



OAK LEAVES

A PUBLICATION OF SMALL WILDERNESS AREA PRESERVATION

P.O. BOX 6442, LOS OSOS, CALIFORNIA 93412-6442 ♦ (805) 528-0392 ♦ OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2018

Justine Rojas: Researching Elfin Forest and Inland Oaks for Her M.A. Thesis

Text by Jean Wheeler, Ph. D.

Justine Rojas is an M.A. student in Botany at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. She accompanied her thesis advisor Professor Ed Bobich on the weekend of his SWAP-sponsored August 4 lecture at the Morro Bay Museum of Natural History (a report on that event by Yolanda Waddell is on page 2). As her thesis proposal includes research planned in the Elfin Forest on our pygmy oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*), I took the opportunity to get acquainted with her just before Ed's lecture and discussed her proposed thesis fieldwork with her.

Justine was born in Glendale, California, and her family home is in Palmdale. She grew up in a rich family life including four sisters and two brothers. Her undergraduate career began at Antelope Valley College, a community college in Lancaster, California. From there she went to the University of California, Riverside, to major in biology, planning a career in pharmacy. However, she took a course in botany, fell in love with the subject, and changed her major in her senior year.

Foreign travels thus far for this enterprising young woman include an undergraduate trip to France for a poster presentation, study abroad in Panama on plant ecology, and travel in Mexico.

Rojas continued on page 3



Barbara Rosenthal's original Elfin Forest mural painting, framed by Rosey Rosenthal will be on display at several sites until December 15th.

Mural Painting Up For Silent Auction

By Yolanda Waddell; Photo by Barbara Rosenthal

In 1992, the National Wildlife Federation granted \$2,500 to Small Wilderness Area Preservation (SWAP) to create a mural thanking the community for its wonderful support in protecting the Elfin Forest. Artist Barbara Rosenthal designed the mural and directed the painting in 1993 on the east wall of Rexall Pharmacy in Los Osos. Five panels with the names of over 2,000 donors were attached at one end of the mural. The panels have deteriorated from years of weathering and need to be replaced.

To raise funds for replacing the panels and other SWAP needs, Rosenthal has donated the painting that was her guide for the mural. It has been put up for silent auction. The auction "kickoff" reception was hosted by Edward Jones Financial Advisor Deanna Richards at the Edward Jones office in Los Osos.

The framed 40 x 11-inch acrylic painting can be seen at the Rosenthal Art Studio on October 13 and 14, and October 20 and 21, during the annual Open Studios art show. The Rosenthal Studio is located at 743 Santa Lucia in Los Osos.

On October 28, the painting will be on display in the SWAP booth at the Baywood Oktoberfest, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. It will travel to other public locations in Los Osos where bids may be made, finishing at Los Osos Rexall Drug & Gift Store, 989 Los Osos Valley Road. Bids will close on December 15, 2018, and the winner will be announced. Display locations and dates, and the name of the winner will be posted on SWAP's website, www.elfin-forest.org. For additional information, call SWAP's message phone, 805-528-0392.

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*of the Los Osos/Morro Bay Chapter of
Small Wilderness Area Preservation (SWAP)*

consists of the following members:

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The SWAP Board of Directors meets monthly
at 2 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 8,
and Monday, November 12.

All Board meetings are open to the public.
To confirm the date, time and location
(which are subject to change),
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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,
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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.

Conservation Committee Report for July/August, 2018



Wildlife biologist Rhett Blanton (left) and botanist Kirsten Nelson (3rd from left). staff members of Terra Verde Environmental Consulting, were joined by Skip Rotstein and Dave Bowlus (middle and right) on an orientation walk through the Elfin Forest. Photo by D. Bowlus.

By Skip Rotstein, Conservation Committee Co-Chair

The August 4th Weed Warriors led by Vicky Johsen did exemplary work. I would like to recognize the major effort by Pete Sarafian to obtain materials and lead a group to repair fences on Butterfly Hill. Craig Johnsen and Rich and Prisila Johnson repaired boardwalk without Skip who was pulling ice plant. Weed Warriors pulled and disposed of survey stakes abandoned by the South Bay Bridge survey team.

Pete Sarafian submitted the first 2018 Semi-Annual Progress Report on the Elfin Forest to US Fish and Wildlife. It was a comprehensive and positive report of erosion control and invasive plant removal. SWAP is described as assisting Pete in tasks other than spraying.

Dave Bowlus and Skip Rotstein did a walk-through with biologists from Terra Verde on their first fieldwork day. Dave and Skip then bushwacked from the Klopfer Grove to the Sienna's View junction with the lower boardwalk looking for signs of pigs and invasive plants in the oaks. Both pigs and invasive plants were missing.

Ed Bobich Lecture Draws Many Listeners

By Bill McQuilkin, Planning Committee Chair

Congratulations to the Planning Committee on a very successful lecture by Dr. Ed Bobich at the Morro Bay Natural History Museum on August 4th. The room was full, with everyone intent on Dr. Bobich's report and his slides. Thanks to Pat Murray, Elsie Deitz and Leslie Rotstein for the great food offerings and decorations at the post-talk reception. Others making the event possible were Yolanda Waddell, publicity; Bill McQuilkin and Jay Waddell, parking; Leslie Rotstein, greeter; Faylla Chapman, Museum representative and supervising setup/takedown of chairs and tables; and Rosey Rosenthal for the elegant sponsor sign. Sponsors of the event were SWAP, the Morro Bay Natural History Museum courtesy of Rouvaishyana; Bill and Sue McQuilkin, Rosey and Barbara Rosenthal; Skip and Leslie Rotstein, and Jay and Yolanda Waddell.

I have gone over my speaker notes and the final take-away from Dr. Bobich seemed to be how much more we need to learn about the Elfin Forest and the multiple impacts of micro location, wind, ground water, nutrients and of course the drought on the forest (but, surprise, not salinity).

We are grateful to Dr. Bobich, a Cal Poly botany professor, for traveling from southern California to share the results of his Elfin Forest research with San Luis Obispo County scientists and residents who are concerned about the effect of drought on our Coast live oak trees.

A graduate student who is studying with Dr. Bobich, Justine Rojas, will begin work on her own research on the effects of wind on Coast live oaks in the Fall. See the interview of Justine by Jean Wheeler on page 1.

Lifelong Learners Group and Cuesta Class Visit Forest



Led by Pete Sarafian (far left), members of Lifelong Learners of the Central Coast attended a class about plant adaptations to drought.

By Pete Sarafian

A group of 11 members of Lifelong Learners of the Central Coast (LLCC) attended a class on August 10 in the Elfin Forest. Pete Sarafian led them around the boardwalk to see, feel and smell native plant drought adaptations. Over a dozen different characteristics of the native plants and their environment allow them to tolerate periods of up to nine months with no rain at all.

This is what allows the wildland hills of California to remain green while the surrounding pastures and ranch lands turn brown in summer. LLCC was a chapter of the nation-wide Osher Lifelong Learner Institute in association with Cal Poly San Luis Obispo several years ago. The central coast program broke off from Cal Poly but still relies on local educators, experts and hobbyists in various fields in our area to provide a learning experience for those with the time and interest to learn. LLCC has a membership throughout SLO County of over 100 individuals, most of whom are retirees.

Cuesta College Environmental Biology Class

Shortly after the beginning of the Fall semester, Professor Steve Hendricks brought his Environmental Biology Field Trip class to the Elfin Forest to learn about the habitats, plants, wildlife and SWAP's role in caring for the Forest. Docents for the group were Pete Sarafian and Vicky Johnsen. Vicky amused the students and Professor Hendricks by handing out nutrition bars to each person. Since the walk lasted from noon to 2 p.m., she felt that they would need something to tide them over till they could have lunch.

Rojas *continued from page 1*

At Cal Poly Pomona, Justine is employed as a Teaching Assistant under Dr. Bobich, working with his students in his Plant Form and Function Lab. Intrigued with her mentor's studies comparing pygmy oaks in the Elfin Forest at Los Osos with inland oaks in the Pomona area, she developed her M.A. thesis proposal on biomechanics and anatomy of stems of typical inland and coastal pygmy forms of *Quercus agrifolia* in relation to exposure to wind.



Justine Rojas

On her first trip to our area during that first weekend in August, Justine and Dr. Bobich visited oak groves at Lake Lopez as a possible site for coast live oaks on the Central Coast sheltered from direct sea winds, and also explored the sea-wind-challenged Elfin Forest groves at Bush Lupine Point, Rose's Grove, and the Don Klopfer Grove. Justine plans to return, hopefully during this fall, to study 6 oak trees at each of these three groves in our Elfin Forest; at an inland site on the Central Coast (possibly at Lake Lopez); and in the Voorhis Ecological Reserve on the Cal Poly Pomona campus. Leaf samples will be collected in late spring for nutrient chemical analysis.

Wind velocity will be measured at each location using a portable anemometer. Variables Justine plans to record for each tree will include height, basal trunk diameter, trunk diameter breast high, and canopy spread. The number of nodes per branch will be averaged, and size of leaves will be measured and averaged. Branches collected from each tree will be transported in plastic bags in a cooler to the lab where she can use devices to measure tensile strength of leaves and stiffness, elasticity, and breaking point as well as wood density of branches. Cross and tangential sections of the branches will also be made, stained, and studied microscopically for comparison. Leaf nutrient composition for carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium will be determined for mature leaves for all sites. Data will be analyzed statistically.

The results of Justine's careful study should give us a more thorough understanding of the ways members of this famous oak species of our state respond anatomically and biochemically to major environmental differences between the coast and inland sites. These responses allow this singular species to survive as small stunted but ecologically very significant trees on shorelines of our central coast while also as much taller, more majestic trees inland.

Golden-crowned Sparrow



Text and Photo by Jean Wheeler, Ph.D.

October and November mark the beginning of the half-year when birds of this species (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*) visit their closest relatives, the White-crowned Sparrows (*Z. leucophrys*). The latter are numerous year-round residents of our Elfin Forest (they were subject of my article for this series in February/March of 2013). Mitochondrial DNA studies show that these two evolved into separate species very recently in geologic time.

It is amazing that Golden-crowned Sparrows are very well known from studies of their migration and on their winter range from Vancouver to Baja California, yet little is definitely known about them in their summer habitat of Alaska and western Canada. The Audubon website for this species is peppered with the word “probably” for everything having to do with their feeding, nesting, and raising of their young on their summer range. Cornell Lab of Ornithology reports in their *Birds of North America* website that “the Golden-crowned Sparrow remains one of our more poorly known native passerines.” They go on to report that there have been several studies on the physiology of migration for this species, but “only one brief published field study from Alaska” that describes their reproductive biology.

The five *Zonotrichia* species are considered large sparrows. Like their white-crowned relatives, Golden-crowned Sparrows are 6-7 inches long with a wingspan of about 9 inches and weigh around an ounce. They have long tails squared at the end, and somewhat small heads for the body size, but thick bills for cracking seeds. They are grayish-brown above with brown-black streaks, two white wing bars, and are gray to brownish-gray below. Their name comes from the distinctive yellow-gold streak from just above the beak back across the crown, bordered by dark brown to black streaks. Their colors, including the gold streak, are brighter in summer, somewhat duller in winter.

On their winter range, such as our Elfin Forest, they live and forage in flocks with White-crowned Sparrows and other species. Studies show that individual birds remain with the same flock all winter and return to the same site annually. Studies also show that

the size and color of the gold streak signals social status within the flock, with the black bordering stripes contributing secondarily to success in dominance. The birds are mainly seed eaters but also consume some fruits, leaf and flower buds, plant sprouts and insects such as ants, wasps, beetles, and moths. They spend much of their time on the ground or in low shrubs.

In summer Golden-crowned Sparrows nest in low shrub areas of the tundra or edges of boreal forests in Alaska and western Canada. Remember to insert “probably” or “it is thought” frequently in the rest of this paragraph. They are mainly monogamous, (but “cheating” has been reported), nesting on the ground or occasionally in low shrubs. The nest is in a territory of the male, who defends his territory by constantly singing from an exposed perch. The song is a 3-note whistle dropping in pitch and described as “Oh, dear me” or “I’m so weary,” which led gold miners in Alaska to call the bird “Weary Willie.” The nest (one of the last scientifically described for North American songbirds) is a cup of twigs, grass, moss, and ferns lined with fine grasses, animal hair, and feathers. There are 1-2 broods with 3-5 eggs, each under an inch long. Incubation is 11-13 days and eggs hatch to naked and feeble young, eyes closed, but ready to leave the nest in perhaps 9-12 days. Young may be fed mostly insects. Parents apparently forage with the mate or alone in summer.

Predators of Golden-crowned Sparrows include several species of hawks and owls, small mammals such as cats, and even ground squirrels. They are probably well-insulated by their subarctic breeding range from much direct human impact, but almost nothing is known concerning how climate change is altering their habitat. Their numbers have remained high and even increasing slightly in Christmas Bird Counts since 1960, and they are so far considered a species of least concern.

As you walk the boardwalk or designated sand trails between now and April, watch for mixed flocks of small birds dominated by sparrows with black and white heads and check for sparrows with gold streaks instead of the white one.



A Photo from the Forest

Vicky Johnsen shared this image of California aster, one of the Elfin Forest’s late summer / early autumn flowers.

Elfin Forest Roses

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

(Ed Note: Revised by Dr. Walters from Junel/July 2005 issue)

Bonnie's drawing of the California rose (*Rosa californica*) was used back in 2005. Why a repeat? It brings us up to date by acknowledging that a second species of wild rose has been identified in the Elfin Forest by Dr. David Keil, ground rose (*R. spithamea*). Further, it gives us a reason to look for the new rose in the fall when both species are past their blooming period because the flowers of the two species are essentially identical. They share the almost identical large, five, whitish to pink to reddish petals and many clustered stamens in the middle that resemble a tuft of yellow-tipped hairs. Both roses also have prickles on the stem but more about those later. So how can one tell the two species apart? It turns out that you are going to have to look beyond the flowers to the stems and fruit.

The reddish fruits of roses are called hips, which might bear some explaining. They are what botanists call an accessory fruit. This is because the fruit's flesh is not derived from ovary tissue. The many tiny ovaries within a rose flower mature into many dry double-layered structures, often mistakenly called seeds. The outer layer is the fruit wall and the inner layer is the seed coat. Botanists call this fruit type an achene. In these achenes we find the first difference in the two species. California rose has yellow achenes whereas ground rose has usually tan or brown ones. The many achenes are enclosed by a fleshy red layer that develops from a vase-shaped structure derived from the fused bases of the stamens, petals and sepals. Botanists call this structure a hypanthium, calyx tube or floral cup. It turns out the surface of the hips are different in the two species. Ground rose hips have many stalked, sticky, glandular hairs whereas California rose hips have very short, very numerous, glandless hairs. Thus the need to look for these two species in the fall fruiting season.

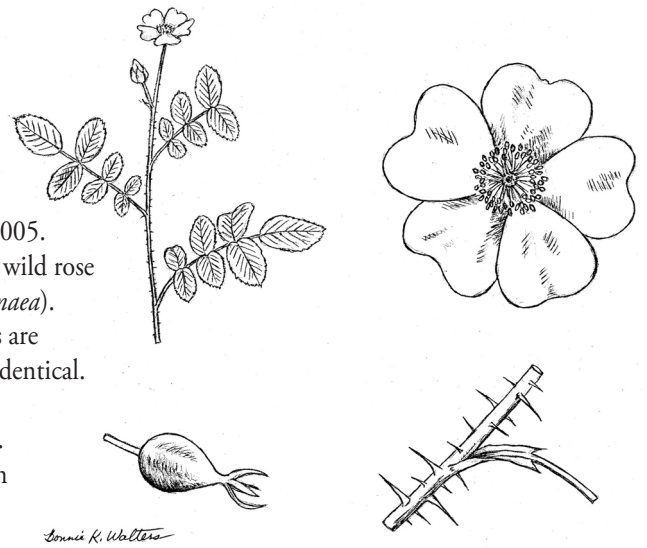
The stems and leaves also show differences. Both species bear prickles along their stems. Prickles are botanically sharp pointed 'ouchies' that arise from the skin or epidermis of stems and/or leaves. There are two other types of sharp structures, spines and thorns, but these are associated only with nodes or where leaves are attached so they don't concern us here. Prickles are distributed all over the surface. The prickles in the California rose are relatively scattered, large and woody with curved, very sharp tips. In contrast, ground rose prickles are numerous, straight and relatively thin. California rose is moderately tall with pointed-tip leaflets (acute). It grows up to a meter tall and spreads over several feet. It would not be a plant to walk through in short pants. Ground rose is weak stemmed, short (usually less than 2 feet) and often less than a foot wide. Its compound leaves bear a terminal leaflet that is dull pointed to flat (truncate).

My guess is that the California rose will be relatively easy to find in the Elfin Forest. It favors stream banks or seeps and ranges throughout California reaching into Southern Oregon and Northern Baja California. It even ranges into mid elevations in the Sierra Nevada. In the Elfin Forest, it is most easily seen near the NW corner of the boardwalk loop near where the spur to Siena's View branches off. This area has the most optimal soil moisture availability along the boardwalk. Ground rose is pretty much a species of coastal Northern California, ranging primarily from the bay area north. It favors woody habitats so it is to be sought in the pygmy oak groves or on the steep slopes arising from the bay. The statewide distribution does have one interesting twist and that is an isolated cluster of collection from coastal mid San Luis Obispo County, i.e. around Morro Bay. So now I give you all the challenge: go out and find the elusive ground rose!

The rose flower and hip have a long history of use by humans as food and medicine. A tea was made from the petals and both humans and wildlife ate the hips. The story goes that during World War II, the English were having trouble getting citrus into the country due to

German submarine activity. This resulted in a shortage of vitamin C so they went on an active search for a local source. They were surprised to find it in a plant that every respectable English person had in his or her garden--the rose. I read that rose hips have more Vitamin C, calcium, phosphorus, and iron than oranges. One can guess that a lot of rose hip tea was consumed during the war years. Rose hip tea is also available from local health food stores. My references indicate that all of the rose species can be used in this way, but that some are more palatable than others. Personal experience can recommend wild rose hips as a pleasant nibble during late summer and fall hikes.

Bonnie's drawing and this article were inspired by a plant we purchased at a local plant sale. Since it is a plant of moist soils, it is more at home in a watered garden. It should be planted in full sun, but it can tolerate partial shade. It doesn't seem to have any soil preference.



California Wild Rose. Photo by Rich Johnson.

Weed Warrior Reports

By Vicky Johnsen, Conservation Committee Co-Chair

July 7 – What Would Happen if...?

Despite the forecasted hot temperatures, Dave Bowlus, Pat Brown, Lannie Erickson, Vicky Johnsen, Skip Rotstein, Pete Sarafian and Dean Thompson, AKA: “The Seven Samurai,” did battle with the invasive grasses (all but Dean, who finished trimming trails).

The area targeted for grass removal was the entrance to the Elfin Forest from the 16th Street parking area, all along up to and past the parking area at 17th Street. Much discussion ensued on the need for some kind of “Fire Break” boundary strip between the houses that abut the Elfin Forest from 17th through to 10th Street. A fire in the Elfin Forest would be disastrous, as the response with bulldozers to protect the houses would cause lasting damage.

Ron Rasmussen’s freshly baked cookies were greatly appreciated by all (as were the ice-cold water bottles). It was a very successful “Weed Warrior” day.

August 4 – A Baker’s Dozen Does the Job

Thirteen “Weed-Warrior-Plus-Volunteers” put in about a total time of 35 hours on Saturday, August 4th .

Craig Johnsen helped Rich and Prisila Johnson and Skip Rotstein replace a board down by the Sienna View Overlook. It went so well that the Johnsons went back to their truck and used some board stock to replace a smaller piece down in the lower section of the boardwalk. Rich & Prisila also spent the remainder of the time pulling out and replacing bad fastenings all along the boardwalk.

Pete Sarafian organized the replacement of the temporary fence and sign at “Butterfly Hill,” assisted by Pat Brown, Dave Bowlus, Bob Barantley and Fred Sharp.

Dean Thompson and Pat Brown trimmed the lower boardwalk section beginning east of Rose’s Grove with help from Frances Leitch. Dean’s future trimming plans are to continue working west from Rose’s Grove.

After making sure everyone had a job, Vicky joined Skip Rotstein and Lannie Erickson down on the northern section of South Bay Boulevard and the Elfin Forest boundary cutting out and pulling up encroaching ice plant.

Dave Bowlus started early and patched the rotting areas on 3 benches. It should be noted that all the benches are in need of refinishing and some need to be repaired. Dave also replaced a broken/rusted portion of the symbolic fence.

Ron’s final batch of cookies were very appreciated. We will miss his magnificent culinary contribution to the Weed Warrior’s Work Party. Many thanks, Ron!

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



During the July 7th work party (L-R), Dave Bowlus, Skip Rotstein, Pete Sarafian and Vicky Johnsen filled several bags of veldt grass and other invasive plants between 16th and 17th Streets.

Photo by Pat Brown.



Craig Johnsen (left) and Rich Johnson replaced the damaged board in the photo and one other during the August 4th work party.

Photo by Prisila Johnson.

Let’s All Pull Together—Poem

By Lannie Erickson

As August and summer now come to an end,
We take time to honor those who labor to blend
Their respect for the forest with the strength of their arms,
Their passion for Nature with their love for its charms.

When that first Saturday of the month rolls around,
We find them like warriors standing their ground
To rout out the weeds that would overgrow.
They allow native plants their glory to show.

They put forth their effort in fair and foul weather.
Such grim tasks are fun when we all work together.
Our splendid Weed Warriors deserve commendation
To honor their hard work and staunch dedication.

Remembering Barbara Machado

Photo courtesy of Machado family

Editor's note: Barbara Machado, a key person in helping SWAP to purchase the lower 38.7 acres of the Elfin Forest during 1990 through 1994, passed away on July 17. Following are remembrances of Barbara.

Pat Grimes, SWAP Secretary and Oakleaves Editor, 1985 to 1998

I have always maintained that the best thing I ever did for SWAP was service on the committee that chose Barbara for our Development Director. She had an amazing knack for getting people to do things. The expertise and enthusiasm she brought to our project marked a huge turning point in our success. Fundraising, grant writing and public relations went into high gear and doing these sometimes challenging tasks became fun.

They all said that it would never happen in Los Osos – that over \$1 million could be raised for the purchase of land already vested toward a housing project. As soon as Barbara joined in writing grants that raised impressive amounts of money, the project went from being a dream to a possibility, and when donations started coming in, even from children's allowances, it went from a possibility to the probability of success because the community became united in the idea of preserving the Elfin Forest.



Elsie Deitz, Special Events Coordinator, 1991- 1997

The story I tell most often is about Barbara's unique style of breaking barriers while acquiring new friends. Mrs. Otto, owner of the property already dedicated for development, met with Barbara, and then President Rose Bowker, to talk about the idea of turning the forest of pygmy oaks into a preserve. Mrs. Otto was firm about declaring that she wasn't about to give anything away to benefit the community of Los Osos, that she had an appraisal of \$3 million for the property. Barbara brought a gift of her home made jam to Mrs. Otto, which broke the ice. That led to negotiation for an independent appraisal of the 38.7 acres, as well as an invitation for us to visit her anytime. Barbara's deep involvement in the acquisition of the Elfin Forest resulted in helping to shepherd an idea into a legacy for posterity.

Yolanda Waddell, SWAP Board Member, 1985 to present:

I met Barbara in 1990, when the SWAP Board advertised to hire a Development Coordinator. When she came for an interview, we explained that we were making very slow progress in raising funds to buy the lower 39 acres of the Elfin Forest, and needed help. We told her that so far we had only raised about \$6,700, and she said, "You can't afford me, but I will volunteer to be your Development Director." Then she said, "Raising \$3 million dollars is a piece of cake." (She had helped to raise \$68.5 million to build a performing arts center in Orange County.) Many pieces of cake and about 4 years later, SWAP, with the help of Barbara Machado, finally achieved its goal. The El Moro Elfin Forest Natural Area became part of San Luis Obispo County Parks, and her job was done.

SWAP put on a big celebration that began at the Rexall Pharmacy parking lot next to the Elfin Forest Mural, and ended in Celestial Meadow in the Elfin Forest. Accompanied by the Spooner's Cove String Band, Barbara danced and sang her own version of "This Land is My Land," finishing with "the Elfin Forest was made for you and me." In remembering Barbara, the word, "joy" comes to my mind. She was joy personified, and has left the world so much better for her having been here.

Katie Davis – Active Board member from the 1990s through 2001

When I think of her, I think of the biggest smile and kindest spirit. Her warmth and generous heart loomed large. I didn't know her well, yet she would treat me like an old friend. I'm sorry to hear of her passing.



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



Text and Photos By Jean Wheeler

Rejoice, bird lovers—the fall migration season is upon us again! Throughout October and November, Morro Bay National Estuary will be receiving water and shore birds migrating through or arriving for their winter vacation here. Terrestrial species will also be settling into the Elfin Forest for the winter or migrating through on their way to their tropical winter resorts.

Terrestrial species arriving around the boardwalk for the winter include Golden-crowned Sparrows (featured in my Page 4 article), as well as Fox and Lincoln's Sparrows. They will be visiting resident White-crowned Sparrows from October to March or April. Ruby-crowned Kinglets also settle in for the winter. American Robins and Hermit Thrushes replace our summer Swainson's Thrushes while the latter depart southward. Yellow-rumped Warblers peak in these months and Say's Phoebe joins its year-round relative, the Black Phoebe. A dawn or dusk walker in the Elfin Forest may be lucky enough to see or more likely hear a wintering short-eared owl. Passing through in small flocks, we can hope to catch views of Cedar Waxwings, Western Tanagers, and Pine Siskins.

Several species of ducks begin to arrive on the estuary as early as August and September. By October we can enjoy watching many dabbling ducks floating on the surface of Morro Bay, dipping their heads way down to seek food with their tails pointing up in the air. Those to look for include Mallards, Northern Pintails, Gadwalls, many American and perhaps a few wandering Eurasian Wigeons, as well as Northern Shovelers and Teal (Blue-winged, Cinnamon, and Green-winged).

Diving ducks plunge completely below the surface disappearing in search of their food. Among those to look for as they pop back up to the surface are Scaup (Lesser and Greater), Ring-Necked, Canvasback, Surf Scoter, Bufflehead, Common Golden-eye, Red-breasted Merganser, and Ruddy Ducks. Horned, Eared, Pied-billed, Western, and Clark's Grebes also arrive from September to November remaining until March or April.

Shorebirds such as Sandpipers, Dowitchers, and the American Avocet reach peak populations in winter with birds arriving from shorelines farther north that won't support them in winter.

October and November are minimal in colorful flowers, but



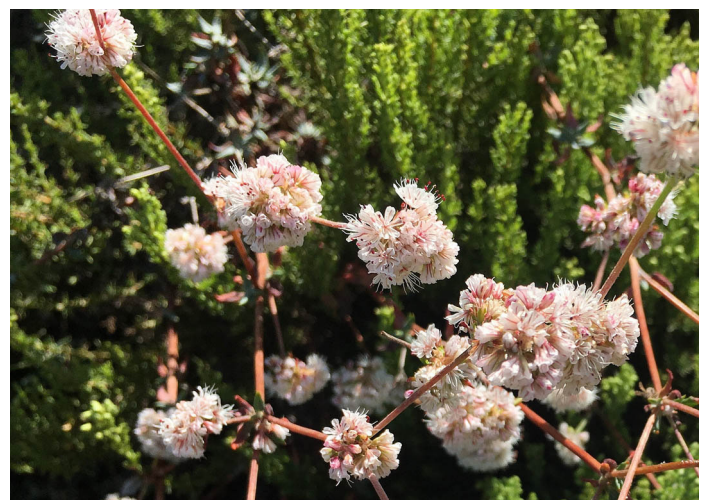
*Black Sage (above)
Northern Pintail (above left)*

if fall and winter rains come early, the Elfin Forest could be green-ing up in preparation for wonderful floral displays in the winter and spring months to come. A few species normally continuing to show some blossoms in October and November drought are California Sagebrush (white), Dune Buckwheat (originally white flowers have aged to pink or rust), California Asters (pinkish to lavender-white petals around yellow central disks), Coyote Brush (white and yellow flowers), and Seaside Golden Yarrow. The formerly white but now dead blossoms of Black Sage remain on their stems like black pompoms, honoring the Halloween season!

On an autumn walk in the Elfin Forest, you may take pleasure in green leaves on shrubs and flowers opening here just as they are falling and will be gone for months in most of our nation. Enjoy the everyday activities of our year-around resident wildlife as well as all the winged arrivals, departures, and passers through on the great fall bird migrations.

A Photo from the Forest

Rich Johnson shared this image of Coastal buckwheat, one of the Elfin Forest's late summer / early autumn flowers.



WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

October 13, 8:30 a.m. – Bird Inventory

Note the earlier walk time

Jim Royer will lead us on a bird inventory walk in preparation for the Big Sit! on Sunday, October 14. This international event hosted by Birdwatcher's Digest (www.birdwatchersdigest.com) pits participating groups of birders against one another to identify the most species of birds 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 20, 9:30 a.m. – The Importance of Soils to the Elfin Forest

Have you heard the term "Baywood Fine Sand?" It's the name of the predominant soil in Los Osos, as well as in the Elfin Forest. It's what you walk on when the pavement ends, because all of Los Osos was once a series of sand dunes. **Cal Poly soil scientist Chip Appel** will describe local soils and talk about their importance in determining what plants will grow in them. We'll learn how sandy soil both benefits and stresses plants. Chip will also explain why the presence of sandy soils in Los Osos reflects climate change and seismic activity over the past couple million years.

November 17, 9:30 a.m. – Tuning in to Nature Writers

Do you enjoy being read to? Here's an opportunity to stroll around the Elfin Forest boardwalk and hear the thoughts and words of famous natural history writers. **Historian Robert Pavlik** will share selections from the works of Robinson Jeffers, Wallace Stegner, Rachel Carson, Gary Snyder, and other writers and poets from this and past centuries. Bob will provide you with a delightful menu of descriptions and impressions to enjoy in the Elfin Forest environment. He'll also bring a handout of his readings for those who want to read further.

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 closed-toe 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.



Birder Jessica Griffiths (far right in white cap) led a very popular "Birding by Ear" walk in July, giving walk participants tips on how to identify birds by their calls and songs. Photo by Dave Bowlus.

Los Osos resident Cindy R reported that she enjoyed the "Birding by Ear Walk" in July: "This was a great hike. We heard and saw many birds including a Hutton's vireo. I have been practicing my bird listening skills in the back yard and neighborhood since then. Elfin Forest has fantastic hikes."



In August, PG&E weatherman John Lindsey (standing on bench) explained why the geography of San Luis Obispo County affects where and how much rainfall each area receives. Photo by Libby Cheda.

Elfin Forest Sightings

Pete Sarafian saw two Black-tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionus columbianus*, also called mule deer) in the Elfin Forest on August 16th. They looked like the two that were recently seen by Jean Wheeler (see article on page 4 of August/September Oakleaves). One was a doe who seemed interested in Pete's activity. The other, a young buck with four points on his antlers, was busy munching on greenery and took no interest. The two were browsing near the intersection of the 12th and 13th Street sand trails. This is only the second time in two decades that Pete has seen deer in the Forest. Previously Pete has seen tracks left in the sand several times in various locations.

Please Report 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: oakleaf@elfin-forest.org or leave a message on SWAP's answering machine, (805) 528-0392.



Eleven sturdy hikers, who walked the California Coastal Trail along the Central Coast, were given a tour of the Elfin Forest by Pete Sarafian. Phot by Pete Sarafian.

Elfin Forest Visitors

Coastwalks Group Visits Elfin Forest

Text and photo by Pete Sarafian

Eleven members of Coastwalks California went on a tour of the Elfin Forest on Friday, July 13. Pete Sarafian hosted the group that also hiked much of San Luis Obispo County's Coastal Trail segments. The group had been camping and traversing the county's coastal beaches and bluffs since the previous Sunday. Each evening Coastwalks volunteers provided dinner and a series of talks about a wide range of topics.

Coastwalks conducts many coastal camping and hiking trips of about one week or more from Northern to Southern California. The organization advocates for the establishment of a coastal trail from the Oregon border down to Mexico. It is headquartered in Sebastapol, CA.

Thank You to Our Generous Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter, SWAP Database Coordinator

RENEWING MEMBERS:

Libbie Agran & Guy Fitzwater*	Marilyn Moore*
Andrea Bersie*	Pat Murray*
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Dianne Bougher*	Patrick O'Donnell*
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Sally & Randy Knight*	Michael Ward*
Wendy McKeown	Norma Wightman*

DONATIONS:

Bill & Sue McQuilkin (lecture)
SLO County Parks & Recreation (printing)
Marilynn & Edward Vilas
Yolanda & Jay Waddell (speaker)

**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.

Board of Directors Election Next Issue

It is a goal of SWAP to increase the number of members on the Board of Directors. A principal purpose of the Annual Celebration or Meeting is to bring SWAP members together to vote for members of the Board of Directors. We also report on our financial status and the accomplishments of the year. We have concluded that this year we can accomplish the voting and reporting by including a ballot and our reports in the December/January Oakleaves.

If you would like to serve on SWAP's Board of Directors, please send an e-mail to swap@elfin-forest.org with a description of your past experience with other organizations and a statement as to why you would like to serve on SWAP's Board. Or you can mail your statement to SWAP Elections, P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412. The deadline for applying for the Board of Directors is Friday, October 26. For more information about being a board member, call 805-528-0392 and leave a message.

A Board of Directors ballot will appear in the December/January Oakleaves with the names of all candidates for the Board. A member of SWAP's Board serves for two years. The ballot must be mailed to the address in the above paragraph, or scanned and e-mailed to swap@elfin-forest.org. Deadline for mailed or e-mailed ballots is Friday, December 7. Also, ballots may be delivered to the December Board meeting on Monday, December 10, at Morro Shores Mobile Home Park, 633 Ramona Avenue, Los Osos in the park's Community Center. Ballots will be counted at the December Board meeting and results will be posted on the home page of SWAP's website, www.elfin-forest.org.



Mural Shirts & Other Great Holiday Gifts

Order these gorgeous shirts for yourself or as gifts. They are black with artist Barbara Rosenthal's lovely mural print in color on both the front and back of each shirt. They are available in adult sizes from small to triple extra large as short-sleeved or long-sleeved T-shirts or as thick, warm sweatshirts. See 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.

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

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

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

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Board of Directors Election Coming Up – see page 10!

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Holiday Shopping With SWAP!

Mural prints signed by artist Barbara Rosenthal and shirts, coffee mugs, and caps decorated with her mural print make excellent gifts. Or give the Alphabet Bird Book to your child or grandchild. A good stocking stuffer is our Pocket Guide. Use the order form on page 11 to either call in or mail your order, and your gifts will promptly be mailed to you.

A gift membership to SWAP or a tax-deductible donation in the name of your relative or friend would also be much appreciated. Your donation can reduce your income tax bite and help with special projects in the Elfin Forest such as soil erosion control, boardwalk repair, and habitat enhancement for native species.

Thinking of Switching to Online Oakleaves?

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 oakleaf@elfin-forest.org with the subject: Switch me to online.

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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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