



OAK LEAVES

A PUBLICATION OF SMALL WILDERNESS AREA PRESERVATION

P.O. BOX 6442, LOS OSOS, CALIFORNIA 93412-6442 ♦ (805) 528-0392 ♦ DECEMBER 2017 / JANUARY 2018

An Increase in Age Requires a Change in Activity

By Ronald Rasmussen, Ph.D.

As we increase in age our skills may in some way change. This may be good or not so good, depending on what kind of activity is needed. To care for the Elfin Forest requires a variety of skills from simply picking up trash to record keeping. Mental skills include publication of SWAP activities and planning for the future. Physical skills include some repair and maintenance of the Elfin Forest. The latter include boardwalk repair, non-native weed removal, and erosion control.

I have now reached an age of eighty-five years. This age carries with it a variety of changes in mental as well as physical skills. I joined SWAP in the year 2000 and began serving as the Chair in 2002. Activities of the Chair require planning as well as direct participation. With increased age, it has become more difficult to meet the requirements, and it is now time to retire from my role as Chair.

Retirement from my position as SWAP Chair does not mean resigning from SWAP. In particular, I will regularly visit the Elfin Forest, notify SWAP officers of issues I observe when necessary, and aid in repairs when needed. Also I will continue to offer guidance for visitors who may be in the Forest and give lectures to groups about SWAP and the Elfin Forest. My future plan is to continue as a member of SWAP and offer my help when and where it may be useful.

SWAP Chair Ron Rasmussen Retires From Board

Text and photo by Yolanda Waddell



In 1999, when Professor Ronald Rasmussen retired from the faculty of U.C. Irvine where he was an environmental toxicology research scientist, he began a survey of places to live on the coast, from Irvine north to Monterey. During a stop in Morro Bay, he went for a walk on the beach. On the way back to his car, he noticed a house for sale just one block from the ocean. It was exactly what he was looking for; he went to the real estate office, made an offer, and it was accepted.

Once settled in Morro Bay, Ron began to explore the area and found the Elfin Forest. Seeing that it was a beautiful and unique area that deserved to be taken care of, he joined the monthly Saturday morning work parties. He found it satisfying to pull weeds that were overwhelming some parts of the Forest and doing other maintenance tasks.

In 2002, Ron joined the SWAP Board of Directors, feeling his science background would be useful. When SWAP Board Chair Jim Weldon retired at the end of 2002, Ron was elected to succeed Weldon as Chair. The next few years were filled with Elfin Forest improvement projects, a State budget crisis that threatened the existence of the local CCC Center, and addition of a SWAP chapter in Cambria whose purpose was to save the Fiscalini Ranch. With the help of the Morro Bay/Los Osos Chapter, that beautiful coastal ranchland was purchased.

In 2005, Treasurer and longtime board member Bob McDougle retired. No replacement for Bob could be found, so Ron took on the additional office of chapter Treasurer. He continued to carry

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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
and Recording Secretary
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, December 11,
and Monday, January 8.***

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.

Rasmussen Retires *cont. from page 1*

the dual responsibility until Jan DiLeo joined the Board and became Treasurer in 2010.

In 2007, the SWAP Board became concerned about deterioration of ancient oaks in the Rose Bowker Memorial Grove due to heavy foot traffic. They decided that a boardwalk extension into the grove with a viewing deck would help to prevent harm to the oaks. Ron drafted a design for the extension and viewing deck, and worked with County Parks to obtain a review including an architect, archaeologist, botanist, a biologist, and the California Coastal Commission. Funds for construction were obtained from the Hind Foundation of San Luis Obispo and from PG&E. In 2009, the CCC built the extension and deck that were formally opened that September.

In 2011, Conservation Chair Pete Sarafian left the Board and, lacking a board member to take on the job, Ron again added a second responsibility, becoming Conservation Chair. The Weed Warriors soon discovered that their new "boss" baked delicious cookies that he brought for them to enjoy at the end of their work morning.

By 2011 the boardwalk was beginning to show the wear of twelve years of foot traffic and weather, and Ron oversaw replacement of more than 1,200 deck boards by the CCC. By 2013, salt air on the galvanized screws in the boardwalk had caused hundreds of screws to rust and break. That year the SWAP Board called in the CCC again to replace the damaged screws with stainless steel screws.

Even after Skip Rotstein joined the SWAP Board in 2014 and became the Conservation Chair, Ron continued as Work Party Coordinator and faithfully brought cookies for the Weed Warriors. He tried gluten free flour for gluten-sensitive Warriors, saying "Retired chemists love to cook."

Ron Rasmussen has served fifteen years as a member and Chair of SWAP's Board of Directors. Deciding that this year is his last, Ron has resigned from the SWAP Board as of the end of the year. He has never missed a meeting, and says that he has enjoyed it all. Asked what he plans to do next, he replied that he will still be an active member of SWAP, on call to help with repairs, weeding and erosion control, just as when he first joined. Ron has given SWAP and the Elfin Forest an amazing gift of thousands of hours of time, energy and talent over the years. All we can say is thank you for everything, Ron. You're the greatest!



Ready to greet visitors to the SWAP Oktoberfest booth were Ron Rasmussen; Barbara Rosenthal, the artist who created the Elfin Forest Mural; Yolanda Waddell wearing a spider on her head; and Pat Murray, booth coordinator with a bee in her bonnet. Photo by Lynette Tornatsky.

SWAP's Annual Celebration Held September 23

*By Pat Murray, Celebration Coordinator;
Photos by Pat Brown*

SWAP's dedicated volunteers arrived at 10 a.m. ready to carry out their assignments from event organizer Pat Murray. Preparation of Morro Shores Mobile Home Park's Social Hall was accomplished rapidly with the help of: Ron Rasmussen, Vicky & Craig Johnsen, Jan DiLeo & Dave Moran, Skip & Leslie Rotstein, Larry & Pat Grimes, Elsie Deitz & her daughter, Carla Pool, Linda Cordes (new member of SWAP), Debbie Levi, and Chris & Jim VanBeveren.

Special thanks to Leslie Rotstein and Yolanda Waddell for making ahead of time the perfect touches for each table center piece--burlap wrapped glass jars with lovely succulents from the Rotsteins' garden. Also on the table was a printed message of "SWAP's Milestone Journey" that was placed in our useful wood stands. Thanks to member Tom Cash who made these stands a few years ago. The centerpieces were SWAP's gift to the lucky person sitting on the chair that had a sticker placed underneath.

Before the main program started, folks arriving had time to socialize and enjoy the special food prepared for them. Served by a team of SWAP's "Chefs" were three pots of homemade soups plus an array of other delicious foods, including the famous homemade cookies from Ron Rasmussen. Pat Brown was our roving photographer for this year's celebration, taking many photos of the goings-on.

The program began by introducing our guest speaker, meteorologist John Lindsey. With his power point presentation, John educated a total of approximately 65 folks on the subject of climate change. We thank him for sharing his knowledge about this very important topic with us.

A few items of merchandise were available for sale. We also thank some folks attending who decided to become SWAP members. Because Pat Murray is a resident of Morro Shores Mobile Home Park, the management allows SWAP to utilize their facilities. We are most appreciative to Morro Shores, not only for hosting our Annual Celebration, but also for providing a room for SWAP's monthly board meetings.



Cheerily preparing food for attendees at the Celebration were (L-R) Vicky Johnsen, Linda Cordes, Jan DiLeo, Pat Murray and Chris Van Beveren.

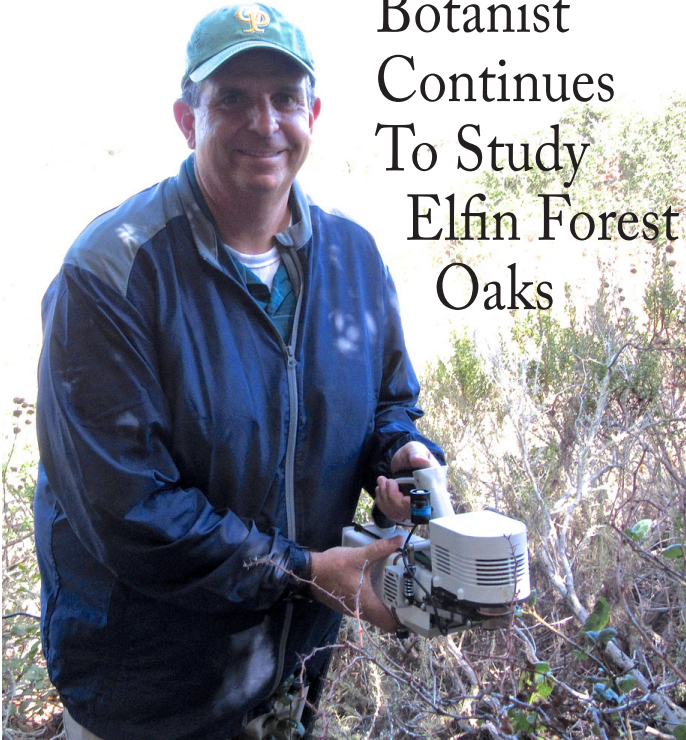


(Above) John Lindsey's very informative talk on climate change was appreciated by all.



(At right) Debbie Levi (left) and Pat Grimes were the welcoming committee at the Annual Celebration.

Botanist Continues To Study Elfin Forest Oaks



This very sensitive LI-6800 Portable Photosynthesis System measures a leaf's degree of absorbing and releasing carbon dioxide; water absorption and transpiration; and calculates the effects of both on the leaf.

(At left) In October Dr. Edward Bobich visited the Elfin Forest to take photosynthesis and other measurements of Coast live oaks to determine their recovery after 4 years of drought.

*Text by Jean Wheeler and Yolanda Waddell;
Photos by Yolanda Waddell*

Edward Bobich, Ph. D., returned to the Elfin Forest October 7-8 to continue his study of the ecology of coast live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*). Dr. Bobich is a Professor of Biological Sciences at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona.

Professor Bobich has visited the Elfin Forest a number of times. Between March and August in 2013 he studied how our location on sand dunes next to the ocean affects photosynthesis, water relations and structure of this species.

He was also conducting similar measurements for much taller members of the same species around the Cal Poly, Pomona campus. The species can reach 50-80 feet tall inland, but ranges from only 4-5 feet in exposed areas to 10-12 or at the very most 20 feet in the most sheltered parts of the Elfin Forest.

After making careful measurements between early spring and late in the dry season, finishing in August of 2013, he said that the oaks in the Elfin forest weren't water stressed, which surprised him. At that time he also stated, "For me, the Elfin Forest is perhaps the ultimate system in which to do research because the plants have completely altered their growth forms in that system."

This year Dr. Bobich was seeking indications as to recovery of the oaks with one year of returning rains after four years of intense drought. On Saturday, October 7, he took daytime measurements of fluorescence, water potential and light interception. On Sunday he measured predawn water potential and followed with photosynthesis measurements into the middle of the day.

While analyzing the data he recorded in the Elfin Forest that weekend and taking additional measurements on coast live oak trees on the Pomona campus, Dr. Bobich emailed Yolanda. He thanked her and SWAP for again assisting him in obtaining

County Parks approval for his work in the Elfin Forest and for helping to make that weekend a very successful trip.

His preliminary analysis was, "I can say that the oaks on both sites [Elfin Forest and Pomona] seem to have recovered well in terms of their physiology (photosynthesis, water status, etc.), but... the die back for many of the oaks here in Pomona was substantial." He included pictures, unfortunately too dark for reproduction here, of what was formerly the tallest tree in one of their groves, but is now missing a substantial portion of the treetop and with large branches fallen from the tree to the ground below.

Dr. Bobich concluded the email with high praise for SWAP:

"Finally, I would just like to say that I really appreciate all of the hard work you and the rest of SWAP have done to make the Elfin Forest what it is today. It has to be one of the most amazing and successful restoration projects in California and it makes me feel good knowing that the Elfin Forest is in such good hands. You have all preserved a small piece of what was likely a more widespread ecosystem in California."

*We not only live with
our day-to-day decisions,
but we must also be responsible
for long-range decisions,
the results of which
may not show up for several hundred years.*

*William Penn Mott,
California State Parks Foundation Founder*

Common Buck Brush

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

(Ed. Note: Revised by Dr. Walters from December 2000 issue)

This repeat plant is one Dr. Robert F. Hoover in his *The Vascular Plants of SLO County, CA* says is “our commonest *Ceanothus*”. It is *Ceanothus cuneatus*, and is commonly called buck brush although an internet check will add wedge-leaf ceanothus and Monterey buck brush. *Ceanothus* includes plants called California lilac, a name also applied to this species. Buck brush is one of our earliest bloomers. As I write in early November, Elfin Forest plants are covered with buds, and by the time this issue gets circulated it will be in bloom. Since buck brush is found all along the boardwalk, I am expecting a spectacular display this winter.

Ceanothus is one genus in the family, Rhamnaceae, found in the Elfin Forest. I discussed the other two genera, *Rhamnus* and *Frangula*, in our August 2017 issue. There are 55 species of *Ceanothus* native to temperate North America. Around forty species are found in coastal California making it one of the largest genera in California.

The genus can be readily divided into two groups based on leaf arrangement. Most species have alternate leaves with soft, deciduous stipules (paired outgrowth at the base of the leaf petiole or stalk). These are generally called California lilacs. A smaller number of species have opposite leaves with hard stipules that sometimes resemble a pair of corky ridges between the two leaf bases. Can you see them in Bonnie’s drawing? It is opposite-leaved *Ceanothus* species to which the name buck brush is usually applied.

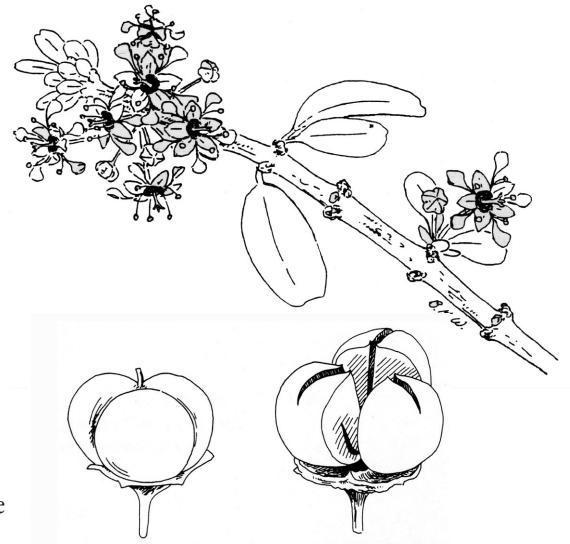
To Bonnie’s original drawing in 2000 I’ve added her drawings of the fruit of a generic *Ceanothus*. It is not a drawing of the fruit of *C. cuneatus*, but like this species, *C. cuneatus* fruits have a small horn-shaped projection arising from the upper and outer margin of each fruit segment. The fruit pictured to the right shows this in a capsule just beginning to explode. Each of the 3 fruit segments splits explosively from the fruit base leaving the shallow bowl base with ridges joined in the middle. I have only caught a fruit exploding once or twice.

Our buck brush is extremely variable. Near the immediate coast it is often a low-growing rounded mound. In chaparral further inland it can become a small tree. Coastal flower color leans toward bluish shades, whereas inland it is more often pure white. But flower color can vary from branch to branch on the same plant.

As nearly every feature of the plant varies, many species and varieties of buck brush have been recognized in the past. Most of these names are now in disuse. Individual plants previously known as *C. fascicularis* (the most common variety in the Elfin Forest), *C. rigidus*, and *C. ramulosus* are now reduced to varieties of *C. cuneatus* or are not distinct enough to recognize separately. Therefore, the only opposite-leaved *Ceanothus* growing in the Elfin Forest is *Ceanothus cuneatus* no matter what your shrub picture book might say.

All species of *Ceanothus*, including buck brush, can and probably have been used in landscaping. Since it is extremely variable, one need only to keep looking to find the combination of flower color, height and configuration desired. Also, *C. cuneatus*, will hybridize relatively easily with any other species of opposite-leaved *Ceanothus* which leads to still more opportunity for variation. The major problem with any form of *Ceanothus* as a landscape plant is susceptibility to root rot caused by various species of water mold. Therefore, these plants should never be planted where they get extra summer water.

I have seen references to species of *Ceanothus* used by various Native North American people for everything from stimulants to soap substitutes. Most do not distinguish among *Ceanothus* species, treating all as having the use being discussed. Most descriptions suggest they are writing about one of the many alternate-leaved species. One might experiment with buck brush, but I suspect other species would be better.



Elfin Forest Visitors and Sighting

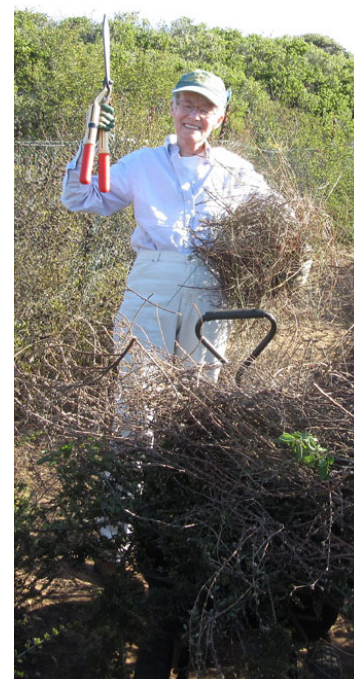
By Yolanda Waddell

On September 28, SWAP members Susan and Ed Chandler took their dogs for a walk in the Elfin Forest and at Bush Lupine Point, they met Cheri and Bud Miller from Monterey. Susan learned that the Millers were exploring the Elfin Forest for the first time. They were watching a Scrub Jay and a California Towhee sitting at the top of bushes north of Bush Lupine Point when the dogs suddenly started barking.

Then they saw a coyote walking across the field north of the boardwalk only about 30 feet away. It continued on its way for another 100 feet and then turned, sat down and looked at the humans and three small dogs. Susan thought it might have been contemplating a future dinner. Then it headed east and another coyote came along, doing the same thing. Thanks to Cheri for sharing her coyote photo with us.



(Above, left) Assembling at the end of 15th Street to work on a very hot September day were Weed Warriors (L-R) Chris McKinnie, Vicky Johnsen, Skip Rotstein, Ron Rasmussen, Carlee Turner and Pete Sarafian. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.



(Above, right) Vicky Johnsen's goal during the October work party was to trim brush back from the 11th Street path and then move the cuttings to fill in an unauthorized path leading off from the trail. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

Weed Warrior Report

By Yolanda Waddell with help from Vicky Johnsen

September 2nd – Heat Hinders Weed Warrior Work

The temperature was way up there on the first Saturday in September. Regardless, eleven willing Weed Warriors took up trail trimming equipment and boardwalk repair tools to do their best for the Forest. Chris McKinnie, a new volunteer from Arroyo Grande, joined Vicky Johnsen in doing trail trimming along the 11th Street trail. Skip Rotstein, with Jean Wheeler's help, temporarily re-attached the interpretive sign at Bush Lupine Point that had been pulled off of its mounting. Pete Sarafian led new volunteers Carlee Turner and Terry Badger on a search for English ivy. Lannie Erickson joined Ron Rasmussen, Prisila Johnson and Rich Johnson in replacing broken screws in the boardwalk. Thanks to all for braving the heat.

October 7th – Working at the West End

Except for the usual need to replace broken screws in the boardwalk, taken care of by Prisila and Rich Johnson and Ron Rasmussen, work in the Forest this day focused on the west end. Vicky Johnsen and Pat Brown, later joined by Lannie Erickson, trimmed back shrubs that were overgrowing the 11th Street trail. Pete Sarafian, Barrett Holland and new Weed Warrior Catherine Hayes made the trek to the groves north of 10th Street, where Cape ivy has been silently overtaking parts of the grove. They pulled it down from the trees and made piles that will later be sprayed with a safe (for people) herbicide.

The Elfin Forest covers 67 acres of dry land, quite a lot of acreage to care for. Thank you all for your time, energy and devotion.

Let's All Pull Together

By Lannie Erickson

Weeds return regardless of weather.
O'ergrown trails, if trimmed, might look better.

Barriers hold the sand 'til it slips.
Then someone has to fill in the dips.

Time marches on, we'd better get cracking,
We know the Weed Warriors
are not ones for slacking.

The better our work, the more we are blessed,
Maybe with cookies when at last we rest.

Join 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.

CCC Crew Completes Erosion Control Project at Bush Lupine Point

By Skip Rotstein, SWAP Conservation Chair

Bush Lupine Point hillside is an eroding ancient sand dune. It is also home to the endangered Morro Shoulderband Snail and Morro Manzanita. A trail below Bush Lupine Point was closed many years ago, but visible wooden hand rails attracted the attention of visitors who climbed over the fences for beer parties. The result has been sand erosion and trash accumulation.

SWAP developed a plan to remove visible evidence of the old trail and to improve erosion control. SWAP proposed adding new strategically placed fences and using jute netting and water bars for erosion control and contracted with the CCC (California Conservation Corps) to do the work.

In 2017, approval came and the CCC's were ready. But rain prevented work in snail habitat for several months. Summer dried the Elfin Forest, but fire came to California. Our CCC crew spent the summer months fighting fires.

Work in the Elfin Forest finally began on October 31st. CCC Los Padres Center Project Director Mike Anderson; the CCC crew, a cheerful group of twelve young women and men; County Parks Supervising Ranger, Bob Yetter; SWCA Environmental Consultants snail monitor Barrett Holland; archeological monitor Leroy Laurie; and observers Pete Sarafian and myself, assembled at Bush Lupine Point.

Barrett gave a snail protection lesson. He passed around shells of Morro Shoulderband Snails and stressed that they should not be picked up if they were seen. Barrett tagged Morro Manzanita shrubs with yellow tape.

The CCC workers quickly removed the rotting wooden handrail and rusting fences. They cleared the sandy hillside of scrap fence materials and trash. Then they prevented future dune erosion by stapling new jute netting onto the hillside and placing wooden water bars in the old trail.

Sharp-eyed Pete Sarafian spotted invasive Italian Thistle seeds on two rolls of new plastic fence material. The fence material was taken back to the CCC base and pressure washed before being returned for use. CCC crewmembers built new fences placed strategically to deny access to the hillside. The finishing touch was a new locked gate constructed to allow SWAP Weed Warriors future access to remove invasive plants.

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.



A deteriorating wood rail fence that was no longer needed was removed by CCC crewmembers as part of the Bush Lupine erosion control project. Photo by Skip Rotstein.



CCC crewmembers placed jute netting on a steep sandy hillside next to the Bush Lupine Point observation deck. Photo by Barrett Holland.

Coming Up in the Elfin Forest



Northern Shovelers

Text and Photos by Jean Wheeler

Unlike most of our nation, December and January in our Elfin Forest normally produce abundantly active bird life on both land and water and a kaleidoscope of colorfully blooming shrubs and herbs. With the rains, mists, and fogs we've had last year and in recent months, we can hope for a return to something like the extravaganza we normally expect in these months despite the drought of the previous four years.

Buckbrush *Ceanothus* flowers are already opening as I write in early November (see the article on this species by Dirk Walters with drawings by Bonnie Walters on page 5). By the time this issue reaches our website and mailboxes, the boardwalk should be bordered all around with their white to lilac blossoms.

Morro manzanitas (pictured) were among the shrubs hardest hit by the prolonged drought with some dead branches sacrificed to leave enough water to save the rest of the plants. But the manzanitas did show some of their bell-like white blossoms even at the end of the drought, often blushing with a lovely pinkish glow. Hopefully this year their blooming will begin by Christmas, as usual, and come closer to the abundance of more "normal" years.

Fuchsia-flowered gooseberries should open in December, or at least by January. Their many long red trumpets provide lots of nectar to the long bills and tongues of Anna's Hummingbirds. These red flower tubes are a major food support to the hummers in their winter/spring nesting season.

Perhaps by Christmas and surely by the end of January, California peonies will be opening their drooping red balls of flowers among their large bright green leaves in the understory. Look for them especially near Siena's View and along the 11th Street sand trail. Other understory plants likely to be in bloom are the white to pink or lilac rays of asters surrounding their golden disk flowers, the yellow and gold of early California poppies, and the white clusters of flowers atop green stems of California everlastings.

Our area is known as one of the top birding regions in our nation, especially in these winter months. That's why the Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival, held on Martin Luther King Weekend each year, attracts hundreds of visitors from all over the U.S. and Canada. The festival is scheduled for January 12-15 in 2018 and early registration is essential for field trips—they fill fast.



*Morro
Manzanita*

Virtually all species of water birds and wading birds listed in our Pocket Guide (sold on page 11) are present and at peak populations in December and January. Look out onto the estuary from Bush Lupine Point or Siena's View to spot large American White Pelicans and Canada and Brant Geese. Dabbling Ducks likely to be present in large numbers include Northern Pintails, American Wigeons, Northern Shovelers (pictured), and Blue-winged, Cinnamon, and Green-winged Teal. Diving ducks typically numerous include Greater and Lesser Scaup, Buffleheads, and Ruddy Ducks. Wading birds commonly seen are Great and Snowy Egrets, American Avocets and many species of Sandpipers.

All the raptors listed in our pocket guide and a great many of the passerines are also present in midwinter. The shrubs around the boardwalk can be alive with flitting Finches, Sparrows, Gnatcatchers, Wrens, Phoebe, Chickadees, Bushtits, Nuthatches, and many other little brown and little grey birds. Other common birds of the brush easily seen are Thrashers, Towhees, Scrub Jays, Quail, Blackbirds, and Doves.

Take a break from holiday shopping madness and walk in the Elfin Forest that we protect through our generous donations and active volunteer efforts!

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.

WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

December 16, 9:30 a.m. –

Sketch and Plant Walk

Join Barbara Renshaw and Jeff Reifel for a stroll along the Elfin Forest boardwalk. Take in views of the Morro Bay estuary, oak groves, expanses of coastal sage scrub and chaparral, and the volcanic Morros beyond. In the Rose Bowker Oak Grove enjoy ancient gnarled Coast live oak trees. Barbara and Jeff will tell you about native plants along the way and choose a few favorite places for sketching. No drawing experience is necessary. Bring a pad of drawing paper, colored pencils or pastels, and some drinking water. Bring a camera too. You'll be pleased to discover the artist hidden inside of you. Rain will cancel this walk.

January 20, 9:30 a.m. –

Flight of the Brant Goose

Naturalist John Roser has monitored Morro Bay's Black Brant population for almost 20 winters. This is one of the few remaining coastal estuaries where Brant can find their primary food, eelgrass. However, in recent years, much of the eelgrass in the bay has died off. We hope to see some Brant, but not in the numbers seen in years past. During John's walk, he'll share his knowledge about this marvelous migratory goose--their very long migration flight, their biology, and what has been learned from banding the Brant. Only a heavy rain will cancel this walk; if it's sprinkling, bring a poncho or an umbrella and come ahead.

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.



Historian Bob Pavlik shared readings by natural history writers during a walk around the Elfin Forest boardwalk. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.



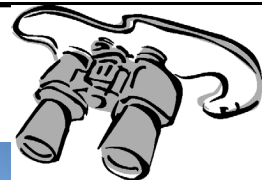
In October, Professor Anne Marie Bergen and her Cal Poly Future Teachers helped walk participants to explore the Elfin Forest "through a new lens." Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

2017 Los Osos Big Sit! Comes in Second with 100 Species

By Jim Royer, Los Osos Big Sit! Coordinator; Photo by Yolanda Waddell

Our 21st sit at Bush Lupine Point in the Elfin Forest had fewer sitters than past years with only one sitter for brief periods. The poor visibility hindered long range identification of grebes, terns and other birds. There was no land bird migration apparent, with no swallows or other birds passing our observation platform from the north. Nevertheless we had a total of 100 species, with Bald Eagle being new for our sit. Other unusual species included White-fronted Goose, Ring-necked Duck, and Eurasian Wigeon. A Black Skimmer seen on the bay the day before was not present on sit day.

There were as many as six Osprey perched along the bay edges in our view, which was a large number for this location. Some flew by close to our location, but the adult Bald Eagle stole the show as he cruised by at eye level near us! We inexplicably missed some species that we never miss, such as Long-billed Dowitcher and American Avocet. Avocets are hard to miss and dowitchers are usually pretty vocal, so it appeared they were really missing! Over the years we've had a cumulative total of 184 species for the Big Sit! at Bush Lupine Point.



Editor's Note: Birdwatcher's Digest, the sponsor of The Big Sit! reported the following statistics: 34 participating states and 4 other countries; 143 total count circles; 527 species observed worldwide. Other countries participating were Bosnia and Herzegovina; Cambodia; Germany; and Italy. The top five counts worldwide were: Corpus Christi, Texas, 102 species; Los Osos, California, 100 species; Hennepin, Illinois, 93 species; Pottsboro Texas, 92 species; and Husum, Germany, 90 species.

Thank You to Our Generous Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter, SWAP Database Coordinator

NEW MEMBERS:

Carola Bundy*

RENEWING MEMBERS:

Patty Arnold	Marie Moore & Elaine Mason*
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Jan Harper	(Cameron Mitchell
Jim Havlena*	Productions)
Dr. Steve Jio & family	Ungar family
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Christine A. Lancellotti*	Jean D. Wheeler*
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Susan McTaggart	Rachel Yon*
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DONATIONS:

King David's Masonic Lodge No. 209, San Luis Obispo

**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.*



OAKLEAVES

is published six times per year beginning in February.

Co-editors are Yolanda Waddell and Jean Wheeler;
Layout is by Katy Budge.

Editing assistance by Pat Grimes.

Contributors to this issue: Ed Bobich, George Brown, Pat Brown, Susan Chandler, Barrett Holland, Vicky Johnsen, Betsy Kinter, Cheri Miller, Pat Murray, Ron Rasmussen, Skip Rotstein, Jim Royer, Ken Smith, Lynette Tornatsky, Yolanda Waddell, Dirk and Bonnie Walters, and Jean Wheeler.

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

Generous Donation from King David's Masonic Lodge

SWAP recently received a \$2,000 donation from the King David's Masonic Lodge No. 209 in San Luis Obispo. We learned that this generous donation was made at the request of George Brown, a long-time member of SWAP and an active member of the lodge. He explained that the Masons are a philanthropic organization and King David's likes to practice that locally.

Every year each member of the Lodge has the opportunity to nominate two local non-profit organizations to each receive \$2,000. The members review the nominations and consider their philanthropic budget, and then vote on which ones they will fund. George thought that SWAP would be a good choice and nominated our organization to receive a \$2,000 donation. SWAP is most grateful both to George Brown and to King David's Lodge for their generosity. The funds will be used for projects in the Elfin Forest.



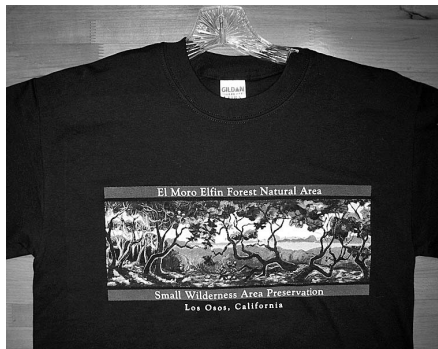
An enthusiastic group of birders from the Central Sierra Audubon Society (based in Sonora) came to the Elfin Forest to learn about its natural history and to see its birds. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

Central Sierra Audubon Society Visits Elfin Forest

By Ken Smith, CSAS Field Trip Coordinator

At the Elfin Forest on Saturday October 28, 17 birders from CSAS along with SWAP docents birded the Forest. Docents Yolanda Waddell (History), Vicky Johnsen (Native Plants), Ron Rasmussen (Elevations & Geology), and Jessica Griffith (Birding by Ear) plus state park docents Barbara Renshaw and Jeff Reifel told us about the Forest and its resident plants and wildlife.

The very informative tour covered history, vegetation, geology, significance of the elevation changes of the ancient sand dune, and identification of birds by their songs. Among the 18 bird species observed by sight and by ear were Hutton's Vireo, White- and Golden-crowned Sparrows, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, California Quail, Bushtits, and several Wrentits calling to each other. The special treat was to walk under an Elfin Oak canopy called Rose's Grove, which was like a special Temple to Nature.



Great Holiday Gifts From SWAP

Coffee mugs, caps, mural T-shirts, sweatshirts, mural wall prints and Alphabet Bird Books make wonderful gifts for your loved ones. 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.



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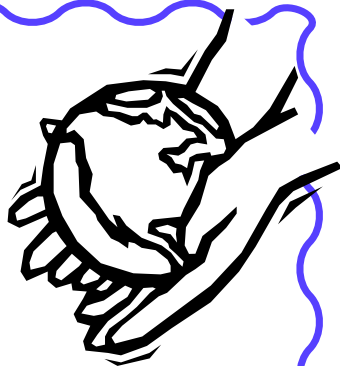
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For the person who has everything, a gift membership to SWAP or a donation in the name of your relative or friend would be much appreciated by SWAP as well as by the loved one honored by your generous gift.

Your donation can not only reduce your income tax bite, but will help SWAP with special projects in the Elfin Forest such as soil erosion control, revegetation with native species, and boardwalk extensions or upkeep.

A life membership with a \$1000 donation earns the Oakleaves newsletter for life and also a SWAP mural T-shirt in appreciation of the major contribution to our efforts.

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☐ I want to help, please call me!
Memberships include a subscription to
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