



OAKLEAVES

A PUBLICATION OF FRIENDS OF EL MORO ELFIN FOREST

P.O. BOX 6442, LOS OSOS, CALIFORNIA 93412-6442 ❖ (805) 528-0392 ❖ DECEMBER 2020 / JANUARY 2021



About to set off up the 12th Street trail for a meeting about the Butterfly Hill Project, this appropriately masked and distanced group included (L-R) landscape architect Lindsay Corica of Firma Consultants, Vicky Johsen, Pat Brown, Skip Rotstein, Brook Langle of Terra Verde Environmental Consulting, Jan DiLeo, Jeff Reifel, Dave Bowlus and Dennis Sheridan. Photo by Jay Waddell.

FEMEF Chair Jan DiLeo Retires from Board

Text and photo by Yolanda Waddell

Jan DiLeo joined the County Parks staff in 1998 as Senior Park Planner. As the County Parks Elfin Forest Projects Coordinator, she obtained necessary permits and oversaw construction of the Boardwalk, heading a committee of SWAP members to address numerous challenges that arose in the process.

After the Boardwalk was dedicated in early 2000, Jan worked with SWAP on funding, planning, designing and constructing

DiLeo *continued on page 2*

Plans for Butterfly Hill Project

By Jan DiLeo, FEMEF Chair, Yolanda Waddell and Pat Brown

As outlined in the 2020/2021 Projects that were covered in the August/September issue of Oakleaves, FEMEF is working on plans for the Butterfly Hill Project. FEMEF has hired Lindsay Corica, a landscape architect with Firma Consultants in San Luis Obispo, to complete drawings for the Butterfly Hill Project. The drawings will include placement of one or two benches and an interpretive display within the site's disturbed area. The interpretive display will discuss butterflies and other pollinators, their importance in the ecosystem, and how to protect their habitat. The drawings will also include an area or areas for habitat restoration, fencing to define public access, and methods to protect the local wildlife.

Butterfly Hill, reached by taking the 11th Street trail, is a high dune near the west end of the Elfin Forest. Pat Brown, who leads butterfly nature walks in the Forest, gave the hill its name when she observed butterflies flying up to the hill in the spring to find a mate. Pat describes the area as a "butterfly singles bar." There is an excellent view from the hill over the estuary and beyond. The Butterfly Hill Project, when complete, will provide a viewing place that is also educational.

Firma's initial designs will be reviewed by FEMEF's Board and County Parks. Input from these two entities will result in a final design that will ultimately be reviewed by the United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the California Coastal Commission.

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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, December 8
and Tuesday, January 12.***

**All Board meetings are open to the public.
To attend a Zoom FEMEF Board meeting,
leave a message at 805-528-0392.**



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.

DiLeo *cont. from page 1*

seven interpretive panels, two monuments, and twenty benches. In 2003, she initiated a major study of the Elfin Forest, the Recovery Action Plan, conducted by the Morro Group. Through the years she worked with SWAP on restoration and revegetation projects, and on extending the Boardwalk into the Rose Bowker Grove in 2010. At all times she was SWAP's "go to" person at County Parks.



In April 2010, Jan left her post as County Parks Senior Planner. The SWAP Board and other members gave her a "farewell" lunch to show their appreciation for her years of hard work on behalf of the Elfin Forest. At the luncheon they learned that she would be willing to join the SWAP Board as Treasurer. Jan lived in Los Osos at the time, and said she had enjoyed working as Treasurer for another group.

Not only did she dive into her Treasurer job, but Jan also acted as a go-between with County Parks. She organized meetings in the Elfin Forest with new Senior Planner Shaun Cooper and Supervising Ranger Bob Yetter, to address SWAP projects for approval by County Parks.

Jan also took part in other Board tasks such as working at the SWAP information booth, and helping to host our Calendar Preview events (SWAP published an Elfin Forest calendar for six years, from 2007 to 2012). Because of her energy and generous giving of time to SWAP, Jan was named Volunteer of the Year at the end of 2010.

In following years, Jan continued her work on Elfin-Forest-related projects, coordinating periodic meetings with County Parks staff and the Director regarding our projects and concerns. In 2016, Jan encouraged the SWAP Board to establish an annual list of projects, to focus Board energy and funds on planned tasks rather than "fighting fires." Selecting projects for the year is now our standard practice.

In February, 2018, Jan was elected FEMEF Chair, and new Board member Dave Bowlus became Treasurer. During her first year as Chair, Jan led the search for and selection of Terra Verde Environmental Consulting to undertake an Elfin Forest Biological Assessment. Its purpose is to guide SWAP in caring for the Elfin Forest in years to come. In 2019, Small Wilderness Area Preservation became Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest (FEMEF). The year 2020 has proved to be a challenge for FEMEF, with Jan learning how to host Board meetings via Zoom. In November, she coordinated and was Zoom host for FEMEF's Annual Celebration, a State-required annual meeting.

Jan and her husband Dave no longer live in Los Osos. Though she will always have a close attachment to the Elfin Forest, she feels it is time to pursue other interests. She has submitted her resignation and will leave the FEMEF Board at the end of December. Her fellow Board members will greatly miss Jan's good humor, positive outlook, excellent leadership and endless energy.

The Board thanks Jan on behalf of FEMEF's members for the 22 years of her involvement with the Elfin Forest. So long, Jan. Please stay in touch, and we hope to see you and Dave in the Elfin Forest once in awhile.

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.

Bob Meyer Has Retired as Webmaster

By Yolanda Waddell

Bob Meyer and his wife Sharon moved from Sacramento to Los Osos in 1999, after Bob retired from his work as Senior Environmental Planner for Cal Trans. Since they like to explore natural areas, they quickly found the Elfin Forest. After attending a walk led by Conservation Chair Pete Sarafian, Bob and Sharon became Weed Warriors.

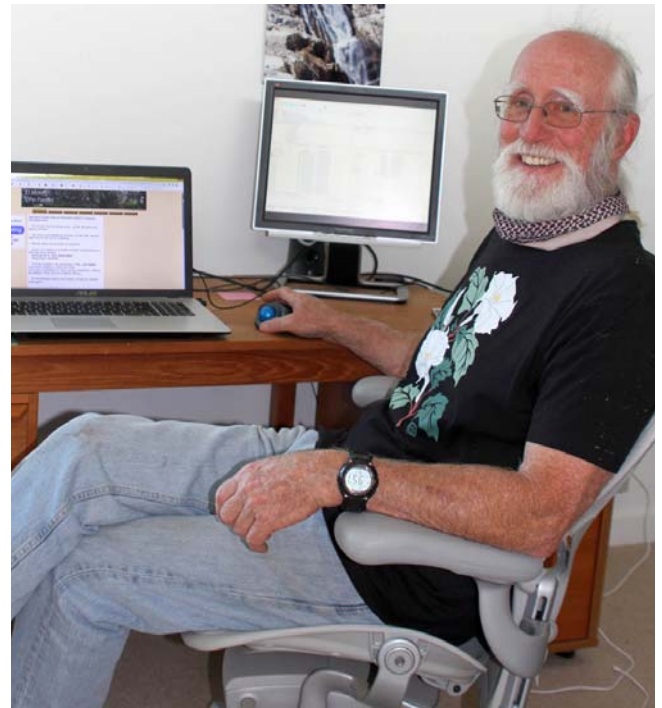


When Pete learned that Bob was skilled with GIS (Geographical Information Systems) mapping, he asked Bob to map the Elfin Forest for a restoration and revegetation project to be done in a future year (2004) by the CCC.

Bob joined the SWAP Board in 2002. After completing the mapping project, he became principal editor and Chair of the Revision Committee for our then 24-page pocket guide, *Plants and Animals of the Elfin Forest Natural Area*. He coordinated work on updating previous lists of plants, birds, insects and fungi. He also enlisted lichenologist Charis Bratt of the Santa Barbara Botanical Garden, who conducted a survey of lichens in the Elfin Forest and produced our lichen list. After all lists were thoroughly vetted by scientists and specialists in the various fields, Bob produced a map, added a set of keys, and found a printer. In 2005, the new 52-page Pocket Guide came off the press.

Next, Bob turned his attention to developing a website for SWAP. He produced a site with six links leading off of the home page: Visiting Forest, About Forest, Conservation, Flora & Fauna, Forest Library, and Forest Store. Over the years he added photos to dress up each page as well as additional green “go to” buttons to bring up links with more information. Board members Danna Weidner and Yolanda Waddell joined him in forming the Website Committee. Danna assisted Bob with tasks like adding each new issue of *Oakleaves* to the website, using the website’s HTML command language.

Bob retired from the SWAP Board at the end of 2009, but remained as a key member of the Conservation Committee, and as Webmaster. He continued to work to make the website more useful, posting all of the lists that appear in our 2005 paper Pocket Guide under the heading, *Flora and Fauna*. He added scientific



Jeff Reifel is the New FEMEF Webmaster

By Yolanda Waddell; Photo by Barbara Renshaw

Jeff Reifel (pronounced Rye-FEL) is a long-time friend of the Elfin Forest. He and his family spent vacations in the Los Osos/Morro Bay area in the years before the Boardwalk was built.

Born in the Los Angeles area, Jeff, whose father was an aerospace engineer, lived in many places while growing up, including Utah and Alabama. He went to high school in Redlands, and college at U.C. Riverside. After college Jeff became a middle school science teacher at Matthew Gage Middle School in Riverside, where he shared his love of science with students for 25 years, from 1985 to 2010.

Jeff moved to our area in 2010 and within a few blocks of the Elfin Forest since 2016. He’s volunteered as a State Parks docent since 2013. As a member of the “Black Hill Gang,” Jeff worked on design and construction of projects that included new stairs below the museum and a new bridge on East Crespi Trail. He is out weekly on trail maintenance. In 2017, his neighbor and friend Skip Rotstein invited Jeff to join a First Saturday work party in the Elfin Forest. Jeff has continued as a Weed Warrior, doing erosion control, trail maintenance and boardwalk repair, among other tasks. He is now caretaker of the boardwalk relieving Rich and Prisila Johnson, who cannot work near other people because of Covid-19. Jeff also gives native plant nature walks in the Elfin Forest with co-leader Barbara Renshaw.

I mentioned at a FEMEF Board meeting last summer that the Website Committee needed help with updating the *Oakleaves*

Meyer *continued on page 4*

Reifel *continued on page 4*

Cal Poly Service Fraternity Helps Out In Elfin Forest



Members of Cal Poly Alpha Phi Omega Service Fraternity were given a tour of the Elfin Forest by Pete Sarafian (right) before working with Pete on an erosion control project.

By Pete Sarafian; photo Vicky Johnsen

Cal Poly students from the Alpha Phi Omega National Service Fraternity visited the Elfin Forest in October. Hosted by Vicky Johnsen and Pete Sarafian, they were a big help to conservation efforts. Many parts of the steep hillside below Bush Lupine Point and Butterfly Hill still are barren with open sand and erosion channels.

After a tour of the Elfin Forest, the students helped Pete by installing four new erosion bars across eroded channels and repositioning many more old bars that no longer were slowing water flow effectively. Some bars have been so effective that the old eroded channels have revegetated naturally. These bars had to be moved out of the vegetation to cover new channels that now exist. Some bars had been undermined by water and had to be pulled out and placed back down after digging out a more level space.

Much good progress was made with the help of the students, who included Zainab Ahmad, Tehya Balido, Vy Le, Anna Leon, Amber Lin, William Miller (Chapter President), Brooke Mylander, Trisha Tran, Kyle Van and Jacob Woo. Thanks to them for their generous gift of energy and time.

Reifel *continued from page 3*

Subject Index. Having done indexing in the past, Board member Skip Rotstein volunteered, but found that using the website's HTML command language was daunting – a common problem. He mentioned this to Jeff, who had learned to use HTML when he created his own website to promote his computer animations. Jeff agreed to do the indexing, bringing the Subject Index up to date and making the Oakleaves Editions Index easier to use. Do take a look under the “Forest Library” link at www.elfin-forest.org. The indexes cover Oakleaves from 1985 to the present.

In October, Bob Meyer decided that it was time to retire as Webmaster and, knowing Jeff's skill, invited him to take over. Jeff agreed, much to the relief and gratitude of FEMEF Board members. His first project was to post instructions for attending FEMEF'S Zoom Annual Celebration on the website home page, with a link for joining the meeting.

When asked about his ideas for the website, Jeff mentioned giving the design, created by Bob in the early 2000s, a more contemporary look. He praised the content of the website with the excellent information that it contains, and will add more ways for website users to learn about FEMEF and its activities. The FEMEF Board gives our heartfelt thanks to Jeff for becoming Webmaster. To our members – do take a look at the website from time to time, and enjoy Jeff's handiwork.

Meyer *continued from page 3*

names to the Mammals list, and photos from UC Berkeley's Cal-Photos lists to the Mammals and Vascular Plants lists. Bob's work shows the power of a website to keep information current, and to connect to other sources of information.

One of Bob's hobbies is photography, and he shared his skill generously with SWAP. His photos appeared in each of our Elfin Forest calendars, in note cards that we sold, and in Oakleaves. He caught some of the Elfin Forest's residents in rare moments, such as a Western Fence Lizard eating a bee. His photos of the Morro Shoulderband Snail are preserved on an interpretive panel, “Special Snails,” that can be seen along the El Morro Linear Parkway in Los Osos.

In October, Bob called me to say that he would be retiring as Webmaster, and had found a replacement for the job. He invited a Weed Warrior, Jeff Reifel, who is familiar with HTML commands and had updated the Oakleaves indexes. FEMEF/SWAP will never have another Bob Meyer, who shared his knowledge and many skills so generously because of his love for the Elfin Forest. But we are grateful to him for finding us a new Webmaster, and hope to see Bob and Sharon from time to time in the Elfin Forest, at Annual Celebrations, and around Los Osos. Thank you, Bob from the FEMEF Board, and on behalf of our members. We wish you enjoyment in whatever you choose to do in the years to come.

Bedstraws

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

Editor's Note: Repeated from Dec 2008 /January 2009 Oakleaves.

The three species of plants discussed this time are all members of the genus, *Galium*. Bedstraw is the most universally used common name for this genus. Locally, bedstraws come in three very easily recognized forms based on their stems and leaves, which Bonnie has drawn for the illustration.

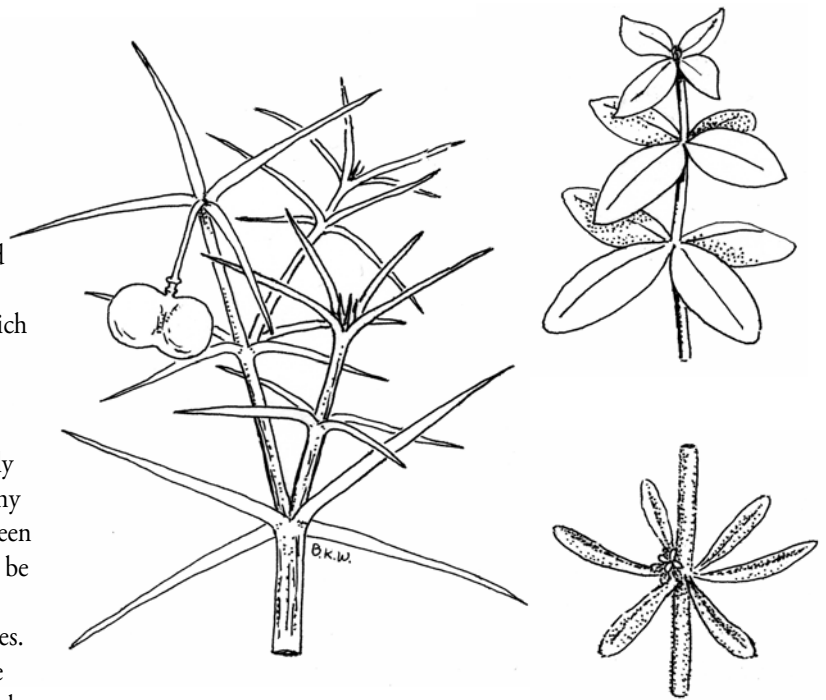
The most distinctive of the three has the whorl of four extremely narrow, needle-like leaves, most longer than the space between adjacent leaf attachments. *G. andrewsii* grows commonly among shrubs and under oaks and is easily distinguished from any of the 11 or so other SLO County bedstraw species. It has not been recorded in the Elfin Forest, but it wouldn't surprise me if it will be found growing in its drier areas.

The other two species shown have shorter, broader, flat leaves. The species listed as *G. nuttallii* in the Elfin Forest Pocket Guide is the one with the four leaves per whorl. The last species pictured, *G. aparine*, is the only annual and, as shown, usually has six leaves per whorl. It is also the only non-native species commonly found along semi-shady paths, streams and as a garden weed throughout the county. This weedy species has recently been reported at the western end of the Elfin Forest.

In *The Jepson Manual*, the current authority on California plant identification, *G. nuttallii* is restricted to Southern California and should not be growing this far north. Also, the taxonomy of the genus has been revised relatively recently. The plant growing in the Elfin Forest should now be called *Galium porrigens*.

Why 'should' and not 'is' called? There are several species of locally common four-leaf per whorl bedstraws and the characteristics used to distinguish these species are easily overlooked, such as whether the very thin stems are woody only at the base or more-or-less extensively woody. Also, the shape and size of leaves as well as the amount and nature of 'hairs' on the stem and leaves are quite variable depending on whether they grow in sun or shade. This causes the variation to overlap among the species. Each of the three pictured species is divided further into several varieties, which also makes easy identification difficult.

Several common names applied to this genus also reflect the subtle distinguishing characteristics among species. So far I've found goose-grass, cleavers, catch-weed, hay-ruff, mutton-chops, scratch-grass, grip-grass, Robin-in-the-hedge, and sweet-hearts. Goose-grass refers to the plant's extreme desirability as a forage plant. I suspect cleavers refers to those species, with large fruits that readily split into two halves. Most of the names refer to the re-curved 'hairs' found on stems, leaves, and fruits of many of the species, which serve to attach to animal hair or fuzzy clothing. The plants then steal a ride as an aid in fruit/seed dispersal. *G. nuttallii* bears minute re-curved hairs and smooth, fleshy fruits so it is not dispersed in that way. If you squint at some of the bi-lobed fruits they can be made to resemble a valentine heart. Has anybody heard



of a better explanation for the name sweet-hearts?

The most universal common name, bedstraw, obviously comes from the pioneer practice of stuffing dried bedstraw, especially one from Eurasia called sweet bedstraw, into pillows and mattresses. The dried stems and leaves are reported to give off a sweet odor which is supposed to give one sweet dreams.



When Dirk Walters wrote in 2008 about Bedstraws (*Galium* spp.) in the Elfin Forest, two species were known: Climbing Bedstraw (*Galium nuttalli*, now *G. porrigens*) and Goosegrass (*G. aparine*). In 2018, another Elfin Forest bedstraw was identified by botanist Kristen Nelson, California bedstraw (*G. californicum*).

Photo by Bing Huey.

Northern Shoveler

Text and Photos by Jean D. Wheeler, Ph.D.

This common winter visitor to our estuary gets part of both its common and its scientific name from the anatomical feature making it perhaps the easiest to identify of all the ducks visiting our waters. This duck features a very large beak, about 2 ½ inches long, shaped like and used like a shovel or a spatula and is therefore called the Northern Shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*).

Also making this species easy to spot and identify, the male in breeding plumage is very distinctively colored, with a glowing dark green head and bright yellow eye behind that large black bill, and a white breast, with chestnut brown sides. His back is dark, but pale blue feathers flash in flight. The female is more drab, like most female ducks a mottled brown, but her large spatulate bill, mostly grayish olive green, is outlined by a distinctive bright orange all around the edge.

We can see the birds in these conspicuous colors on our estuary because they are most vivid in color when actively mating, and they are actively forming pairs when here on their winter range. In their northern breeding range, males fade to look much like the dull brown females from May to August. They molt (and hide in weeds while flightless) just before fall migration. Mates will remain together until just before they leave the nesting area and head south for winter lakes and estuaries. Both spring and fall migrations are prolonged, some birds departing early and others leaving quite late in both seasons.

A female scrapes a shallow nest in areas of short weeds and grasses near weed bearing, often muddy shallow waters, but not near open deep water. She lays about 9 eggs and does all the incubating. Males defend the nest. Young hatch in about 3-3 ½ weeks, covered in down, able to walk and swim, and the female leads them to water within a few hours of hatching.

When feeding, these dabbling ducks swim nearly upright on the surface of muddy, weedy waters, swinging their distinctive bills from side to side barely below the surface ahead of them. They use the tiny comb-like edges of their bills to strain seeds and other plant foods plus tiny aquatic invertebrates from the water. They often swim in groups, helping to stir up food to comb out of the water.

This species is very widely distributed. In North America they nest from the Great Lakes and Hudson's Bay west to the Pacific shores of Canada and Alaska, even the Arctic Coast in eastern Alaska, and south to Oregon. They winter in the U.S. on both Pacific and Atlantic coasts, across the southern states, and in most of Mexico. They also breed across northern Eurasia and winter in southern Europe, Africa, and southeast Asia.

Northern Shoveler populations are considered stable. Hunting is carefully managed with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service allowing about 700,000 taken by hunters in each of several recent years.



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Layout is by Katy Budge.

Editing assistance by Pat Grimes.

Contributors to this issue: Contributors to this issue: Pat Brown, Jan DiLeo, Bing Huey, Vicky Johnsen, Betsy Kinter, Barbara Renshaw, Jeff Reifel, Jim Royer, Pete Sarafian, Angela Scardina, Jay Waddell, Yolanda Waddell, Dirk and Bonnie Walters, Jean Wheeler.

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

Correction: In our Oct/Nov issue on page 5, in the Long-billed Curlew article, the surname of the Community Science Coordinator for the Intermountain Bird Observatory in Idaho was given incorrectly. Her name is actually Heather Hayes. We deeply regret the error.

Weed Warrior Reports

Text by Yolanda Waddell

from Reports by Vicky Johnsen, Conservation Co-Chair

Continued presence of Coronavirus still limits the size of groups working in the Elfin Forest. In spite of that, much is being done to care for the Forest.

September - Conservation Co-Chair Vicky Johnsen, Dean Thompson and weed warrior James Solum did vegetation trimming along the boardwalk. Jeff Reifel took over maintenance of the boardwalk in the absence of Rich and Prisila Johnson, who cannot work near other people because of the dangers of Covid-19. Jeff replaced hundreds of rusted and broken screws, and placed one-way arrows on steps leading up to the boardwalk to inform visitors about the current one-way practice.

October - Vicky became concerned about deep ruts in the 15th Street parking area sand that caused visitors to park their cars where native plants were growing. The 11th Street parking area had a similar condition. Vicky expressed her concern to County Parks Supervising Ranger Lasca Gaylord, who arranged for loads of chips to be delivered to the 11th Street and 15th Street parking areas. Vicky, Jeff Reifel and Dave Bowlus moved and spread the chips at 15th Street, and Supervising Ranger Gaylord worked with Jeff Reifel to spread the chips at 11th Street.

On October 30 - Vicky was joined by two new volunteers, Sophie Fauchier-Specker and her mother Annie Fauchier-Specker, in doing vegetation trimming. Vicky reported that a mom and her daughter watched them trimming and thanked them. Later the mom came back to where they were working with bags of Halloween treats, apparently sent by the daughter. Vicky said, "In the 7-1/2 years I've worked in the Elfin Forest, I've been thanked but never before treated."



Dave Bowlus and Jeff Reifel deposited a tarp full of wood chips in the 15th Street parking area prior to spreading them.

Photo by Yolanda Waddell.



Jeff Reifel inspects a boardwalk stringer (support board) while doing boardwalk maintenance. Photo by Barbara Renshaw.

Photos from the Forest

While on Jim Royer's birding field trip (see Walks article page 9), Angela Scardina caught this Scrub Jay perched on a fence post with a very still Morro Bay estuary behind it.



Join First Friday Work Parties

We invite you to join us on any first Friday from 9 a.m. to noon at the north end of 15th Street in Los Osos to enjoy satisfying physical activity in fresh air amid lovely surroundings. Please dress for wind, fog, or sun. Layers work well. Long pants and long shirt sleeves are good. Sturdy shoes are a must. Take care not to park in front of driveways or mailboxes. For more information including possible cancellation re Covid-19, call 805-528-0392.

Coming Up in the Elfin Forest

Text and Photos by Jean Wheeler

Our area is one of the top birding locales in our country, and especially in these winter months when diversity of birds and populations of many species are at a peak for the year.

Virtually all species of water birds and wading birds listed in our Pocket Guide (sold on page 11) are present and at peak populations in December and January. Look out onto the estuary from Bush Lupine Point or Siena's View to spot large American White Pelicans and both Canada and Brant Geese. Dabbling Ducks likely to be present in large numbers include Northern Pintails, American Wigeons, Northern Shovelers (page 6 has my natural history article with photos of this species), and all three Teal: Blue-winged, Cinnamon, and Green-winged. Diving ducks typically numerous include Greater and Lesser Scaup, Buffleheads, and Ruddy Ducks. Among wading birds commonly seen are Great and Snowy Egrets, American Avocets, Long-billed Curlews, Marbled Godwits, and Willets.

All the raptors listed in our pocket guide and most of the passerines are also present in midwinter. Look for Osprey flying low over the estuary or even perched on sticks protruding from the water. Northern Harriers, Red-tailed Hawks, Peregrine Falcons and Turkey Vultures often fly low over the estuary or along the cliffs containing Bush Lupine Point and Siena's View lookouts.

Shrubs around the boardwalk can be alive with flitting Finches, Sparrows, Gnatcatchers, Wrens, Phoebes, Chickadees, Bushtits, Nuthatches, and many other little brown and little grey birds. Among the larger common birds of the brush easily seen from the boardwalk are Thrashers, Towhees, Scrub Jays, Quail, and Doves.

By the turning of the year, some of our larger shrubs will be coming into bloom. Buckbrush ceanothus, among the many species of the California lilac genus, is one of the dominant shrubs in our maritime chaparral, so its white to lavender flowers will nearly surround the boardwalk. Tucked in more protected areas of the lower boardwalk is Morro manzanita. This tall shrub is found only along the coast between Montaña de Oro and Morro Bay State Parks, with the Elfin Forest preserve nearly in the center of its limited range. The tiny bell-shaped flowers of the Morro manzanita are listed in our pocket-guide as white, but often have a quite pinkish blush.

Against the green shrubs, the bright red of the fuchsia-flowered gooseberry makes a cheerful holiday statement. When the gooseberries begin to open their many long red trumpets, our Anna's Hummingbirds should be very relieved. The flower tubes of this species are a major food support in their nesting season

By the end of January, California peonies may begin opening their drooping red balls of flowers in the understory, especially near Siena's View and along the 11th Street sand trail.

I've heard weather forecasters predicting a La Niña with low rainfall on our coast this winter. But our Elfin Forest has lived here for a great many centuries surviving and producing beautiful blooms even in drought years. Our flowering shrubs are vitally important to the survival of birds, butterflies, and many other animals dependent upon them. We are lucky to be able to enjoy the tenacity and beauty of our drought-surviving plants and animals!



Say's Phoebe



Fuchsia-flowered Gooseberry

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 Oak-leaves editors at: oakleaf@elfin-forest.org or leave a message on FEMEF's answering machine, (805) 528-0392.

WALKS Update

By Yolanda Waddell, Walks Committee Chair

In November, at the time of this writing, there has been a surge of coronavirus cases in San Luis Obispo County. Therefore, all nature walks in the Elfin Forest must continue to be limited to no more than 6 people, with the leader maintaining more than six feet of distance, and members of different households maintaining more than 6 feet of distance.

In previous months, the FEMEF Walks Committee decided not to give nature walks in the Elfin Forest because, as a public park, we couldn't limit the number of people attending. However, County Parks has approved Reservations Only nature walks.

In early October, birder Jim Royer gave two birding field trips for groups of six or smaller. Participants phoned in a request to join the walk on a first-come, first-served basis. Walk guidelines were observed, as can be seen in the accompanying photo, and attendees were happy to join a nature walk in the Elfin Forest once more.

For future walks, 3rd Saturday Walks Coordinator Petra Clayton will check with our regular nature walk leaders to learn who is comfortable with giving a walk in the Elfin Forest. By the time that we put together the February/March 2021 *Oakleaves*, we may have more nature walks in the Elfin Forest to offer.

Keep an eye on our website home page, www.elfin-forest.org or check outgoing messages each month at 805-528-0392 for any update about walks.



*In October, walk leader Jim Royer, with spotting scope, led a small group of participants on a pre-Big Sit! birding inventory in the Elfin Forest.
Photo by Angela Scardina.*

*The effects of the Coronavirus pandemic on this year's Big Sit! were visible with just two spotting scopes and, at the time the photo was taken, just one masked birder, Mike Stiles, at Bush Lupine Point.
Photo by Jay Waddell.*



2020 Elfin Forest Big Sit, Covid-19 Version

By Jim Royer, Big Sit Coordinator

This year's "Big Sit" at the overlook platform at Bush Lupine Point on Sunday, October 11, was very different due to Covid-19. Many former counters were understandably reluctant to count from the overlook with other birders present. We also wanted to keep the number of counters (and visitors) down, due to the pandemic, so we did not publicize the count or solicit counters. We ended up with a total of five counters. All but one were seasoned "Big Sitters" here.

As usual, Mike Stiles started in the dark of the early morning. The rest of us came at different times during the day, counting in shifts so that there were two counters present for almost all of the day.

The weather was pleasant most of the day, with comfortable temperatures and good visibility. We started off well with 80 species by 10 am, and 89 species by noon. We had to work for the rest of the day to add more species.

Surprisingly, there were no geese at all. Several usual duck species were nowhere to be found, like Ruddy Duck and Bufflehead. We also missed other usual suspects like Band-tailed Pigeon, American Coot (!), Red Knot, Royal Tern, Black-crowned Night Heron, Downy Woodpecker, House Sparrow, and Fox Sparrow.

Highlights included a large flock of swallows including Tree Swallows, Violet-green Swallows, and a Rough-winged Swallow (new for the count). We also had a single White-faced Ibis, out in the mud by the bay and flying by. Two adult Bald Eagles, flying around, were an impressive addition. We watched an adult Peregrine Falcon chase a Black-bellied Plover, catch it mid-flight in its talons, and then drop the shorebird to its juvenile offspring flying below, who caught the bird and flew to the ground to eat it!

Our final tally was 98 species for the day. We usually see about 100 species, so we were happy with the total since there were only five of us for the day. We should still be one of the top counts in the country for the weekend.

Thank You to Our Generous Members

*Compiled by Betsy Kinter,
FEMEF Database Coordinator*

NEW MEMBERS:

Claudette Saylor*

RENEWING MEMBERS:

Libbie Agran & Guy Fitzwater*

Anne Avril & Dan Haifley*

Rosemary Baxter*

Kathryn Bay*

Sandra Beebe

R.S. & L.H. Cowan*

Thom & Diane Danfield*

Robert & Gail Davis*

Carmen Fojo*

Debra Groom

Jim Havlena & Mary Rogers*

Herbert & Debra Holt*

Steven Jobst & Jill Anderson*

Gene Kalland*

Jerry Mullins*

Brian Nofziger & Allison Nofziger*

Mrs. Shirley G. Palmer

James & Sharon Skinner

Joanne Smalley*

Diane & Frank Snow*

Shaunna Sullivan

& Ron Ruppert*

Bonnie Thompson*

Michael Ward

Carol Weisl*

Mary Whelen*

Norma Wightman*

DONATIONS:

Hamill Family Foundation,
recommended by Crow and Wendy White

**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.*

Vote for Board Members

It is that time again... and just when you thought you were done voting. This year FEMEF has four candidates running for the FEMEF Board. One incumbent (Dave Bowlus) is running for re-election; three candidates are new to the Board. Two existing FEMEF Board members, Yolanda Waddell and Skip Rotstein, will remain on FEMEF's Board; their terms do not expire until December 2022.

Please take a minute and send in your vote. You can vote for one candidate or all the candidates. A ballot and directions for submitting your ballot are provided below. All FEMEF / SWAP members are eligible to vote. Thank you for supporting FEMEF and the Elfin Forest.

FEMEF Ballot December 2020

<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Term Length</i>	<i>Indicate "Yes" or "No" Below</i>
DAVE BOWLUS <i>Incumbent, Treasurer, retired biology Professor</i>	2 Years / Jan. 1, 2021 - Dec. 31, 2022	Y / N
JEFF REIFEL <i>FEMEF Webmaster, retired science teacher</i>	2 Years / Jan. 1, 2021 - Dec. 31, 2022	Y / N
ALBERT CALIZO <i>Filipino Community leader; Los Osos Citizen of the Year, Elfin Forest Volunteer</i>	1 Year Jan. 1, 2021 - Dec. 31, 2021	Y / N
STEVE HENDRICKS <i>Cuesta College Biology Professor; Los Osos Resident; Conducts Elfin Forest class walks</i>	1 Year Jan. 1, 2021 - Dec. 31, 2021	Y / N
Write-In _____		Y / N
Write-In _____		Y / N

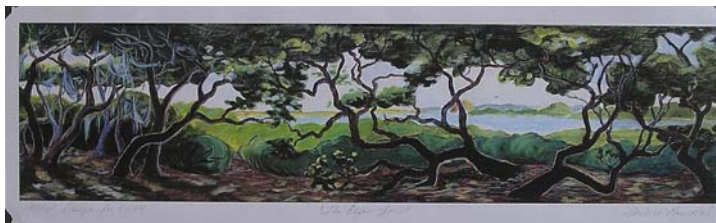
How to Vote for

Friends of the El Moro Elfin Forest (FEMEF) (aka SWAP) Board members:

1. Via Email. Send an email to: skip@elfin-forest.org. In the email indicate the candidate's names and whether you vote "Yes" or "No" for that candidate. You may propose a write-in candidate by indicating a person's name and then a "Yes" vote after that name. Email your ballot no later than midnight on December 11, 2020. Please only one ballot per member.

2. Via U.S. Postal Service. Duplicate or cut out the ballot above. On the ballot indicate your vote, i.e., "Yes" or "No" for each candidate. You may propose a write-in candidate by indicating a person's name and then a "Yes" vote after that name. To verify you are a member, put your name on the outside of the envelope (in the return address slot). Mail your ballot no later than midnight on December 11, 2020 to: FEMEF, P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412.

Great Holiday Gifts From SWAP



Mural wall prints, mural T-shirts and sweatshirts, mural coffee mugs, our oak tree logo caps, and Alphabet Bird Books make wonderful gifts for your loved ones. Pocket guides are good stocking stuffers! A gift donation or life membership in the name of your relative or friend would also be much appreciated.



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.

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

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 \$1.50 (book rate) each = ___

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: _____

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Make checks payable and mail to:

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

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



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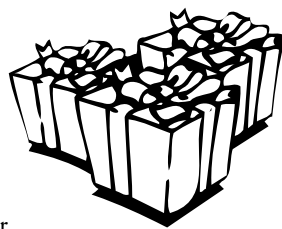
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Vote for FEMEF Board Members ~ Ballot & candidate info on page 10.

Please check renewal date on your label.

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Gift Memberships & Tax Deductible Donations Help Save the Elfin Forest



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

Your donation will reduce your income tax bite and will help fund special projects in the Elfin Forest such as soil erosion control, revegetation with native species, and boardwalk upkeep.

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

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 |

Donation only \$ _____

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!

Make checks payable to: FEMEF

Mail to: Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest,
 P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412-6442.