



OAK LEAVES

A PUBLICATION OF FRIENDS OF EL MORO ELFIN FOREST

P.O. BOX 6442, LOS OSOS, CALIFORNIA 93412-6442 ♦ (805) 528-0392 ♦ AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2021

Shirley Otto, a Remembrance

By Yolanda Waddell; photos provided by Mirna Esquivel.

Editor's note: Thank you to Joe Boudreau and Mirna Esquivel for information used in this article.

Mrs. Shirley Jean Otto, from whom SWAP purchased 38.6 acres of land that are now part of the Elfin Forest, passed away at age 93 in February, in her Montecito home. She was the widow of Richard Otto, who in 1921-22 bought 1,000 acres that included the Elfin Forest.

Richard Otto developed most of the land that he acquired into a community he called Baywood Park Estates. Fortunately, the 90-acre tract that is now the Elfin Forest remained untouched. Shirley married Richard Otto in 1958, and worked with him to continue developing the Baywood Park community. It is reported that over 20,000 trees, many of them Monterey pines, were planted.

In 1964, Richard and Shirley bought a house in Montecito, just east of Santa Barbara. After Richard died in 1966, Shirley remained in that home, managing the Otto Los Osos properties from a distance. She was an excellent vocalist and a lover of opera, hosting receptions for the regional Metropolitan Opera competitions at her home. Her known love for animals resulted in her being asked to take in dogs or cats that needed a home.

She also loved basketball and purchased a team that became the Santa Barbara Islanders.

In 1985, a group of Los Osos neighbors formed the Los Osos/Morro Bay Chapter of SWAP to buy the 90.2-acre Otto Prop-

Shirley Otto *continued on page 2*



Dozer, the Long-billed Curlew is Back!!

Text by Jean Wheeler

Editor's note: Thank you to Petra Clayton, Carol Comeau, and Heather Hayes for providing information used in this report.

In our October/November issue of 2020, my natural history article covered the Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*). This was in celebration of news from Petra Clayton about two banded and satellite-tagged curlews that were the first-ever of their species tracked in migration directly from the Intermountain Bird Observatory in Idaho to our Central Coast. They were named Dozer and Neil, and they spent nine months in the area of our estuary from June 21 last year to March 21, 2021.

In mid-July, I received an email from Petra with the great news that Dozer returned to that protected area in Idaho, nested there successfully, and has now been sighted back in Morro Bay! Unfortunately, his pal Neil died this spring. But Dozer was seen at Morro Strand State Beach on July 12.

Petra informs us that Carol Comeau, a local volunteer curlew tracker had traced Dozer's recent route back from Idaho. He was seen in eastern Oregon on June 27, northern Nevada on June 29, July 6 near Merced, California, and July 8 in Morro Bay. Carol traced his mate Mimi in her migration past the Salton Sea and into Sonora Mexico, near the Colorado River. Research Biologist Heather Hayes had visited their nest and said Dozer and Mimi "were mobbing me like crazy, which suggests the chicks were on the run." Heather said, "This makes my heart so happy that he has arrived back in Morro Bay!"

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest (FEMEF)

consists of the following members:

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The FEMEF Board of Directors meets monthly
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The next meetings are

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and Tuesday, September 14.

All Board meetings are open to the public.
To attend a FEMEF Board meeting, leave a
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If you have questions about FEMEF activities
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Owners of dogs off-leash can be cited. If you
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Shirley Otto *cont. from page 1*

erty, as the undeveloped tract was
called, from Mrs. Otto. The north-
ern 52.6 acres were purchased by
State Parks in 1987, so SWAP then
focused on raising money to buy
the southern 38.6 acres.

SWAP'S first contact with
Shirley Otto was a phone call in
1986 by Board member Myron
Graham to tell her that kids on
ATVs were damaging her property.
She appreciated his call and asked
the Sheriff to keep ATVs off of
the property. Later, in April 1991,
SWAP President Rosemary Bowker
and Development Director Bar-

bara Machado had lunch with Mrs. Otto to tell her about our efforts to raise funds to buy the property. Rose reported that Mrs. Otto was very supportive of our efforts.

It took until April 1994, to raise the \$1.6 million that Mrs. Otto had agreed to accept. The Otto Property was added to San Luis Obispo County Parks as the El Moro Elfin Forest Natural Area. All who worked to buy the Forest were grateful to Shirley Otto for waiting for us. We send our condolences to her family and close friends on their loss.



Shirley Otto and two young lion cubs made friends during her travels in Europe.

Albert Calizo Leaves FEMEF Board

Albert Calizo, who joined the FEMEF Board of Directors in January, has resigned because of health problems and family needs. We are sorry to lose Albert, who brought his knowledge of the Los Osos community and administrative skills to the Board, but we wish him well and good health.

Pete Sarafian Retires From Forest Work

By Yolanda Waddell

Twenty-two years after he began volunteer work in the Elfin Forest for SWAP (now FEMEF), Pete Sarafian has retired from active work in the Forest. He became a member of SWAP in 1999, and has been heavily involved in all aspects of Elfin Forest maintenance and restoration ever since.

In addition to weeding veldt grass as well as slender-leaved iceplant and other invasive non-natives, Pete also collected seed for habitat restoration and helped to install toe rails on the completed boardwalk. Soon he saw the need to inform SWAP members about the large variety of invasive plants that had spread throughout the Elfin Forest during decades when, unknown to the owners, people had been dumping their green waste in the Forest. He wrote a series of eleven articles, each about a different invasive plant. They were published in Oak-leaves, and are now available on our website.

In the years that followed, Pete joined the SWAP Board of Directors and became Conservation Committee Chair. He gave the name Weed Warriors to the weeding volunteers, and worked tirelessly to accomplish his vision of removing all veldt grass and other invasives from the Elfin Forest. Habitat restoration was also very important, so he wrote successful grant applications to the Morro Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) for funds to hire a native plant specialist to grow plants from seed collected in the Elfin Forest. In addition, he asked for funds to hire the California Conservation Corps (CCC) to do planting and set up fences that would protect the young plants and their surrounding habitat.

In following SWAP's Adopt-A-Park contract with San Luis Obispo County Parks, Pete spent more than 500 hours each year coordinating work by SWAP's Weed Warriors, CCC crews, and other volunteers and habitat restoration contractors, to bring the Elfin Forest's habitats to a healthy condition. He attended State, County and Cuesta College classes to learn more about the ecology and plants of the Forest. Also, he obtained "take permit" certification from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to act as a snail monitor, as well as applying for and receiving a herbicide Applicator Certificate to spray difficult-to-remove invasives like Cape ivy and the Smilax asparagus vine. He became an active member of the California Invasive Plant Council and the San Luis Obispo County Weed Management Area.

In 2009, the San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation selected Pete to receive their annual Sustained Environmental Contribution award for his then-decade-long work to free the Elfin Forest of invasive plants, control erosion, and to restore native plant habitats. In 2011, the San Luis Obispo Chapter of the California Native Plant Society presented their Annual Community Service Award to Pete, "With great appreciation of your enduring commitment to...the preservation of California native flora."

Perhaps the best testament to Pete's dedication can be seen on the slope below the Forest along South Bay Boulevard. It had been cleared of weeds and planted with native plants before Pete joined SWAP, but eventually veldt grass and other weeds crept back in. Year after year in the Spring, Pete and the Weed Warriors crawled carefully along the slope (below, right), pulling out invasives and giving room for the native plants to grow. The slope outside the Elfin Forest (below, left) wasn't weeded and is filled with veldt grass. The contrast between the two areas of the slope show that years of attention and hard work can indeed restore a native habitat. Our heartfelt thanks to Pete for his vision of a restored Elfin Forest and dedication to making that happen. We wish him enjoyment as he goes on to other adventures.

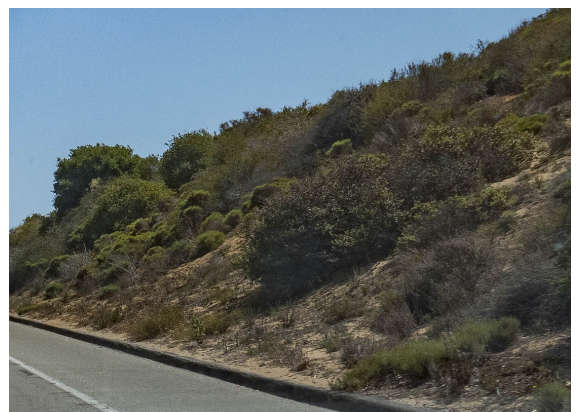


Pete Sarafian leads a group of Weed Warriors in cutting off Veldt Grass seed heads to prevent them from dropping. Later they removed the Veldt grass plants to make room for native plant seeds still sleeping in the soil, to sprout and grow.
Photo by Yolanda Waddell.



Comparing the well cared-for Elfin Forest slope along South Bay Boulevard with the same slope farther up the street shows the result of many hands and hundreds of hours of weeding under the eye of Pete Sarafian.

Photos by Dave Bowlus.



California Ground Squirrel

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

California Ground Squirrels were identified as *Spermophilus beecheyi* until about a decade ago, but molecular phylogenetic studies resulted in division of that genus into 8 genera. *Spermophilus* is now limited to Asian species and our species is now identified as (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*).

These squirrels live in burrows typically within three feet of the surface but occasionally as much as 5-6 feet below ground, and burrow systems may house several generations. They spend most of their lives within or foraging close to those burrows, only occasionally venturing to the tops of shrubs for a lookout, as this one was doing when I photographed it shortly before noon on a late July morning a few years ago in our Elfin Forest.

The California Ground Squirrel species is widely distributed and locally abundant in much of our state, but not much above 2,000 feet in elevation or in very desertic areas. It also extends northward through Oregon into southern Washington, southward into Baja California, and east into western Nevada in areas not excessively arid.

Mottled brown mixed with gray and white, these squirrels are darker on their backs, lightest on their bellies, intermediate on shoulders, necks, and sides, and they have a distinct white eye ring. Their ears are conspicuously erect, and their tails are bushy, but somewhat less so than the tails of tree squirrels. Their length is from just over a foot to nearly a foot and a half. Adults weigh about one and a third to just under two pounds. They look very similar to tree squirrel species in the same regions, but when frightened they dive for their burrows whereas tree squirrels will always rush up a tree or structure, never down into a burrow.

The diet for these ground squirrels consists of grasses and herbaceous plants in early spring changing as their preferred foods become available: seeds, nuts (including acorns), some berries and fruits, and some insects. They carry food back to their burrows in their cheek pouches, and are known to cache food.

Mating for these squirrels tends to occur in early spring, but timing is highly dependable on climate of their area as they may spend winters entirely within their burrows in colder climates. Males possess abdominal testes which drop into a temporary scrotum only during the breeding season. Females produce only one litter per year following a gestation period of about a month, with from half a dozen to a dozen young. Females will often mate with more than one male, so offspring of a litter may differ in paternity, and males may also mate with several females.

Only the females care for the young and will move them to other burrows frequently to avoid predation. The young open their eyes at about 5 weeks and are weaned and able to leave the burrow themselves by about 8 weeks.

California Ground Squirrels are highly vulnerable to predation because they are diurnal, live in rather open habitats, and have concentrated populations. Predators of their species common in our Elfin Forest include snakes, hawks, coyotes, and domestic cats



and dogs. These ground squirrels survive and are considered a species of least concern because they remain within or close to escape holes into their extensive burrow systems, and because of their high reproductive rate.



OAKLEAVES

is published six times per year beginning in February.

Co-editors are Yolanda Waddell and Jean Wheeler.

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Editing assistance by Pat Grimes.

Contributors to this issue: Joe Boudreau, Dave Bowlus, Mirna Esquivel, Vicky Johnsen, Rich Johnson, Betsy Kinter, John Nowak, Jeff Reifel, Barb Renshaw, Dean Thompson, Yolanda Waddell, Dirk and Bonnie Walters, Jean Wheeler.

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California Rose

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

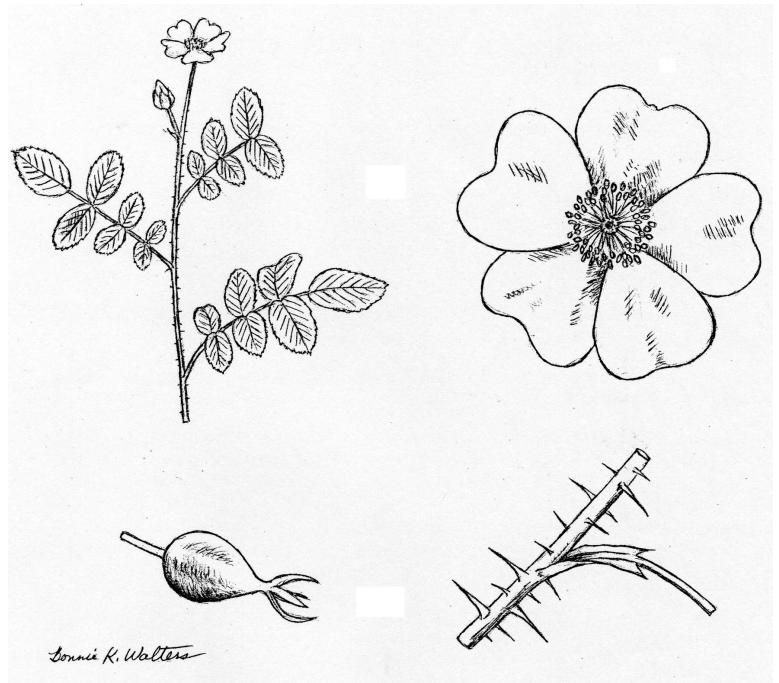
(Ed. Note: Revised by Dr. Walters from his *Oakleaves* article, August-September, 2005)

Bonnie's drawings used for this issue represent a species with 'ouchies' scattered randomly over the surface of the stem. 'Ouchies' with this distribution are derived from the surface layer of the stem (epidermis) and are known by botanists as prickles. The other common genus with prickles is the blackberry (*Rubus*). The native California blackberry (*R. ursinus*) was discussed in the August-September issue of *Oakleaves* in 2018. The current prickly plant is our common California rose (*Rosa californica*). It is moderately tall with rather stout curved prickles and pointedly tipped leaflets. California rose is locally common throughout our area. It ranges north into Southern Oregon, south into Northern Baja California and east to mid elevations of the Sierra Nevada. California rose favors stream banks or seeps and woods edges. In the Elfin Forest, it is most easily seen from the northwest corner of the Boardwalk loop near where the spur to Sienna's overlook branches off. This area has the most optimal soil moisture availability in the Elfin Forest.

Most of us probably already recognized the drawing as a rose right off. Its flowers are very characteristic. The five large, pink to red petals, many stamens and prickly stem give it away. The reddish 'fruits' are called hips and might bear some explaining. They are what botanists call an accessory fruit. This is because the fruit's flesh is not derived from ovary tissue as are true fruits. The many ovaries within a rose flower mature into many dry double-layered structures, often mistakenly called seeds, like its relative the strawberry. The outer layer is the fruit and the inner layer is the seed coat. Botanists call this fruit type an achene. The many achenes are enclosed by a fleshy red layer that develops from a vase-shaped structure derived from the fused bases of the stamens, petals, and sepals. Botanists call this structure a hypanthium, calyx tube or floral cup.

The rose flower and hip have a long history of use by humans as food and medicine. A tea was made from the petals and both humans and wildlife ate the hips. The story goes that during World War II, the English were having trouble getting citrus into the country due to the German submarine activity. This meant they had trouble getting enough vitamin C. They went on an active search for a local source. They were surprised to find it in a plant that every respectable English person had in his or her garden, the rose. I read that rose hips have more vitamin C, calcium, phosphorus, and iron than oranges. One can guess that a lot of rose hip tea was consumed during the war years. Rose hip tea is also available from local health food stores. My references indicate that all the rose species can be used in this way, but that some are more palatable than others. Personal experience can recommend wild rose hips as a pleasant nibble during late summer and fall hikes.

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



California Wild Rose. Photo by Rich Johnson.

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.

Calendar Images

These are some images from past SWAP Calendars featuring some of our talented local artists.

At left: August 2009, “Elfin Forest Vista” watercolor
by Rosanne Seitz

Below: September 2009, “Evening Glow Over the Elfin Forest”
oil painting by Ken Christensen

Below left: September 2011, “SOS Local Endangered Species”
etching by Rachael Winn Yon



Kindness Rocks and the Elfin Forest

By Yolanda Waddell, Oakleaves Co-editor

Humans throughout the ages have drawn on rocks. Ancient peoples throughout California and the U.S. produced rock art, mostly for religious reasons. The latest version of rock art, called Kindness Rocks, began in 2015, when a young woman named Meghan Murphy wrote short inspirational messages on five rocks and scattered them along a Cape Cod beach. From there, the idea spread on social media.

Recently, someone who was inspired by the idea of Kindness Rocks created about 100 of them and placed them along Elfin Forest boardwalk rails and at the Forest's two overlooks. Conservation Committee member Dean Thompson found them during an early morning walk and moved the rocks to some of the Elfin Forest entrances.

Dean posted a photo of some of the rocks on his FaceBook page. He explained that the Elfin Forest is classified as a Natural Area, a place of special biodiversity significance, and that brightly painted rocks are unsuitable to a natural area. Responses to his post were positive, but also included criticism for his unkindness in removing the rocks.

The artist who created and placed the rocks, and those who criticized Dean, didn't understand the importance of minimizing visitors' impact on the environment. The natural beauty of the Elfin Forest is on display – its beautiful wildflowers, singing birds, scurrying fence lizards – for enjoyment and learning. The rocks, though well intended, were a distraction.



*A sample of the Kindness Rocks left in the Elfin Forest
by an enthusiastic artist.*

Photo by Dean Thompson.

Weed Warrior Report

By Jeff Reifel, Conservation Co-Chair

During May and June, the weed warriors have continued to work with reduced numbers. Jeff Reifel has been working on Boardwalk maintenance. Conservation Co-Chair Vicky Johnsen, Barb Renshaw and Jeff Reifel have started to gather seeds from forest natives for use in future reseeding projects. Benches are looking like they will need some painting soon. Those who wish to join our efforts can contact us at volunteer@elfin-forest.org.

Education Committee News

The FEMEF Education Committee, which has essentially been on hold since early 2020, has reawakened and is stirring into action. Yolanda Waddell is now Acting Chair of the committee because both of the Co-Chairs, Cheryl Dove and Leslie Rotstein, have had to resign because of other commitments. However, Cheryl will remain as a committee member and docent.

In June, Cheryl, Vicky Johnsen and new member Angela Scardina met at FEMEF's storage unit to transfer all of the Education Committee walk materials, files and books to a storage cabinet at the Johnsen home. That will allow for easier access by committee members. At a meeting later in June, they discussed how to recruit more docents, and what they can do with only three K-12th grade school walk docents and two docents who can give walks for college classes and other adults. In August they will meet with Los Osos Middle School science teacher Annie Stoneman, and will ask teachers at the Los Osos elementary schools about their plans for field trips.

Being a FEMEF docent in the Elfin Forest is very rewarding. There is so much to share with young minds: over 200 species of native plants that somehow live through six months of summer and early Fall with no rain; beautiful and active birds living in the Forest and in the bay; reptiles like the fence lizards sunning on toe rails of the boardwalk; fascinating insects including bumble bees with pollen sacs on their legs, butterflies and the colorful assassin bug. If you are reading this report and have an urge to learn about and share the natural history of the Elfin Forest, please email yolanda@elfin-forest.org or leave a message on the FEMEF phone, 805-528-0392. Messages are answered within 24 hours.

At right: The Education Committee materials and books are all ready in their tidy new home to be put into use in the Fall.

Photo by Vicky Johnsen.

Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest Mission:

Preserve and maintain El Moro Elfin Forest Natural Area; inform and educate about the natural history of the Elfin Forest and the Morro Bay Estuary; promote and support scientific research in the Forest.



In July, Barb Renshaw collected Black sage seed for future use in the Forest. Photo by Jeff Reifel.



Coming Up in the Elfin Forest

Story and Photos by Jean Wheeler

Flowers and fruit both adorn the Elfin Forest in August and September despite little to no summer rain. The signature flowers of this season, widespread and usually blooming only during these two months, are the bright yellow heads of mock heather. Other yellow to gold flowers still decorating our small wilderness area include California poppies and California goldenrod, which does not produce the dreaded allergens of other species called goldenrod.

Coyote brush has masses of creamy flowers. Plants with only male flowers produce five stamens around each of a great many sterile pistils, while the female plants produce large masses of fertile slim tubular pistils. By autumn, the female plants are nearly smothered in tiny seeds with silky white parachutes to be carried away by breezes (pictured).

Dune buckwheat flowers have been blooming white, but are aging to pink and then a dark rust color heralding autumn. California asters bloom mainly from August to December with ray flowers in white to pink or lavender around yellow central discs.

Colorful fruits add their beauty to the Elfin Forest in late summer and early autumn. California coffeeberry is especially attractive along the lower boardwalk. Their berries, the size of large blueberries, appear whitish to yellow at first, gradually darken to red, and finally turn rich, ebony black. Berries in all these colors are often clustered together on these shrubs in late August and September. A smaller bright red berry grows on hollyleaf cherry shrubs in the same area.

White to pale lavender blossoms in pompoms on sturdy stems of black sage will darken to black pompoms in time for Halloween. Spikes of white flowers characterize chamise near the inland end of the boardwalk.

In these warmest months western fence lizards (pictured) dart actively and do their amusing push-ups along the boardwalk. In the sandy areas under or between shrubs, you may be lucky enough to see a garter, gopher, or California king snake, none of which is poisonous. Also between and under shrubs, or occasionally looking out from the top of a bush, you might see a California ground squirrel (a photo of one accompanies my natural history article about the species on page 4). Tracks of our nocturnal animals, notably raccoons, can often be seen in the sand next to the boardwalk on early morning walks.

Resident birds are weaning their young and migrants are already moving in for the winter or passing through on their way to winter homes to the south. Birds likely to be active are White-crowned, Chipping, Lark, Savannah, and Song Sparrows; House and Purple Finches; Lesser and American Goldfinches; Bushtits; Bewick's Wrens; and Anna's Hummingbirds. Fairly common but usually staying low in the bushes are California and Spotted Towhees, California Thrashers, and Wrentits. The blue flash and noisy screams of California Scrub Jays are everywhere, and California Quail can be seen scurrying through the underbrush.



Over a dozen raptors are active in our area all year and may be seen flying or gliding over our forest or the adjoining estuary as they search for prey. Also, begin to keep an eye out for the earliest arrivals of birds migrating south for the winter. Several species of ducks and some wading birds begin to arrive as early as August, and more arrive in September.

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.

Gardening with the Blue Elderberry

By John Nowak, Horticulturalist

The lovely Blue Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra subsp. cerulea*) is a wonderful small tree that grows here on the central coast of California, and was recently identified in the Elfin Forest. It has a wide geographic range, encompassing northern Baja California to British Columbia, Utah and New Mexico. It mostly grows below 10,000 feet and can be found throughout the central coast including north and south of the Cuesta Grade.

This plant is in the honeysuckle family and offers many benefits to wildlife with its plume of creamy flowers that attract bees and butterflies. It is not usually available in the nursery trade due to its rangy growth habit. However, it can be trained into a single trunked small tree or allowed to become a large shrub. Growing to 30 feet tall without pruning, the tree can become a statement in the garden.

Blue Elderberry leaves are green and generally have seven leaflets. Their flowers usually come in spring and are followed by edible fruit in summer. The fruit is black but is covered with a white powder that makes them look blue. These fruits are a favorite of many birds and other wildlife. The fruits were also eaten by the Native American people and the 49ers who made wine from the fruit.

This plant, once established, does best with monthly summer watering to stay green. It is not susceptible to oak root fungus. When trained properly, other plants like Hummingbird Sage (*Salvia spathacea*), Coral Bells (*Heuchera species*) and Goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*) can be planted underneath to create a lush feeling.

This shrub/tree itself is very drought resistant and if left alone it will go somewhat deciduous in hot inland areas. It is not particularly fire-prone, due to its large non-oil bearing leaves and branches. So, if you are looking for a large shrub/small tree that is drought resistant, attracts birds and bees, and needs little water, consider the Blue Elderberry. Happy Gardening!



Blue Elderberry tree in the Elfin Forest. Photo by Jean Wheeler.

Elfin Forest Beat

By Barb Renshaw

Enjoying the breeze at the highest point on the boardwalk (125 feet above sea level), I noticed a pair of smiling women with three dogs. I said, "good morning," and they stopped to chat. They were a mother and adult daughter from San Diego. With the sun shining they admired the view and commented: "We are happy that so many motels and restaurants now allow dogs. And, besides we can bring them here and to the dog beach."

"What do you plan next?" I asked. "We're going north to Big Sur and then Bodega Bay." I mentioned that one of my relatives settled in Bodega Bay in the 19th century. The mom told me that some of her relatives still live in the Stockton area after coming to California for the gold rush. I thought: Well these people are not really tourists. They have been in California for five or six generations.

A bit later I spotted another mother-daughter pair inspecting the plants. These two looked older. I stopped, and the mother asked about the oaks. "We are from Massachusetts, and I don't see anything here that looks like our oaks." I explained about the coast live oaks. She then asked, "Are they so short because of the environment or because of genetic difference?" I replied that as far as we knew, they had responded to the environment. I recommended that they make a point of going into Rose's Grove.

During our conversation, I discovered that they were staying in Los Osos because the daughter's son is a Cal Poly student in his first year there. They are tourists, I thought.



WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

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.

Thank You to Our Generous Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter, FEMEF Database Coordinator

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Shirley Otto Trust

NEW MEMBER:

Joe Bourdeau*

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Marisa Waddell, in honor of Yolanda Waddell

In memory of Evan Goodwin: Andrea Davis

In memory of Val McLaughlin: Larry & Pat Grimes

In memory of Natalie Joy Stoddard: Larry & Pat Grimes

In memory of June Wright: Joan Hughes

**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.*

First of a Series

SWAP and the Elfin Forest – Historical Notes

By Yolanda Waddell

Thirty-five years ago, in June, 1986, the Los Osos/Morro Bay Chapter of SWAP published its first annual report. It began:

“One year ago, the Los Osos/Morro Bay Chapter of S.W.A.P. was a newborn organization, with less than \$100 in its treasury and a monumental task ahead – saving the 90-acre El Moro Elfin Forest, 50 acres of which have been valued at \$1.65 million.”

It was a very active year for all involved, from designing and printing a flyer and stationery to setting up information booths and speaking to local service groups. Myron Graham, a very sociable member of our Board, phoned the property owner, Shirley Otto, to tell her about off-road vehicles racing around in the Elfin Forest and doing much damage. She wrote to the Sheriff's office, asking that vehicles be kept off of the property. Soon tickets were being given and fewer ATVs were seen.

Fundraising – the most important undertaking – began in 1985, with grant writer Dr. Bill Newman sending letters of inquiry to thirty foundations selected for their interest in our type of project. In Spring, 1986, the Board organized an “Artist's Day in the Elfin Forest” event, inviting artists to tour and create art in the Elfin Forest. Board members provided brunch and a picnic lunch for fifteen artists. Each artist gave one or more of the paintings or drawings that they produced, to SWAP. The works of art were to be matted and framed, and turned into a traveling art show with all of the art for sale.

Scientific investigation of the Elfin Forest began with a Resource Inventory and Site Survey by Cal Poly ecologist and SWAP board member, Dr. Les Bowker. In addition to the survey, he prepared a map of his findings. Cal Poly biologist Phil Ashley made a Botanical Survey. A large oak was age dated at 200 years by Cuesta biology instructor Ron Ruppert. Members of the San Luis Obispo Archaeological Society surveyed the Forest and declared it to be one of the best Chumash midden areas on the Central Coast.

SWAP publishing began with the El Moro Elfin Forest Coloring Book, drawn by Katie Davis with calligraphy by Les Smith, both local artists. Biologist and board member Rose Bowker wrote text and edited the book. Rose also became editor of SWAP's newsletter, Oakleaves. Another publication was an illustrated prospectus, written to attract support from foundations and other potential donors.

The chapter's finances increased slowly but surely. In June, 1986, Treasurer Larry Grimes reported \$625 in the treasury, and 64 paid members. By June of 1988, the treasury had grown to \$3,862, a long way from the millions of dollars needed. Nevertheless support for saving the Elfin Forest was growing. It took more years and countless hours of work to raise the necessary funds, but SWAP's volunteers were up to it.



Do you enjoy the mural by Barbara Rosenthal painted on the wall of the Rexall Drug Store in Los Osos? Get a signed full-color print (mounted on black foam core as shown) to hang on your wall or give as a gift (#3 below)!



FEMEF Shoppers' Order Form

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

All Prices Include Sales Tax

1. MURAL SHIRTS

Large mural design by artist Barbara Rosenthal on both front and back. Black shirt with words: "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

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4. ALPHABET BIRD BOOK

With 26 clever verses and superb photos on facing pages, this book is sure to please young and old.

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5. MURAL MUG

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

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6. ELFIN FOREST CAPS

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Dozer, the Long-billed Curlew is Back!! ~ see page 1

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Share your Love of the Elfin Forest Volunteers Needed!!



Our Education and School Walks Committee especially needs several more school walk docents for grades K-12. Assistance in developing a good docent training program would also be much appreciated. If you can contribute to our efforts to help our students see and learn about the diverse plants and animals so well adapted to our Elfin Forest habitat, please call 805-528-0392 or email yolanda@elfin-forest.org.

Our Weed Warrior program is about to return to regularly scheduled battle mode after reduction to very few experienced warriors guarding our small wilderness for well over a year while carefully protecting one another against Covid. We now need to return to former attack force levels to prevent nasty invasive plants from crowding out our native vegetation. If you would like to help us in eradicating invasive plants and minimizing erosion in storms, please contact Jeff Reifel, our Conservation Co-Chair by emailing: volunteer@elfin-forest.org.

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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.

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