



OAK LEAVES

A PUBLICATION OF FRIENDS OF EL MORO ELFIN FOREST
P.O. BOX 6442, LOS OSOS, CALIFORNIA 93412-6442 ♦ (805) 528-0392 ♦ SPRING 2023

State of the Forest

By Steve Hendricks, FEMEF Chair

Board members of the Friends of El Morro Elfin Forest (FEMEF) continue to meet monthly on Zoom to discuss issues related to the forest, plan for future projects, and keep up with maintenance in the forest. Input from members and the public is encouraged and greatly appreciated, so please join our meetings if you are able. See the Board of Directors box on page 2 for more information. Below is an overview of some of the most significant happenings in the last four months.

Boardwalk Maintenance Continues

Although recent rainy weather has put a pause on boardwalk work, last fall saw more than 150 boards being replaced. FEMEF volunteers, led by Jeff Reifel, are identifying old boards and replacing them one by one. Although replacing of the boards along the boardwalk may seem like an easy task, it is not. The job requires more than just removing the old boards and putting down new ones. Because of the many twists and turns in the meandering boardwalk, each board must be uniquely cut to fit in its specific spot, often requiring angled cuts along its entire length. Jeff and his amazing crew of volunteers has been doing a superb job. Jeff will be leading work parties to replace decaying boards once things dry out. If you would like to help, please check the “Forest News” link on the website for upcoming work parties. Thank you, County Parks, for your continued support and Jeff Reifel for leading this effort.

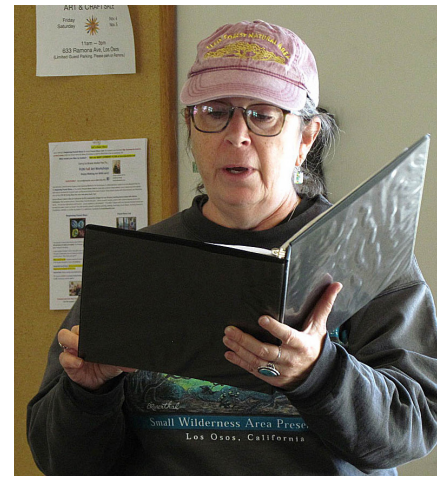
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Meet Our New Director, Rebecca Rasmussen

by Bob Dees and Rebecca Rasmussen

At its recent January 17, 2023, meeting, the FEMEF Board was pleased to welcome Rebecca Rasmussen aboard as a new Director. Rebecca's father, Ron Rasmussen, served as Chair of the FEMEF Board from 2002 to 2017. He passed away at age 89 on September 4, 2022. As you might expect, Rebecca has been familiar with the wonders of the Elfin Forest for many years. All of us on the Board know she will bring new talent and energy to the rewarding task of overseeing the Elfin Forest. In accordance with FEMEF bylaws, Rebecca will serve for the remainder of this year and can stand for election by the FEMEF membership next fall. Here's what she has to say about herself and her new role as a FEMEF Board member:



Rebecca, singing the 23rd Psalm in Hebrew at the memorial for her father, Ron Rasmussen, who chaired our Board of Directors for 15 years. Photo by Jean Wheeler.

I am very pleased to have the honor of following in the footsteps of my father, Ron Rasmussen, to work with the Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest. I have been a visitor to the forest for over twenty years. Through my father's work with FEMEF, I have learned much about the flora and fauna that make the unique environment of the Elfin Forest such an important natural treasure in California.

My parents instilled a love of nature in me from a very young age. Summer vacations were always camping or backpacking trips to exciting destinations in California, Oregon, Washington, or Canada. They built cherished memories of skiing trips to the Sierra

New Director *continued on page 3*



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

of the

Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest (FEMEF):

Steve Hendricks, Chair

Robert Dees, Vice Chair

Dave Bowlus, Treasurer

Beverly Boyd, Acting Recording Secretary

Allison Fash, Student Board Member

Roger Carmody

Rebecca Rasmussen

Skip Rotstein

The FEMEF Board of Directors meets monthly. Meeting days and times can vary and will be posted on the home page at www.elfin-forest.org.

FEMEF Board meetings are virtual and are open to the public. To attend a 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 coming activities 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.



<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Elfin-Forest-Preserve/139602329410370>



https://www.instagram.com/el_moro_elfin_forest/

State of the Forest *continued from page 1*

Major Projects in the Elfin Forest Still on Hold

Major projects in the Elfin Forest, like plastic fence removal and the Butterfly Hill overlook project, remain on indefinite hold until the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) is approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. County Parks believes this timeline could mean it will be many months to several years before approval is granted. FEMEF is inquiring with County Parks about the removal of small sections of plastic fence with vegetation growing through. Stay tuned for updates on these projects and keep your fingers crossed.

Vandalism in the Elfin Forest

Sadly, vandals have struck in the Elfin Forest. Several educational signs in the forest have been scratched and disfigured to such an extent that they are no longer readable. Yolanda Waddell will be leading an effort to update and replace these damaged signs. If you spot any malfeasants up to no good, please call the County Sheriff at 805-781-4550. The Sheriff is very quick to respond in Los Osos.

Weed Warriors are Back!

With the deluge of rain received along the Central Coast in the past month, FEMEF is planning for a bumper crop of invasive weeds in the Elfin Forest this spring. Ambassador-at-large and Weed Warrior extraordinaire Vicky Johnsen will be leading weeding parties in the Elfin Forest beginning in March. FEMEF has contacted Ecological Assets Management LLC, a local environmental consulting group, to be our snail observer for these Weed Warrior events. Bob Sloan of Ecological Assets will make sure that if we do come across any Morro shoulderband snails, they will be relocated with the greatest of care. Weed Warrior parties occur on the first Saturday of each month from 9 a.m.-12 noon. Check the website for updates.

It is Now Easier to Donate to the Elfin Forest

Student board member Allison Fash and longtime board member Dave Bowlus have been working hard to update our payment system and our ability to accept donations. Thanks to Allison and Dave, we can now accept donations electronically through Givebutter. This is a much simpler and faster way to donate. There is a link under "donate" on the website. Of course, you can still donate the old-fashioned way via check. Thank you to all the donors over the years!

Jeff Reifel Leaves the Board of Directors

By Bob Dees

Jeff Reifel, a member of FEMEF's Board of Directors since 2021, has recently resigned from that position. Before becoming a Director, Jeff acted in a volunteer capacity as the webmaster for FEMEF. After joining the Board as a Director, he continued to act as webmaster and was also Co-Chair with Vicky Johnsen of the Conservation Committee. Among other roles, he was also active in overseeing the maintenance of the boardwalk and trail, updating the design of FEMEF's new Trail Guide, and working with other members to improve our organization's bylaws. We will miss Jeff on the Board of Directors and we appreciate his many contributions to Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest.

Dean Thompson – An Elfin Forest Steward

By Yolanda Waddell; photo by Dean Thompson

When Dean Thompson told me that he taught sixth graders for 35 years at Camp KEEP (Kern Environmental Education Program) in Montaña de Oro State Park, I remarked, “That would be a very large number of sixth graders.” He replied, “Thousands.”

A native Californian, Dean was born and raised in Los Angeles. He didn't like living in a large metropolitan area and always enjoyed the natural beauty of San Luis Obispo County during family vacations there. He asked his parents why they lived in Los Angeles, and his father, who grew up in San Luis Obispo, said, “There's nothing to do in a small town.” When Dean turned 18, he said to himself, “I'm out of here” and enrolled at Cal Poly State University, majoring in Natural Resources Management and Wildlife Biology.

After graduating, Dean worked for four years as a field biologist, working with eagles, hawks, peregrine falcons, and other raptors all over California and Arizona. He joined the Peregrine Recovery Plan, a project dedicated to returning the peregrine population from near extinction due to the softening effect of DDT on their eggs. Dean was assigned to monitor the pair of peregrines on Morro Rock and lived at (and sometimes on) Morro Rock for 100 days. He would remove thin-shelled peregrine eggs from the nest and replace them with dummy eggs. The peregrine eggs were sent to the Peregrine Recovery Plan headquarters, where the eggs were carefully hatched.

While working at Morro Rock, Dean heard that there was an opening for an environmental education instructor at Camp KEEP in Montaña de Oro State Park. He applied and got the job, teaching sixth graders from Kern County, with the outdoor environment as their classroom.

After a few years, Dean and his wife Staci bought a house that is only a few doors away from the Elfin Forest. His requirement for a house was to be able to “walk out the door and get into nature.” He enjoyed “rambling around” what was then called the Otto Property. It belonged to Shirley Otto, widow of Baywood Park developer, Richard Otto. When Dean heard about an effort by SWAP (Small Wilderness Area Preservation) to buy the southern 39 acres of the property, he became active in SWAP. He and Staci organized a garage sale, earning \$500 that they were able to give to SWAP's land preservation fund.

When asked what the Elfin Forest was like before it was purchased by SWAP and turned over to County Parks, Dean said, “It was a wild area. People walked their dogs and there were all sorts of secret trails to explore. It was definitely impacted by veldt grass.” He had seen how veldt grass had taken over Los Osos and Montaña de Oro. Dean helped with and appreciated the work that was done by SWAP volunteers to remove the invasive grass. He didn't approve of the boardwalk at first but came to see its benefits after it was built.

Over the years, Dean explored most of the Elfin Forest, checking groves for problems like the effects of people having parties and leaving trash behind or camping and again leaving trash behind. Youngsters enjoyed making forts and dugouts in the sand. Dean found several marijuana plant “gardens” in the lower groves near the bay. He would

remove the plants and leave a note saying that their owners needed to find other places to grow marijuana.

Dean became the caretaker of the trail that led from the end of his street into the Forest. He said that during his and Staci's first winter there “a ton of sand” washed out into the street during heavy rains. His erosion control work on the trail prevented that. He also learned the best way to trim a plant that was growing over the path without damaging it. When SWAP established its Conservation Committee, he became a member of the committee. Now the lead vegetation trimmer for the trail, he trains other volunteers how to train plants to grow away from a path or the boardwalk.

I asked Dean what he said to his daughter and son, as well as to the sixth graders at Camp KEEP, about how to help in preserving wild places when they grow up. He replied, “I think that you have to enjoy being outside first. And once you enjoy being outside, then you are going to want to learn a little about what you enjoy. And once you start learning a little about what you enjoy, you are going to want to care for it. My initial emphasis is to get them comfortable and to like being outside, out in nature, and to find that there is joy in it. Once they find that joy in nature, then they can understand it and care for it.” Dean is not only a steward of the Elfin Forest, but also has been a steward of many youngsters, some of whom will no doubt grow up to be caretakers of natural areas wherever they live.



Dean Thompson with his cat Brie.

New Director *continued from page 1*

Nevada Mountains and warming up in natural hot springs south of Lake Tahoe. For my family, spending time in nature was always energizing and full of wonder.

I grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area and went on to study at Occidental College in Los Angeles and Oxford University in England. I graduated with a BA degree *cum laude*, double majoring in Theater and Diplomacy and World Affairs. I then built a career working as an actor, singer, teacher, and administrator with numerous theaters, choirs, and non-profit organizations throughout Southern California. I hope that my non-profit skills will benefit FEMEF.

My 12-year-old son and I moved to Morro Bay in 2021 and are looking forward to becoming more involved with the community. We currently volunteer with the Estero Bay Kindness Coalition and participate in the Morro Bay 4-H Club. I also sing with the San Luis Obispo Master Chorale and Canzona Women's Ensemble.

Migratory Bird Research is Essential, and Dozer, a Curlew Migrant, is Back!

Text by Jean Wheeler, Ph.D.

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

To protect populations of migratory bird species, scientists need to know not only their breeding and wintering locations but also exactly what routes the birds take between those areas. Such knowledge may help to protect birds en route and especially in resting areas along the way. Scientists of Intermountain Bird Observatory (IBO), associated with Boise State University in Idaho, banded Dozer and other long-billed curlews (*Numenius americanus*) in May of 2020. They also fitted them with satellite transmitters on a ranch in Idaho as part of their continuing research since 2013.

Petra Clayton, a local birder and strong supporter of Morro Bay National Estuary and our Elfin Forest as important birding habitats, first saw Dozer on June 21, 2020. She photographed him closely to read his leg bands and identify the “odd thing sticking up on the bird’s back” as a satellite transmitter. “Curlew Crew” biologists with IBO were excited to learn that Dozer and Neil, another curlew, had both migrated to Morro Bay. All curlews previously tracked in their research had wintered in inland valleys in California and Mexico. Dozer and Neil were here for about nine months. Petra’s sighting prompted my article about this species on page 5 in *Oakleaves*, October-November 2020, which included the photo seen here showing Dozer with his satellite tracking “stick” and a map of some of the places he was sensed in our area.

An email from Petra informed me that “Dozer, the Long-billed curlew is Back” when he was seen on July 12, 2021, which titled my second article, on the front page of our August/September *Oakleaves*, 2021. Regretfully, Neil had died. But Dozer had successfully raised a family of chicks, seen and photographed in Idaho by Heather Hayes, and he returned to Morro Bay, as documented by sightings of local birders here and maps from his satellite tracking. And now, Dozer is back for his third holiday from nesting! Petra has emailed me that Dozer is again enjoying his post-breeding relaxation along the Morro Bay shoreline.

Research like that being done by IBO is extremely important to reversing downward trends in so many migratory bird populations. Articles have been written and support developed for birds in their breeding homes and in distant winter areas. But developing protection for migration paths, and especially rest areas for “layover days” along the way, receive much less attention. Numerous species need more research to identify places requiring protection along their travels. We can be losing species whose breeding grounds we are spending money to protect if we don’t also protect the routes they travel and the places they rely on to rest for a few days before continuing to their “winter recreation home.”



*Dozer, the long-billed curlew, with the antenna on his back.
Photo by Petra Clayton.*



*Curlew eggs with chicks hatching, at a nest on a ranch in Idaho.
Photo by Heather Hayes.*

Although IBO has been researching long-billed curlews for some time, I’ve learned that it has lost its primary source of funding for continuing such research. This important organization is consequently asking for donations to its website — boisestate.edu/ibo — and specifying the Curlew Research Fund. Any support you can give to groups researching bird migration routes or to organizations like Morro Bay National Estuary Program and our own El Morro Elfin Forest can help save migrating birds. Our bay and forest are “on the way” for many bird species flying to and from Central and South America and serve as vital wintering destinations as well as year-around homes for many other avian species.

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.

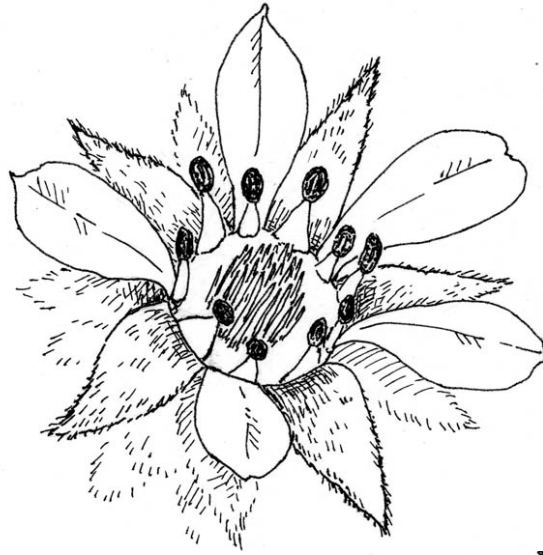
Horkelia

Text revised by Dirk Walters, Ph. D., from his June 2010 article
Drawing by Bonnie Walters; photo by Jean Wheeler

Some plants are so distinctive that identification can be easily accomplished while simply walking casually past them. This issue's plant is one of the first plants I learned when I came to this county back in the early 1970's. Its localized distribution and relatively small populations meant I couldn't use it in my taxonomy classes. Mostly, I found it an easy plant to ignore. Why? It is solitary or in small clusters of flowers produced on isolated stalks that arise directly from the ground, and the flower stalks are never more than a foot or so tall. As a result, I never got down on my knees to closely examine the flowers. If I had, I would have discovered how beautiful and fascinating they are. It isn't the five petals or five green sepals that make it special, but the ten stamens. Look at Bonnie's drawing and locate the stamens. They appear to be in two sizes. The ones in front of the triangular sepals are larger, with big anthers borne on top of a showy, flat, triangular white filament. The stamens in front of the petals are made of a puny triangular filament and an even punier anther. The stamens as well as the petals and sepals are attached to the edge of a cup-shaped flower base. This structure is known as a hypanthium as it is often found below (*hyp-*) the flower (*anthium*). Each flower contains many tiny pistils which are nearly hidden down inside the hypanthium. Each of the pistils turns into a dry fruit containing a single seed. Botanists call such a fruit an achene. Technically, each flower matures into a cluster or aggregate of achenes.

The plant is currently placed in the genus *Horkelia*. It doesn't really have a common name other than its scientific generic name. *Horkelia* is named after J. Horkel, a German plant physiologist, who lived from 1769-1846. Members of this genus were placed in the genus *Potentilla* in older identification books such as Robert Hoover's *The Vascular Plants of San Luis Obispo County California*. *Horkelia* plants can be distinguished from most *Potentilla* by their triangular filaments (*Potentilla* is string-like) and white to pinkish flowers (*Potentilla* is yellow). Occasionally, one sees the common name cinquefoil applied. However, this name is best applied only to members of *Potentilla* displaying a basic pattern of five (*cinque*) leaves or leaflets (*foil*). The species of *horkelia* found in the Elfin Forest is *Horkelia cuneata*. *Cuneata* refers to the shape of the leaflets which are cuneate, meaning wedge-shaped. The species comes in three subspecies. Two of the subspecies range over our coastal dunes, while the third is found locally in well drained soils in the interior of our county. Unfortunately, in our area the subspecies tend to intergrade, so sub-specific identification is sometimes difficult. The subspecies found in the Elfin Forest should be *H. c. ssp. cuneata*. Some books call this the wedge-leaf horkelia. I have also seen it called Kellogg's horkelia. In older books, this species was identified as *Potentilla Kelloggii*. This is a case where the common name followed the plant into a new genus.

My initial review of native plant horticultural books led me to think that most gardeners were not impressed with horkelia's



potential as a landscape plant. In fact, F.W. Barclay, writing in L.H. Bailey's 1910 edition of *Cyclopedia of American Horticulture*, wrote that "American potentillas are generally unattractive plants with small flowers." He did go on to say that "They are, as a rule, very tenacious of life and do well with ordinary care." However, when I mentioned that I was profiling horkelias this time, I was greeted with great enthusiasm for the plant as a low maintenance ground cover by those to whom I had mentioned it. The plant spreads by a thick, branching horizontal underground stem (rhizome). Regularly, the rhizome branches so that one branch turns upward. When it reaches to just below the ground surface, it produces a cluster of vertically oriented leaves. The branching rhizomes will produce an irregular surface covering. If you don't mind a ground cover that has openings in it and if you can give up watering and mowing, this might be just the plant for you. It grows best in well drained soils such as those found in the Elfin Forest and Los Osos.





Alice Welchert (left) and Vickey Johnsen (kneeling at right) with two large trash bags half full of veldt grass after two hours of weeding.
Photo by Pete Sarafian.

The Bobcat in The Forest

By Skip Rotstein



A bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) has been sighted near El Moro Elfin Forest. Video cameras placed on the game trail that goes from the Elfin Forest to my front yard recorded the short-tailed cat at the beginning of January. Since the home range of a bobcat can be as much as 20 sq. miles, it is a safe bet that this cat is also at home in El Moro Elfin Forest.

My first impression was that the cat was a large domestic cat (*Felis catus*). Then I recognized the dark tufts at the end of each ear and the short tail. These are the shared characteristics of the two North American members of the genus *Lynx*, the bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) or red lynx and the Canadian lynx (*Lynx canadensis*). This bobcat was small, possibly a female. Bobcats range from 10 lb. small females to 40 lb. large males. That is two to three times the weight of a domestic cat. Bobcats are solitary hunters. This is probably the only bobcat in its range unless it is a female sharing the range of a male.

You are not likely to see this bobcat, skunks, opossums, raccoons, foxes, or even coyotes on your daily walk in the Forest. All hunt at night and are sleeping in their dens during the day. If you would like to see videos of the El Moro Elfin Forest bobcat and the other predators listed above, search online at @skiprotstein3535.

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.

Join First Saturday Work Parties

We invite you to join us on any first Saturday from 9 a.m. to noon at the north end of 15th Street in Los Osos to enjoy satisfying physical activity in fresh air amid lovely surroundings. Please dress for wind, fog, or sun in layers of clothing with long pants, long shirt sleeves, work gloves, and sturdy shoes with closed toes. Take care not to park in front of driveways or mailboxes. To request more information, call (805) 528-0392.

Weed Warrior Work Parties are Resuming!

In nearly all issues of *Oakleaves* prior to 2020, we have requested members to volunteer for monthly work parties to pull invasive weeds. The enormous amount of work volunteers have accomplished over more than two decades has allowed native plants to thrive instead of being choked out by very invasive weeds like veldt grass and ice plant. Native species now thrive in the forest even in an area left to sand and weeds by all-terrain vehicles that invaded illegally prior to our purchase of the property and our donation of it to become a county park. Our dedicated volunteers came to be known as our Weed Warriors.

Scheduling of these work parties was discontinued during the COVID epidemic, although a few experienced and dedicated warriors worked one to three at a time on their own schedules. We thank them very much for working so hard to prevent the weeds from spreading unchecked in these last three years.

During the January 3rd Saturday walk, Board member Dave Bowlus spread the welcome news that we are resuming the scheduling of Weed Warrior Work Parties. For this issue they are scheduled from 9 a.m. to noon on the first Saturday of each month: March 4, April 1, and May 6. With the heavy and persistent rains this winter, there will almost certainly be plenty of weeds to remove. See the box at right for more information.

Gardening with California Natives – Yarrow

By John Nowak, Horticulturist & Suzette Girouard; photo by Marlin Harms

This issue's article features *Achillea millefolium*, commonly known as yarrow, common yarrow, or woundwort; it also has many other synonyms. *Achillea millefolium* is found within the family Asteraceae. Five varieties and several cultivars are available in the horticulture trade. This lovely plant has many ties to ancient folklore. Named after the Greek warrior Achilles, it is said that he carried yarrow to promote slow bleeding from battle wounds. The species name *millefolium* comes from the Latin term *mille*, referring to the fern-like feathery leaves. These bi-pinnately compound leaves cause some to think that yarrow is a fern.

Yarrow grows widely throughout San Luis Obispo County in many plant communities. In the Elfin Forest, yarrow grows alongside *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat), *Arctostaphylos morroensis* (Morro manzanita), *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak), *Salvia mellifera* (black sage), *Toxicodendron diversilobum* (poison oak), and many other species.

Native Americans of our area and early European settlers found many uses for yarrow. Its pungent odor is a clue to the chemical makeup of its foliage, which contains many types of acids. Salicylic acid, which we now know as aspirin, is one of them. In earlier times, a tea was made and drunk for aches and pains. Leaves were placed on hot stones, and water was poured onto them, releasing a steam used to treat respiratory illnesses. Another tea was made to relieve stomach disorders. And mentioned above, yarrow has a blood coagulating property. It was not particularly used as food; however, in small amounts fresh leaves can be consumed.

In the garden setting, yarrow's fern-like appearance can create a feeling of lushness. The new growth comes on quickly after winter dormancy; within six months flower stocks appear and rise above the foliage. The flower color can range from white to cream to yellow, attracting pollinating insects such as beetles, bees, and butterflies (including the variable checker spot and the coastal bramble hairstreak). As the flowers mature, they slowly turn brown, and their seeds drop, providing food for small mammals such as the western harvest mouse and big-eared woodrat. Birds such as California quail, California towhee, California thrasher, and various species of finches also dine on these seeds.

Achillea millefolium is adaptable to many different soil types; however, it prefers moist, well-drained soil. It is considered semi-drought resistant, but it does best with monthly supplemental moisture, beyond the seasonal rainfall. Yarrow has few pests; however, rabbits, deer, and birds will consumer it, frequently down to the soil. Yarrow has several attractive cultivars that are available from the horticulture trade. These cultivars have been selected for various attributes such as flower and foliage color, stem length, and smaller compact growth. Yarrow makes a great foundation plant for meadow creation and to accent a dry streambed. Maintenance consists of removing old flowers, thinning old leaves, and periodic division of roots before winter rainfall.

Yarrow is a wonderful addition to any garden. With its ancient history and many medicinal uses, it has earned its place as "plant of the season."



Photos from the Forest



A wild pig sow and two piglets on the tidal flats were seen from Siena's View in January. Photo taken by Melissa Rochte.

Coming Up in the Elfin Forest

Story and Photos by Jean Wheeler

We've had more rain spread more evenly over the winter months than in most recent years. This should provide us with a more bountiful and lasting spring floral season than in quite a few years. White floral pompoms will develop on black sage shrubs around the boardwalk. By late spring you can see white spikes of flowers on chamise bordering the higher inland end of the boardwalk. Eye-catching around much of the boardwalk all spring will be tall, bright orange sticky monkey-flowers (leaves sticky, not the flowers).

In the understory, yarrow raises a cluster of small white blossoms on tall stems with feathery leaves along the 11th Street trail (John Nowak discusses yarrow as a choice for home gardens on page 7). Horkelia also has white flowers you'll need to look for carefully (see my photo on page 5 with the article about this plant by Dirk Walters). Yellow and orange flowers in the understory in spring include California poppies, deerweed, fiddleneck, and suffrutescent wallflowers.

Fuchsia-flowered gooseberries look like small bright red trumpets on low bushes. Also bright red but topping thin stems in the undergrowth along the lower boardwalk are cardinal catchflies (pictured). As early as April, the big blue flower spikes on bush lupine shrubs should be opening along the sand dune crests near the estuary. By May there will be no doubt why Bush Lupine Pt. carries that name.

"Flying flowers" are butterflies attracted by all these sources of nectar and often looking for egg-laying sites on plants with good shelter and food for their offspring. Two orange and black butterfly species commonly seen in the Elfin Forest are variable checkerspots and Gabb's checkerspots. The latter have much more of the orange and cream-colored rectangles and less of the black and the white squares than do the variable checkerspots.

Other butterflies to look for include small green coastal bramble hairstreaks, large yellow and black anise swallowtails, brownish common buckeyes, and colorful painted ladies. Moro blue butterflies flutter around the blue flower spikes of bush lupine. Given decades of losses from coastal housing development, stands of this lupine in our Elfin Forest are important in assisting survival of both the plant and the butterfly species.

While admiring butterflies and flowers from the boardwalk and sand trails, your eyes will no doubt also be attracted by the flight of avian residents. Especially likely to be seen and heard are the bright blue California scrub jays, plump California quail with amusing head plumes, orange and black spotted towhees, chattering flocks of tiny, fuzzy gray bushtits and blue-gray gnatcatchers, and similarly talkative little brown birds including sparrows and wrens. Avian migrants resting here as they pass through from winter homes farther south may include warbling vireos, hooded orioles, black-headed grosbeaks, and yellow Townsend's and Wilson's warblers.

Among other residents increasingly active as summer approaches are western fence lizards, brush rabbits, ground squirrels, and coyotes.

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



Gabb's checkerspot butterfly.



Cardinal catchfly.

You Are Invited to an Illustrated Presentation on Richard and Shirley Otto

On each of two evenings, March 20 and 21, Joe Bourdeau, trustee of the Otto estate, will give an illustrated presentation on the lives of Richard and Shirley Otto at the Baywood Inn conference Room. In 1994 our organization purchased 38.7 acres of land from Shirley Otto, immediately donating it to our county as a park, the Elfin Forest. To enjoy this presentation on either evening at no charge, call the Baywood Inn at 805-528-8888 or email to baywood.inn@gmail.com.

WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

Docent-Led Third Saturday Walks

Masks are optional.

March 18, 9:30 a.m. Animal Tracks

Evan Albright, an animal track expert, will lead an informative walk about who is “tracking up” the Elfin Forest. Visitors will learn how to tell the front feet from the back feet of a raccoon and how coyote and dog tracks differ. Evan will also demonstrate how to find other signs that a wild resident of the Elfin Forest has passed that way. Attend this walk and develop an awareness of the comings and goings of the Forest’s mammal, bird, and reptile inhabitants—and enjoy some things you wouldn’t otherwise readily see while walking along the boardwalk.

April 15, 9:30 a.m. Butterflies & Native Plants

In honor of California Native Plant Week, butterfly guru Pat Brown will introduce you to several native plants and talk about the butterflies that sip their nectar and the caterpillars that eat their leaves. Pat has photos of butterflies in all stages of development, from eggs to mature butterflies, and will share them along with fascinating butterfly facts. She’ll lead you to hangouts of variable checkerspot, Moro blue, swallowtail, hairstreak, and other butterflies that make the Elfin Forest their home. She will also share information about butterfly books, web sites, and butterfly-related materials. She recommends that you bring a pair of close-focusing (5-10 ft.) binoculars.

May 20, 9:30 am. Wildflowers

Dirk Walters will take us on a delightful tour of every blooming plant that is visible from the boardwalk in the Elfin Forest. There will be bright yellows of rush-roses, deerweed, golden yarrow, and of course California poppies. White popcorn flowers and pearly everlasting plants are in abundance, too, as well as pink cobwebby thistles and blue wild hyacinths. The silver dune lupines at Bush Lupine Point should be covered with pale blue blossoms and alive with honeybees and Moro blue butterflies. Treat yourself to a springtime experience in nature’s own garden.

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.



On her walk, Faylla Chapman reviewed ecological relationships among the estuary, tideland marshes, and the Elfin Forest.

Photo by Jan Moore.



During her walk, Jean Wheeler used a diagram illustrating air crossing subtropical ocean water, being chilled to fog by the cold California Current, then clearing as it moves onto warm land.

Photo by Dave Bowlus.



Vicky Johnsen took two new friends, Patrice and Joan, on a mushroom foray in the Elfin Forest.

The mushrooms were identified as western jack o-lantern fungi.

Photo by Vicky Johnsen.

Thank You to Our Generous Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter, FEMEF Database Coordinator

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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 quarterly issue. Gifts are processed by two different volunteers before reaching our editors, and newsletter copy deadline is one month before the date of the issue.*



OAKLEAVES

is a quarterly FEMEF publication.

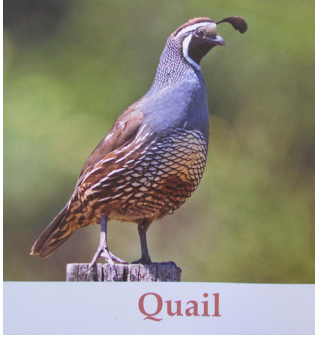
Editors are Yolanda Waddell, Jean Wheeler, and Bob Dees
Layout by Katy Budge

Contributors to this issue: Dave Bowlus, Petra Clayton, Bob Dees, Suzette Girouard, Marlin Harms, Heather Hayes, Steve Hendricks, Vicky Johnsen, Betsy Kinter, Jan Moore, John Nowak, Rebecca Rasmussen, Melissa and Tim Rochte, Skip Rotstein, Pete Sarafian, Yolanda Waddell, Dirk Walters, Jean Wheeler.

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.

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*White flowers of
 black sage
 bloom like puffs
 of pompoms
 on the stems.
 White in spring,
 they will remain
 on the stems,
 turning to rust in
 summer and black
 in time for Halloween.
 Photo by Jean Wheeler.*

.....

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