



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 2015



Celebrate Earth Day in the Elfin Forest

*Purple Nightshade is native to western United States
and Baja California. Photo by Jean Wheeler.*

By Ron Rasmussen, SWAP Chair

In 1969, Senator Gaylord Nelson (D-Wisconsin) established Earth Day to focus public attention on environmental issues. Each year on April 22nd, Earth Day is celebrated around the world by thousands of environmentally concerned citizens.

SWAP volunteers celebrate year round by actively working to preserve our environment. The Elfin Forest shows SWAP's commitment to this preservation. We invite you to honor Earth Day by visiting the Elfin Forest and seeing the results of this commitment.

The column "Coming Up in the Elfin Forest" (page 8) in this and every issue features native flowers and animals likely to be seen

Earth Day continued on page 2

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Visitors from Ventura County enjoyed a walk in the Elfin Forest with Ron Rasmussen, second from left in 2nd row. Linda Parks, group coordinator, is in the first row, second from right. Photo by Bonnie Clarfield-Bylin, left end of front row.

Visitors from Ventura

By Yolanda Waddell

In January, SWAP received a request for a guided walk in the Elfin Forest from Linda Parks, a Ventura County Supervisor. She organized a trip to Morro Bay, the Elfin Forest and Cal Poly for a group of 15 environmentally friendly women. Prior to visiting the Elfin Forest, the group went kayaking on the Morro Bay estuary. When they arrived at the Elfin Forest, Ron Rasmussen and Vicky Johnsen each led a group on a nature tour of the Forest. After lunch, they planned to visit the Cal Poly Arboretum.

The women in Linda Parks' group were indeed environmentally friendly. Included in the group was Bonnie Clarfield-Bylin who took the above photo. She is recently retired from being a National Park Service Supervisory Ranger. Her most recent service was in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, and she is very active in the Audubon Society.

Another member of the group was Merrill Berge, founder of Camarillo Sustainable Growth, dedicated to preventing valuable agricultural land from large-scale development. In 2014, they managed to save 800 acres of farmland east of Camarillo from being turned into a 2,400 home development.

I would like to have had the opportunity to converse with more of the women in this energetic group. It is heartening to know that there are people working hard to protect land in Ventura County.



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, Corresponding Secretary

Carrie Arnold, Recording Secretary

Pat Akey, Member at Large

Vicky Johnsen, 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, April 9,
and Thursday, May 14.**

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.

Earth Day *continued from page 1*

currently in our wild little patch of Earth. Also, take advantage of SWAP's 3rd Saturday Walks (page 9) and learn more about the natural wonders in the Elfin Forest.

To learn more about Earth Day and other environmentally active organizations in our area, visit the San Luis Obispo County Earth Day Festival from 10 am to 5 pm on Sunday, April 19th, at El Chorro Regional Park. Look online at www.earthdayalliance.com for more information.

California Native Plant Week, April 11-19

California Native Plant Week this year will take place between Saturday, April 11 and Sunday, April 19. The following description of Native Plant Week appears on the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) web site:

The California State Assembly and Senate approved Resolution ACR 173 in 2011, establishing California Native Plant Week and proclaiming the 3rd week of April each year as California Native Plant Week. The resolution encourages community groups, schools, and citizens to undertake appropriate activities to promote the conservation, restoration, and appreciation of California's native plants.

The resolution (ACR 173) was introduced by Assemblywoman Noreen Evans (D – Napa) and sponsored by the California Native Plant Society, while it garnered the support of horticulturalists, conservation organizations, and nurseries throughout California.

ACR 173 recognizes the vital historical, artistic, and economic contributions California's native plants have made to our State, and points out that California native plant gardening and landscaping have tremendous positive impacts to our watersheds, to habitat recovery, and to curbing catastrophic wildfires. In particular, the resolution recognizes that home landscaping and gardening with native plants can cut residential water use from 60 to 90% over conventional gardening.

SWAP's butterfly specialist, Pat Brown, will celebrate Native Plant Week with her walk, "Butterflies and Native Plants" on Saturday, April 18. See page 9 for a walk description. For other events and field trips related to Native Plant Week, check the San Luis Obispo CNPS chapter's web site, www.cnps-slo.org.



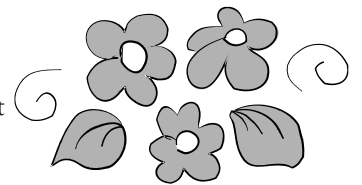
The Suffrutescent Wallflower is native only to California and only close to the coast from San Luis Obispo County south. Photo by Jean Wheeler.

Cambria Wildflower Show

Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve will present their annual Wildflower Show at the Cambria Veterans Hall, 1000 Main Street, on Saturday April 25 from noon to 5 p.m. and Sunday, April 26 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

This is an event that is well worth seeing. More than 400 species of wildflowers will be gathered by volunteers in the area from the Monterey County line in the north to the Morro Bay estuary in the south, and from the top of the Santa Lucia Mountains to the ocean. They will be displayed in jars and bottles, arranged by family, genus and species by botanist Doc Miller.

Volunteers to help gather the wildflowers are welcome. For more information, e-mail ffrpcambria@sbcglobal.net or phone 805-927-2856. The web site for Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve, a former chapter of SWAP, is www.ffrpcambria.org.





Cape Ivy



Wild Cucumber

Cape Ivy and Wild Cucumber Confusion

By Yolanda Waddell. Photos by Yolanda Waddell and Bob Meyer.

In our June, 2014 issue of *Oakleaves*, we wrote about the annual mixup of Cape Ivy and the Wild Cucumber vine. The problem is that Cape Ivy (*Delairea odorata*), a very invasive plant from South Africa, looks a lot like a California native vine, Wild Cucumber (*Marah fabaceus*). Every year, one or more well-meaning persons will pull up a bunch of Wild Cucumber, thinking that it is the invasive Cape Ivy. It happened again this year – see the adjacent photo.

SWAP has posted a flyer at all seven Elfin Forest entrances that explains the differences between Cape Ivy and Wild Cucumber. Here are some differences:

Cape Ivy doesn't have tendrils – Wild Cucumber does have tendrils, as it is a vine
 Cape Ivy leaves are smooth and rubbery – Wild Cucumber leaves are hairy and rough
 Cape Ivy has yellow flowers – Wild Cucumber has white flowers
 Cape Ivy never grows in the open – Wild Cucumber often grows in the open
 Cape Ivy doesn't die back in summer – Wild Cucumber dies back in summer

Neither Cape Ivy nor Wild Cucumber should be pulled. Wild Cucumber of course belongs in the Elfin Forest. When Cape Ivy is pulled, the stems break into pieces and each piece that lands on the Forest floor can produce a new plant.

Except for trained and authorized personnel, pulling either plant is bad for the Elfin Forest. In fact, pulling any plant including weeds, even by Weed Warriors, without a trained snail monitor present is illegal as the endangered Morro Shoulder Band Snail could be harmed or killed. If you see someone in the Elfin Forest pulling up either vine, please let them know about this.



Thinking of Switching to Online Oakleaves?

Tired of looking at that pile of newsletters and magazines waiting to be read? If you use your computer a lot, we encourage you to take a look at the online *Oakleaves* 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. Just e-mail us at oakleaves@elfin-forest.org with the subject: Switch me to online.

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.

Anise Swallowtail Butterfly

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



It probably does not generally lay eggs in the Elfin Forest and most of its caterpillars would probably die of starvation if it did. Nevertheless, the Anise Swallowtail Butterfly (*Papilio zelicaon*) is one of the largest butterflies commonly seen in our small wilderness area.

The Anise Swallowtail is easily recognizable among the 19 butterflies listed in our pocket guide *Plants and Animals of the Elfin Forest Natural Area* (sold on page 11). Bright yellow and black in color, at 3 inches it is definitely larger than all of the other butterflies listed except for the Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) and the Pale Swallowtail (*Papilio eurymedon*). The Monarch is orange and black in color and noticeably larger at 4.5 inches. The Pale Swallowtail, 3.5 inches, is black and white to pale yellow with wide black stripes running from front to rear down the wings paralleling the body.

The Anise Swallowtail Butterfly is yellow and black, having a fuzzy black body with yellow stripes on the abdomen and black antennae. A yellow band extends laterally across the middle of the wings, wide except where interrupted by the black body in the center. The yellow band narrows in passing behind the rear of the body.

On closer inspection, the broad yellow band consists of separate yellow rectangular bars elongated from front to back, separated by very thin black lines containing the veins. Surrounding the outer edges of the wings are narrow black bands also interrupted by a row of large yellow spots. The yellow bands and spots are so prominent that the butterfly appears more yellow than black.

The Swallowtail group of butterflies is named for narrow "tails" extending outward from the back of each rear wing. The tails of the Anise Swallowtail are moderately long and black. Just above the tails, between the narrow black band edging with yellow spots and the broad yellow band across the middle of the butterfly, is a short row of prominent blue spots. At the edge of each rear wing between the tails, just behind the central blue spots, is a small "eyepot" yellow to orange-red in color with a black "pupil."

This species lives in open country from British Columbia and North Dakota south into Mexico, but is mostly absent from deserts. It is common on open hills or mountains, along roadsides or fields, and in towns.

Males are well-known for "hill-topping" and are often seen on what is known among SWAP butterfly watchers as "Butterfly Hill." This is the open area along the 11th Street sand trail on a cliff overlooking the estuary. Also known as a butterfly "singles bar," the males are there to attract females. After being impregnated, the females leave the area to find and lay eggs on host plants that will support their larvae.

Most eggs are laid and caterpillars live on the weed Sweet Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) introduced from Europe. Art Shapiro, Professor of Evolution and Ecology at U.C. Davis (see Art Shapiro's Butterfly Site on the Internet), indicates that the only native California Mediterranean plant hosts available that could have sustained repeated breeding for this native butterfly are Water Hemlock (*Circuta* spp.) and Water Parsley (*Oenanthe* spp.). He says these are still used, but rarely as compared with fennel.

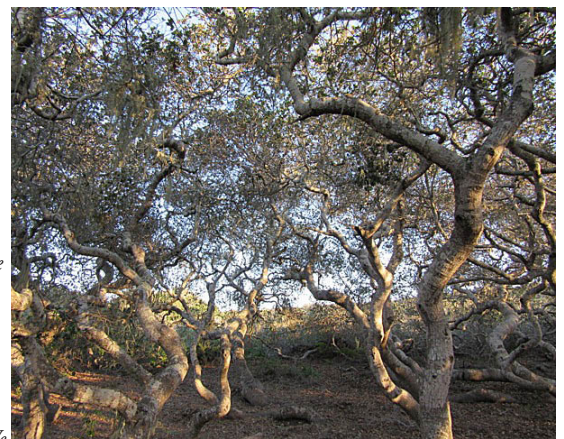
Water Parsley (*O. sarmentosa*) does occur in the brackish water marshes that edge the Elfin Forest (see our pocket guide mentioned above), whereas fennel is eliminated from the Forest as a weed. However, fennel grows abundantly all around and just outside the forest, no doubt supporting the caterpillars of the Anise Swallowtails that we see flying in and making use of the Butterfly Hill "singles bar."



Elfin Forest Oaks Are Green Again

at left: September, 2014
at right: March, 2015

In the October issue of *Oakleaves*, Jean Wheeler wrote about the defoliation of a very large number of Elfin Forest coast live oaks by a huge population of Oak Moth caterpillars. She expressed a generally felt concern that successive years of drought combined with literally all leaves being eaten off of the Forest's oak trees would seriously weaken the trees. Jean wrote, "We



can only hope that our drought breaks with early and often rains this fall and winter, and that most of our oaks will be able to replace enough of their leaves to survive. Surely they have done so before in the hundreds of years that they have been alive in the Elfin Forest." Shortly after Jean's article appeared in *Oakleaves*, we noticed that a few new leaves could be seen on many of the trees. Now, as this article is being written in early March, a light oak leaf canopy has returned to Rose's Grove oaks and the other Elfin Forest oaks. Leaves are fewer and most of the leaves are smaller than in past times, but it is clear that the Elfin Forest oaks have survived both caterpillars and drought once again. - text & photos by Yolanda Waddell

Revisited and updated from June/July 1998

Sticky Monkey-flower

By Dirk Walters, Ph.D.;

Drawing by Bonnie Walters, photo by Jean Wheeler

The plant highlighted in this issue is the sticky monkey-flower or bush monkey-flower, *Mimulus* (or *Diplacus*) *aurantiacus*. As I write in early March, the orange or golden tubes of this shrub are the most common and obvious flowering shrub along our coast from the Pacific Ocean to the crest of the Santa Lucias, from Monterey County to Santa Barbara County. In fact, it is one of the most common shrubs throughout the California Floristic Province, from southern Oregon to northern Baja, Mexico and west of the crest of the Cascade, Sierra, and Peninsular Ranges. In this county, at least four recognizable types are known. The one around our area displays flowers on long stalks (pedicels), has shorter tubes, and is orange in color (*M. aurantiacus*). Bonnie has drawn this form and I suspect it would make a great drought-tolerant addition to any garden.

When you go out to look for the flowers of the shrubby monkey-flower, you may want to see it move. Most people know plants can move their leaves in response to changing light conditions and that seeds and pollen move if wind or insects carry them. However, these movements are often so slow that most of us will never have actually seen them. Some of us who are nature television junkies may have seen plant movements in time lapse photography. In *Mimulus*, the stigma (the end of the central bowling pin shaped structure, called the pistil or female organ) consists of two small flat plates. When the flower opens, the plates are spread apart exposing the lower part of the upper plate and the upper side of the lower plate. These two surfaces are the pollen receptive portions of the stigma. When pollen is deposited on one of these surfaces, the two plates move together relatively rapidly or 'slam' shut. To see this relatively rapid movement anytime, simulate a successful pollination: gently rub the stigmas with a pine needle, pencil point, or grass leaf and watch the stigmas close. If you come back to the same flower after a few hours, the stigmas will have reopened, so no permanent damage will have been done.

The name monkey-flower comes from the observation that one can recognize the face of a monkey in the spot pattern of the fused petals (corolla). Since coming to California, I have often looked for this 'face' and have never seen it in any of the species I have observed. This has always bothered me. I found a possible explanation for my lack of creativity in seeing the 'face' in *Wild Flowers of the United States, Vol. 4*, edited by H. W. Rickett which states, "Both names (*Mimulus* and monkey-flower) refer to the 'grinning' or 'miming' corolla of some species; these are mostly eastern (U.S.) species, and many of the numerous western species have no 'monkey face'." So, I wasn't really 'creatively challenged' because western (U.S.) species don't have monkey faces. Surely, none of our common bush monkey-flower forms have one.



I also ran into a problem with the origin of the name *Mimulus*. One source said it was derived from a Latin root and a second said it was Greek; both agreed that it meant an ape, oaf, or painted actor. So I looked up the word 'mime' in the *Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd edition*. It states that the word is derived from the Greek 'mimos' or Latin 'mimus' meaning a oaf, ape, or actor with comically painted face. In other words, both sources were correct. Since the Greek language is the older of the two, the Greek origin of the base word is probably more correct. The name '*aurantiacus*' is derived from New Latin and means the color orange, which is the color of the corolla in the most widespread form of the species.

Above and Beyond

On January 17, Pete Sarafian sent a note saying that Vicky Johnsen and Lannie Erickson deserve thanks for going out mid-month to help him on a project to remove many mustard plants from the slope above South Bay Boulevard. He also noted that Kevin O'Donnell, a 12th Street neighbor of the Elfin Forest, supplied and graded a large amount of wood chips at the end of 12th Street next to the Elfin Forest. Many thanks to those who go "above and beyond" for the Elfin Forest, including Pete.



Vicky Johnsen, center, displays her Weed Warrior weapon before digging in to vanquish the hordes of Panic grass plants near the 10th Street entrance of the Elfin Forest. At left is Charlie Sitton and at the right of Vicky is snail monitor Barrett Holland. Photo by Pat Brown.

Weed Warrior Report

By Yolanda Waddell

January 3rd – Panic Grass Cleanup at 10th Street

On Saturday, January 3rd, fourteen stalwart Weed Warriors returned to the scene of December's Panic Grass pillage. There was still plenty to pull; after digging and pulling for three hours, they had filled seven or 8 large bags. Participating in the Panic pull were Sandy Brinley, Pat Brown, Kimberly Burns, Ed Ellingen, Matt Ellingen, Lannie Erickson, Jack Fanselow, snail monitor Barrett Holland, Vicky Johnsen, Robert Lindley, Conservation Chair Ron Rasmussen, Pete Sarafian, Charlie Sitton and Amber Sturgess.

January 31st – Foiling the Cheat Grass

Because Barrett Holland, our snail monitor from SWCA, couldn't make the usual first Saturday on February 7th, the Weed Warriors met on Saturday, January 31st. They hiked down to the Don Klopfer Grove, the lowest oak grove next to the estuary, and pulled the invasive Cheat grass established there. The ten hardy souls who made the trek were Dave Bowlus, Steve Cake, Jack Fanselow, snail monitor Barrett Holland, Vicky Johnsen, Prisila Johnson, Rich Johnson, Ron Rasmussen, new Conservation Chair Skip Rotstein and Pete Sarafian. Removing invasives such as Cheat grass makes it possible for more native plants to grow and thrive in the Elfin Forest.



Weed Warriors can stand up if need be in the Don Klopfer Grove. Among the Warriors pulling Cheat grass on January 31st were (L-R) Snail monitor Barrett Holland, Jack Fanselow, Dave Bowlus and Vicky Johnsen. Photo by Ron Rasmussen.

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.

OAK LEAVES



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Dirk and Bonnie Walters, and Jean Wheeler.
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Conservation Committee Selects a Chair

Text and Photo By Yolanda Waddell

Historically, SWAP's Conservation Committees have been small, with just two or three members. But recently some Weed Warriors and others who are interested in working in the Elfin Forest indicated that they are willing to form a committee that will be large enough to spread the work around. The Conservation Committee now consists of Dave Bowlus, Jack Fanselow, Vicky Johnsen, Bob Meyer, Ron Rasmussen, Skip Rotstein, Dean Thompson, Yolanda Waddell and Jean Wheeler.

In January, six members of the Conservation Committee met in Rose's Grove to select a new Conservation Chair. Ron Rasmussen, at that time both SWAP Board Chair and Conservation Chair, led the meeting. Skip Rotstein agreed to be the Conservation Chair, and was unanimously elected by the other committee members.

Skip became active in SWAP's Conservation Committee a year ago. He and his wife Leslie, who is an advisor on our Education Committee, moved to Los Osos two years ago from the town of Morongo Valley in the California desert. Skip was a biology teacher at Palm Springs High School. After he retired, he bought a hardware store that was going out of business. Then he moved it next to a desert nursery called the Cactus Mart that he and Leslie had taken over after her retirement in 2000. Since coming to the Central Coast, Skip is active not only with SWAP, but also with the Morro Bay Natural History Museum and the Morro Bay National Estuary Program.

Skip and the Conservation Committee members met in March to establish the following subcommittees: Weeding, Reveg-



Past Conservation Chair Ron Rasmussen (left) welcomes Skip Rotstein, second from right, as SWAP's new Conservation Chair. Vicky Johnsen is between Ron and Skip and Bob Meyer is on the right.

Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

etation, Trail Vegetation Trimming, Mutt Mitts and Trash Control, Erosion Control and Boardwalk and Trail Maintenance. Skip reported that he took a survey of the condition of all of all Mutt Mitt posts (*see related article on page 10*) and interpretive signs at the street ends. He also located places where shrubs and trees have grown in sufficiently that some of the Forest's green fencing can be removed. The Conservation Committee will meet periodically to plan conservation action in the Elfin Forest as needs arise.

There's Trouble In The Elfin Forest

By Yolanda Waddell; photo by Pete Sarafian

In recent months there have been some troublesome events in the Elfin Forest. Following are reports that we have received from Pete Sarafian and other active SWAP members.

January 25 – Pete Sarafian sent the following message:

Dear Folks: Someone scattered plastic confetti all over the ground in Rose's Grove. If we each go out one day this week whenever we can and spend a few minutes to an hour picking it up, the grove should be clean by the end of the week.

Later that day, Conservation Committee member Jack Fanselow reported: "The mess in Rose's Grove is now cleaned up. I know that Vicky Johnsen (also a Conservation Committee member) worked on it this morning. Others may have prior to my getting there mid-afternoon. Jack Fanselow"

February 18 - Pat Brown, Chair of our Boardwalk Guide Committee, e-mailed the following report:

"When I stocked the guide boxes today, both contained broken pieces of brown glass. Lying on the boardwalk in front of the bench where the 16th Street hand-capped walkway meets the main boardwalk, there were three wooden matches with burned tips. Near the Bowker bench there was a cigarette butt lying on the boardwalk. The butt had not been snuffed or stepped on as people often do when they extinguish one." She later added that broken glass in the guide boxes is a semi-regular occurrence, saying that someone makes a habit of leaving broken glass in the boxes.

February 28 – Past Conservation Chair Pete Sarafian sent the following report:

"On the evening of Friday, February 27, miscreants made a mess of Rose's Grove in the Elfin Forest. They held a party, built a bonfire (see adjacent photo) and left a



Trouble continued on page 8

Coming Up in the Elfin Forest

Story and Photo by Jean Wheeler



Moro Blue Butterfly

April and May are the two best months to look for “flying flowers” in the Elfin Forest. One of the most numerous is the Variable Checkerspot Butterfly. It looks brown to black with cream to light yellow rectangular spots. Their bristly black caterpillars with orange dots can often be spotted grazing on the sticky leaves of their host plant, called sticky monkey-flower.

Other butterflies to look for include the similar Gabb’s Checkerspot (checkered much more orange and cream with less brown-black background than the Variable Checkerspot), the smaller green Coastal Bramble Hairstreak and Silvery Blue Butterflies, the large yellow and black Anise Swallowtail (my natural history discussion with photo of this species is on page 4), and the black and cream Pale Swallowtail. The Moro Blue is pictured here on a just-opening flower spike of its host plant, silver dune lupine.

The wildflowers attracting all these butterflies come in many colors. Yellow to orange flowers include California poppies, deer-

weed, fiddleneck, golden yarrow, suffrutescent wallflowers (pictured on page 2), and sticky monkey-flowers (see Dirk Walters’ article on page 5 with a drawing and photo).

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 pinking 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 (pictured on page 1) 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, and wedgeleaf horkelia. California blackberry and poison oak each have white flowers and three leaves now, but the blackberry plants have thorny stems.

Coffeeberry and hollyleaf cherry are 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.

While admiring butterflies and flowers from the boardwalk and sand trails, your eyes will no doubt also be attracted by the flight of avian residents. Most of our year-round birds are actively building nests or already raising young. Especially likely to be seen and heard are the bright blue Western Scrub Jays, orange and black Spotted Towhees, chattering flocks of tiny fuzzy gray Bushtits and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, and similarly talkative little brown birds including several species of sparrows and wrens. The large brown bird with a big down-curved beak is the California Thrasher. The plump brown birds with plumes are the state bird, California Quail.

Among avian arrivals in April or May from winter homes 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!

Trouble *continued from page 7*

big mess. Elfin Forest neighbor Charlie Sitton hauled away a large trash bag full of empty beer and other bottles, partially smoked marijuana cigarettes and rolling papers, and other debris. The miscreants even tore branches off centuries-old live oak trees to feed their bonfire. SWAP members made reports to SLO County Parks, the SLO County Sheriff’s Department and the South Bay Fire Department.

It is at least a weekly occurrence to find fires, cigarette butts, matches and lighters in the Elfin Forest. Anyone knowing more about the vandals’ party is invited to contact SWAP at 805-528-0392.”

Ron Rasmussen, SWAP Chair, also e-mailed that Elfin Forest neighbor and SWAP Weed Warrior Charlie Sitton phoned him to report the party in Rose’s Grove. Charlie called the SLO County Sheriff. The officer took notes of what was there, but did not offer any further action.

Mark Wagner, Supervising Park Ranger for our district, notified the Sheriff’s office about the earlier events and e-mailed us that County Park Rangers visit the Elfin Forest several times a week at present. The Sheriff’s office e-mailed the deputies who patrol the coast areas of the county to make an effort to conduct extra patrol in the Elfin Forest when they are in the area.

The greatest problem in apprehending the troublemakers is that the Sheriff has to see them in action. We ask our readers who visit the Elfin Forest often to call the County Sheriff’s office if you observe “bad” behavior such as dogs off-leash, vandalism or obvious crimes. The Sheriff’s phone number is 781-4550; please program that number into your cell phone. **Do NOT confront anyone who is doing something wrong; just phone the Sheriff.** Thank you for your help in keeping the Elfin Forest safe and clean.

WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

Third Saturday Walks

April 18, 9:30 a.m. – Butterflies & Native Plants

In honor of California Native Plant Week, 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 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 books, web sites and butterfly-related materials. She recommends that you bring a pair of close-focusing (5-10 ft.) binoculars.

May 16, 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 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.

Walks in the Elfin Forest begin at times stated above at the north end (1100 block) of 15th Street off Santa Ysabel in Los Osos. Wear comfortable shoes, long sleeves and pants to avoid poison oak and mosquitoes. 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 his geology 3rd Saturday walk in January, Al Normandin displayed a map showing all of the past and present mines in San Luis Obispo County and the Central Coast. Photo by Jean Wheeler.



February's Fungus Foray was a "fruitful" one, despite the drought. Here walk leader Dennis Sheridan talks about the Wood Bluet mushroom that he is holding. Photo by Jean Wheeler.

Remembering Art Armstrong

By Yolanda Waddell

On Sunday June 5th, 1994, Art and Lillian Armstrong attended SWAP's Elfin Forest mural dedication held at the Los Osos Rexall Drugstore parking lot. It was a joyful event, celebrating both the completion of Barbara Rosenthal's mural on the east wall of the Rexall Drugstore, and also the successful end of a 9-year-long fundraising effort to purchase 38.7 acres of the Elfin Forest from its owner, Shirley Otto. Rose Bowker unveiled a plaque naming over 2,000 individuals and businesses who contributed to the effort to save the Elfin Forest. Art and Lillian's names are on the plaque, and they were no doubt pleased that they, together with many others, were able to help in the conservation of a lovely small wilderness, now called the El Moro Elfin Forest Natural Area.

In the years since that celebratory day Art and Lillian continued as members of SWAP. Art was active in many other organizations, but always remembered SWAP. He cared for Lillian during a long illness until she passed away, and then found a new love, Claudia. Art passed away at age 88 on Monday, January 5th following a brief struggle with cancer. He is survived by his second wife, Claudia and her family, his daughter Susan and his granddaughter Lisa. Elsie Dietz, an original SWAP Board member, remembers Art's wonderful, short letters to the editor of The Tribune, his delicious humor and warm smile. We will miss Art's presence and extend SWAP's condolences to Claudia, Susan and Lisa.

Thank You to Our Generous Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter, SWAP Database Coordinator

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Mary Lou Wilhelm

**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.



13th Street Mutt Mitt post, askew.

The Case of the Falling Mutt Mitt Pole

Text and Photos by Yolanda Waddell

In February, Conservation Chair Skip Rotstein, my husband Jay and I took a walk up 13th Street to take a look at the pile of Wild cucumber that someone had erroneously cut and left next to the trail (see "Cape Ivy and Wild Cucumber Confusion" on page 3.) As we approached the trail at the end of 13th Street, we saw a strange sight: the post supporting the Mutt Mitt dispenser and trash can was leaning at a forty-five degree angle. Did a vandal push it over? Did the recent rains erode the sand around it and cause it to fall?

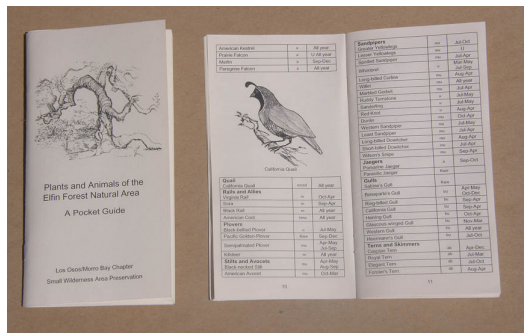
Skip wiggled the post and said that he would return later with something to prop it up.

When he returned, he lifted the post out of the hole and found that there was no post left between the top of the hole and the concrete that it had been set in. Termites had eaten all the wood that was below ground! For the time being, Skip set the post back into the hole and propped it up by placing some small logs under the trash can – see the second photo.

A survey by Skip of all the Mutt Mitt posts and interpretive signs at each of the seven Elfin Forest entrances resulted in no more termite-weakened posts. However, a few of the interpretive signs could be under attack by termites as well. SWAP will work with County Parks to do the repairs that are necessary.



13th Street Mutt Mitt post, restored to upright and braced with logs under the trash basket by Skip Rotstein.



Our *Pocket Guide, Plants and Animals of the Elfin Forest Natural Area* is a goldmine of information. This paperback is 8 by 4 inches with 56 pages packed with fascinating facts. Included are charts of plants by bloom season, color and habitat; birds by habitat and peak months; and butterflies by size, months in flight, color, and host or nectar plants used. Other lists include mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects and other arthropods, lichens, and mushrooms.



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

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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.

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Useful 56-page guide to plants and animals of the Elfin Forest. Lists for mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, arthropods including moths and butterflies, gastropods, vascular plants, lichens, and mushrooms. Some with charts for seasonality, color and more.

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Celebrate Earth Day in the Elfin Forest ~ see page 1

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Introduce a Friend to The Elfin Forest

Wildflowers are coming into bloom with winter rains, many birds can be seen, and animal tracks in the sand testify to passing nocturnal residents. How about

introducing a friend to the late winter/early spring beauty of our small wilderness preserve?

Pick up a trail guide where the 16th Street Entrance meets the boardwalk or where the Bush Lupine Point spur leaves the boardwalk loop. Encourage your friend to enjoy the information in the trail guide and on the beautifully-illustrated Interpretive Signs.

Report your friend's reactions and especially wonderful or unusual sightings to the editors for "Visitor Comments" or "Elfin Forest Sightings" in a future issue of *Oakleaves*.



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