Boulevard weed free. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.



Weed Warrior Vicky Johnsen seems to be saying “I’m gonna get you, Cheat Grass!” during the June work party. Photo by Jean Wheeler.

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.



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Co-editors are Yolanda Waddell and Jean Wheeler; layout is by Katy Budge. Editing assistance by Pat Grimes. Contributors to this issue: Pat Akey, Erick Amaya, Ed Bobich, Larry Grimes, Vicki Houdyshell, Vicky Johnsen, Betsy Kinter, Marty Levi, Bob Meyer, Pat Murray, Ron Rasmussen, Yolanda Waddell, Dirk and Bonnie Walters, and Jean Wheeler.

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If possible, all copy should be submitted by e-mail to: oakleaves@elfin-forest.org.

Coming Up in the Elfin Forest

Text and Photos by Jean Wheeler

Flowers and fruit both adorn the Elfin Forest in August and September even though these months are near the end of our half year of drought. Mock Heather blooms almost exclusively in these two months, its yellow flowers brightening much of the shrub cover in our Elfin Forest. Seeds set by earlier bloomers are providing food for birds and other animals, including rapidly maturing offspring of this year.



*above: Hollyleaf Cherry
at left: Blue-Grey Gnatcatcher*

Other yellow to gold flowers still decorating the Elfin Forest include California Poppies and California Goldenrod. Coyote Brush has yellow male flowers and white female ones. Flowers on Dune Buckwheat that opened white are aging first to pink, and then rust in color. California Asters bloom mainly from August to December with ray flowers in white to pink or lavender around yellow central discs.

Colorful fruits add their beauty to the Elfin Forest in late summer and early autumn. California Coffeeberry is especially attractive along the boardwalk between Bush Lupine Point and Siena's View. Its berries appear yellow at first, darken to red and finally turn a richly glowing black. Berries in all three colors are often clustered together on these shrubs in August and September. Another bright red berry grows on Hollyleaf Cherry shrubs in the same area.

Among our resident birds active now are White-crowned, Chipping, Lark, Savannah, and Song Sparrows; House and Purple Finches; Lesser and American Goldfinches; Bushtits; Bewick's Wrens; Blue-gray Gnatcatchers; and Anna's Hummingbirds. Fairly common but usually skulking low in the bushes are California and Spotted Towhees, California Thrashers, and Wrentits. The blue flash and noisy screams of California Scrub Jays are everywhere, and California Quail can be seen scurrying through the underbrush.

Western Fence Lizards dart actively along the boardwalk in these warmest months, and you may be lucky enough to see a Garter, Gopher, or California King Snake, none of which is poisonous. Tracks of our nocturnal animals, notably Raccoons, can often be seen in the sand next to the boardwalk on early morning walks.

The abundant and active life displayed by so many plants and animals adapted to our dry climate and sandy dune soils is marvelous to observe at this most stressful season of their year. For detailed charts of colors, habitats, and peak seasons for hundreds of plants and animals, see our Pocket Guide, sold on page 11.



Ron Rasmussen (in SWAP T-shirt) begins a nature walk for members of the Los Osos Meditation Group. Photo by Vicky Johnsen.

Informative Walk By Request

Do you belong to a group that might enjoy a docent-led walk in the Elfin Forest? Debbie and Marty Levi, members of the Los Osos Meditation Circle, knew that they could ask for a walk for their group because they have been active members of SWAP in the past. On a lovely day in May, our Chair and Conservation Chair Ron Rasmussen met the group and gave them an excellent introduction to the Elfin Forest as they strolled along the boardwalk. He described the plant communities or habitats that can be found in the Forest, the origin of the ancient sand dunes that underlie the Forest, the Chumash who left shell middens, and the purpose and work of SWAP in removing invasive plants and caring for the Forest.

If your organization would like to schedule an Elfin Forest nature walk, leave a message on the SWAP phone, 805-528-0392 or e-mail swap@elfin-forest.org.

WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST Third (and Second) Saturday Walks

August 17, 9:30 a.m. – Geology Walk

Take a journey through time with Jeff Grover, Cuesta College Geology instructor. Jeff will focus on the geologic history of the Morro Bay area from the formation of the ancient Morros, or Seven Sisters, to the recent development of the dunes that form the Elfin Forest. He may even give us a glimpse of what the Elfin Forest and Morro Bay will be like in the geologic future. Of course, he will describe our local earthquake faults and talk a little about earthquakes in general. Jeff brings rock samples and draws diagrams of local geologic action. Join us for a lively and informative walk and talk.

September 21, 9:30 a.m. – Literary Stroll

Do you enjoy being read to? Would you enjoy strolling around the Elfin Forest boardwalk and hearing the words of famous natural history writers? Then this walk is meant for you. Cal Trans historian Robert Pavlik will share selections from the works of such authors as Robinson Jeffers, Wallace Stegner, Rachel Carson, Gary Snyder and others from this and past centuries. As you follow Bob along the boardwalk, stopping here and there for a reading, he will provide you with a delightful menu of descriptions and impressions that can be enjoyed in the Elfin Forest environment. He'll also provide us with a handout of his readings for those who want to read further.

October 12, 8:30 a.m. – Pre-Big Sit! Bird Walk (Second Saturday – Note earlier time)

Jim Royer will lead us on a bird inventory walk in preparation for the Big Sit! on Sunday, October 13. This international event hosted by Birdwatcher's Digest (www.birdwatchersdigest.com) pits participating groups of birders against one another to identify the most species of birds in one day. Our Big Sit! takes place at Bush Lupine Point. Join Jim on Saturday in finding and identifying 60 or more species of birds throughout the Elfin Forest and in the Morro Bay estuary. Regardless of your birding experience, you'll come away knowing more about birds, their calls, their habits and habitats.

October 19, 9:30 a.m. – CCC and the Elfin Forest

It's hard to walk anywhere in the Elfin Forest without being on or near a project of the California Conservation Corps. The boardwalk? They built it. Coastal scrub area near Bush Lupine Point? They planted many of the plants. Fences to protect sensitive habitat? They put them up. Join Mike Anderson, Conservation Supervisor of the Los Padres CCC for an eye-opening walk and talk about the positive impact of the CCC on the Elfin Forest and most of the rest of San Luis Obispo County. Don't miss this rare opportunity to learn how the CCC makes our beautiful Central Coast even better.

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.



*In May, Dirk Walters talked about the phototropic characteristics of Coast live oaks during a stop in the Rose Bowker Grove.
Photo by Yolanda Waddell.*



During his digital photography walk in June, Jerry Kirkhart explained the particulars of both cameras and tripods. Photo by Bob Meyer.



This CCC crew that installed symbolic fencing in 2012, is one of many CCC crews that have worked on the Elfin Forest over the years.

Thank You to Our Generous Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter, SWAP Database Coordinator

NEW MEMBERS:

Marie McRee*

RENEWING MEMBERS:

C. Dawn Aulenbrock*	Sally & Randy Knight*
Pam Bains*	Jennifer & Larry Levine*
George & Cynthia Boatenhamer	Frank R. Martinez
William Bouton*	Melissa Mooney*
Stephen Cake*	Brian Nofziger*
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**Thanks to those listed above who donated more than the \$25 (regular) or \$15 (senior or student) membership dues. The additional donations will be used for special projects in the Elfin Forest.*

If you recently sent a donation to SWAP and don't see your name in this issue's New and Renewing list, be assured that your gift will be acknowledged in the next bimonthly issue. Gifts are processed by two different volunteers before reaching our editors, and newsletter copy deadline is one month before the date of the issue.

Thinking of Switching to Online Oakleaves?

If you are more 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.

Elfin Forest Etiquette

By Yolanda Waddell

You frequently go for walks in the Elfin Forest, or maybe just occasionally. Of course you know that dogs should be on leash and that you should park carefully if you drive to the Forest. Then why bother to read this article? I hope that you will read it to refresh your memory about why it's necessary to be more careful in that sensitive natural area. Also, maybe you can use some of the following words if you meet visitors who aren't being careful. Here they are:

Parking – All of the Elfin Forest entrances are at the end of residential blocks. There are two or three parking spaces available at each of the street ends, from 11th through 17th. Never park in front of mailboxes or driveways.

Please do not park and enter the Elfin Forest from 16th Street unless you have a mobility problem or want to bring children in strollers; this is the Forest's handicap entrance. There are very few parking spaces on 16th Street; leave those spaces for visitors with mobility problems.

For a change of scene, try entering the Forest via different streets from time to time. For example, as you walk up the 11th Street trail you are immediately surrounded by coast live oaks and flowering shrubs; then you find yourself on a high dune, called Butterfly Hill that overlooks the bay.

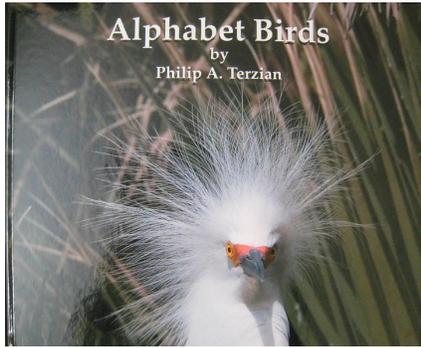
No Bicycles, Skateboards or Skates – The only wheeled vehicles permitted are wheelchairs, walkers and strollers. The boardwalk is very narrow in places and has many curves. Fast-moving wheeled vehicles are dangerous to pedestrians, especially elderly ones or young children.

Dogs must be on leash – This is why:

- Leashes protect dogs from becoming lost and from wilderness hazards, such as ticks and coyotes.
- Unleashed dogs can intimidate other Elfin Forest visitors and their dogs.
- Unleashed dogs can harass, injure and sometimes kill wildlife.
- A leashed dog's keen senses can enhance your awareness of nearby wildlife or other Elfin Forest visitors.
- Owners of off-leash dogs can be cited under County Codes 11.04.150 and 1.04.010.

No Smoking – All of Central California is in a drought condition. The Elfin Forest looks green, but a closer look will tell you that tinder-dry grasses, twigs and branches could easily catch fire. In January, the County Supervisors approved a County No Smoking Ordinance, number 8.22.30, for all County parks including the Elfin Forest Natural Area.

Thank you for helping SWAP by being careful when you visit that treasure that is the Elfin Forest.



Alphabet Birds: Book for Kids

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



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