



OAKLEAVES

A PUBLICATION OF FRIENDS OF EL MORO ELFIN FOREST

P.O. BOX 6442, LOS OSOS, CALIFORNIA 93412-6442 ♦ (805) 528-0392 ♦ AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2020

FEMEF's 2020/2021 Projects

By Jan DiLeo, FEMEF Chair

As many of you know, one of FEMEF's key roles is helping San Luis Obispo County Parks with routine care and maintenance of the Elfin Forest. Routine care includes removing invasive plants, trimming vegetation along designated trails, picking up litter, doing minor boardwalk repairs, and similar tasks. Each year, to address upcoming maintenance needs within the Forest, FEMEF's Board prioritizes that year's maintenance projects and coordinates these priorities with County Parks.

This year, due to COVID19 restrictions, FEMEF has made the difficult choice of limiting our maintenance and education activities in the Elfin Forest. Typical activities, such as organizing our monthly Weed Warrior work parties and conducting 3rd Saturday nature walks, have had to be postponed in order to protect the health and safety of our visitors as well as our volunteers. Once it is safe to do so, FEMEF, in conjunction with County Parks, will again coordinate Weed Warrior activities as well as the 3rd Saturday and other educational walks.

The 2020 / 2021 Elfin Forest major maintenance projects are as follows:

1) Remove Remaining Temporary Green Plastic Fencing.

In 2018, it was recommended in the Elfin Forest Biological Assessment produced by Terra Verde Environmental Consulting, that, "...all green fencing be removed and, where appropriate,

Projects *continued on page 2*

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Yolanda Waddell



Yolanda Waddell on a Ladder in 1993 at the wall for the Rexall Drug Store in Los Osos, aiding in the painting of the Elfin Forest Mural designed by Barbara Rosenthal. Yolanda also aided in the restoration of that mural on that wall in 2008. Archives photo.

By Pat Grimes

Editor Note: Pat Grimes was Editor of Oakleaves from 1991 through the December, 1998 issue.

Down in the Celestial Meadow, isolated from all the sights, sounds and cares of our daily lives, sits a bench for contemplation among the fragrant plants and wind-pruned trees of the Elfin Forest. The plaque reads: Yolanda Waddell, Heart and Soul of the Elfin Forest. Those words may sound grandiose to those who don't know her essential role in the preservation of this natural area; and for those who do know, they probably seem inadequate to describe her decades-long devotion to this effort. Hers is an unflinching commitment to every aspect and detail of guiding this preservation effort from a nascent concept to a vibrant organization sustaining the habitat between our homes and the estuary. The simple truth is the El Morro Elfin Forest as we know it today would not be one of the jewels of our community without the determined work of Yolanda Waddell.

Yolanda *continued on page 3*



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

of the

Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest (FEMEF)

consists of the following members:

Jan DiLeo, Chair

Skip Rotstein, Vice Chair

Dave Bowlus, Treasurer

Yolanda Waddell, Secretary

Beverly Boyd, Acting Recording Secretary

The FEMEF Board of Directors meets monthly at 2:00 p.m. on the 2nd Tuesday of the month

Meeting via ZOOM

until Covid-19 restrictions are lifted.

The next meetings are

***Tuesday, August 11
and Tuesday, September 8.***

All Board meetings are open to the public.

To attend a Zoom FEMEF Board meeting,

e-mail Board Chair Jan DiLeo

at jan@elfin-forest.org/



CONTACT FEMEF

If you have questions about FEMEF 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: Lasca Gaylord

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 Lasca Gaylord at 781-1196.

Projects *from page 1*

replaced with more permanent options.” In 2019, FEMEF volunteers, in coordination with County Parks, removed some of the temporary green plastic fencing within the Forest. In early 2020, FEMEF provided a Fencing Plan to County Parks. This plan proposes the removal of much of the remaining green plastic fencing, and in some locations, recommends installing pole fencing. Pole fencing is recommended along sand trails or the boardwalk where it is needed to keep

visitors on designated trails. The Fencing Plan is currently being reviewed by County Parks and the United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). Once approval is obtained from these agencies, FEMEF will implement the approved Fencing Plan.

2) **Butterfly Hill Overlook.**

This hilltop in the Elfin Forest provides beautiful views of the bay as well as a good area to spot butterflies and other wildlife. As with most popular areas, Butterfly Hill is getting a little trampled with overuse. A FEMEF volunteer is putting together a design that includes 2 to 3 benches in this area, an interpretive display, and pole and symbolic fencing. The pole fencing would be located to “define the human area” and to dissuade people from trampling the native vegetation located adjacent to and below Butterfly Hill. Once the design is complete, County Parks and USFWS will provide input on the draft design. When the design has been properly vetted, County Parks will obtain any necessary permits. FEMEF will apply for grants to fund the project’s construction.

3) **Hire California Conservation Corps (CCC) to help remove invasive plants.**

During the pandemic, removal of invasive plants within the Forest has slowed. There are still a few dedicated FEMEF volunteers pulling weeds on a somewhat regular basis while also practicing social distancing and wearing masks. However, additional human resources are needed to remove invasive ivy and other invasive plants.

FEMEF is working with the CCC to schedule a crew this summer to assist with invasive plant removal.

4) **New Interpretive Panels & Entry Sign Designs.**

The original Forest entry signs and interpretive displays were installed in 2002.

Since that time, sign graphics have markedly improved. In the first phase, FEMEF, in conjunction with County Parks, would hire a consultant to help design replacement interpretive panels and entry signs. To complete new designs, FEMEF and other interested volunteers would work with County Parks and the graphic consultant. Once designs are finalized, the second phase of this project would be to raise money to have the new signs/panels manufactured and installed.

Thanks to the financial support of our membership, FEMEF is able to undertake these projects. If you wish to help with one or more of these projects please call the FEMEF phone at (805) 528-0392. Please leave your name, phone number, and how you would like to help. We will contact you as soon as possible. Once again, thank you for your volunteer hours and financial support - we could not do these projects without you.



Working to remove 350 feet of plastic fencing in September, 2019, Weed Warrior Jeff Reiffel rolls up a length of fence while Barbara Rosenthal (left) waits to tie up the roll. Photo by Rich Johnson.

Yolanda *cont. from page 1*

I sat down with Yolanda one afternoon recently to “turn the tables,” interviewing her for Oakleaves so readers could find out what’s behind her deep connection to the Elfin Forest.

The Waddell family first got to know the Elfin Forest walking their dog in the late 1970’s where Yolanda developed a special fondness for the plants and creatures there. When she learned the property was for sale, she knew immediately that something should be done to save that piece of land. She has not stopped doing for the Elfin Forest for nearly 35 years, so I asked her what has kept her going for so many years. She explained, “Well, I made a promise to myself and also to the Chumash women who camped at the Elfin Forest. I was just thinking one day, ‘Okay, I promise to help take care of this piece of land.’ And it still seems like a good thing to do.”

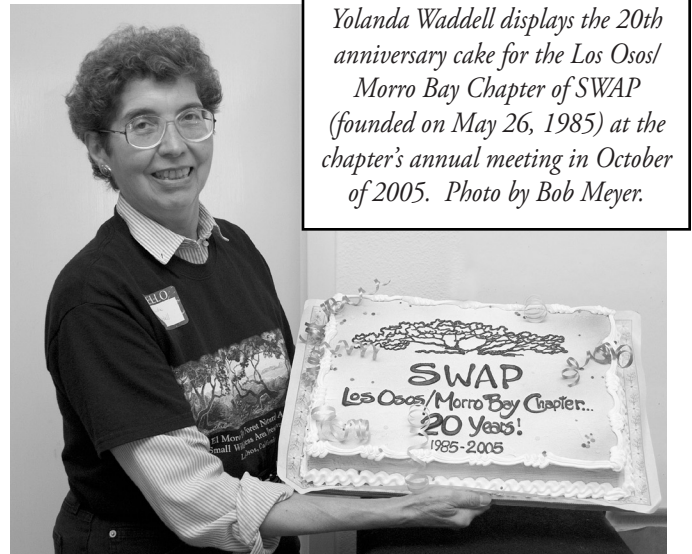
Yolanda reminisced with amazement about the consequences of that promise: all the processes and activities she encountered, how the community came together, the generous, talented and hard-working people she came to know, and the immense responsibility of being a land steward. She confessed, “Whenever things need to be done to or for the Elfin Forest, I can’t resist having a hand in it.” And so she has had a hand in discussions, walks, fund raisers, every newsletter since 1999, every outreach, many projects, Board of Directors meetings and every celebration.

I tried to pin her down to choosing a most-cherished experience and after recalling many satisfying and surprising moments she settled on two that thrilled her completely – scientists who came to do research in the Elfin Forest. In 2011, Yolanda and husband Jay, while on a walk in the Forest, spotted an entomologist swishing his butterfly net among low-growing plants. He was Dr. Frank Kurczewski, visiting from New York State to study digger wasps in the Elfin Forest and Montaña de Oro State Park. Dr. Kurczewski later wrote an article on digger wasps for Oakleaves (Oct/Nov 2011, p. 4) and discovered a rare robber fly in the Forest. Also in 2011, SWAP received a request from Dr. Ed Bobich, a botanist at Cal Poly Pomona, to study growth of coast live oaks in the Elfin Forest. Dr. Bobich completed his research in 2013 and gave a talk about it at Morro Bay Museum of Natural History in 2014. “It had been my feeling for years that the Elfin Forest was a perfect laboratory and here is research—real serious research being done in the Elfin Forest.”

Our chat concluded by looking at her hopes for the future that she distilled into one phrase: we will always have weeds. It was her way of saying the Elfin Forest will always need an organization of stewards to care for it over generations. “So that’s my hope: that this organization will continue and that from generation to generation the Forest will be cared for as an example of what this lovely part of California looked like 100, 200, 300 years ago.”

Since the original SWAP Board installed “Yolanda’s Bench” years ago, the organization has changed the name to Friends of the El Moro Elfin Forest (FEMEF) to better describe their current mission. Thinking about Yolanda’s legendary dedication today, we might describe her as the “Best Friend of the Elfin Forest.”

See some of Yolanda’s favorite photos from the forest on page 10!



Yolanda Waddell displays the 20th anniversary cake for the Los Osos/Morro Bay Chapter of SWAP (founded on May 26, 1985) at the chapter’s annual meeting in October of 2005. Photo by Bob Meyer.



Yolanda contributes to all aspects of our work for the Elfin Forest, but finding photos with her involved is hard; she was almost always taking the photos! This one shows Yolanda, at right, and Pat Akey as docents for a school walk by Baywood School first graders in 2009. Photo by Jay Waddell.



The 1994 SWAP Board of Directors posed in the Elfin Forest in 2014, 20 years after they succeeded in saving the Forest. Left to right: Yolanda Waddell, Les Bowker, Barbara Machado, Elsie Dietz, Jerry Deitz, Pat Grimes and Larry Grimes. Not present: 1994 SWAP President Rose Bowker, who was taken from us by cancer in 2005. Photo by Pat Brown.

Willet

Text & Photo by Jean D. Wheeler, Ph. D.

The Willet (*Tringa semipalmata*) is among bird species named for their territorial calls, in this case a loud “pill-will-willet.” Relatively large among sandpipers, it is quite a bit larger than its nearest relative the Lesser Yellowlegs (*T. flavipes*). Adult Willets are about 15-16 inches long with just over a 2-foot wingspan, weigh about half a pound, and are invariably described as heavyset, robust, stocky, or even inelegant. They have long blue-gray legs and long, thick and straight bills.

Rather boringly brown or gray when seen walking on the ground or wading in shallow water in our estuary, you may have missed the fact that several have already landed and are walking on the ground near the bottom of my photo. They have somewhat darker barred plumage when breeding, which we don't tend to see here on the coast.

However, visitors at Bush Lupine Point or Siena's View may well be startled when a large flock of Willets resting or walking quietly on the mud flats or wading in shallow water suddenly takes off. This reveals much flashing of previously unseen but, in flight, strikingly distinctive black and white wings—bright white on each upper wing in a wide stripe bordered by deep black.

There are two subspecies of Willets in North America, which some suggest may eventually be recognized as separate species. The easterners (*T. s. semipalmata*) breed on the east coast from Newfoundland to the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean islands. In winter they migrate as far south as coastal Argentina. Overall, they are a bit smaller but look more stocky and their bills are thicker. We see the westerners (*T. s. inornata*). Although somewhat larger, the western subspecies is a bit more slender, narrower in bill, and tends to be less strongly barred in breeding plumage than the easterners.

Our western subspecies breeds around lakes and marshes from the Prairie Provinces of Canada and the northern Great Plains to northeastern California. Most winter on our west coast and south as far as northern Chile, but some migrate to join the eastern subspecies wintering southward from the south Atlantic coast.

Bird guide books give the impression we should expect to see Willets in coastal California only in winter or on migration. But bar graphs of sightings of this species in our area, including monthly graphs of sightings from Bush Lupine Point, show fairly high numbers of Willets in the middle of all months. There are a few gaps of only 2-4 weeks straddling adjacent months in late spring or very early summer (at the beginning and end of the breeding season). So I suspect with early or late departers and returners and some few non-breeders for a given year, the “year around” presence listed in our Pocket Guide is closer to the truth.

When you see Willets walking slowly over mudflats or wading



Willetts go in brown/gray disguise on the ground but a flock of them burst into the air with an amazing flash of brilliantly black and white wings.

in shallow water, they are probing with their sensitive long beaks for insects, worms, crabs, small mollusks, small fish, and some plants. Guidebooks say they are often seen alone, although they may also nest in flocks. But in our estuary, we usually see them in fairly large flocks, resting or walking on mud flats or weed beds or wading and probing for food, or swooping in flights.

Nests in breeding areas are shallow depressions, usually in grass, which is bent over as foundation or for screening, and lined with finer grass. Incubation of generally 4 eggs is by the male parent at night, the female most of the day. Incubation is said to be 3-4 weeks, with chicks led to water the day after hatching, protected by the parents, but finding all their own food right from the first. The female parent leaves after 2-3 weeks, while the male remains until after the young are able to fly. Age at first flight is not definitely known, but assumed to be at about 4 weeks.

Willet populations declined considerably in the 1800's, hunted for food, but have recovered well following protection. With global warming, Audubon predicts 15% range loss in much of western U.S., 85% maintained in our northern plains and Rocky Mts. and 51% gains in range in Canada's prairie provinces.

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 FEMEF's answering machine, (805) 528-0392.

Pholisma

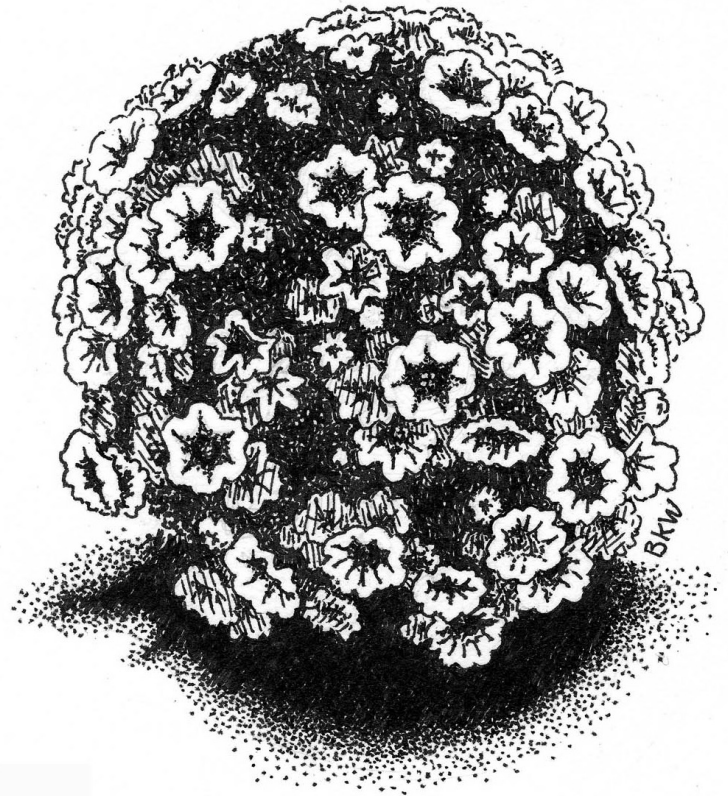
Text by Dirk Walters, Ph.D. Drawing by Bonnie Walters.

Editor's Note: Revised by Dr. Walters from his Aug/Sep 2009 Oakleaves article.

I'm guessing that there is not a single person who has seen the plant Bonnie has drawn for this article who doesn't recognize it. It goes by the scientific name, *Pholisma arenarium*. As one might guess with a plant this distinctive it has many common names. The few names I've collected include pholisma, desert pholisma, sand plant, scaly stem sand plant, dune food, and purple sand food. However, I prefer the name I first heard locally: golf balls or purple golf balls. All these names apply to one or more of its conspicuous characteristics. *Pholisma arenarium* does have a scaly "stem"; it is purple when in bloom; and it grows only in coastal and desert sand dunes. Any name referring to its use as "food" is confusing since I found no reference to this species being eaten. I suspect it is a confused reference to a second species of *Pholisma* (or *Ammobroma*) (*P.* or *A. sonorae*, true sand food) a rare desert plant found in south-eastern California, Arizona and New Mexico. True sand food is endangered by off-road vehicle activity, so even if it is edible it's NOT an appropriate food plant.

I put the word, stem, in quotations in the preceding paragraph because the plant we see from June through August growing in the upper elevations of the Elfin Forest dunes is actually just its inflorescence. An inflorescence is a group of flowers. In this case, the inflorescence is what botanists call a spike where flowers are borne stalk-less (sessile) on an elongate axis. Below the lowest flower is the inflorescence stalk (peduncle) that sinks anywhere from a few inches to a foot or more into the sand. All my references indicate that the peduncle arises directly from the root of another flowering plant such as *Ambrosia* (beach bur), *Croton* (croton), and *Ericameria* (mock heather). I'm not sure what exactly is happening at the peduncle-root interface. All but one of the references indicates that the peduncle arises directly from the host root which would make the vegetative part of pholisma totally inside the host plant's root. But Mary Coffeen, in her **Central Coast Wildflowers**, tells of research with radioactive tracers that found radioactivity not only in the host and in pholisma, but also in fungi associated with the host plant root. Mary suggests that Pholisma may, in fact, be parasitic on the fungus and not directly on the host flowering plant. Certainly, she is implying that the fungus is mycorrhizal, which is a mutualistic symbiosis between the fungus and vascular plant root. The fungus allows an increase in the amount of soil water and nutrients that can be collected by the host plant roots. In return, the fungus is supplied with sugars produced by its host. I'm guessing that the radioactive tracers could simply have passed into the fungus and pholisma separately and not serially as implied by Mary. Either way, I find it very intriguing. I assume the radioactive tracers were applied to the host plant and not to the soil.

Finally, those familiar with my articles might notice a glaring deficiency. I haven't stated to which plant family pholisma belongs. This is because it appears to be in flux. All the older published



floras put it in its own small family (*Lennoaceae*) which consisted of a couple of genera of parasitic desert and or sand dwelling plants. But recent analysis based heavily on DNA sequences sink the Lennoaceae into a group or complex of formally independent families known collectively as the Boraginaceae Complex where it now resides in the current edition of the Jepson Manual.

When I wrote the original article in 2009, I ended it with the following two sentences "Unfortunately, I more recently heard that the old family, Boraginaceae, no longer exists as it is being incorporated into the mint family (Lamiaceae). We will have to wait for the new Jepson Manual, which hopefully will be out late this year or early next, to get the final word." Wow, how wrong could I have been. First the old borage, fiddleneck or popcorn flower family (Boraginaceae) is alive and well and was not sunk into the mint family or Lamiaceae based on the fact both families produce a fruit of 4 + separate nutlets. In fact, the Borage family has grown larger as it has absorbed the old waterleaf family or Hydrophyllaceae which contained lots of showy flowered genera including the phacelias, fiesta flowers, and baby blue-eyes. Both the old Hydrophyllaceae and Boraginaceae share the conspicuous feature of an inflorescence that uncurls like the neck of fiddle. This feature was much more conspicuous in the species of the old Borages than it was in the old waterleaves. I'm too old to even try to explain how the DNA sequence data and other esoteric biochemical and morphological data are now being used to reorganize the taxonomy of plants using computer-based classification programs.

*For another look at Pholisma,
see Chuck and Bernadette Soters' photo on page 9.*

El Moro Elfin Forest in the Time of COVID-19

By Yolanda Waddell

Since mid-March, Californians have needed to shelter at home to be safe from the COVID-29 pandemic. When this is being written in early July, the number of positive cases is rapidly increasing throughout our state and in our county.

Our governor encouraged Californians to go outdoors and get some fresh air by walking their dogs or hiking on nature trails while keeping a six-foot distance between themselves and other walkers or hikers. In the Elfin Forest it was impossible for walkers on the narrow paths and boardwalk to stay six feet away from each other, so most made do by turning their faces away from oncoming walkers.

Eventually an Elfin Forest regular suggested that installing one-way signs on the boardwalk would help visitors to stay at least six feet behind other walkers. County Parks liked the idea and created the sign shown with this article. Other enthusiastic Elfin Forest users posted red arrows along the boardwalk, and one creative person fastened a wood arrow to one of the interpretive signs (shown in the accompanying photo).

Unfortunately the one-way rule won't work with the Forest's seven entrance paths or with the three boardwalk extensions to overlooks and Rose's Grove. However, in June, the Governor issued a facial covering mandate for all Californians: "Effective June 18, 2020, the State of California now requires the use of face coverings in indoor and outdoor settings (where physical distancing is not practical) anywhere outside of private homes." That means that in the Elfin Forest, all walkers must carry masks to wear when meeting people on access paths or the boardwalk.

In mid-May, San Luis Obispo County was approved to move into Stage 2 of the state's reopening plan. The Elfin Forest is in the Outdoor Museum category that limits Guided tours to no more than 6 people. Our 3rd Saturday nature walks are open to the general public, and there is no way to limit the number attending. Therefore, we will have to cancel upcoming walks if the County hasn't moved into a reopening stage that permits larger groups.

The same qualifications are true for our First Friday Work Parties. Notice of cancellation(s) will be posted on the home page of FEMEF's website: www.elfin-forest.org. To stay up-to-date with the county's COVID-19 status, you are encouraged to look at the ReadySLO website, www.readyslo.org.

Scheduled monthly work by our Weed Warriors has stopped. With fewer volunteers working to pull invasive plants, those have flourished along with the native plants that benefitted from bountiful rains in March and April. However, as you will see when you read the Weed Warrior reports on page 7, maintenance work in the Forest hasn't stopped. Seasoned volunteers are still pulling weeds and doing boardwalk repairs, working two or three at a time and maintaining a safe distance from each other. Volunteers who do work where they are likely to encounter Forest visitors always wear masks.

Our beloved Elfin Forest continues to flourish. Do pay a visit – enjoy the late summer blooms, fence lizards sunning themselves on the toe rails, and recently fledged birds flitting among bushes or running across the paths. The Elfin Forest is there for you.



County Parks sign directing walkers to proceed in a clockwise direction around our boardwalk to minimize face-to-face contact (even with face masks) during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.



Prisila Johnson wears a face mask to protect herself and passing walkers from Covid-19 while drilling screws tightly into boards where needed to repair the boardwalk. Photo by Rich Johnson.



Interpretive sign at junction of 16th street boardwalk access and the loop, with County Covid signs and with a wooden arrow added by a walker. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

Weed Warrior Reports

Text by Jean Wheeler from

Reports by Vicky Johnsen, Conservation Committee Co-Chair

First Friday work parties for May and June were canceled because of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, much work continued to be accomplished by a few dedicated warriors working in twos or threes with social distancing.

Vicky Johnsen worked with Alice Welchert and Pete Sarafian on three different days in May for a couple of hours each day. They removed large bags of invasive grasses, especially Rip-Gut Brome and Veldt Grass, in the Don Klopfer Grove and on the upper slope at South Bay Boulevard. Pete Sarafian also did considerable weeding by himself on other days.

Skip Rotstein worked for well over two hours removing a large patch of ice plant below and to the north of Bush Lupine Point. Rich and Prisila Johnson spent a morning doing boardwalk repair, replacing rusted and broken screws in the boards and tightening some boards and railings.

Jeff Reifel and Skip Rotstein also rebuilt the steps on the sand trail leading from the Boardwalk to the Don Klopfer Grove so that each step now does not exceed 8 inches of drop, as well as repairing all washouts and digging runoff channels as needed. I read this report with especial gratitude, having struggled up and down the formerly uneven and in many cases very steep steps of that path with great difficulty many times over the years!

I'm aware that the efforts by these stalwart weed warriors have continued in June, but we are going to press with this issue very early in July, before receiving the reports on hours for June.

*Nature does not hurry,
but everything is accomplished.
~ Lao Tzu ~*



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.

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Printed at Hay Printing, Morro Bay on recycled paper.
Labeled and mailed at Achievement House.

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.



Alice Welchert (left) and Vicky Johnsen (kneeling at right) with two large orange trash bags half full of veldt grass from a two-hour work stint in May with Pete Sarafian, who took the photo.



Jeff Reifel on the steps he and Skip Rotstein rebuilt along the trail from the boardwalk down to the Don Klopfer Grove.

Photo by Skip Rotstein.

Coming Up in the Elfin Forest

Text and Photos by Jean Wheeler

In these dry months of the year, white and yellow flowers dominate the shrubs in the Elfin Forest. The signature flower of this season is the bright yellow mock heather, widespread in the Elfin Forest and blooming almost exclusively in August and September. Low to the ground is California croton with pale green leaves and tiny white flowers. California asters have white to pale pink or lavender ray flowers around central yellow discs.

California poppies continue to bloom much of the year in shades from yellow to orange. Dune buckwheat flowers were white when they opened early in summer, but are aging to pink and eventually turn a dark rust color.

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

Reptiles are especially active in the warmth of late summer. Western fence lizards pause to do their amusing pushups along the boardwalk, and you may also be lucky enough to see an alligator lizard. Garter and gopher snakes are also possible, neither of which is poisonous.

Coyotes have been seen often in the last few years, slipping through the brush or even boldly walking on the boardwalk. If you are walking your dog, keep him or her leashed--as is legally required--to protect your pet, other people, and the coyotes. Black-tail deer (see photo page 9) have also been seen in and near our forest occasionally in the last few years. On morning walks, look for tracks in the sand beside the boardwalk of our nocturnal visitors; raccoon tracks are especially common.

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

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

Spotted Towhees often cling to the tops of shrubs for a few moments giving their loud buzzing call. They are beautiful birds with black heads, black backs with white spots, reddish-brown sides, and white bellies. Their relative, the California Towhee, is basic brown and usually stays low, as do the hard-to-spot brown Wrentits. In bushes most of the time but fairly often seen calling from branch tops is the California Thrasher, brown above and buff below with a long down-curved beak and a long tail.

From Bush Lupine Point and Siena's View check out the estuary for large year-round flocks of Willets (pictured in my story about them on page 4). Also watch for arrivals migrating in for



Bushtits seldom sit long enough in one place for careful study, instead moving in flocks with other small birds through shrubs disturbing and catching small insects or gleaning them from leaves and twigs.



Mock Heather, signature flower for August and September in the Elfin Forest.

their winter vacation on Morro Bay. Usually arriving in August or September are White Pelicans and several species of ducks including Gadwalls, Northern Shovelers, and Green-winged, Blue-winged and Cinnamon Teal.

The abundant and active life displayed by so many plants and animals adapted to our dry climate and sandy dune soils is marvelous to observe at this stressful season of their year!

WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

Saturday Walks

Attention –The following walks are subject to cancellation, depending on which stage of re-opening we are in during August and September. Please check our website: www.elfin-forest.org one week before the walk date to learn if the walk has been cancelled.

August 15, 8:30 a.m. – Elfin Forest Birds in the Summer Note Earlier Time

Late summer is an interesting time for birds. Nesting season is ending, but migration has not yet started. Juvenile birds are on their own for the first time, and some bird species form “family flocks.” Many birds are switching from breeding to preparing for migration. Though not as many birds are singing, there is still plenty to see and hear! Join Jessica Griffiths on a walk to explore what birds are up to during this under-appreciated time of year.

September 19, 9:30 a.m. – Pacific Wildlife Care

Pacific Wildlife Care (PWC) volunteer and Central Coast Outdoors owner/guide Virginia Flaherty will lead a walk focusing on PWC’s rehabilitation program in relationship to the Elfin Forest. 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 can do to help ensure the return of injured, orphaned and oiled wildlife to the hills and waters of the Central Coast. She will also bring one of PWC’s Wildlife Ambassadors to the start of the walk.

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

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.

Photos from the Forest



“The Elfin Forest has two new residents” declared Leslie Rotstein in sending us this photograph of two fawns photographed one morning late in May by the trail camera in the Rotstein’s yard, which virtually adjoins the Elfin Forest.



*In May, we received this photo from Chuck and Bernadette Soter, who asked for an identification. The plant is *Pholisma arenarium* or Sand Plant, just pushing its way up and out of the sand. *Pholisma* blooms between April and August during wet years. Photo by Chuck Soter.*

For more information, see Dirk Walters’ article on page 5.

Thank You to Our Generous Members

*Compiled by Betsy Kinter,
FEMEF Database Coordinator*

NEW MEMBERS:

Marcia Shannon*

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**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 FEMEF 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.

Yolanda's "Pics" – Some of Her Favorite Photos



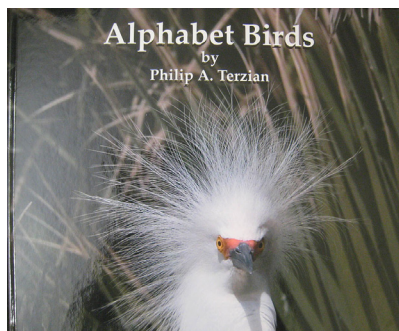
In 2009, archaeologist John Parker gave the last of his very popular Chumash walks before he moved north to Clear Lake. Here he was explaining how Chumash money differed from the currency we use today.



Phyllis Snyder, on left, was eager to hear John Parker's last Chumash talk but couldn't get down off of the boardwalk. The boardwalk extension to Rose's Grove hadn't been built yet. Jean Wheeler, Oakleaves co-editor, helped Phyllis to navigate her walker off of the boardwalk and down the path so she could be within earshot of Dr. Parker's talk.



Ron Rasmussen, along with help from a few Weed Warriors, kept the boardwalk in good shape until he retired from SWAP in 2018.



Alphabet Birds: Great Gift Book for Kids

This wonderful book by Philip A. Terzian has gorgeous pictures of birds, one for each letter of the alphabet. The facing page features a clever little poem for each bird in large-sized text and child-appropriate wording.



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

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Your donation to Friends of the Elfin Forest can not only reduce your income tax bite, but will help us with special projects such as soil erosion control, revegetation with native species, and the projects described on pages 1 and 2 of this issue.

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

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☐ I want to help, please call me!

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

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

All donations to FEMEF are tax-deductible.

EVERY membership counts!

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08/20