



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 ♦ DECEMBER 2013 / JANUARY 2014

Highlights of 2013

By Ron Rasmussen, SWAP Chair

2013 saw much activity in the Elfin Forest by SWAP volunteers and the California Conservation Corps. Our bank account has remained steady in spite of paying for the projects mentioned below (see Annual Treasurer's Report, page 10). We are grateful for the constant support of our members, and look forward to another productive year in 2014.

Restoration at 11th and 16th street entrances. It's now almost two years since the damage to the vegetation occurred at the 11th street entrance to the Elfin Forest. To repair some of the damage, native plants were placed in the area in January of this year. At the same time about 20 new plants were placed in the bare areas near the 16th street entrance. Because we had little rain last year and, as of this writing, almost none so far this year, SWAP has watered the plants monthly. The result has been very good with at least 90% survival. While some of the plants may look as if they have dried out, they are only resting in their dormant state and are expected to recover.

Boardwalk maintenance. The boardwalk was installed in 1999, and is showing its age. The galva-

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Elfin Forest Visitors



On Saturday, September 28, Cuesta College Bio Sciences Division Chair Ron Ruppert (with binoculars) brought the Cuesta Naturalist Club on their first field trip to the Elfin Forest. Following that, the group went to SWAP's Annual Celebration to hear botanist Dr. Ed Bobich talk about his Coast live oak studies in the Elfin Forest. Ron and the students asked many good questions following Ed's talk, helping to make the event even more interesting for all in attendance.

Photo by Kyle Nessen.

Volunteer Party Postponed to February 2nd

A notice appeared in the October/November *Oakleaves* inviting SWAP's hard-working, skillful, talented and dedicated volunteers to attend a Volunteer Appreciation on November 3rd. But the committee members who are planning the event became too busy to put on a good party, so we have postponed it to Sunday, February 2nd, 2014 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m..

The event will be held in the Community Room at Morro Shores Mobile Home Park, 633 Ramona Avenue. We'll thank you individually and present an award to the Volunteer of the Year. Here is an opportunity to relax, meet and chat with your fellow volunteers.

We also invite all past members of the SWAP Board of Directors to this event. There will be appetizers, beverages, wine and desserts. **Note: this event is for volunteers only.**



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 7 p.m. at the Community Room, Morro Shores Mobile Home Park, 633 Ramona Ave., Los Osos.

The next meetings are
**Thursday, December 12,
and Thursday, January 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.

Highlights *continued from page 1*

nized steel screws used in the original construction continue to rust away and need replacement. In July of this year the California Conservation Corps (CCC) replaced several hundred of the old screws, but the remainder of old ones will eventually need replacement as well. SWAP volunteers monitor the boardwalk for defective screws and replace them as needed.

Invasive non-natives and weeds.

After many years of effort, the Elfin Forest, as viewed from the Boardwalk, appears to be largely free of veldt grass and other invasives. However, this is misleading. The seeds from prior growth are lurking everywhere just waiting for the rain. Also, at some locations off the Boardwalk, there



In October, SWAP and County Parks met to discuss issues and future projects. Shown (L-R) are Bob Meyer, County Parks Director Curtis Black, SWAP Chair Ron Rasmussen, County Parks Senior Planner Shaun Cooper, SWAP Treasurer and past County Parks Senior Planner Jan DiLeo, and Kerry Brown of the County Planning Department. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

continues to be a problem with annual non-native grasses as well as cape ivy and asparagus vine. SWAP and other volunteers will continue work to control these invasives.

New boardwalk steps. To more easily access the Boardwalk from some sand trails, the CCC has installed new steps with handrails where the 11th street trail reaches Bush Lupine Point and also near the Dudleya Grove where the Habitat Trail begins. The latter trail provides access for groups of students and others on SWAP's educational walks.

Black cable "Symbolic" fencing on Habitat Trail. The northeast corner of the Elfin Forest is crisscrossed by unmarked trails through the fragile chaparral and coastal sage scrub. This area is used daily by visitors who access the area via South Bay Boulevard or from the Boardwalk. Without some way of directing this "traffic", the area would continue to be degraded with the loss of native vegetation. The Habitat Trail appeared to be the one most frequently used and it was chosen to be marked by the installation of black cable used elsewhere in the Elfin Forest. The trail is now marked from the Boardwalk to connect with the Rein Orchid Trail that runs along the top of the bluff along South Bay Boulevard. SWAP volunteers will continue to work in this area to encourage regrowth of the native vegetation.

The Elfin Forest as a "Living Laboratory." Two scientists have seen the value of the Elfin Forest as truly a "Living Laboratory". The range of habitats from Coastal Dune Scrub to Riparian and Salt Marsh provides a range of living conditions for the variety of plants and animals found in the Elfin Forest.

Dr. Ed Bobich from Cal Poly Pomona studied the effect of these various conditions on the physiology of the oaks. He has found that there are differences in physiology among the groups of oaks depending on where they are growing. However, they do not seem stressed by lack of water, suggesting that their root system has ready access to underground moisture. The results of his studies are being submitted for publication in an appropriate scientific journal. When accepted they will be made available on SWAP's website.

Dr. Frank Kurczewski, an entomologist, has for five years conducted studies of wasp and robber fly species that live in the Elfin Forest. In his latest work he may have discovered a new species of robber fly, apparently unique to the Central Coast. Studies are underway to confirm this finding.

Botanist Draws Enthusiastic Discussion at SWAP's Annual Celebration

Text by Jean Wheeler

A large crowd gathered for SWAP's Annual Celebration at the Community Room of Morro Shores Mobile Home Park on Saturday afternoon, September 28. In addition to many SWAP members and guests, Ron Ruppert of Cuesta College brought a number of students from the Cuesta Naturalist Club following their morning field trip to the Elfin Forest.

Those attending were invited to sign name tags at a greeting table and enjoyed photo and brochure presentations near the entrance. Snacks and beverages were attractively presented at a long counter at the rear and tables along one side of the large room. Guests then seated themselves at a number of tables with plates of food and beverages to enjoy the featured presentation.

SWAP Chair Ron Rasmussen introduced Dr. Edward Bobich, who has taught botany at Cal Poly Pomona since 2005. Dr. Bobich has recently completed fieldwork in the Elfin Forest on the physiological and structural responses to environmental stress of Coast Live Oaks and other plant species.

"Pygmy Oaks Versus Normal Oaks; How Different are the Oaks in the Elfin Forest?" was the title of the presentation by Dr. Bobich. He showed photos and graphs of detailed measurements concerning photosynthesis, water relations, and structure of Coast Live Oaks. Results on sand dunes near the ocean in the Elfin Forest were compared between early spring and late summer. Results for both seasons were also compared with those of a much taller grove of the same live oak species on different soils at a reserve well inland in Pomona. Dr. Bobich then discussed his conclusions from his research.

Dr. Bobich's presentation lasted about a full hour. More technically detailed than we have normally seen at SWAP Annual Meetings, his presentation was received with great interest and enthusiasm. The question and answer session afterwards lasted at least a half hour, and questions came from many men and women of diverse ages in his audience.

As the party began to break up, small groups of people continued to discuss the research reported with one another and with Dr. Bobich, who insisted he enjoyed continuing the discussions even though his departure for his home in Pomona was delayed much longer than he had expected. SWAP members packing up posters, brochures, and food trays expressed to one another delight with the great success of this Annual Celebration.

The only business conducted at the Annual Celebration was election of members to the SWAP Board of Directors. Elected for two years were Pat Akey, an incumbent Director; Erick Amaya, a new Director; and Yolanda Waddell, an incumbent Director. At present, there are six members on the SWAP Board.



Botanist Ed Bobich fascinated his audience with his presentation at SWAP's Annual Meeting. Photo by Bob Meyer.



Pat Akey sat at the welcoming table for SWAP's Annual Celebration greeting visitors and providing name tags and information. Photo by Bob Meyer.



Text and photo by Jean Wheeler, Ph. D.

Standing up to four feet tall with a six-foot wing span, the Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) is the largest member of the heron family in North America. Its range extends from southern Alaska and Canada through the Caribbean area into South America.

Seen at a distance, as we typically do from Bush Lupine Point or Siena's View, the slate blue overall color well suits its common name. Close up, as in the photo I took at Montana de Oro State Park, the reddish-brown to black flanks and shoulders and the white face can be seen. There is a black stripe over each eye leading back to very slender black plumes; one such threadlike plume curves forward across the white upper throat in the photo.

In flight this very large blue-gray bird slowly beating along on wide wings is unmistakable with its long neck curled into an "S" shape between its shoulders and long legs trailing behind. Hunting in shallow water or on a grassy shoreline or terrace it is also very recognizable. Long periods of statue-in-stone immobility are relieved by short periods of very slow wading or walking, or by lightning-like stabs of its strong, straight beak to catch prey.

The diet of Great Blue Herons consists primarily of small fish. However, various sources report them as also stalking in shallow water for shrimp, crabs, aquatic insects, and amphibians such as frogs. On land they may wait in the same immobile stance for terrestrial insects, reptiles, and small birds or mammals such as mice or gophers to come within sudden striking distance. I once watched one of these tall statuesque birds on land suddenly lunge forward to come up with a slender snake, and slide it down the hatch.

Great Blue Herons are generally solo in flight or stalking for food. However, they breed in colonies called heron rookeries consisting of large nests made of sticks usually in crotches of trees or in high bushes. One such rookery has long been established in a grove of trees a short distance north of the Morro Bay Natural History Museum. It is protected by fencing but has parking and explanatory signs outside the fence for bird watchers. The rookery is also used by Great and Snowy Egrets and, unfortunately, by increasing numbers of Cormorants whose waste products are killing many trees.

The female heron lays about a half dozen eggs in one brood per year, although she may replace a destroyed clutch. Eggs are incubated for a month. Chicks are fed by both parents and fledge at about two months. The first chick usually is aggressive, getting more food and growing more quickly than siblings. Nest predators include large predatory birds such as eagles, hawks, and owls as well as raccoons and bears. Adults are too large for most predators, but may occasionally be taken by raccoons, bears, alligators, or crocodiles where those predators are present.

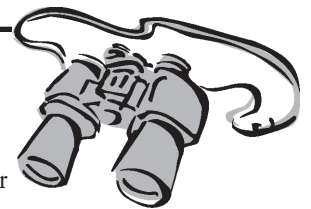
Near the Elfin Forest, watch for Great Blue Herons flying overhead from the rookery near the museum to hunting areas in the estuary or beyond, or stalking prey in shallow waters of Morro Bay below Bush Lupine Point or Siena's View or along Los Osos Creek.

Big Sit! Team Tallies 104 Species

The Big Sit! is an annual, international, noncompetitive birding event hosted by Bird Watcher's Digest and founded by the New Haven, Connecticut, Bird Club. Each list by birders is limited to species that they can see or hear from a 17-foot-wide circle. Coordinated each year by Jim Royer, our local Big Sit! takes place at Bush Lupine Point in the Elfin Forest. Generally our Big Sit! team's count is in the top five nationally. Last year we came in second with 116 species.

This year's team of thirteen top-notch birders spotted a total of 104 species of birds. In his report to fellow birders on the slocobirding listserv, Royer said, "Today's Elfin Forest Big Sit! had a final total of 104 species with no real rarities. The only new bird for the count was, weirdly enough, American Robin. This was the 180th species we have seen at the annual Big Sit! over the last 16 years. Highlights included a Merlin blasting by the observation platform, several Peregrines, five or six Red Knots, two Osprey and a Eurasian Wigeon. I will put the species list on the Birdwatcher's Digest web page. Thanks to all those who counted and who brought food." The Birdwatchers Digest web address is www.birdwatchersdigest.com.

Ed Note: Results listed on Birdwatchers Digest on November 11 showed that our Bush Lupine Point group came in third after San Blas, Mexico with 122 species and Arcata, California with 106 species. While the Big Sit! isn't called a competition, it is good to know that our birders, with help from our location, are indeed top-notch.



Bermuda Grass

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

It's November in a very dry year which was preceded by a dry year. Most native plants are waiting for the rains. The small amount of rain that fell in the last week in October I doubt will be considered significant, i.e. sufficient enough to initiate plant growth. So Bonnie and I have punted on the selection of the plant profiled in this issue of *Oakleaves*. We have chosen to make a scan of an all too common grass which is generally known as Bermuda grass, (*Cynodon dactylon*). According to Wikipedia, it has lots of common names in many different languages. Gardeners often refer to it as devil grass when in mixed company. I suspect they use more colorful language when they are trying to eliminate it from their lawns and gardens.

The scientific name, *Cynodon*, is derived from Greek and means 'dog tooth'. The dog teeth are the distinctive small scale-like leaves that arise from the nodes of the rhizomes. *Dactylon* is also from Greek and refers to finger-like structures. In this case it refers to the usually 4 or 5 thin inflorescence branches that somewhat resemble the fingers of the hand with the fingers widely separated.

The common name, Bermuda grass, reminds us to not depend on names to give us accurate information. Yes, Bermuda grass does grow in Bermuda, but it also grows throughout the warmer parts of the world. It grows on every continent that has areas where periods of low temperatures are rare or of very short duration. In the U.S. it is found in almost every one of the lower 48 states. It is especially common in the warmer half of the country. Where does Bermuda grass come from if not Bermuda? It has at least three other wild varieties and all of them, including the wide-spread variety (*Cynodon dactylon* var. *dactylon*) are found in South-East Africa. Only *C. d. var. dactylon* has a worldwide distribution.

Bermuda grass was probably introduced to the U.S. in the 18th century, whether as a lawn grass or for forage crop was not made clear. The species is able to survive long periods of drought by simply 'dying back' to its extensive system of rhizomes (horizontal underground stems). Aerial shoots can arise from any of its multitude of nodes (region of stems that produce leaves and buds). It is this capability to form long and extensively branched rhizomes that make it a good lawn grass. However, its weakness is its habit of dying back during drought. This means that one's nice green lawn will have brown spots or, if a Bermuda grass lawn, will turn completely brown.

Bermuda grass also doesn't share an area well. It is extremely aggressive. In experiments where Bermuda grass is grown with various other species, it inhibits the other species. In some cases Bermuda grass growth is better when paired with other species than when it grows alone. Its aggressive growth is why gardeners refer to it as devil grass. Where there is adequate water, Bermuda grass puts much of its growth into its green aerial shoots which makes it an almost great pasture grass. Why 'almost great'? It is because, under some environmental conditions, livestock poisoning has been traced to it.



Needless to say, Bermuda grass has no place in the Elfin Forest. I will have to admit I don't remember seeing it in my rambles through the forest or the adjacent marshes although I wasn't particularly looking for it. The Elfin Forest plant species list was made many years ago before the SWAP gang had begun their preservation efforts. At that time, the area was badly disturbed with many open areas. These bare areas are mostly vegetated now, so I suspect Bermuda grass would have a difficult time getting established in Elfin Forest, at least near the board walk, especially since it doesn't tolerate shade very well. Bermuda grass might be found constantly sneaking in from the surrounding yards and roadways. Since it likes water, is salt tolerant, and does best in disturbed areas, I suspect it might be quite common on road and stream banks bordering the salt marsh. It is still on the Elfin Forest species list so it's worth reminding ourselves to keep a watchful eye out for it.

There's Been a Change in the Weather Report

By Yolanda Waddell

For the past few years one could find a running weather reading on the Elfin Forest website, www.elfin-forest.org under the "Visiting Forest" heading. The readings came from Webmaster Bob Meyer's own weather station in his back yard. Updated every 10 minutes, it told the temperature, humidity, air pressure, wind direction and speed, and more. Since Bob lives not far from the Elfin Forest, the weather reading was accurate for the Forest.

Unfortunately, the weather station has stopped reporting both temperature and humidity. Bob isn't sure if he can fix it, so he has installed a National Weather Service link for Los Osos. It can be found in the same spot, the fifth green button down under "Visiting Forest." It provides a 5-day forecast of temperatures and atmospheric conditions. It also includes the current temperature, humidity, wind speed and dewpoint.

The weather information comes from the weather station in the US Coast Guard office in Morro Bay. Today's weather forecasting computers can calculate for a specific zone. This is called "point forecasting." When you click on the green button that says, "Weather forecast for the Elfin Forest from the National Weather Service," you will see a map at the right side of the page. The green box on the map shows the area that the point forecast covers. Bob has set it to cover the area from north Los Osos to the Morro Bay State Park campground.

We encourage you to take a look at the new weather forecast page and enjoy one more benefit provided by our SWAP Elfin Forest web site. Our thanks to Bob Meyer for his good work.

New Docent Begins Walks

By Yolanda Waddell

Vicky Johnsen's life so far certainly can't be called "ordinary." Her family moved to Venezuela when she was two years old. She went to grade school in Spanish. Then they moved to Guatemala where she attended junior high in Spanish as well, but transferred to a private English-speaking school so that she could continue her education in the United States. She attended a boarding school in Bethesda, Maryland, while her family remained in Guatemala.

Following high school, Vicky went to Occidental College near Pasadena and graduated with a degree in art history. While working on a teaching credential at the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, she realized that teaching school wasn't for her. About that time, Craig Johnsen asked her to marry him. Following the wedding, they moved to San Diego where Craig was stationed as a naval officer.

It was in San Diego that Vicky found an outlet for her teaching talent and her love of learning. She happened to visit the Scripps Aquarium in La Jolla at the time that docent training was beginning. She applied for the training and was accepted promptly when they learned that she speaks Spanish. She led tours for mainly Spanish-speaking students, and though her knowledge of marine science was minimal to begin with, she learned quickly. She says, "Every question I couldn't answer taught me something." For example, a student's question, "Do fish have tongues?" sent her to the aquarium library to learn more about the anatomy of fish.

When Craig left the Navy, he and Vicky led a crew of 6 other people on a 72-foot schooner, the *Talofa*, which Craig's family had bought and restored. They sailed across the South Pacific to the Marquesas Islands, then to other islands in French Polynesia and Hawaii, and finally back to San Francisco, encountering a November storm on the way. Vicky was the medical and supply officer, in charge of provisioning for the schooner.

Following a move to Palm Desert, California, Vicky became a docent at the Living Desert Preserve in Palm Desert. The Living Desert is both a zoo and a botanical garden, focusing on plants and animals of the world's deserts.

In 1990, Vicky and Craig sold their house in the hills above Palm Desert and moved aboard their 40-foot schooner, *Magic*, which Craig had designed.

They lived on the boat and sailed it up and down the west coast and across portions of the Pacific until 2007. During their voyages they stopped in Morro Bay a few times and were attracted to the Central Coast. Finally in 2011 they bought a house in Los Osos.

Vicky saw the "Elfin Forest" signs one day when they drove along Santa Ysabel Street, and investigated. She read a Weed Warrior work day notice on the boardwalk bulletin board, and became a Weed Warrior. Now, two years later, she is a full-fledged SWAP Docent. She is using skills learned in past docent volunteer jobs plus knowledge that she has gained about the Elfin Forest to design a new series of Elfin Forest walks. Her "2nd Wednesday Nature Walks" began in November. Like our long established 3rd Saturday walks, the 2nd Wednesday walks will start at the north end of 15th Street. Beginning at 10:00 a.m., the walks will last for 1-1/2 hours. See page 9 for descriptions of her December and January walks. Welcome aboard, Vicky!



Vicky Johnson will give a walk in the Elfin Forest on the second Wednesday of each month. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.



SWAP's booth during Oktoberfest in Baywood Park attracted many visitors, including people in Halloween attire. Lannie Erickson (left) showed up in a colorful scarecrow costume. Attending the booth were (L-R) Ron Rasmussen, Dave Moran and Jan DiLeo. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

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.

Weed Warrior Report

Text and photos by Yolanda Waddell

September –

Chips flew, water poured and veldt was pulled

Education Chair Pat Akey requested that County Parks deliver a load of chips to the end of 11th Street; she wanted a new layer of chips for the student assembly area just inside the 11th Street entrance to the Forest. Under the chips, in the sand, are small shards of broken glass from past parties in that area. Willing Weed Warriors hauled buckets of chips from the big pile that had been dumped at the end of the street, making a thick and safe cover for future school walks.

Following the chip hurling, our new plants at 11th Street and 16th Street were watered, and in the time left the energetic crew pulled several bagsful of veldt grass at the southernmost edge of the Forest between 15th and 16th Streets. Our crew of chip movers, waterers and weeders included Jay Bonestell, Bob Brantley, Ed Ellingen, Matt Ellingen, Lannie Erickson, Jack Fanselow, Vicky Johnsen, Prisila Johnson, Rich Johnson, Bob Meyer, Ron Rasmussen and Yolanda Waddell.

Thanks to all for a good day's work.

October –

More chip moving, watering & some board fastening

There was a pile of chips at the end of 11th Street, leftover from September's project. The October Warriors took buckets and shovels in hand, filled Bob Meyer's trusty truck with chips and then emptied it at the end of 15th Street where heavy equipment from the Los Osos Dig had churned up the sand.

The 11th Street and 16th Street plants were given a watering by some of the crew while Bob Meyer and Jack Fanselow carried stainless steel screws and portable screwdrivers to fasten loose boards in the boardwalk. Lannie Erickson, a member of the Trail Trimming Crew as well as being a Weed Warrior, did some shrub trimming along the boardwalk. The hard-working October Warriors were Ed Ellingen, Matt Ellingen, Lannie Erickson, Jack Fanselow, Bob Meyer, Ron Rasmussen and Yolanda Waddell.

Let's all pull together

By Yolanda Waddell

Those weeds keep growing from sun to sun,
So a Weed Warrior's work is never done.
There are still some patches of veldt grass to yank;
We need to keep it from increasing its seed bank.

On the bright side, we might remove some fencing
where plants have grown thick, a barrier commencing.
No matter the job, we know you'll be there
to help the Elfin Forest receive loving care.



Weed Warriors (L-R) Matt Ellingen, Rich Johnson and Ed Ellingen fill watering jugs for the young native plants at the 16th Street entrance. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.



During the October work party Weed Warrior Jack Fanselow installs a stainless steel screw in a loose boardwalk board.



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Contributors to this issue: Jan DiLeo, Vicky Johnsen, Betsy Kinter, Bob Meyer,
Kyle Nessen, Ron Rasmussen, Jim Royer, Ron Ruppert, Yolanda Waddell,
Dirk Walters and Jean Wheeler.

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Coming Up in the Elfin Forest



Story and Photos By Jean Wheeler, Ph.D.

The holidays are here! Not only for us but for thousands of birds who have finished their frantically busy summer feeding demanding offspring. Then they made a long and dangerous migration to reach our area of mild weather and sufficient food for the winter.

Morro Bay National Estuary is one the richest locales for birding in the United States. The 18th Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival scheduled for January 17-20, 2014, as always will draw lots of visitors from all over the U.S. and from abroad. The small wilderness preserve we protect is part of the action. See the schedule of events and field trips for this winter's festival at www.morrobaybirdfestival.org.

Bush Lupine Point and Siena's View are two of the best places in the region for viewing the thousands of water and shorebirds flying over and swimming or wading in the estuary. And the forest itself is the winter home for many migratory birds favoring brushy open woodlands.

Virtually all of the water birds and wading birds listed in our Pocket Guide (sold on page 11) are present and at peak populations in December and January. So are all the raptors listed, and a great many of the passerines. Often the water of the estuary seems nearly covered by the thousands of water and wading birds.

Shrubs around the boardwalk can be alive with flitting finches, sparrows, warblers, wrens, titmice, nuthatches,

Black Brant (above)

Lace Lichen (at left)

and many other little brown and little grey birds. Among the not-so-little birds of the brush are phoebes, thrashers, towhees, scrub jays, quail, blackbirds, and doves.

We're very light on rain so far, but even a couple of more light rains should bring some of our larger shrubs into bloom. Buckbrush Ceanothus, among the many species of the California Lilac genus, is one of the dominant shrubs in our maritime chaparral. As I write in early November, a few of its white to lavender flowers are already beginning to open. By the end of December their flowers should nearly surround the boardwalk.

Tucked in more protected areas of the lower boardwalk are Morro Manzanitas. These tall shrubs are found only along the coast between Montana de Oro and Morro Bay State Parks. The Elfin Forest is nearly in the center of their limited range and we preserve a substantial percentage of this manzanita's total population. The tiny bell-shaped flowers are listed in our pocket-guide as white, but usually have a pinkish blush.

Against the background of green shrubs, bright red flowers of the Fuchsia-flowered Gooseberry make a cheerful holiday statement and attract hummingbirds to their sweet nectar. Symbiotic lichens often coat both dead and living branches of our shrubs and trees. At least 56 kinds have been identified in the Elfin Forest. Each lichen consists of fungi providing structure and algae providing food via photosynthesis.

Take a break from shopping and gift wrapping or relax after the happy holiday turmoil. Enjoy a walk through the burgeoning beauty of our marvelous little winter-blooming wonderland!

18th Annual Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival

Every Martin Luther King weekend over 450 birders visit Morro Bay, a Globally Important Bird Area. Over 200 species are usually sighted during the Festival weekend, 211 last year. The event is sponsored by Morro Coast Audubon Society in collaboration with California State Parks, the Central Coast State Parks Association, and the City of Morro Bay.

The 2014 Festival features 122 events including pelagic cruises, boat rides and kayaking in the Bay, van trips throughout the county (several include the Elfin Forest), and many informative workshops. Kimball Garrett will be the Keynote speaker on Saturday, January 18, and Jon Young will follow him on Sunday evening.

Many vendors will display nature-related artwork, books, field equipment and attire, and local merchant wares. A number of the events are geared toward birders who are also photographers.

The Winter Bird Festival headquarters are at Morro Bay Community Center, 1001 Kennedy Way. Field trips fill quickly. For detailed information and online registration, visit www.morrobay-birdfestival.org.



WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

Second Wednesday Walks

new!

December 11, 10:00 a.m. –

How to be a Near-sighted Birdwatcher

In this new series of 2nd Wednesday nature walks in the Elfin Forest, SWAP docent Vicky Johnsen will focus on birds. Learn a few tricks from an amateur birdwatcher while enjoying a morning walk in the Elfin Forest. Bring binoculars if you have them, but they are not necessary.

January 8, 10:00 a.m. – Elfin Forest Habitats

Join Vicky Johnsen for her 2nd Wednesday Morning ramble. Her topic today is "The Elfin Forest Habitats: Hobbits would love this place...or would they?" Come along and find out for yourself.

Third Saturday Walks

December 21, 9:30 a.m. – Solstice Walk

Winter solstice is today, December 21. Will the sun really stand still, as the word "solstice" means? Dr. Jean Wheeler has taught thousands of geography students about the relative wanderings of the sun, moon, and earth and what they mean to us in terms of our climates, tides, and the vegetation and animal life around us. She'll show us how large our seasonal differences in sun angle are. Also, she'll explain how locations of some Elfin Forest plant species reflect in part their need for or ability to tolerate abundant solar energy, yet other species survive only where protected from the heat of high summer sun angles.

January 18, 9:30 a.m. –

Archaeology and Chumash Walk

Archaeologist Ethan Bertrando will take us time traveling into the pre-Spanish past of Central Coast inhabitants, the Chumash and their ancestors. Ethan teaches anthropology at Cuesta College and is the lead archaeologist and anthropologist for the California Army National Guard. Walking along the boardwalk, he will tell us the fascinating story of the ancient peoples who camped in the Elfin Forest 1,000 years or more ago. He will bring artifacts that show the industry and culture of the Chumash and other indigenous tribes on the Central Coast. This walk will reveal a complex world of the Elfin Forest's past inhabitants, one that we would never suspect today.

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, and leave pets at home. The easy paced walks last 1-1/2 to 2 hours. For more information call (805) 528-0392.



During the September 3rd Saturday walk, Literary Stroll leader Tim Rochte read from works by natural history writers to a group who braved some cold late summer weather to hear him.

Photo by Ron Rasmussen.



During the pre-Big Sit! bird inventory walk on October 12, walk participants joined leader Jim Royer (3rd from left, wearing shorts) in looking at birds in the estuary in the field north of the boardwalk.

Photo by Yolanda Waddell.



Mike Anderson, CCC Project Director, talked about the California Conservation Corps and the work it has done in the Elfin Forest during his October 3rd Saturday walk.

Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

Thank You to Our Generous Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter, SWAP Database Coordinator

NEW:
Ed Bobich

RENEWING MEMBERS:

Randy Ball	Susan McTaggart
Lois Barber	Hector Montenegro*
Eleanor Brown	Beverley & Bill Moylan*
Wendy Brown*	Jerry Mullins*
Kathleen Copeland*	Mike Multari
David & Evelyn Dabritz*	& Denise Fourie*
Jan DiLeo	Paul O'Connor
L. Erickson*	Karen O'Grady*
Siegrid Fenn	Robert Pavlik*
Alta Hall*	Rebecca Rasmussen*
Mary Harrison*	Ronald Rasmussen*
Jim & Karen Havlena*	Elaine Townsend*
Jypsy Joe Johnson*	June Wright*
Philip & Joy Kerce*	

DONATIONS:

County of San Luis Obispo – trail guide sponsor
Tom Lorish – PG&E Campaign for the Community
Hector Montenegro
Mary Lou Wilhelm

In memory of Norman A. MacGillivray:
Harley & Tootie Cedarquist
Chris & Angie Marganite

**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.

Annual Treasurer's Report

By Jan Di Leo, SWAP Treasurer

Following is a summary of SWAP revenues, expenditures and balances for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2012 and ending June 30, 2013. In 2012/2013, SWAP initiated various projects including sanding and staining Forest benches, installing symbolic fencing, conducting boardwalk repairs, and Forest restoration (new plants at 11th and 16th Streets). In spite of the numerous projects we ran in 2012/2013, our bank balance remains steady. That is due to the financial support of our many dedicated members. Thank you.

SWAP TREASURER REPORT SUMMARY JULY 1, 2012 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2013

REVENUES 07/01/2012-06/30/2013	
MEMBERSHIPS AND DONATIONS	\$16,963.80
MERCHANDISE SALES	1,361.25
GRANTS AND REIMBURSEMENTS	2,774.54
INTEREST ON CDs	383.30
TOTAL REVENUES	\$21,482.89

EXPENSES 07/01/2012-06/30/2013	
PUBLICATIONS	\$5,990.13
OFFICE AND OPERATING EXPENSE	6,869.64
OFFICE EQUIPMENT	1,098.51
MERCHANDISE FOR SALE	1,985.38
COMMITTEE EXPENSES	464.83
ELFIN FOREST PROJECTS	5,601.01
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$22,009.20
NET EXCESS (DEFICIT)	(\$526.31)

ACCOUNT DATA	
AS OF 07/01/12	
BANK ACCOUNT	\$8,969.07
CDs (INCL. INTEREST ESTIMATE)	55,798.81
PETTY CASH	50.00
TOTAL	\$64,817.88
AS OF 06/30/2013	
BANK ACCOUNT	\$8,059.46
CDs (INCL. INTEREST EARNED)	56,182.11
PETTY CASH	50.00
TOTAL	\$64,291.57
NET INCREASE (DECREASE)	(526.31)

Thinking of Switching to Online Oakleaves?

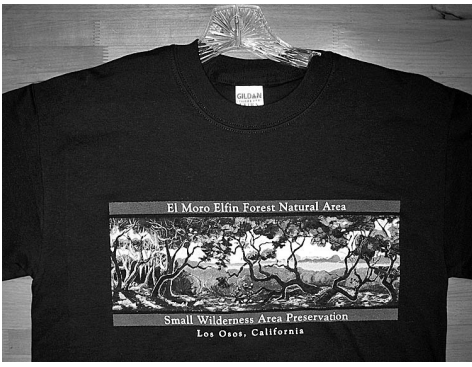
If you are more comfortable reading a paper copy of Oakleaves, we understand. However if you use your computer a lot, we encourage you to take a look at the online version at www.elfin-forest.org.

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.

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.



SWAP Has Great Holiday Gifts!

Mural T-shirts and sweatshirts and mural prints make wonderful gifts for your loved ones. And the lovely note cards, postcards, and pocket guides make good stocking stuffers! A gift donation or life membership in the name of your relative or friend would also be much appreciated.



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 = \$____
 ___ Long Slv. T-Shirt (S, M, L, XL) @\$23.00 = \$____
 ___ Long Slv. T-Shirt (XXL, XXXL) @\$25.00 = \$____
 ___ 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.

___ @ \$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

___ @ \$25.00 = \$____

5. ALPHABET BIRD BOOK

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

___ @ \$21.65 (including tax) = \$____

Shipping costs within zip 934 __:

Bird Book, \$2.77 (book rate) per book = ____

Pocket Guides & Note Cards \$1.50 = ____

Mural Prints on Foamcore \$5.00= ____

Shirts each: \$4.00 = ____

For shipping costs outside 934 __,

call (805) 528-0392

TOTAL OF ORDER

\$____

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

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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.




Los Osos / Morro Bay Chapter
SMALL WILDERNESS AREA PRESERVATION
A Non-Profit Public Benefit Corporation
P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412-6442
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Address Service Requested

New series of Elfin Forest walks on 2nd Wednesdays. See page 6.

Please check renewal date on your label.

 printed on recycled paper

Holiday Shopping With S.W.A.P!

S.W.A.P.'s beautiful mural design shirts make excellent gifts for the holidays. Mural prints 5 1/2 inches by 17 inches signed by artist Barbara Rosenthal and the Alphabet Bird Book also make ideal gifts. Good stocking stuffers are the pocket guides to plants and animals and lovely notecards and postcards from Bob Meyer's talented photography. A gift membership to S.W.A.P. or a tax deductible donation in the name of your relative or friend would also be much appreciated. Use the order form on page 11 to either call in or mail your order, and your gifts will promptly be mailed to you.



Consider a Year-end Tax Deductible Donation

Your donation can not only reduce your income tax bite, but help S.W.A.P. with special projects in the Elfin Forest such as soil erosion control and revegetation with native species. Donating \$1000 would make you a life member. You would receive the Oakleaves newsletter for life and would also receive a S.W.A.P. mural T-shirt in appreciation of your major contribution to our efforts.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Member | <input type="checkbox"/> Renewing Member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Member \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Defender \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Steward \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Champion \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protector \$75 | <input type="checkbox"/> Guardian \$500 |
| <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!

Make checks payable to: SWAP.

Mail to: Small Wilderness Area Preservation,
P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412-6442.