



OAK LEAVES

A PUBLICATION OF SMALL WILDERNESS AREA PRESERVATION
P.O. BOX 6442, LOS OSOS, CALIFORNIA 93412-6442 ♦ (805) 528-0392 ♦ JUNE / JULY 2019



New Elfin Forest species: California bedstraw (Galium californicum), scattered occurrences throughout oak woodland.

Photo © by Bing Huey.

This was one of several new species discovered in the Elfin Forest by Kristen Nelson, botanist with Terra Verde Environmental Consulting.

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Elfin Forest Biological Assessment Report

Editor's Note: Following is a synopsis of the Elfin Forest Biological Assessment Report prepared by Terra Verde Environmental Consulting and submitted in its final form in March, 2019, to the SWAP Board and County Parks. Terra Verde's survey of the Elfin Forest's native habitat, wildlife and plant communities, and infrastructure such as fencing and erosion control features, was conducted in June, July and August, 2018. Three staff persons worked on the project: Brooke Langle, owner and Principal Biologist; Kristen Nelson, Botanist; and Rhett Blanton, Wildlife Biologist. The complete report will be available to the public at a future time. For more information, send an e-mail to swap@elfin-forest.org. Details on specific recommendations will be discussed in future articles.

Introduction

This biological assessment report was prepared to review the health of the El Moro Elfin Forest Natural Area (Forest) and provide specific recommendations for future management of the Forest.

The biological assessment is intended to serve as an update to the Recovery Action Plan made for County Parks by the Morro Group (now SWCA) in 2003, with specific focus on assessing the current health of the Forest and management issues that were not a concern in 2003. The primary objectives of this report include:

- Provide a 2018 update to the native habitat baseline conditions by mapping plants, wildlife, and plant communities;
- compare 2018 conditions to 2003 conditions and identify areas of change;
- identify and map locations of invasive and non-native plants and animals;
- identify and map potential erosion concerns;
- document potential impacts to native habitat as a result of overuse and/or non-native wildlife activity;
- assess management concerns pertaining to human-wildlife interactions and public outreach; and
- provide recommendations regarding the ongoing management of the Forest.

The recommendations made in this report are based on direct observations made during a series of field surveys completed in June, July, and August, 2018; information documented in past reports; personal communication with local residents and SWAP members who live near and volunteer in the Forest; and a literature review of publicly-available information on the resources and potential threats identified in the Forest.

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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:

Jan DiLeo, Chair
Skip Rotstein, Vice Chair
Dave Bowlus, Treasurer
Yolanda Waddell, Secretary
Beverly Boyd, Recording Secretary

The SWAP Board of Directors meets monthly
at 2 p.m. on the 2nd Tuesday of the month
at the Hobby House,
Morro Shores Mobile Home Park,
633 Ramona Ave., Los Osos.

The next meetings are
Tuesday, June 11
and Tuesday, July 9.

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.



In May, Dave and Pat Akey (center) moved from Los Osos to Tucson, Arizona to live near their daughters. In thanks for their many years of service, the SWAP Board presented a framed mural print to them at a celebratory luncheon. The Board also gave framed murals to retired Board members Ron Rasmussen (left) and Pat Murray (right), each of whom served on the board for 19 years. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

Pat Murray Retires From SWAP Board

By Yolanda Waddell

Pat Murray is enthusiastic about pulling weeds. After she retired from her position at American Airlines in 1999, it was natural for Pat to join the SWAP Weed Warriors every month. In early 2000, Pat was invited to join the SWAP Board of Directors and to become the Property and Records Committee Chair. That post included being in charge of ordering, selling and keeping an inventory of our merchandise such as T-shirts and sweatshirts, mural prints and Pocket Guides.

Pat dove into her job with zeal, organizing and staffing SWAP's Oktoberfest booth. In 2001, she worked with Barbara and Rosey Rosenthal to organize a fundraiser for the Elfin Forest at the San Luis Artists Gallery in San Luis Obispo. Next she had the inspiration to place an order form at the end of each issue of Oakleaves to enable members to purchase our merchandise anytime. She often took to the road, distributing brochures, newsletters and pocket guides to chambers of commerce, libraries and bookstores, promoting SWAP and the Elfin Forest wherever she went.

In the years that followed, Pat set up and took down countless booths; designed new merchandise like the Elfin Forest caps and mural mugs; coordinated each of SWAP's annual celebration gatherings and volunteer recognition events; moved (with other board members' help) all of SWAP's belongings to a larger storage unit; and kept the storage unit organized and tidy.

She also is the "host" of the SWAP message phone, recording a new outgoing message each month that describes the month's events. She has been the de facto Chair of the Volunteer Committee and has served on several other committees such as the Planning Committee.

In March of this year, Pat decided that 19 years of attending monthly board of directors' meetings was enough, and submitted her resignation. Much to our relief, Pat hasn't lost her interest in SWAP and the Elfin Forest. She will continue as Chair of Property and Records, as our phone message taker, as a member of the Planning Committee, and as booster-in-chief of our organization and its goals. The SWAP Board of Directors is grateful for the thousands of hours and mountains of energy that Pat has given to supporting the Elfin Forest and helping to make SWAP the effective organization that it is. Thank you, Pat!

Report *continued from page 1*

The Forest supports a unique natural ecosystem and serves a diverse community of local residents, tourists, and research entities. The purpose of this biological assessment is to review and document the overall health of the Forest. This report provides an updated inventory of biological resources present in the Forest, including the current status and extent of known vegetation communities, and special-status and invasive botanical and wildlife species populations. This updated information was compared to data collected as part of the 2003 Recovery Action Plan. In addition, this report reviews specific management concerns identified by SWAP, including erosion, overuse, human-wildlife interactions, and aging infrastructure (e.g., signs, fencing, etc.).

Survey Methodology

In addition to field surveys in 2018, the assessment included information compiled from past reports, historical aerial imagery, and personal communication with volunteers in the Forest on a regular basis. In particular, current members of SWAP spent time with Terra Verde biologists in the Forest to share information about historical conditions, past restoration efforts, and ongoing maintenance activities, as well as the locations of past observations of wild boar (*Sus scrofa*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), and invasive plants.

Field surveys focused on documenting updated baseline conditions, identifying potential management concerns and/or threats to the health of the Forest, and identifying recommended management strategies that can be implemented by SWAP in coordination with County Parks and California State Parks. The 2018 assessment included mapping the current boundaries of vegetation communities; documenting the overall health of the Forest and each community; and identifying and mapping invasive species infestations, erosion concerns, evidence of invasive wildlife activity, and impacts associated with overuse. In addition, the current condition and functionality of fencing and signage was assessed.

Field surveys included an inventory of all detected botanical and wildlife species, including indirect wildlife observations (e.g., tracks, scat, vocalization, etc.). Vegetation communities were mapped and classified according to classifications used in previous reports, as well as descriptions used in the second edition of *A Manual of California Vegetation (MCV)* classification system (Sawyer et al., 2009).

The 2018 surveys focused on identification and mapping of special-status and invasive species occurrences, as well as incidental observations



New Elfin Forest species: Western dogwood (Cornus sericea ssp. Occidentalis), a few individuals in riparian woodland. Photo by Kristen Nelson

of new species and confirmations of ‘unconfirmed’ species included on the list of Vascular Plants of the Elfin Forest (SWAP, 2018). A list of all wildlife species observations and new botanical species observations was created.

Results

In 2018, a total of 76 acres of habitat were mapped within the terrestrial areas of the Forest and along the edge of the estuary. Remaining acreage of the Forest extends into the salt marsh and mudflats of the estuary, which are intermittently inundated during high tide. Five special-status botanical species and nine invasive weeds were documented, all previously known to occur in the Forest. Similarly, four special-status and three non-native wildlife species were observed, all known to occur in the Forest prior to the 2018 surveys.

Vegetation communities observed in the Forest include coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) woodland, maritime chaparral, coastal dune scrub, riparian woodland, brackish marsh, and limited areas of ice plant mat. Mudflats and salt marsh habitat that surround the western and northern edges of the Forest were not mapped. The current boundaries of vegetation communities were mapped in the field and on the desktop using GPS and GIS software, with the aid of current and historical aerial imagery.

Invasive Species

Accumulated knowledge about invasive weed infestations in the Forest currently exists in varied formats and locations, and is therefore difficult to track and, in some cases, is no longer available. The 2018 surveys included mapping of invasive weeds in the Forest; this included specific efforts to visit locations of previously mapped infestations, where possible, to verify the current status. The negative ecological impacts of the species are well documented (Cal-IPC, 2018). Preventing new infestations and controlling existing populations is a primary management concern for the Forest. In order to simplify and consolidate future tracking of invasive weed populations in the Forest, all available information regarding the primary species of concern was compiled and summarized.

Use of the Forest by non-native wildlife appears to be limited to three species: wild boar, brown garden snail (*Cornu aspersum*, formerly *Helix aspersa*), and Argentine ant (*Linepithema humile*). Non-native bird species common in residential areas, such as starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*), may use the Forest on occasion. In addition, domestic cats (*Felis catus*)



New Elfin Forest species: Blue elderberry (Sambucus nigra ssp. caerulea) a few individuals in oak groves north of 17th Street, near 11th Street, and in riparian woodland. Photo by Jean Wheeler.

Report *continued on page 4*

Report *continued from page 3*

have been occasionally observed hunting native wildlife in the Forest. These species have the potential to negatively impact native and special-status wildlife species in the Forest and disrupt natural ecological processes.

Erosion and Sedimentation

Four erosion features were observed during field surveys. Erosion in the Forest may result in unwanted impacts to native habitats, loss of soil and sedimentation into the estuary, deposition of eroded sand onto streets and public access areas, and, in one case, potentially unsafe or unstable conditions if left unattended. In an attempt to address these concerns, numerous temporary erosion control methods have been employed throughout the Forest, including monofilament fiber rolls, silt fencing, sand bags, and imported rock and concrete chunks used as slope protection. In most cases, these controls are degraded and no longer functioning. The remnants of degraded monofilament erosion controls are unsightly and present a significant risk to wildlife due to the potential for entrapment and inadvertent ingestion. Four primary areas of erosion concern were documented and recorded using a hand-held GPS unit.

Special-status Plants

Five special-status plants were observed during the 2018 surveys, all previously known to occur in the Forest: Morro manzanita, sand almond (*Prunus fasciculata* var. *punctata*), suffrutescent wallflower (*Erysimum suffrutescens*), Michael's rein orchid (*Piperia michaelii*), and southwestern spiny rush (*Juncus acutus* subsp. *leopoldii*). Observations of these species during the 2018 surveys were recorded using a GPS unit. In addition, the total number of observed individuals for each species was recorded or estimated.

Special-status Wildlife

Numerous special-status wildlife species are known or have potential to occur in the Forest, either as long-term or migratory residents. In 2018, direct and indirect observations of four special-status wildlife species were documented, all known to occur in the Forest: Morro Shoulderband Snail, Blainville's horned lizard, great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*), and monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*). Great blue heron and monarch butterfly likely migrate and forage through the area, but no rookeries (great blue heron) or overwintering sites (monarch butterfly) are known in the Forest.

Climate Change

The extent and nature of the effects of climate change on native habitats, ecosystems, and individual species is just beginning to be characterized and understood at the landscape scale. Interacting factors such as fire suppression practices and fire history further complicate our ability to predict and quantify the impacts of climate change on natural ecosystems at the local level. Though available research and predictive models provide important information about likely changes that can be anticipated, the specific effects on small, isolated wilderness areas such as the Elfin Forest are yet to be seen, and are likely to be highly site-specific. Anticipated effects of climate change include drought stress resulting from altered weather and precipitation patterns, increased risk of catastrophic fire, individual species loss, shifts in community assemblages, and associ-



New Elfin Forest species: Fat-hen or Spearscale (Atriplex prostrata) found at edge of Los Osos Creek, west of bridge. Photo by Kristen Nelson.

ated reduction in habitat stability due to changes in the composition of flora and fauna at micro and macro trophic levels.

Management Recommendations

The primary management considerations identified during the 2018 assessment include:

- Controlling and eradicating invasive species
- Discouraging off-trail access and unauthorized activities in the Forest
- Stabilizing significant erosion features
- Engaging and informing the public about the sensitivity and unique diversity of the Forest in order to encourage responsible use and appreciation of the Forest
- Maintaining organized and up-to-date data and records regarding Forest resources, projects, and maintenance activities

Conclusion

The results of the 2018 assessment included identification of several management considerations that may be implemented by County Parks, California State Parks, and/or SWAP to improve public engagement with and awareness of Forest resources, foster responsible use, enhance areas of impacted habitat and erosion concerns, and ensure successful management of Forest for the foreseeable future. When SWAP signed their first Adopt-A-Park agreement with County Parks in 1995, maintenance concerns were initially focused on addressing significant habitat impacts and invasive weed infestations that resulted from the unregulated historical use of the area for various recreational activities. More than two decades of work by County Parks and SWAP volunteers have resulted in the successful restoration and enhancement of native habitats throughout the Forest.

Though management and control of weed infestations will be an ongoing effort in the Forest, many invasive species have been brought under control. With the successes of the last two decades of work by County Parks and SWAP volunteers, management efforts can now shift from an emphasis on responding to past degradation to proactively engaging the community to be involved and use the Forest responsibly while also encouraging use of the Forest for professional and academic research projects.

Wooly Phlox or Wooly Star

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

Editor's Note: We are revisiting an article that Dirk wrote for our June/July, 2008 Oakleaves. Wooly star can be seen in the Elfin Forest from the end of May through the end of June.

Bonnie's drawing for this issue of *Oakleaves* is a beautiful plant that shows up in the Elfin Forest in late May or early June. It is *Eriastrum densifolium* ssp. *densifolium*. It is of some interest that most flower books for amateurs don't mention this plant at all, yet it has as many common names as there are local floras. In Clifton Smith's *A Flora of Santa Barbara County, Ca.*, it is called Mesa Phlox; in *The Dune Mother's Wildflower Guide* it is Dunes Blue Phlox or Wooly Blue Star; and in Mary Coffeen's *Central Coast Wild Flowers* it is simply Wooly Star or *Eriastrum*. I have also heard it called simply Wooly Phlox.

The genus name, *Eriastrum*, refers to the silvery wooly hairs (eri-) surrounding the star-like (-astrum) flowers. In our variety, the leaves are also covered with the silvery hairs. Most references note its likeness to the genus, *Gilia*, but note that it differs primarily in wooly phlox flowers producing sepals of different sizes. Our coastal variety grows in open areas within stabilized coastal dunes from Monterey County south where it forms tight to straggly gray mounds usually covered with pale blue flowers. White flowered plants are also reported, but I personally have not seen them. The plant produces herbaceous shoots from a woody root crown. It is, therefore another one of those plants sometimes treated as an herb and sometimes as a shrub.

In the Morro Bay area, *Eriastrum* grows in open areas within stabilized coastal dunes. How can there be open areas within stabilized dunes? It's not easy, and this is why I suspect that one never finds more than a few patches of it. Heavy use of a dune area breaks up the fragile surface crust that can resist the wind, which allows the sand to start moving. I know of only one area in the Elfin Forest where it has appeared almost every year that I can remember. It is to the left of the path from 15th Street to the boardwalk and just before the boardwalk. Recently, a protective fence has been placed around the area in order to protect it and the other plants occupying the area.

Our coastal Wooly star is somewhat of an oddity in the genus *Eriastrum*. All other California members of this genus are annuals. Further, most of them are inhabitants of interior deserts. Even the other varieties of our species are denizens of dry interior mountains and valleys. In other words, this plant is one of several coastal dune species that are widely separated from their desert relatives. In most, like the dune almond (*Prunus fasciculata*), a case can be made for Native Californians carrying or trading these useful plants that they then planted or allowed to escape into the coastal dunes. However, I think it would be difficult to make that case for this plant, as I can find no reference to any human uses for the plant.

In her book, Mary Coffeen relates a story of a friend and her collecting seed and trying to grow it. They reported no success and even asked their readers to report if they had had any. The authors of the treatment of *Eriastrum* in the Jepson Manual also thought it worthy of the garden. However, they, too, note the difficulty in cultivating it. It would certainly make a beautiful garden plant for a sunny, sandy patch.



Wooly Star, photo by Jean Wheeler.

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.

Weed Warrior Reports

March 9: Dedicated work by a mini crew

SWAP was rained out on the usual first Saturday of the month, March 2nd. Only two dedicated Weed Warriors, Dave Bowlus and Pete Sarafian, were able to make it to the “rain date” work party. Here are their reports:

Dave Bowlus: I started out to do erosion control, going up 15th, and planned to work my way down to 11th. But when I reached the next trail at 14th Street I found that a water bar had come loose. I drove to the hardware store and bought materials, picked up a drill and sledgehammer at my house, and returned to reinstall the water bar. I did a little more erosion control afterwards. That was it.

Pete Sarafian: Thanks to Skip, *et al* for making the curbside (at the foot of the South Bay Boulevard slope) relatively weed-free in February. I have never seen it look so good. Today I spent the whole work party along the top of the South Bay hillside. There was plenty of perennial veldt grass, but I didn't see much Sahara mustard. However, there was veldt grass and ripgut brome all the way up to the Orchid trail. Due to heavy rainfall some of the ripgut brome was in seed, even on plants that were only an inch high!

Also in March: Vicky Johnsen noticed that one of the boards on the 16th Street entrance deck had been hit by a car (top photo by Craig Johnsen). Later that month, Rich and Prisila Johnson went to the Elfin Forest and repaired the board (bottom photo by Prisila Johnson).

April 6: Making the best of good weather

By Skip Rotstein, Conservaton Co-Chair

On April 6, the weather was rain free, yet cool. Recent rainfall enabled rapid weed growth along South Bay Boulevard. Pete Sarafian and I weeded from opposite ends of South Bay. I noticed veldt grass stalks protruding through the thick mat of ice plant at the south end, so I cleared the last 20 square feet of ice plant to see what was growing underneath. I was surprised to find a nearly continuous growth of veldt grass under what had appeared to be a solid mat of ice plant.

Meanwhile, on the north end of South Bay, Pete was picking and bagging veldt grass on the hillside below the native brush. Pete also cleared veldt grass from the 16th Street parking lot and along the sand trail to the Orchid Trail. Pete reported that a new volunteer from ECO SLO joined him in weeding for an hour.

Dave Bowlus toured the preserve to look for evidence of rain-caused erosion. Dean Thompson emailed that he arrived after I had gone to South Bay. He trimmed brush along the boardwalk and delivered an impromptu lecture to a college group in Rose's Grove.



*On a rainy day in March, Conservation Co-chair Vicky Johnsen sent a photo of her pointing at a damaged board at the 16th Street entrance.
Photo by Craig Johnsen.*



*On a sunny day later in March, Weed Warrior Rich Johnson sent a photo of him pointing to the same board, now repaired.
Photo by Prisila Johnson.*

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.

American Coot

Text and Photo by Jean Wheeler, Ph.D.

Often seen swimming in open water with lots of ducks and dabbling or diving for food as ducks do, American Coots (*Fulica americana*) are, however, not ducks. They are instead members of the Rail Family (Rallidae). Most other rails (including the other three rails known to occur at the edges of the Elfin Forest) are secretive and very seldom seen venturing out from marshes and reed beds.

On land, their differences from ducks are more obvious. They look more like plump little black chickens as they walk, not waddle, around on large feet--not webbed but having long, separate toes, gray and crossed by black stripes, spreading out from the base of yellow-green legs. Each toe has broad skin lobes that help the bird kick through water like the webs of duck feet, but fold back on dry land, not impeding walking, yet spread to support weight on muddy ground.

Coots have short black necks and round heads, with the most distinguishing feature being the long bright white bill sloping up from a pointed beak with a black ring around it near the tip. The beak broadens toward the face, and white color extends well up onto the forehead, often ending there with a dark red spot. Tails and wings are very short, and coots require long running or swimming takeoffs to fly.

Aquatic plants sought for food includes algae, eelgrass, wild rice, sedges, water lilies, and cattails. They also feed on insects, crustaceans, snails, tadpoles, and salamanders, especially in breeding season, and these constitute the major part of a chick's diet. On land, they'll seek grains and even oak leaves.

Mating is monogamous for life, and they build woven floating platforms of dead rushes, cattails, and sedges anchored to upright vegetation. The female lays eggs on one of the platforms. Incubation is by both sexes for about three weeks. Young can swim well and leave the nest within six hours of hatching. They follow and are fed by both parents and brooded at night by the male. They can fly in 7-8 weeks.

For me, the most fascinating coot fact is that very young coots have red skin and red/orange feather plumes on their heads and necks. I once saw two such chicks at the pond in Cloisters Park in Morro Bay, and I didn't know what they were. Then an adult coot herded them back into the rushes. I looked in every bird book I had, but there was no mention of red-headed young in any of my newer guides, including Sibley. Only my oldest guide by Roger Tory Peterson (1961) finally confirmed for me that young of coots have these adornments!

Recent online sites now call these "chick ornaments" that fade within a week of hatching and even state that parent birds preferentially feed the most brightly plumed chicks. Research also indicates that some coot females lay eggs in nests not their own, but that coot females reliably reject hatchlings from parasitically laid eggs. It is thought they imprint on their first hatched chick, nearly always from their own first egg laid, and later siblings resemble that chick while parasitic hatchlings don't.

Predation, more likely after nesting season, is by crows, magpies, and Forster's tern, owls, harriers, and eagles, with coots claimed to be more than 80% of the Bald Eagle's diet in some locales.

Coots are not on conservation watch lists. They're seldom hunted, considered less tasty than ducks. Being numerous and living in wetland, scientists sometimes use them in monitoring environmental toxins.



SWAP Chair Jan DiLeo and Conservation Co-Chair Skip Rotstein represented SWAP at the Earth Day Fair coordinated the San Luis Obispo County Earth Day Alliance in Laguna Lake Park, on April 27th.

Photo by Jean Wheeler.

Coming Up in the Elfin Forest

Story and Photo by Jean Wheeler

The Elfin Forest is richly green and wildly blooming in many colors after a far better rainy season than our herbs and shrubs have enjoyed in many years. With the excellent supply of water in the soil, the floral explosion should keep going at least through the two months of this Oakleaves issue.

Dune buckwheat has white flowers at this time of year. White to pale lavender blossoms occur in pompoms on sturdy stems of black sage. Spikes of white flowers characterize Chamise. Deerweed shrubs show yellow blooms while Sticky Monkey Flowers (the leaves are sticky, not the flowers) are conspicuously orange and both species should bloom on into August. California Poppies, Fiddleneck, Golden Yarrow, and Suffrutescent Wallflowers also have yellow to orange flowers.

Silver Dune Lupines near Bush Lupine Point have lovely blue flower spikes, but were hit much harder than other species by the long years of drought, so the display may not be as spectacular as in previous years. Woolly Star is a low-growing bush with herbaceous shoots and bright blue flowers above a woody root crown. It is best seen along the 15th Street sand trail and a sandy area across from the Fairbanks Monument. Blue Dicks have a cluster of purplish-blue flowers at the top of a slender stem as much as two feet tall. Purple Nightshade is also in bloom during these months.

Cobbwebby Thistles and California Hedge Nettles have pink flowers. Red Fuchsia-flowered Gooseberries are nearing the end of their blooming season but Cardinal Catchflies (red flowers in the undergrowth appearing to have been cut by pinking shears) should continue to bloom all summer.

Butterflies have been called “flying flowers” and these colorful insects abound in June and July. Bush lupines attract Moro Blue butterflies to lay eggs on their leaves while Acmon Blues are attracted to deerweed to host their caterpillars. Dune buckwheat attracts Gray Hairstreaks. Variable Checkerspot lay eggs beneath sticky monkey-flower leaves. Gabb’s Checkerspot is attracted to California poppies for nectar. The California Oak Moth lays its eggs on our pygmy live oaks.

While admiring butterflies and flowers from the boardwalk and sand trails, your eyes will no doubt also be attracted by the flight of avian residents. Especially likely to be seen and heard are the bright blue California Scrub Jays, orange and black Spotted Towhees, chattering flocks of tiny fuzzy gray Bushtits and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, and similarly talkative little brown birds including several species of sparrows and wrens. Among avian migrants passing through in June or July from winter homes farther south are Warbling Vireos, Hooded Orioles, Black-headed Grosbeaks, and Yellow, Townsend’s, and Wilson’s Warblers.

Among non-avian residents active as summer approaches are Western Fence Lizards, Brush Rabbits, Ground Squirrels, and Coyotes.

What a colorful and exciting time to visit the sand trails and boardwalk of our small wilderness area!



Community member Bill Richmond took on the repair of one of the Elfin Forest benches, and found it so badly damaged that he built a new bench! Photo by Dave Bowlus.

Three Elfin Forest Benches Restored

By Benchy McBenchbottom

I am happy to report that all three benches taken from the Elfin Forest for repair and painting have been restored. Two of the repair volunteers: Gerald Clare and Jay Waddell were able to fill in rotten, worn or damaged areas and apply two coats of nice-looking brown deck paint. Jay found a nest of carpenter ants in his bench and Gerald had to deal with a lot of dry rot.

However Bill Richmond’s bench turned out to be beyond repair, so – he built a new bench! Take a look at it in the adjacent photo. He moved the name plaque from the old to the new bench, giving it the appearance that nothing had ever happened.

We benches are very grateful to the three volunteers who gave their time and skills to make us more enjoyable for Elfin Forest visitors to sit on. Per Dave Bowlus, who is in charge of bench restoration, the rest of the benches will be sanded and painted without removing them from the Elfin Forest during the next few months during First Saturday work parties. If readers would like to help with that, let Dave know you are coming at dave@elfin-forest.org. The next work party will be on Saturday, June 1, from 9 to noon, meeting at the north end of 15th Street.

WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

June 15, 9:30 a.m.

– Pacific Wildlife Care

Pacific Wildlife Care volunteer and Central Coast Outdoors owner/guide Virginia Flaherty will lead a walk focusing on Pacific Wildlife Care's rehabilitation program in relationship to the Elfin Forest and its surrounding environs. Pacific Wildlife Care takes in over 2500 animals of over 170 different species each year. PWC has rescued, rehabilitated, and released thousands of animals since its inception in 1986, including virtually all of the native species found in the Elfin Forest, on the sand spit and in the estuary. Virginia will talk about what we as individuals can do to help ensure the return of these injured, orphaned and oiled wildlife to the hills and waters of the Central Coast. She will also be bringing one of PWC's Wildlife Ambassadors to the start of the walk.

July 20, 9:30 a.m. – Insect Walk

Although we generally see just a few kinds of insects and spiders while walking through the Elfin Forest, there are dozens, perhaps hundreds of different species of arthropods living in the Forest. Entomologist Dr. Norman Smith will search every nook and cranny along the boardwalk for the Good, Bad, and Ugly of these creatures, as well as late summer butterflies. The importance and ecology of our local insects will be discussed during the walk. If you'd like to see the insects close up, bring a hand lens or close-focusing binoculars.

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 or if you use a wheelchair call (805) 528-0392



Cuesta College instructor and marine biologist Steve Hendricks (at right) gave a fascinating nature walk about marine life in the estuary during March. Photo by Petra Clayton.



During his April 3rd Saturday walk, photographer and naturalist Don Quintana gave technical tips and advice on how to construct a good nature photo as well as sharing information about the many wildflowers that were in bloom at the time. Photo by Petra Clayton.

Gathering to begin a tour of the Elfin Forest to discuss the Terra Verde Biological Assessment Report were (L-R):

Shaun Cooper, County Parks Senior Planner;

Jan DiLeo, SWAP Chair;

Bob Yetter, Supervising Ranger for the Elfin Forest;

Ken Klis, Parks Superintendent;

Skip Rotstein, Conservation Committee Co-chair;

Kristen Nelson, Terra Verde botanist;

Brooke Langle, Terra Verde Principal Biologist;

and Dave Bowlus, Conservation Committee member

(see page 1).

Photo by Yolanda Waddell.



Thank You to Our Generous Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter, SWAP Database Coordinator

NEW MEMBER:

Beverly Gingg*

RENEWING MEMBERS:

Susanne & Michel Chirman*	Richard & Prisila Johnson*
Mary & Allan Conkling	William Johnson *
Linda Cordes*	Heidi Kausch*
David & Evelyn Dabritz*	Carolyn Lane
Stephani Denker*	Beth & Sheldon Miller*
Siegrid Fenn	Jim & Barbara Murray*
Marsha Houston	Lou Tornatzky*
Jan Di Leo	Cameron Mitchell Tucker
Craig & Victoria Johnsen*	Danna Weidner & Tom Cash*
Jane Johnson	Jacqueline Williams*

DONATIONS:

Madeline Taylor, Matthew Bailey, & Tyrus Milton
– in memory of J.T. Taylor (husband, father, uncle)

**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: Dave Bowlus, Petra Clayton, Bing Huey, Craig Johnsen, Vicky Johnsen, Prisila Johnsen, Rich Johnson, Betsy Kinter, Pat Murray, Kristen Nelson, Skip Rotstein, Pete Sarafian, Yolanda Waddell, Dirk & Bonnie Walters, Jean Wheeler.

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Deadline for copy to Oakleaves is the first of the month before issue.
If possible, all copy should be submitted by e-mail to: oakleaf@elfin-forest.org.

New Mural Mugs – New Vendor

Last year, when she wanted to re-order our popular mural mugs, Pat Murray, SWAP's Property and Records Chair, learned that her vendor for the mugs was no longer interested in making them. The search for a new vendor became urgent when she ran out of mugs and had to post a note in April/May *Oakleaves* that they were temporarily unavailable.

Fortunately, a restaurant in Morro Bay referred Pat to a new vendor, Ted Jorgensen.

Ted's company in Los Osos, Two Muggers (his wife is his partner), will produce the mural mugs for SWAP at a reasonable price. The wording on the mugs has changed slightly, but with the help of Barbara and Rosey Rosenthal, the mural image remains the same and retains its quality. Pat has received her order of the new mugs and they are selling well at a price of \$15.00 each. See the order form on page 11.



Pete Sarafian saw this deer in his front yard, and caught a photo of it just before it disappeared into the Elfin Forest.

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.



Our 15-ounce beverage mug has arrived from our new vendor. It has Barbara Rosenthal's gorgeous Elfin-Forest mural wrapped all around the cup. Microwave and dishwasher safe, it's great for coffee, hot chocolate, or just about any other beverage you choose. Hand washing is suggested.



SWAP Shoppers' Order Form

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

All Prices Include Sales Tax

1. MURAL SHIRTS

Mural design by artist Barbara Rosenthal on both front and back. Words on shirt: "El Moro Elfin Forest Natural Area" above mural and "Small Wilderness Area Preservation" and "Los Osos, California" below mural.

Circle Sizes:

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

2. POCKET GUIDE

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

___ @ \$3.00 = \$___

3. ELFIN FOREST MURAL PRINTS

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

___ @ \$35.00 = \$___

4. ALPHABET BIRD BOOK

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

___ @ \$20.00 = \$___

5. MURAL MUG – NEW FORMAT

15- ounce beverage mug with wrap-around mural design. Microwave safe, hand wash suggested.

___ @ \$15 = \$___

6. ELFIN FOREST CAPS

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

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

Shipping costs within zip 934 __:

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

Pocket Guides & Note Cards \$1.50 = ___

Mural Prints on Foamcore \$5.00= ___

Shirts & Caps each: \$4.00 = ___

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

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

TOTAL OF ORDER

\$_____

(Please print when filling order, and indicate how many of each.)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email _____

Phone (w/ area code): _____

Make checks payable and mail to:

SWAP, P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412-6442.

Call-in orders may also be made: (805) 528-0392.




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Summary of the Elfin Forest Biological Assessment Report page 1.

Please check renewal date on your label.

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Things for Kids to do in the Elfin Forest During Summer

Explore with a camera. Come early when bunnies are **hopping** around and quail are foraging. Send "best" photos to *Oakleaves* (oakleaf@elfin-forest.org) at the end of the summer and we'll publish them.

Pack a lunch and have a **picnic**.
Look at the flowers and butterflies.

Become a birder. Take binoculars and a bird guide and see how many birds you can identify.



Become a **writer**. Make a journal about your visits to the Forest, and turn that into a story.

Get exercise. **SHAPE UP** by walking or running around the boardwalk.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Member | <input type="checkbox"/> Renewing Member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Member \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Defender \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Steward \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Champion \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protector \$75 | <input type="checkbox"/> Guardian \$500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seniors & Students \$15 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member \$1000 | |

☐ I want to help, please call me!

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

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

All donations to SWAP are tax-deductible.

EVERY membership counts!

Make checks payable to: SWAP

Mail to: Small Wilderness Area Preservation,
P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412-6442.