



OAK LEAVES

A PUBLICATION OF SMALL WILDERNESS AREA PRESERVATION

P.O. BOX 6442, LOS OSOS, CALIFORNIA 93412-6442 ♦ (805) 528-0392 ♦ OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2017

New Interpretive Display Planned for Rose's Grove



SWAP Board members (L-R) Vicky Johnsen and Jan DiLeo, seated in Rose's Grove, discuss what type of interpretive sign to use to protect the oaks in the grove. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

The Coast live oak trees in the Rose Bowker Memorial Grove, or Rose's Grove as it is usually called, seem to be irresistible to children who want to climb in them. Many times, Board member Vicky Johnsen and other SWAP members have encountered families who allow their children to climb the trees. Vicky also came

New Interpretive Display *continued on page 2*

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How to Become Connected to a Place

[Based on the writings of Wallace Stegner and many others]

By Ron Rasmussen, SWAP Chair

"If you don't know where you are you don't know who you are"

Wendell Berry



Al Normandin (center) talks about the *Amanita virosa* or Destroying Angel mushroom during SWAP's annual Fungus Foray.

Photo by Ron Rasmussen.

A large part of North American history over the past several hundred years is based on the stories of European immigrants as they moved from the East Coast westward across the continent until they were stopped by the Pacific Ocean. During this migration some put down roots and formed communities reminiscent of their ancestral homes. Others continued on to the coast pursuing the goal of free land and riches in California. Some prospered, but many either perished or turned back to more familiar surroundings. However, as travel became easier and the hospitable climate became well known the movement west resumed.

The West Coast population is now dominated by immigrants, not only from Europe but, via the Pacific Ocean, from Asia as well.

Connected to a Place *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
Vicky Johnsen, Vice Chair
Jan DiLeo, Treasurer
Yolanda Waddell, Secretary
Pat Murray, Member at Large
Vanessa Nelson, Member at Large
Skip Rotstein, Member at Large

The SWAP Board of Directors meets monthly
at 3 p.m. on the 2nd Monday of the month
at the Community Room,
Morro Shores Mobile Home Park,
633 Ramona Ave., Los Osos.
The next meetings are
Monday, October 9,
and Monday, November 13.

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: Bob Yetter
SLO County Parks Supervising Ranger
1144 Monterey 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 Bob Yetter at 781-1196.

Connected to a Place *cont. from page 1*

Some may question the appellation "immigrant" applied to second, third or even fourth generation families. However, these are newcomers compared to the Native American cultures that were established thousands of years ago along the West Coast.

Many newcomers do not fully appreciate the local environment in the way that the Native cultures have done over millennia. But there is a way to connect. The choice to live permanently here along California's Central Coast offers a path to living "in" the land not just "on" the land. Continuing on this path does not involve reshaping the environment to resemble some idealized version, but rather integrating oneself into the existing environment.

Remember that the existing biota are the result of selective pressure of natural forces acting over thousands of years. Without an understanding of the present environment, any attempts to make the environment "better" are often failures or short-lived at best. When we are aware of the advantages and limitations of the existing environment we can choose personal behavior that will best preserve it.

To live "in" the land one needs to accept the environment on its own terms. Here in Los Osos and Morro Bay that means, among other things, continuing to maintain areas like the Elfin Forest in their original state. This remnant of the once much more extensive California coastal chaparral allows us to connect with the region where we have chosen to live and hopefully "put down roots".

Look at everything when you visit the Elfin Forest and remember what you have seen. Make that memory part of yourself. This will help you understand the local environment and know where you are and how you are part of this wonderful place. Help SWAP keep the Elfin Forest a way for all of us "newcomers" to connect to the land where we have chosen to make our homes.

New Interpretive Display *cont. from page 1*

upon a couple who had stretched a hammock between two branches, and were lying in the hammock. In addition to the possibility of children falling out of the trees and being hurt, the elderly oak branches are sometimes broken. Vicky says to the children, "Would you climb on your grandmother? These are very old grandparent trees."

To protect the oaks, SWAP Board members are working to produce an interpretive display that would be placed in Rose's Grove. Shown discussing what kind of artwork to use on the panel are Vicky Johnsen and SWAP Treasurer and Project Coordinator Jan DiLeo. They are thinking to use children's art, and have been in contact with a teacher at Monarch Grove Elementary School. Hopefully by next spring there will be small signs in Rose's Grove that will remind children to be careful of the "grandparent trees."

Wildfires Delay Bush Lupine Project

In the August/September issue of Oakleaves we wrote that the CCC would begin work on the erosion control project at Bush Lupine Point on July 31st. We also noted that if the CCC crew scheduled to do the work was called away because of wild fires, the project might be delayed.

As it turned out, CCC crewmembers of the Los Padres Center (behind Cuesta College) were needed for camp support for several wildfires, and had to postpone work in the Elfin Forest. As of the first week of September when this is being written, they have been busy with the 200-acre Eclipse fire in San Diego County, the 20,529-acre Pier fire in Tulare County and the 160,000-acre Chetco fire in southern Oregon. Corps members routinely work 12-to-16-hour days at the fire camps, unloading and distributing supplies, checking in and replacing broken tools, and washing and rolling fire hoses as well as cooking and cleaning. The work done by these young men and women is invaluable.

Mike Anderson, Project Coordinator for the Los Padres CCC, told us that most likely we will have to wait till the end of fire season before they are free to work in the Elfin Forest. SWAP is proud that our local CCC Crewmembers are so important in giving camp support to the fire fighters, and wish them a safe return to the Los Padres Center.

Do We Have a Mosquito Problem in the Elfin Forest?

By Skip Rotstein, Conservation Chair

Late one July afternoon, I was surprised to find a stranger walking in my driveway under our Elfin oaks. I was more puzzled by the North Salinas Valley Mosquito Abatement District sign on his truck. Jerry, a tall friendly man nearing retirement age, introduced himself and his wife and asked permission to set up a dry ice mosquito trap. He explained that he had driven down from Salinas to help out the San Luis County Health Department by trapping and counting mosquitoes (our county does not have a Mosquito Abatement District). He picked our house because it is at the edge of the Estuary. I said OK and Jerry set up the trap. The next morning he picked up the trap before dawn and drove off. That got me wondering. I live one block away from the Elfin Forest. Which mosquitos are likely to be biting both at my home and in the nearby Elfin Forest?

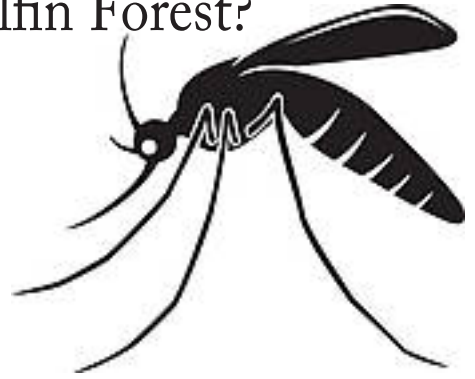
I checked the San Luis Obispo County website to find Jerry's results posted on the state Mosquito Surveillance Results-Interactive Map (www.county.ca.gov/Departments/HealthAgency/Public-Health/eh.aspx). The posting for my address said no mosquitos had been captured. However, a trap set August 2016 at South Bay Blvd. and Turri Road captured 32 female *Aedes dorsalis*, and 101 females of that species were trapped by the Quarry parking lot on South Bay Blvd. One to four females of *Culex tarsalis*, *Culex pipiens*, *Culiseta particeps*, *Culex stigmatosoma*, *Culiseta incidens*, and *Culiseta inornata* were also trapped in 2016 and 2017 at seven waterside trapping locations. *Aedes dorsalis* seems to be the most likely mosquito in the Elfin Forest because it can breed in the salt and brackish water of the Estuary adjacent to the typically dry Elfin Forest. Other mosquito species known to occur in San Luis Obispo County are not likely to breed in either of these environments.

A. dorsalis is known commonly as the Summer Salt Marsh Mosquito, one of 53 mosquitos that occur in California. It is a brilliant gold-colored aggressive day-biting mosquito. The species breeds in California coastal salt marshes and brackish inland waterways. Typical of mosquitos, it has four life stages: egg, larva, pupa and adult. Development from egg to adult can occur in less than one week under optimum temperature and nutrient conditions, so it can produce swarms quickly.

This species has been associated with Western Equine Encephalitis in the Central Valley since the 1950's. Virus bearing *A. dorsalis* were detected along the Salton Sea in 1995 (but not in 94 or 96). A study of Morro Bay in 1995 found none of the virus in this mosquito.

More recently, *A. dorsalis* has been determined to be a vector of West Nile virus (2005) in areas outside of our county. No other diseases were mentioned in connection with this mosquito species. Human cases of West Nile and Zika viruses detected in our county are believed to have been contracted outside of the county. No mosquitos of any kind in San Luis Obispo County have been found carrying these viruses.

One empty trap in my driveway does not provide a definite answer, but given present research, the Elfin Forest does not appear to have a problem with disease-bearing mosquitoes this summer.



Doubly Damaged Interpretive Sign to be Replaced

In the June/July issue of *Oakleaves* we reported that one of our projects for this year is to replace two badly scratched interpretive panels at Bush Lupine Point. The problem that faced us was an outdated electronic format which no one seemed to be able to convert to a more usable format. Fortunately, our Webmaster and computer guru Bob Myer found a way to do the conversion, and the artwork was sent to the Fossil Company for fabrication of the two panels.

Then, at the end of August, someone wrenched the panel titled "Sheltered From the Wind" from its moorings, as shown in the photo. During the September 2nd work party, Conservation Chair Skip Rotstein and Weed Warrior (also *Oakleaves* Co-editor) Jean Wheeler did a temporary repair and put the panel back in place. When the new panels are received, SWAP member Craig Johnsen will make new wood frames for them and will install them.



Someone pulled this interpretive sign off of its moorings. Fortunately, this panel was previously badly scratched and was already scheduled for replacement.
Photo by Vicky Johnsen.

Lace Lichen is the California State Lichen

By Al Normandin: Photos by Marlin Harms

It began in 2011 when the California Lichen Society first started a long campaign to have California become the first state to have its own lichen. Success was achieved on July 15, 2015 when Governor Jerry Brown signed a law naming Lace Lichen as the California State lichen.

Lace Lichen (*Ramalina menziesii*) was the perfect choice. It is found along the entire coast of California. In many places it is found greater than 100 miles inland. Novices can easily identify the lichen as it is the only one that has a lacy appearance. Hence the common name, as well as its other common name, Fishnet Lichen. No longer is the misnomer "Spanish Moss" used. You may also identify it while driving, as it is the only common lichen in our area that hangs down a foot or more from our trees.

The purpose of its lacy appearance is to capture more moisture from humid air. Because of this, Lace Lichen takes on two forms. The coastal version with plenty of moisture is mostly stringy with some small lacing or netting, while the reverse is true for the inland version. By the time you reach San Luis Obispo, you can spot the difference.

Although the fungal portion is able to reproduce by releasing spores that must later find and combine with an alga, Lace Lichen mostly reproduces by animals splitting it apart with both fragmented parts growing. In the Elfin Forest it can be seen growing up to three feet long mostly on Coast Live Oak trees.

All *Ramalina* species including Lace Lichen are especially vulnerable to air pollution. It must take in carbon dioxide to make food and grow, but excessive nitric oxides and sulfur dioxides that it also takes from the air may poison it. Pollution has killed much of it in the Los Angeles basin, where it now mostly grows above the smog belt or inversion layer. Birds often use it for nesting material. Although usnic acid makes it a predator deterrent and unpalatable to some including human consumption, sheep, snails, rabbits, elk, mites, silverfish and others like to feed on it. Often it is not found at lower levels on trees due to deer creating a "deer browse line".

Due to resistance to current antibiotics, a new class of antibiotics is needed. Lice Lichens contains usnic acid which has been long used as an antibiotic in folk medicine as well as prescription medicine in Europe. While it is a stronger antibiotic than penicillin, it has been ignored here due to allergic reactions. It may be brought back or altered to make it a marketable medicine in the future. Studies have found Lace Lichen very effective in killing three kinds of bacteria: MRSA, e-coli and staphylococcus.

Lace Lichen only has an alga as a partner. Many other lichens have cyanobacteria or both as partners. Algae have the advantage of being more effective at producing food at different moisture levels within the lichen, while cyanobacteria have the advantage of being nitrogen fixers, providing usable nitrogen to manufacture the necessary proteins for survival.



(Top) Lace Lichen draping over Fuchsia-flowered gooseberry.



(Below) The lace of Lace Lichen.



OAKLEAVES

is published six times per year beginning in February.

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Layout is by Katy Budge.

Editing assistance by Pat Grimes.

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Common Black Sage

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

(Ed. Note: Revised by Dr. Walters from June 2001 issue)

One of the Elfin Forest's more common coastal shrubs lends its name to the community in which it is co-dominant--Coastal Sage Scrub. Black sage (*Salvia mellifera*) is found most often on ocean-facing slopes from the bay area south on transverse and peninsular ranges into northern Baja California. In most of San Luis Obispo County it is the only large shrubby *Salvia*.

Black sage lacks white leaf hairs (trichomes) that cover sages commonly found in Southern California; thus the plant and leaves appear dark from a distance. I have always assumed this is the origin of its common name "black sage." On the other hand, Dr. Charlie Blair from Lompoc reported to me, "I believe that it was Vern Human, whom I consider one of the Lompoc area's best all-round naturalists, who came up with the idea that it was the dark, almost black color of the seed head that gave *S. mellifera*, the common designation, "black sage." He also noted "I have heard the occasional complaint about common names of local sages, 'that purple sage (*S. leucophylla*) isn't purple and black sage isn't black.' My contention is that the blossoms of the purple sage are indeed purple (or at least lavender) and that the seed heads of the Black Sage are indeed black."

The search for the origin of common names is lots of fun as long as one remembers that common names are not regulated and thus are subject to whim and error. "Sage" is a common name used for many unrelated plants and signifies simply an odiferous plant. Sage also signifies any species in genus, *Salvia*, a member of the mint family (Lamiaceae, Labiatae). Black sage is both an odiferous plant, and also a true sage.

Black sage is most often found either as co-dominant with California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) or in pure stands. Few herbs are able to grow under it due to its ability to produce water-soluble chemical compounds that prevent germination and growth of other plants, a property known as allelopathy. Black sage does best on well-drained, hot slopes facing south and west. In general, it doesn't do well on flat areas such as valley floors. An exception to this is on our stabilized coastal sand dunes in the Elfin Forest. Here black sage is common enough to be considered co-dominant with even more common mock heather (*Ericameria ericoides*). This may be because Elfin Forest soils are very sandy with good drainage and low water holding capacity.

The scientific name of black sage means "to bear honey" (*Melli-* is Greek meaning honey), a fact well known to California apiarists. I suspect most honey sold as 'sage honey' is made from nectar produced by black sage. Charlotte B. Clarke, in **Edible and Useful Plants of California**, states "the leaves of many sage species, e.g. black sage can be used as a substitute for sage," the spice we can buy at the supermarket. Most, if not all, commercial sage comes from a European species, *Salvia officinalis*. "*Officinalis*" means sold in apothecary shops (fore-runners of our drug stores). Dr. Robert F. Hoover in his **Vascular Plants of San Luis Obispo County**, notes that although the flowers are usually white to very pale lavender in color, plants near the coast may have much darker colored flowers. He suggests that some of these forms might make good additions to native plant gardens.

Bonnie's drawing is unusual in that she has drawn two flowers. Black sage, like many plants with both stamens (male) and pistils (female) in same flower, matures the two sexes at different times. The flower looks very different in the two stages. In black sage, the stamens usually mature first (flower in upper left) followed a few hours later by the elongation of the style and the separation of its two stigma (flower in lower right). Botanists call this maturing of stamens first followed by the female, protandry, ('*pro-*' first and '*andry-*' male'). This maturation sequence creates a greater opportunity that pollen received by a stigma will have come from a different individual plant, increasing the chances that seed produced will be out-crossed and not in-bred.



Black Sage flower heads as Halloween decorations!

Photo by Jean Wheeler.

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.



Weed Warriors Rich and Prisila Johnson fasten a section of boardwalk railing that has come loose. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.



Barrett Holland and Pat Brown trim back plants that are growing over the path. Photo by Ron Rasmussen.

Weed Warrior Report

By Yolanda Waddell, Ron Rasmussen and Vicky Johnsen

July 1st – Pulling, Pounding and Picking Up

It was weed mop-up time along the South Bay Boulevard slope, which now looks great until winter rains fall on veldt grass and other seeds that are still in the soil. Pat Brown, Lannie Erickson, new Weed Warrior Sarah Halpern and Vicky Johnsen yanked the remainder of the offending veldt grass plants, as well as picking up a bag or two of trash that always seems to accumulate.

Pete Sarafian worked very hard on pulling slender-leaved iceplant where there was quite an infestation below Bush Lupine Point. The boardwalk repair crew consisted of Prisila and Rich Johnson, Ron Rasmussen and Skip Rotstein. Thanks to all for working to keep the Elfin Forest weed free and a boardwalk that's safe to walk on.

August 5th – Elfin Forest “Housekeeping”

Vicky Johnsen sent the following report after the August 5th work party:

“Trimming done by myself, Skip Rotstein, Pat Brown, Barrett Holland and Frances Leitch; Pete Sarafian weeded and then he and Lannie Erickson did some digging of the sand under the boardwalk at the Fairbanks Monument. Rich and Prisila Johnson replaced bad boardwalk fastenings with Ron Rasmussen who also took photos.” Our thanks to all of the above Weed Warriors for their dedication, and for coming month after month to care for the Forest.

Let's All Pull Together—Poem

By Lannie Erickson

The days are getting shorter,
The nights are cool and long,
There's dust upon the aster
As the thrasher chants its song.

It's been a busy summer
Full of visitors and fun,
But in our Elfin Forest
There's still work to be done.

We hope that you can join us.
Our Forest needs some friends
So others can enjoy it
before the season ends.

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 drive-ways or mailboxes. To request more information, call (805) 528-0392.



Contrast between healthy salt marsh and an area where pigs have been rooting.

Elfin Forest Sightings – Pig Damage in the Estuary

On August 6th, SWAP Conservation Committee member Bob Meyer sent the following report to the SWAP Board. Bob sent us ten photos, and we include two of them.

“A little over two months ago we received the first reports of feral hogs feeding out on the marsh portion of the Elfin Forest. That part of the Forest is owned by State Parks. Investigation of the western end of the Don Klopfer Trail (in the lower grove next to the estuary) showed that end was being heavily used and extended westward.

Friday I put on boots and went on to the marsh portion of the Forest for a look-see. I didn’t see any hogs, but plenty of damage to the marsh. This photo (lower right) is of the devastation a few hundred feet to the west. Until recently this was a very healthy stand of various tules, rushes and Pacific pickleweed, mixed with some *Distichlis* (Saltgrass). Except for the *Distichlis* all are known to have fairly good nutritive value in that humans at one time or another have used portions of them as part of their diet. Humans and hogs have similar digestive tracts. The part of pickleweed humans eat is the fleshy leaves. I’ve tried it pickled - not bad.

I went as far as the northern-most part of the upland Forest. (The top photo) is a panorama taken there. The area not covered, heading southwest towards Siena’s View, is where all our pictures of the sows and the piglets were taken so there is more damage to be seen.

I covered about a 1/4 mile of the marsh, and scaling the damaged area from our latest aerial photo I come up with about 1.25 acres of marsh vegetation totally gone. The area disturbed, but not yet churned into semi-permanent mud flats is about twice that.”

Because the feral pigs are causing such extreme damage to the estuary plant life, we forwarded Bob Meyer’s report to the Morro Bay National Estuary Program. MBNEP Communications and Outreach Coordinator Rachel Pass wrote back that MBNEP Director Lexie Bell and the staff are in discussion and research mode about the feral pigs. They are continuing conversations with California State Parks and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, since pigs have been spotted on land belonging to both organizations. We will continue to keep our readers informed about this serious problem.



Devastation of a formerly healthy stand of tules, rushes and Pacific pickleweed caused by the rooting of feral pigs in the marsh next to the Elfin Forest.



*On July 5th,
SWAP docent Jean Wheeler led
an ecology-focused walk for
an Environmental Biology class
from Cuesta College.*

Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

Coming Up in the Elfin Forest

Text and Photos By Jean Wheeler

If you “must go where the wild goose goes,” then Morro Bay National Estuary should be your target at this time of year. All four species of geese listed in our Pocket Guide (sold on page 11) begin arriving in October, if not before.

Not only the geese, but all ten species of dabbling ducks and at least seven or nine species of diving ducks have usually settled on the estuary by October or November. The American Avocet similarly returns at peak population. All five grebe species peak from September or October until March or April. Western gulls are year-round residents, but five other species of gulls join them here only in fall through spring.

The Elfin Forest itself plays host to brush or woodland birds also migrating through or wintering. Fox, Lincoln's, and Golden-crowned Sparrows join our year-round White-crowned Sparrows. Ruby-crowned Kinglets settle in for the winter. American Robins and Hermit Thrushes replace our summer Swainson's Thrushes after those depart southward. Yellow-rumped Warblers peak in these months and Say's Phoebe joins its year-round relative, the Black Phoebe, for a winter visit. Passing through in small flocks are Cedar Waxwings, Western Tanagers, and Pine Siskins.

While October and November are minimal in colorful flowers, let us hope that the rains that brought relief last year from the four-year drought will return again early this autumn to green up the Elfin Forest in preparation for wonderful floral displays in winter and spring. A few flower species which normally do continue to show some blossoms in these months even without early rains are California Asters (white to pinkish or lavender petals around yellow central disks), Dune Buckwheat (their formerly white flowers have aged to pink or rust), Coyote Brush (white and yellowish flowers), and Seaside Golden Yarrow. The dried flower heads of Black Sage look like black pompoms on their stems, decorating the Elfin Forest for Halloween (see photo on page 5).

Take an autumn walk in Elfin Forest and marvel in appreciation of our vegetation. It is so well adapted to thrive in this most difficult season at the end of months without significant rain, even though autumn often features some of our hottest days of the year. Don't miss the terrific vistas from Bush Lupine Point and Siena's View of the wintering waterbirds on Morro Bay National Estuary.



(Above) American Avocets

(Below) California Asters



Weed Warrior Vicky Johns with bags of the invasive Slender-leaved iceplant that was pulled in the Elfin Forest. Weed Warriors dispose of weeds from the Elfin Forest in their own greenwaste cans.

Photo by Craig Johnsen.

Iceplant Found Hiding in the Forest

Vicky Johns sent the following report on July 14 about a special weeding project that she and Pete Sarafian took on.

Pete and I pulled Slender-leaved iceplant on the slope down below Bush Lupine Point, underneath a huge dead manzanita and also under low-growing oaks. The plants were very large and had hundreds of flower/seed heads just waiting to dry and broadcast all over the place. I had my van and room in our green waste bin so I took the pile home.

WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

October 7, 8:30 a.m. – Pre-Big Sit Bird Inventory (Note earlier time)

Jim Royer will lead us on a bird inventory walk in preparation for the Big Sit! on Sunday, October 8. This international event hosted by Birdwatcher's Digest (www.birdwatchersdigest.com) asks participating groups of birders to identify all species of birds seen or heard in one day. Our Big Sit! takes place at Bush Lupine Point. Join Jim on Saturday in finding and identifying 60 or more species of birds throughout the Elfin Forest and in the Morro Bay estuary. Regardless of your birding experience, you'll come away knowing more about birds, their calls, their habits and habitats.

October 21, 9:30 a.m. – Exploring the Elfin Forest Through a New Lens

Join Professor Anne Marie Bergen and her Cal Poly Future Teachers on a trek through the Elfin Forest. Explore using your senses and various lenses to "see" the Elfin Forest. Visit learning stations along the boardwalk that will help you explore the mosaic of living and non-living things above the estuary. Tap into your curiosity, learn with us!

November 18, 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.

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.



Ron Rasmussen explains the ecology of the Elfin Forest to a group of 3rd Saturday walk participants in July. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.



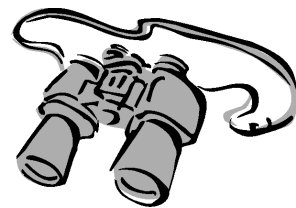
After his 3rd Saturday reptile walk in August, herpetologist Tony Frazier displayed a Kenyan sand boa for walk participants to learn about and touch. Photo by Ron Rasmussen.

The Big Sit! is Coming!

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 in the early 1990s. Each group establishes a 17-foot circle and records all species of birds seen or heard by participants within the 24-hour day, while inside that circle. Rules allow participants to leave the circle to correctly identify a bird seen or heard at a distance by an observer located within the circle.

This year the Big Sit! will take place on Sunday, October 8, and over 150 counting circles will participate. There are Big Sit! circles all over the world, including Guatemala, India, the Netherlands, England, Vietnam, and New Zealand.

A group of local birders, coordinated by Jim Royer at Bush Lupine Point in the Elfin Forest, have in some years led all circles in number of species counted. Members of Jim's team start counting before dawn, in order to "catch" owls and other nocturnal birds before they go to sleep for the day as well as early risers off to distant feeding grounds. They wind up the day after sunset, usually with 105 or more species and toast the end of the good birding day with champagne.



Thank You to Our Generous Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter, SWAP Database Coordinator

NEW MEMBERS:

Leslie & Charlie Cohn*

RENEWING MEMBERS:

Bob & Linda Bailey*	Bill & Sue McQuilkin
Lois M. Barber	Marilyn Moore*
Kathryn Bay*	Pat Murray*
Sandra Beebe	Mrs. Shirley G. Palmer*
Dianne Bougher*	Nicholas & Dorothy Pier*
William Bouton*	Barbara Renshaw*
Christine & David Braun*	Patrick & Dorothy Rygh*
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Yolanda and Jay Waddell in memory of Curt Beebe

**Thanks to those listed above who donated more than the \$25 (regular) or \$15 (senior or student) membership dues. The additional donations will be used for special projects in the Elfin Forest. If you recently sent a donation to SWAP and don't see your name in this issue's New and Renewing list, be assured that your gift will be acknowledged in the next bimonthly issue. Gifts are processed by two different volunteers before reaching our editors, and newsletter copy deadline is one month before the date of the issue.*

Thinking of Switching to Online Oakleaves?

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.

Remembering Curt Beebe

By Yolanda Waddell; Photo provided by Sandra Beebe

Curt Beebe was a fearless man. He studied, grew and walked through poison-oak, and cut trails in Morro Bay State Park and Montaña de Oro, sometimes in very steep terrain. He did all of that in spite of having Parkinson's Disease.

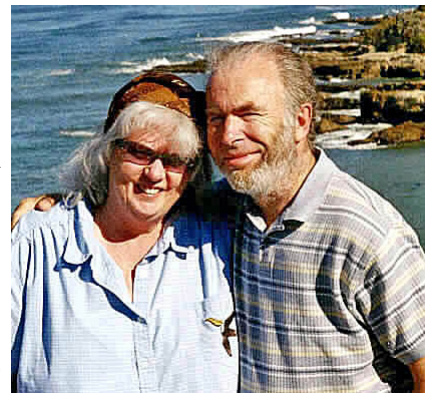
In his professional life, Curt was a psychiatrist who practiced for twenty-seven years in Pennsylvania and South Carolina. Born in New Hampshire, he majored in biochemistry at Harvard, and went to the University of Vermont to get his M.D., going on to become Board Certified in Psychiatry. At age 62, he retired from his practice because of Parkinson's Disease. He and his wife Sandra, a psychologist, decided to move to California, settling in Morro Bay.

Curt and Sandra found many volunteer opportunities in their new community. I wrote about their Mutt Mutt project in the last issue (August/September, page 3) of *Oakleaves*. Sandra researched places that would benefit from having a Mutt Mitt dispenser, and found the funding. Then Curt and Sandra would install the dispensers and trash cans on posts at the entrances of much-used trails. Over time they installed 36 Mutt Mitt dispensers.

Curt became a docent for the Morro State Park Natural History Museum and dove into his study of poison-oak and urushiol, the "poison" in poison-oak. Petra Clayton, SWAP's 3rd Saturday nature walk coordinator, heard about Curt and asked him to give a poison-oak walk in the Elfin Forest. During his walk, we learned that poison-oak has many benefits. It kills grass, attracts songbirds, feeds middle-sized birds, stops erosion with its long root system, and stops intruders. When asked, Curt agreed to write about poison-oak for SWAP's *Oakleaves* newsletter. He had so much information that we needed to serialize his article in 3 succeeding issues from June/July, 2001 to October/November, 2001. These can be seen on SWAP's website, www.elfin-forest.org under "Forest Library."

Curt loved being outdoors and volunteered to help with trail creation and maintenance in Morro Bay State Park and Montaña de Oro State Park. Eventually he led a trail making group, and that group created the Beebe Trail in Montaña de Oro. It is a 1.1-mile long trail connecting to the Oats Peak trail, and has a 5-star rating.

In 2010, Curt and Sandra moved to Santa Monica to live closer to their son Daniel and his wife Nathacha and their grandchildren. On August 19, I received word from Sandra that Curt had passed away. His ashes will be scattered along the Beebe trail, where Curt will be forever outdoors in a place that he loved. This will take place on the Friday after Thanksgiving, November 24th. If you want to be present at the ceremony, send an e-mail to Sandra Beebe at sbeebe2@roadrunner.com for a time and meeting place.





Great Holiday Gifts From SWAP

Coffee mugs, caps, mural T-shirts, sweatshirts, and mural wall prints make wonderful gifts for your loved ones. 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) @\$20.00 = \$___
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___ Long Slv. T-Shirt (XXL, XXXL) @\$27.00 = \$___
___ Sweatshirt (S, M, L, XL) @\$35.00 = \$___
___ Sweatshirt (XXL, XXXL) @\$37.00 = \$___

2. 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.

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

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Booth Workers Needed for Oktoberfest

Los Osos will be celebrating its annual Oktoberfest this year on Sunday, October 29 on Second Street in downtown Baywood Park. SWAP will participate by setting up a booth among others that feature many kinds of arts and crafts, as well as ethnic foods. We'll talk to visitors about SWAP, distribute literature, and sell T-shirts, sweatshirts, our beautiful coffee mugs and caps, guidebooks, notecards, etc.



We need volunteers to staff our table at this event. If you can work a two-hour shift between 9:00 am and 4:00 pm on this day, please call SWAP's message phone at 528-0392. Give your name, shift preference, and phone number. Join us, you'll have fun!

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☐ I want to help, please call me!

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

☐ ***Check here to receive the online version only.***

All donations to SWAP are tax-deductible.

EVERY membership counts!

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