



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 2016

Help Ensure the Future of the Elfin Forest

By Ron Rasmussen, SWAP Chair; Photo by Yolanda Waddell

El Moro Elfin Forest Natural Area is a nature preserve that needs continuous care so that it will remain healthy and available to residents of our area as well as tourists. It also is useful for students from elementary school through college to learn firsthand about the natural world. Ever since being founded more than 20 years ago, the care of the Elfin Forest has been the responsibility of Volunteers. You can join this important group by helping in any of the areas described in the following paragraphs.

Being a "Natural Area" means that SWAP Volunteers need to keep the Elfin Forest free of invasive plants. Removal of the non-natives allows the existing flora to follow their natural growth pattern. This year the El Niño rains have enhanced how the natives follow their usual growth pattern. The early blooming plants have shown an exceptional flowering, and more is expected from those that bloom in the fall of the year.

Fencing and the boardwalk help to control erosion of the Forest's sandy soil, but additional work is needed to reduce erosion on the sand trails. Installing waterbars and digging runoff channels helps to prevent sand from washing down the trail. Volunteers help in this activity.

The primary purpose of Natural Areas such as the Elfin Forest

The Future *continued on page 2*

❖ Inside This Issue ❖

- 3 Shaun Cooper: County Park Planner
- 4 Help from a Fly Against Cape Ivy?
- 5 Goldentop by Dirk Walters
- 6 Weed Warrior News
- 7 Elfin Forest Visitors
- 8 Coming Up in the Elfin Forest
- 9 Walks in the Elfin Forest
- 10 .. New & Renewing Members / Forest Sightings
- 11 SWAP Shoppers' Order Form

SWAP Annual Celebration

Date: Saturday, September 24, 2016
Time: Noon to 2:30 p.m.
Place: Morro Shores Mobile Home Park
Community Room, 633 Ramona Ave., Los Osos



Speaker:
Daniel Bohlman,
Conservation Director
of the Land Conservancy
of San Luis Obispo,
will talk about
the Pismo Preserve
& Eagle Ranch
Photo by Kaila Dettman.

The SWAP Board is excited to have Daniel Bohlman, Conservation Director of The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo as our Annual Celebration speaker in September. He will talk about and show photos of the Land Conservancy's recent acquisition, the beautiful Pismo Preserve, and the Eagle Ranch 3,255 acre easement donation in Atascadero.

Before Daniel joined the Land Conservancy, he worked for The Nature Conservancy and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. He hails from Fond du Lac, Wisconsin where he spent his days tromping about the local woods. Tiring of Wisconsin's long winters, he move to California in 1996, obtaining a degree in Ecology and Systematic Biology from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo with a concentration in Botany. His choice to work for the Land Conservancy was directed by his passion for San Luis Obispo's diverse and amazing landscapes, and his desire to preserve and maintain these landscapes via direct action.

Annual Celebration *continued on page 2*



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

Vicky Johnsen, Member at Large

Pat Murray, Member at Large

Skip Rotstein, 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

**Wednesday, August 10,
and Wednesday, September 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.

The Future *continued from page 1*



*SWAP Conservation
Committee members at a
meeting in the Elfin Forest.*

is to provide an educational resource for the general public. SWAP's educational activities include monthly Nature Walks that are offered to visitors as well as residents of the area. These walks are led by experts on various subjects, and are provided free of charge. Also, groups of students from elementary schools through colleges visit the Elfin Forest. Leaders of these groups may come from the schools but also from SWAP Volunteers. SWAP is sometimes requested to provide Nature Walks to groups of tourists or families, even with little prior notice. These requests are almost always honored. SWAP Volunteers usually lead these groups around the Boardwalk and describe the unique qualities of the Forest.

Another part of SWAP's educational activities is to provide lectures about the Elfin Forest to interested organizations such as the Central Coast State Parks Association (CCSPA) and Rotary Clubs. SWAP also has information booths at local yearly events. These include the Morro Bay Bird Festival and the Los Osos Oktoberfest. All of these activities are conducted by SWAP Volunteers.

If you are interested in becoming a SWAP Volunteer you are welcome to e-mail us at swap@elfin-forest.org or phone 805-528-0392. You may also join the monthly Volunteer Work Party that meets on the first Saturday of the month at 9 AM at the end of 15th street in Los Osos, and experience what SWAP volunteers do to help the Elfin Forest.

If you would like more detailed information, you may also want to sit in on a SWAP Board Meeting. These meetings are currently being held on the second Wednesday of each month at 7 PM, in the Community Room of the Morro Shores Mobile Home Park, 633 Ramona Avenue, Los Osos.

El Moro Elfin Forest Natural Area is an important resource for the education and pleasure of the people of our area. To help preserve this resource by becoming a SWAP Volunteer you will be doing a service to the community as well as to yourself.

Annual Celebration *continued from page 1*

Please mark your calendar and join us on September 24th for a most informative and enjoyable presentation by Daniel Bohlman, as well as good food, a chance to chat with fellow lovers of the Elfin Forest, and a brief business meeting that includes election by SWAP members of candidates for our Board of Directors. The candidates this year are incumbents Jan DiLeo, Vicky Johnsen, Patricia Murray and Ron Rasmussen. Board members are elected for a two-year period, except this year Ron Rasmussen is applying for only a one-year term. Other candidates for the SWAP Board may be nominated at the Annual Celebration or ahead of the meeting by mailing SWAP, P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos 93412-6442.

Shaun Cooper Plans Our County Parks

Text and photo by Yolanda Waddell

Shaun Cooper, the Senior Planner for San Luis Obispo County Parks, can only visit the Elfin Forest occasionally. His days are filled with meetings, e-mails, researching, grant writing, and mountains of paperwork related to planning improvements or additions to our 15,000 acres of County Parks.

Shaun grew up in Fremont, a city of 225,000 at the southeast end of San Francisco Bay. There is a large park with a lake within the city, and a national wildlife refuge adjacent to Fremont, so Shaun's love of the outdoors began early. He enjoyed camping and spending time in the parks, and while in high school, did an internship with the Fremont City Parks. Art and drawing were two of his favorite high school subjects. The idea of combining drawing with his interest in plants and the outdoors led him to major in landscape architecture at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. During summer breaks, Shaun worked for Reagan's Nursery in Fremont and Hayward Area Recreation and Parks District in Hayward, a city that is on the east side of San Francisco Bay, north of Fremont.

After graduating from Cal Poly, Shaun obtained a full-time position with Hayward Area Recreation and Parks District as a draftsman. He designed and managed construction of irrigation systems, playgrounds and facilities. His next job was with Washoe County Parks and Recreation in Reno, Nevada, spending four years as Park Planner. In that job he hired consultants to do the designing, managed contracts and wrote grants. From there he went to Albany, Oregon, in the Willamette Valley 30 miles south of Salem. He spent six years there as the Parks Development Coordinator, doing more grant writing and working on the city parks, an aquatic center and the city's riverfront trail.

In 2004, a Park Planner job became open at San Luis Obispo County Parks. Shaun applied for the position, as he wanted to return to San Luis Obispo County, and was hired. His supervisor was the Senior Planner, Jan DiLeo, who is now our SWAP Treasurer. He assisted Jan in overseeing environmental reviews; managing feasibility studies for such projects as trails (what are the constraints and opportunities); writing grants; managing design and construction; and coordinating with other county, state and federal agencies. In 2010, when Jan DiLeo left County Parks to establish her own consulting business, Shaun applied for her job and became the Senior Planner.

Shaun, as Senior Planner, is SWAP's contact person when we propose improvements or restoration projects that require applying for permits. Because the Elfin Forest is adjacent to the Morro Bay estuary, a permit from the California Coastal Commission is often required when there is a major project such as the replacement of 1,200 worn out and broken boards in the boardwalk in 2011. He is our conduit to other agencies such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Fish and Wildlife Service, the Coastal Commission or the Coastal Conservancy. He will assist us with grants for larger projects that



SWAP cannot afford, but cautions that grant sources have dried up, especially State and Federal transportation funds. Shaun remarked that the proposed county-wide ½-cent sales tax increase on the November ballot would help County Parks with the development of pathway projects such as the Bob Jones Pathway, Morro Bay to Cayucos Connector Pathway, and the Templeton to Atascadero Pathway.

Asked about positive things that are happening with County Parks and the Elfin Forest, Shaun said that he appreciates the value that residents of San Luis Obispo County place on preserving and maintaining their forests and undeveloped areas. He is excited about the project, led by County Parks Director Nick Franco, to obtain national accreditation for San Luis Obispo County Parks. Accreditation will help with obtaining grants, implementing a strategic plan, and making park operations run more smoothly.

In his free time Shaun enjoys doing landscaping and planting in his own yard, making improvements on his house, surfing and going for walks with his wife and their Labrador. He appreciates the great relationship that County Parks has with SWAP, saying that field staff and parks administration depend on our presence in the Elfin Forest and input from us. They are all glad to work with SWAP on improvements to the Elfin Forest. Personally, he finds it rewarding to finish a project and see people using it, knowing that he had a hand in it. He feels fortunate to live in this county and to accomplish good things for our County Parks.

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.

Small Fly May Soon Help Fight Cape Ivy

By Jean Wheeler, Ph. D.

Cape Ivy (*Delairea odorata*), is one of the major exotic plant pests in the Elfin Forest and other reserves protecting our state's native plants, including Morro Bay State Park and Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Studies at the Golden Gate NRA showed that sites infested by Cape Ivy for five years or more had 78% fewer seedlings of annual plant species and 10% fewer seedlings of perennial plant species than uninfested sites. Cape Ivy has also proven invasive, causing problems in Hawaii, in Mediterranean Europe, in southern England, and in Australia and New Zealand.

For well over a decade, our Weed Warriors have been fighting this vigorous vine that can grow to 30 feet above the ground. It can smother plants of many native species, including *Quercus agrifolia*, the wonderful environmentally short-statured Coast Live Oaks for which our Elfin Forest is named. It has been an especially serious problem for trees in the grove on the sand dune overlooking the estuary along the 11th Street sand trail.

Until now, only mechanical removal and chemical spraying have been available to fight this exotic vine from South Africa. Mechanical removal is very labor intensive, quite physically demanding, and minimally effective. Even small pieces of the plant dropped in place can quickly regrow, and if removed plants are not carefully bagged before sending to dump sites they can spread the exotic pest to new locations. Chemical control tends to be temporary, can also harm native vegetation, and requires special training and a permit for the operator; we have only one person so permitted among our Elfin Forest volunteer personnel.

Studies of potential biological control agents have been underway since at least the late 1990's and one such organism, a small fly called Cape Ivy Gall Fly (*Parafreutreta regalis*) has just received approval by an office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture for environmental release in California.

P. regalis is about the size of a common house fly or slightly smaller and is from South Africa, where it reproduces in galls it creates in the stems of Cape Ivy. Female flies insert up to 28 eggs in a stem node of a Cape Ivy plant from which leaves should grow. A week later the eggs hatch, and the feeding by the wormlike larvae through three instar stages causes the growth of a large gall in the stem. Females lay an average of about 61 eggs in their 2-4 week adult lifetimes, each thus initiating multiple galls. Cape Ivy plants affected by such galls show a significant reduction in height and biomass.

Extensive testing in South Africa and in California laboratory environments has shown that of over 90 plant species exposed to the flies, including very close relatives of Cape Ivy, the flies formed galls and developed only on two species of Cape Ivy. No plants of any other species were attacked by *P. regalis*; they are essentially mono-specific to Cape Ivy.

On April 27 of this year Emily Pullins, Director of Regulations, Permits, and Manuals under a branch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, signed an authorization for the Pest Permitting Branch (PPB) to permit environmental release of *P. regalis* in California. Her signed document states, "I have decided to authorize the PPB to issue permits for the environmental release of *P. regalis*." Her statement concludes, "I have determined that there would be no significant impact to the human environment from the implementation of any of the action alternatives and, therefore, no Environmental Impact Statement needs to be prepared."

Hopefully this indicates that our Weed Warriors will soon have the assistance of this South African fly in reducing the impact of that region's aggressively invasive Cape Ivy vines on our Elfin Forest vegetation. Those vines have grown to the very tops of many of our Coast Live Oaks in recent years, damaging the oaks and smaller native plants by their weight and interception of needed sunlight.



In July of 2009, dedicated Weed Warrior Lannie Erickson pulled Cape Ivy out of oak trees and shrubs at the western end of the Elfin Forest. Rapid re-growth by the aggressive vine has required similar arduous work by the Weed Warriors every year since then, as well as several chemical sprayings.

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.

Elfin Forest Sights and Sounds

On June 26th, Pete Sarafian heard a coyote warbling for a full hour at dawn and then again at sunset.

Also in June, Elfin Forest neighbor Frieda Murphy saw a male and female coyote grooming each other, and playing near them were two small coyote cubs.

Goldentop Grass

Text and photos by Dirk Walters, Ph.D.

Goldentop grass or simply goldentop, *Lamarckia aurea*, is a very easily recognized grass. It is relatively small, producing a tight mound of stems (culms) bearing relatively broad (for a grass) flat leaves. Leaves of most grasses are extremely narrow and often rolled to appear only a few millimeters wide. Goldentop leaves are a dark gray-green and contrast with elements of the flowering and fruiting inflorescence. Like all grasses, units of the inflorescence are tiny spikelets. Goldentop spikelets are totally enclosed by a pair of sterile bracts (glumes). In goldentop, the glumes are bright golden tan contrasting strongly with the darkish blue-green leaves below.

I chose the plant with no apologies in spite of the fact the species is probably rare in the Elfin Forest and is native to the Mediterranean region of the old world. I happen to have a soft spot for it. I find it's not pushy as a weed: it doesn't seem to intrude far into native vegetation; it seems to prefer shallow, rocky and/or hard packed soils and is usually found along trails or at the base of rocky cliffs where little else grows.

This type of soil is rare in the Elfin Forest so I would not expect to find a lot of it there. However, this spring, on a California Native Plant Society field trip to Coreopsis Hill near Oso Flaco Lake, I found it growing in the back dunes. True, it was growing beside an abandoned road where coarse gravel had been laid down; I didn't see it out in the native dune vegetation. The most recent list of plant species in the Elfin Forest does list the species. I expect it would be found growing around the weedy edges of the forest. It even may have been eliminated by our diligent Weed Warriors.

The common names, goldentop or goldentop grass, obviously come from the color of the inflorescence which is produced above the tight cluster of darkish leaves. The species name (*aurea*) is derived from the Latin word meaning gold. The genus *Lamarckia* is named after French naturalist & botanist, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, a hero of mine. Lamarck was a botanist and museum director who lived from 1744 -1829, late in the Age of Exploration.

As director of the French Natural History Museum, Lamarck was at the center of new knowledge as thousands of organisms were discovered and described. Few of these species resembled those known from Europe and the Middle East, so many new species were becoming known. The existing explanation of individual creation of species was becoming harder and harder to accept. It was becoming increasingly obvious to amateur and professional naturalists (i.e. biologists, a label invented by Lamarck by the way) that these new species intergraded.

A number of prominent naturalists of the period wrote informally about the potential problem, but didn't offer any explanations as to how it could happen. Lamarck was the first to offer a plausible explanation hypothesizing that species change by need or by "trying harder." If an animal needed to reach the leaves at the top of a tree, it needed to stretch its neck. Then descendants would



(above) Goldentop grass flowering



(at right) Goldentop grass fruiting

inherit (he didn't know how) the longer neck. This is the classical explanation for a giraffe's long neck according to Lamarck's theory of change in species form or evolution. It didn't turn out to be the best explanation.

Lamarck's theory was replaced a couple of decades later by a theory that hypothesized that the environment selected individual giraffes with longer necks. Individuals of a species are born slightly different, and those who fit the environment best (had slightly longer necks in the case of giraffes) were likely to have a better chance to survive and reproduce. This second idea was Alfred Wallace and Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution via Natural Selection. Neither Lamarck nor Darwin knew why individuals of a species are born slightly different. That was worked out by their contemporary, Gregor Mendel. Unfortunately, the importance of Mendel's work was not discovered until the early 20th century.

One last thought: the two pictures are of a flowering and a fruiting specimen. Note the lack of difference in their appearance. This is why grasses are usually identified in fruit rather than in flower. Grass flowers are notoriously uniform but useful characters develop in fruit without particularly destroying floral characters.



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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 Brown, Shaun Cooper, Kaila Dettman, Lannie Erickson, Betsy Kinter, Luke Mellom, Frieda Murphy, Pat Murray, Ron Rasmussen, Pete Sarafian, Yolanda Waddell, Dirk Walters and Jean Wheeler.

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Weed Warrior Report

By Yolanda Waddell

May 7th - Spring Cleaning in the Forest

There were 20 Weed Warriors at work during the May 7th work party. Our usual ranks were swelled by eleven volunteers from the Cal Poly Architecture Honor Society, who came with their advisor (and SWAP member), Dr. Tom Fowler. Dr. Fowler's daughter Hannah joined the group as well. Members of the Honor Society who participated were Tyler Armstrong, Eli Beckman, Megan Jones, Allison Lee, Yaejin Lee, Benny Lin, Sophia Liu, Carmen Muller, Alex Siegel, and Lisa Xie.

After meeting at the north end of 15th Street at 9:00 a.m., Weed Warrior Leader Ron Rasmussen headed for the boardwalk with Rich and Prisila Johnson to replace a number of rusted and broken screws with new stainless steel screws.

The remaining Weed Warriors divided into two groups led by Pete Sarafian and Vicky Johnsen. Their task was to do a "weed sweep" of the area between the south edge of the Forest and the boardwalk, and between 11th and 17th Streets. Pete and Vicky were surprised and pleased that they only found a scattering of young veldt grass plants and other weeds. Both groups ended the morning pulling well-developed veldt grass plants along the slope above South Bay Boulevard. At noon, the Honor Society members were especially pleased to be treated with Ron Rasmussen's home-baked cookies.



Among members of the Tau Sigma Delta Architecture Honor Society who joined SWAP's May work party were (L-R) Sophia Liu, Yaejin Lee, Lisa Xie and Benny Lin. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

June 4th - Native Plant De-fence and Weed Off-ence

In June, Weed Warrior leader Ron Rasmussen assigned the boardwalk maintenance job to himself, and asked Rich and Prisila Johnson to remove chicken wire fences from around the "new" plants at the ends of 11th and 16th Streets. Fifty-seven native plants were planted in January, 2013, and fences were installed around each one to protect them from rabbits. The plants that have survived were bursting through their fences. If plants could vocalize, there certainly would have been a collective sigh of relief once the fences were gone. Now those areas look like the rest of the Forest's coastal dune scrub.

A check of the grove downhill from the end of 10th Street showed that some heavy-duty weeding was needed. Snail monitor Barrett Holland, Vicky Johnsen, Frances Leitch, Ellen Nelson and Yolanda Waddell worked hard and filled at least four bags with veldt grass and cheat grass. Pete Sarafian found a bunch of invasive plants to yank out in an adjacent grove, including the prolific Sow thistle. A couple of the 10th Street neighbors kindly let us empty our bags of weeds into their green waste cans.



In June, Ellen Nelson joined the weeding project in a grove at the western end of the Elfin Forest.

Join 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.

Let's all pull together

By Lannie Erickson

A tiny mouse gathers seeds
Dropped by heavy headed weeds.
Sand slides where the mouse has tracked,
Into the hikers' boots' impact.
The loosened grains of sand sift down
The face of dunes, toward our town.
Time moves on, the seasons change.
We cannot Nature's tides arrange.
Hence each first month's Saturday,
Rakes and shovels into play,
Maintain the paths so all can view
Our lovely Elfin Forest. too.



Joe Morris, center, of the Sierra Club Santa Lucia Chapter, led a nature walk in the Elfin Forest for Sierra Club members in June. Photo by Ron Rasmussen.

Joe Morris Leads Sierra Club Group

Story and photo by Ron Rasmussen

On Sunday, June 26 Joe Morris from the San Luis Obispo Branch of the Sierra Club led a group of Club members on their first visit to the Elfin Forest. The weather was perfect and the members had many questions about what they were seeing as they walked along the boardwalk and listened to Joe's presentation. Present from SWAP were Vicky Johnsen and Ron Rasmussen, who helped answer some questions from the Club members. After the 90-minute walk, the Club members were impressed by the beauty of the Forest and agreed that SWAP has an important duty to help preserve the Elfin Forest Natural Area.



Santa Barbara fifth and sixth graders listen to docent Pete Sarafian talking about the oak trees in Rose's Grove. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

Elfin Forest Visitors

School Walk for Santa Barbara Alternative School

In May, we received a phone call from a Santa Barbara 5th and 6th grade teacher, Brian Malcheski, asking for a docent to lead his 25 students on a discovery walk in the Elfin Forest. They were going to come on Tuesday, May 24th, and from the Elfin Forest would travel on to Montaña de Oro State Park, where they planned to camp for the rest of the week. We found that three of our very good docents: Ron Rasmussen, Pete Sarafian and Chris Van Beveren, were available to give the walk. Their focus was on the relationship of insects and plants. The students, from the Open Alternative School in Santa Barbara, enjoyed the walk, as did the teacher and parent chaperones.



Ron Rasmussen, left, and daughter Rebecca Rasmussen provided information about SWAP and the Elfin Forest at the Solstice Fair. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

SWAP Pop-up Booth at CCSPA Solstice Fair

Each year, at a time close to the summer solstice, Central Coast State Parks Association (CCSPA) docent Faylla Chapman organizes a Solstice Fair. It is held at the Morro Bay State Park Picnic Area, and local nature-oriented organizations are invited to participate. The event, held on Saturday, June 25th this year, is family-oriented and features activities for youngsters.

Ron Rasmussen's daughter Rebecca, her husband and son were visiting Ron during the weekend of June 25th. Rebecca mentioned to Ron that they were going to attend the Solstice Fair at Morro Bay State Park, and wondered if SWAP had a booth at that event. Ron hadn't known about the event, but at Rebecca's suggestion, he went to SWAP storage and pulled out materials to set up a "pop-up" information table. It was a delight to be part of an event with children doing handicrafts, playing nature games and seeing the "teaching" animals brought by Pacific Wildlife Care. It is an event that SWAP will be sure to join again in future years.

Coming Up in the Elfin Forest



Story and photos by Jean Wheeler

White pelicans swimming in formation to catch fish.

Flowers and fruit both adorn the Elfin Forest in August and September even though these months come at the end of a long and hot dry summer. The signature flowers, widespread and usually blooming only during these two months, are the bright yellow heads of mock heather. Other yellow to gold flowers still decorating our small wilderness area 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 now to pink, and then rust in color. California asters bloom mainly from August to December with ray flowers in white to pale pink or lavender around yellow central discs. Tall spikes with black pom-poms of dried flower heads are still starkly attractive on black sage.

I think California coffeeberry decidedly wins the attractive fruit contest in these late summer months. Along the lower boardwalk the colorful berries appear yellow at first, darken to red and finally turn rich ebony black, with all of these colors often seen on adjacent berries at the same time. Another bright red berry growing in the same area is that of hollyleaf cherry.

Reptiles are especially active in the warmth of late summer. Western fence lizards pause to do their amusing pushups along the boardwalk, and you may be lucky enough to see a garter, gopher, or California king snake, none of which is poisonous.

Coyotes are seen increasingly often in the last few years, slipping through the brush or even boldly walking on the boardwalk. If you are walking your dog, keep him or her leashed--as is legally required--to protect your pet, other people, and the coyotes. On morning walks, look for tracks in the sand beside the boardwalk of our nocturnal visitors; raccoon tracks are especially common.

Among the resident birds active now, those most demanding attention are as usual the Western Scrub Jays flashing blue and loudly shrieking their name. California Quail may be heard calling for chi-CA-go and scurrying through the underbrush.

Other resident birds actively flitting through the brush are Bushtits, Bewick's Wrens and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. White-crowned, Chipping, Lark, Savannah, and Song Sparrows are here at this season, as are House and Purple Finches, Lesser and American Goldfinches, and Anna's Hummingbirds.

Spotted Towhees often cling to the tops of shrubs for a few minutes giving their loud buzzing call. They are beautiful birds with black heads, black backs with white spots, reddish-brown sides, and white bellies. Their relative, the California Towhee, is

basic brown and usually stays low, as do the brown Wrentits. In bushes most of the time but fairly often seen calling from branch tops is the California Thrasher, brown above and buff below with a long down-curved beak and a long tail.

Also, begin to keep an eye out for the earliest arrivals of birds migrating in for their winter vacation on Morro Bay. Usually arriving in August or September are White Pelicans and several species of ducks including Gadwalls, Northern Shovelers, and both Blue-winged and Cinnamon Teal.

So come out to the Elfin Forest on a late summer's misty morning or sunny afternoon. Marvel at the abundant and active life displayed by our plants and animals. They are so marvelously adapted to provide a wondrous tapestry of life even in late summer's stressful drought season.



Mock heather.

WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

Third Saturday Walks

August 20, 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 17, 9:30 a.m. – Archaeology Walk

Archaeologist Ethan Bertrando will take us time traveling into the pre-Spanish colonial 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 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.



Lexi Bell, Executive Director of the Morro Bay National Estuary Program, describes the formation of the Morro Bay estuary for visitors during her June 3rd Saturday walk. Photo by Ron Rasmussen.

Cub Scouts Investigate Elfin Forest

On June 22nd, the Elfin Forest was visited by 90 Cub Scouts who were attending a Cub Scout Day Camp at the El Morro Church of the Nazarene in Los Osos. The day camp Program Director, Casey Rosenlieb, had asked for docent-led walks for the Cub Scouts and told us that the theme this year was CSI (Cub Scout Investigators).

Education Committee member and docent Pat Brown was our coordinator for the walk, contacting Casey Rosenlieb with our questions and passing updates to Education Chair Pat Akey and our three other participating docents: Vicky Johnsen, Pete Sarafian and Chris Van Beveren.

Three groups of Cub Scouts, ages 7 to 11 years, along with some siblings and parents, walked to the Elfin Forest from the Nazarene Church at 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, June 22nd; three more groups arrived at 10:45, as the first three groups were leaving. It is a tribute to the energy of the young scouts that they made it all the way around the boardwalk in less than an hour and fully participated in the "investigations" that the docents had prepared for them. Each Cub Scout was given a magnifying glass to use. They observed woodrat nests, oak galls and galls on other plants, and kept a record of the birds, insects and reptiles – especially fence lizards – that they saw.



Docent Pat Brown shows a group of Cub Scouts what a Dusky-footed Woodrat looks like, in preparation for their "investigation" to find woodrat nests in the Elfin Forest.

Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

Thank You to Our Generous Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter, SWAP Database Coordinator

RENEWING MEMBERS:

Sally & Randy Knight*

Mary Robinson, Morro Bay Stand Up Paddleboarding

Janice & Roger Verity*

Beth & Keith Wimer

DONATIONS:

Barbara Rosenthal (donation of mural prints)

Hamill Family Foundation, on the recommendation of Dr.

Corwith C. White

BROCHURE SPONSORS:

Celia R. Alfirevic, Celia's Garden Café

Steve Dinielli, Branch Manager – Envoy Mortgage

Leslie L. Lee, Shoreline Properties

Jim Marshall, Jim Marshall Insurance Agency

**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.

Another Winning Poem from Morro Bay National Estuary Program

2016 Youth Runner-up: Luke Mellom

The Elfin Forest

No Sounds are made as wind
blows through the trees.

Trees grow at the touch of rain,

Moss dangles down from the branches.

Tiny creatures remain hidden.

Humans use the boardwalk
To admire the forest's beauty.

At the end of the day,
The forest remains untouched.



The Evolution of our SWAP Brochure

By Pat Murray, SWAP Property and Records Chair;

Map by Dave Moran

Have you seen our wonderful color brochures that give you a glance of the treasures of the Elfin Forest? Here is a bit of history that re-caps the "Then and Now" of the SWAP brochures.

The idea of using brochures began back in 1994, after the Elfin Forest was acquired and became a County Parks Natural Area. The first one was rather plain - on buff paper with black ink. It contained information about the Elfin Forest and interesting highlights of our organization's progress in saving the Forest. By 2004, roughly over 12,000 copies of that brochure had been printed by a Los Osos printing company.

In May 2005, Tom Hay of Hay Printing in Morro Bay took over printing our buff brochures with green as well as black ink. Our sincere appreciation continues for Tom's professional work, not only for our brochures but also the fine printing of our Oakleaves newsletter. This was also our first year in having financial supporters who helped defray our cost of printing. By August 2009, a total of 16,000 brochures had been ordered and were in circulation.

A new look takes place! In October, 2011 SWAP decided to transform our brochures completely. We were proud to introduce a beautiful tri-fold full color glossy brochure, elegantly designed by our graphic artist, Katy Budge. We ordered 5,000 copies and in April, 2013 another order of 10,000 copies was printed.

Photos in the brochure were generously provided by the following photographers: Scott Glancy for his cover photo that welcomes you to the Elfin Forest; and on the inside and backside of the brochure are photos by J. Radford, Yolanda Waddell, M. Harms, Jean Wheeler, Bob Meyer, Ron James, Jay Waddell and Pat Murray. The two maps, designed by David Moran, were revised in our 2016 update, giving a clearer direction to the Elfin Forest.

We appreciate our generous current supporters for the 2016 revised printing of 10,000 copies. They are: Celia Alfirevic of Celia's Garden Café - proud first-time sponsor; Steve Dinielli, Envoy Mortgage - third time returning sponsor; and Leslie L. Lee, Shoreline Properties and Jim Marshall, Insurance both of whom have sponsored six printings of the brochure. Bravo to all!

Our brochures are handed out at walks, given out at our booths and placed at the Morro Bay Museum of Natural History, chambers of commerce, bookstores, motels and other outlets. Over the years we have printed and distributed a total of over 53,000 copies. Thanks to our sponsors, brochures have been an excellent way to introduce the Elfin Forest to others.



Do you enjoy the mural by Barbara Rosenthal painted on the wall of the Rexall Drug Store in Los Osos? Get a signed full-color print (mounted on black foam core as shown) to hang on your wall or give as a gift (#4 below)!



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) @\$20.00 = \$___
- ___ Short Slv. T-Shirt (XXL, XXXL) @\$23.00 = \$___
- ___ Long Slv. T-Shirt (S, M, L, XL) @\$25.00 = \$___
- ___ Long Slv. T-Shirt (XXL, XXXL) @\$27.00 = \$___
- ___ Sweatshirt (S, M, L, XL) @\$35.00 = \$___
- ___ Sweatshirt (XXL, XXXL) @\$37.00 = \$___

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. 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.

___ @ \$3.00 = \$___

4. ELFIN FOREST MURAL PRINTS

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

___ @ \$35.00 = \$___

5. ALPHABET BIRD BOOK

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

___ @ \$20.00 = \$___

6. MURAL MUG

15- ounce beverage mug with wrap-around mural design, microwave and dishwasher safe.

___ @ \$10 = \$___

7. ELFIN FOREST CAPS

One size fits all caps with adjustable straps in back, 100% cotton. Two colors, forest green and maroon. Specify color when ordering.

___ @ \$15 = \$___ Color(s) _____

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 & Caps each: \$4.00 = ___

Mural Mug: \$6.00 ___ (If more than one mug, call for shipping cost.)

For shipping costs outside 934 __, call (805) 528-0392

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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
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Join SWAP's Annual Celebration Sept. 24! See page 1

Please check renewal date on your label.

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Don't Miss Our Annual Party!

Our Annual Celebration is coming up from noon to 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 24, in the Community Room of Morro Shores Mobile Home Park, at 633 Romona Ave., just across from the Sweet Springs Nature Reserve in Los Osos.

Always a fun party with no admission price, this event includes beautiful and fascinating displays of natural history photography, a wonderful illustrated presentation by a leader in local conservation efforts (see page 1 for information about this year's exciting speaker), delicious refreshments, and an excellent opportunity for enjoyable conversation with long-time friends and interesting new acquaintances in a spacious indoor setting.



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| <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.