



# OAKLEAVES

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

## The State of the Forest and FEMEF is Strong!

*Text By Dave Bowlus, Ph.D., FEMEF Treasurer.*

The Elfin Forest presents one with something new on every visit: New footprints in the misty morning crusted sand. The overflight of a turkey vulture or line of pelicans. Tiny buds popping open on Ceanothus, mock heather, or fuchsia-flowering gooseberry, depending on the season. A mockingbird giving a preview of every bird call likely to be heard that day. Mysterious clouds.

Reports of flora and fauna happenings in the Elfin Forest by Jean Wheeler, Dirk Walters, and others are to be found in every issue of *Oakleaves*, the quarterly newsletter of our organization.



Visitor Ken Jarrett took a video of a badger emerging from a burrow next to the boardwalk in broad daylight and turning to peer at Ken. This frame was extracted from the video by Pat Brown.

## Yolanda Waddell Honored at FEMEF Annual Celebration

*By Jean Wheeler, Dave Bowlus, Pat Grimes, and Roger Carmody*



Yolanda Waddell, honoree at the Annual Celebration, with Jay Waddell, her husband and always her strong partner in her work for more than four decades of saving and educating people about the Elfin Forest. Photo by Jean Wheeler.

## State of the Forest *continued on page 2*

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Bob Pavlick read a lovely poem by Leanna Erickson in honor of Yolanda Waddell, and Yolanda received multiple certificates honoring her at our Annual Meeting on October 21, including a framed certificate from the California State Assembly, presented by State Representative Dawn Addis. Other honors came from U.S. Congressman Salud Carbajal, State Senator John Laird, and the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors. Mike Anderson from the California Conservation Corps presented a certificate of honor, and Curtis Armstrong, Los Osos/Baywood Park Chamber of Commerce President, presented a certificate honoring Yolanda from that organization. Lasca Gaylord, County Parks Supervising Ranger, brought Yolanda a vase full of beautiful flowers. Yolanda also received a toast (champagne donated by Diane Filipponi of

## Yolanda Honored *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

Roger Carmody, Secretary

Beverly Boyd, Acting Recording Secretary

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](http://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.



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# State of the Forest *continued from page 1*

Other happenings in the Forest might not be as readily observed. Skip Rotstein, a FEMEF Board of Directors member who lives just a stone's throw from the Elfin Forest, has added a new dimension to Forest comings and goings with the motion-detecting night-vision video cameras he has installed in his backyard. This year he has posted videos on YouTube of nighttime visitors roaming Los Osos/Baywood Park neighborhoods (raccoons, skunks, opossums, mule deer, rats, mice, and domestic cats). And his cameras have recorded rarer hunters, including bobcat, mountain lion, and long-tailed weasel, not all in the same video, of course! See his YouTube channel, @skiprotstein3535. Another surprising sighting this year: In July a Forest visitor, Ken Jarret, spotted and photographed a badger, in broad daylight, peering out of a new burrow immediately next to the boardwalk. Subsequently, the badger seems to have found a less public spot for a burrow (see photo page 1).

Humans are busy in the Elfin Forest as well. Third Saturday Walks this year have included a "June Bloom Sketch Walk" by Barb Renshaw and Vicky Johnsen, an insect walk by entomologist Dr. Norman Smith, and a nature photography walk by wildlife photographer Donald Quintana.

Birders gathered October 8th at Bush Lupine Point for the "Big Sit," a competitive event organized by the New Haven Bird Club. (See photo, page 9.) The team, staying inside a 17-foot diameter imaginary circle, had 24 hours to identify and log as many bird species as possible from their vantagepoint. The team at Bush Lupine Point counted 97 species on that day. Jim Royer, the team's organizer, reports they spotted a soaring golden eagle and merlin and peregrine falcons flushing shorebirds on the mudflats and bay. They heard the two common rails singing in the reeds below the point and saw a pine siskin and a red-breasted nuthatch, both less common land bird species.

After a long hiatus, First Saturday Work parties were resumed in March, and Weed Warrior volunteers have returned to pulling invasive plants, trimming trails, and repainting benches.

Work to maintain and repair the boardwalk continues with the leadership and hard work of Jeff Reifel, FEMEF volunteer extraordinaire. Besides boardwalk and Weed Warring, Jeff and Barbara Renshaw curate the bulletin board between 15th and 16th streets and lead walks. Jeff also chaired the committee that designed the new full-color edition of the Trail Guide, now available in dispensers at the boardwalk intersections near 16th Street and the Fairbanks Monument.

On the organizational side of things, in January the Board of Directors welcomed Rebecca Rasmussen as a new Board member. Like Ron Rasmussen, her late father, Rebecca became active immediately, volunteering to dive into board business, notably as Chairperson of the Website Committee.

The Annual Celebration (FEMEF's Annual General Membership Meeting) took place on October 21 this year. Yolanda Waddell was honored for her 40-plus years of working to protect the Elfin Forest, and ten other volunteers were also honored for their years of valuable work. A report on the Annual Celebration, with photos, is on page 4. A separate article on pages 1-3, with a photo, recounts some highlights of the history and importance of Yolanda's work and the national, state, and local awards she received that day in honor of these long and valued efforts.

Careful readers of *Oakleaves* may have noticed that Yolanda's name and designation as an officer on our Board of Directors no longer appears for the first time since 1985, a change that started with the Spring 2023 issue. Seeking no fanfare, Yolanda Waddell has left the Board of Directors but continues to act as writer and editor for *Oakleaves* and, most importantly, as our organization's historian/eye-witness of all things Elfin Forest.

There's never a dull day in the Elfin Forest. The state of the Forest and FEMEF is strong! I encourage you to visit the Forest often and be refreshed by our precious natural area. Join our volunteers if you can. Welcome!

# Allison Fash Leaves Board

By Yolanda Waddell

On invitation by Board Chair Steve Hendricks, Cuesta College student Allison Fash became our first Student Board member in December of 2021, immediately joining in Board discussions and presenting her own ideas.

One of Allison's ideas was to set up an Elfin Forest Instagram page, her goal with social media being to increase donations and memberships. She created a beautiful FEMEF Instagram site with photos she took in the Elfin Forest, and maintained that site until retiring from the Board in September 2023.

Allison also provided a method for the public to donate to FEMEF digitally, without needing cash or writing a check. It is a free fundraising platform called Givebuttr.

Allison has found it necessary to resign from the Board because of her heavy class workload at Cal Poly, where she is now an Environmental Science major. She also works at a restaurant to support herself. Her future goals consist of traveling to less developed countries and creating useful programs and establishments. She wants to focus on nursing local environments back to health, while benefiting the economies of the communities.

We know that Allison will do well at Cal Poly and achieve many of her goals. Our deep-hearted thanks to you, Allison, for the differences you made for FEMEF and the Elfin Forest.



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## Yolanda Honored *continued from page 1*

Filipponi Ranch), and a standing ovation from attendees at the Annual Celebration.

If they could only write or talk, surely thanks from all those species of plants and animals visiting and living in the Elfin Forest would drown out the rest of us!

Yolanda told me she walked the family dog in the Elfin Forest in the late 1970's and that she and friends she met there became concerned on learning the land was to be sold and developed for housing. She was one of the leaders in organizing to raise funds to buy the land and preserve it as a small wilderness instead of developing it.

Yolanda worked with Rose and Les Bowker, Elsie and Jerry Deitz, Larry and Pat Grimes, Barbara Machado, and others to preserve the Elfin Forest. They founded a new chapter of SWAP (Small Wilderness Area Preservation) in 1985, thereby gaining tax deduction status for donors. They conducted fundraisers, wrote grants that earned over a million dollars, and were close to the required purchase price when a deadline for purchase neared. San Luis Obispo County agreed to fund the remainder needed. The nearly 39 acres were purchased by SWAP in 1994 and immediately donated to the County as a park, with SWAP signing an "adopt a park" agreement with the county to advise and assist in managing the property, since renewed three times.

Pat Grimes wrote in an *Oakleaves* article (page 1 in August/September, 2020) that she asked Yolanda how she had kept going for 35 years. Yolanda explained, "Well, I made a promise to myself and also to the Chumash women who camped at the Elfin Forest. I

was just thinking one day, 'Okay, I promise to help take care of this piece of land.' And it still seems like a good thing to do."

Yolanda has been a leader in safeguarding the Elfin Forest since those early days in the late 1970's. She became the first President of the new SWAP chapter from 1985-1990 and has remained a member of the Board ever since, until retiring at the start of 2023. She has usually served as Treasurer or Recording Secretary or Corresponding Secretary. In addition, she became Editor of *Oakleaves* in 1999, and still continues as our senior Editor.

There is a bench near the middle of the lower boardwalk loop, adjoining the Celestial Meadow. The bench provides a peaceful place for contemplation among fragrant plants and wind-pruned trees. The plaque on it reads: "Yolanda Waddell, Heart and Soul of the Elfin Forest". Her friend Pat Grimes wrote, "Hers is an unflinching commitment to every aspect and detail of guiding this preservation effort from a nascent concept to a vibrant organization sustaining the habitat between our homes and the estuary. The simple truth is the El Moro Elfin Forest as we know it today would not be one of the jewels of our community without the determined work of Yolanda Waddell."

### Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest Mission:

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

# FEMEF's Annual Celebration

*Text and Photos by Jean Wheeler*

On Saturday, October 21, we held our annual meeting and celebration in the lovely facility kindly made available to us by Morro Shores Mobile Home Park again this year. The entry makes us feel at home, as the doors face Sweet Springs, another major nature reserve in our community, secured by Audubon Society.

The Fireside Room inside the doors enabled our dedicated volunteers to set up photo displays with five air photos of our Elfin Forest, multiple photo displays of honoree Yolanda Waddell over many years of her work for the Elfin Forest, and a series of photos and papers about Emily Polk. Emily founded Small Wilderness Area Preservation to save a live oak stand along Los Osos Valley Road, now Los Osos State Reserve, then adopted other small wild areas for saving, vitally including our Elfin Forest. Our merchandise, including our newly redesigned shirts are for sale in that room.

Members and guests were seated in the large inner room at many tables, with food and beverages on service tables. Our Board of Directors Chair Steve Hendricks introduced guest speaker Michael Bell, who was extensively involved in acquisition and operation of the former Bixby Ranch property at Point Conception, now the Dangermond Preserve. With projections on a screen, Michael showed maps and photos from the reserve, emphasizing the unusually great opportunity of managing wildlife habitat on a property containing an entire river drainage basin.

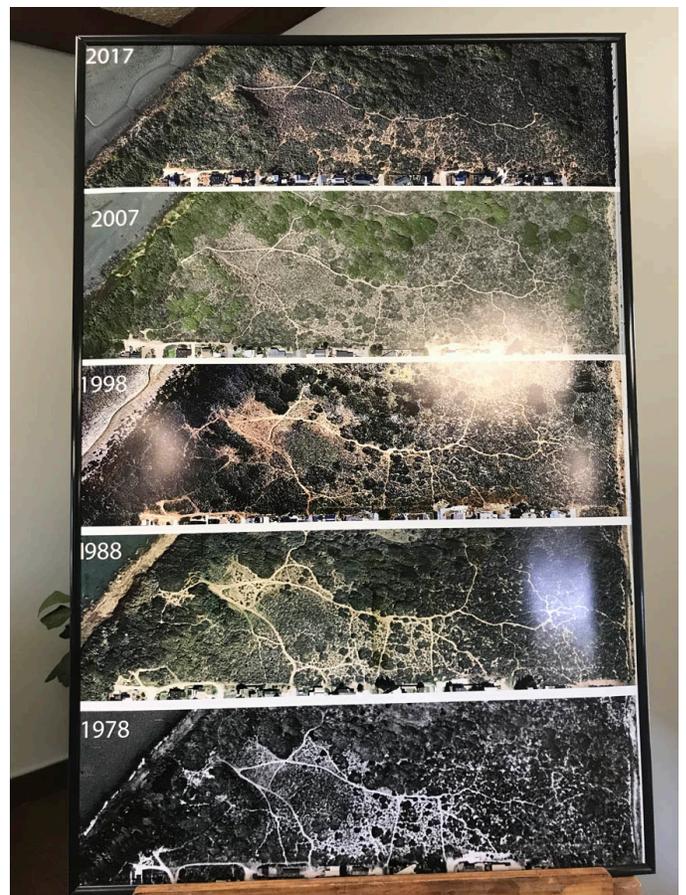
After a brief business meeting with a Treasurer's Report, Conservation Report, and Election of Officers, the program turned to recognition of volunteers. A separate article, pages 1-3, with a photo, recounts some highlights of the more than 40-year history and importance of Yolanda's work and recounts the national, state and local awards she received in honor of these long and valued efforts.

Ten other volunteers were also presented with certificates from FEMEF for their valuable work for the Elfin Forest over the years. Bob Meyer developed our original Website, provided considerable work in our conservation efforts, and provided many photographs. Betsy Kinter has been dedicated to maintaining the accuracy of our membership list. Pete Sarafian served many years as our Conservation Chair and as a board member. Petra Clayton organized and provided leaders for all of our docent walks for many years. Between them, Pat and George Brown led our butterfly docent walks, took photographs, designed and built our boardwalk kiosk and the box holders for our Trail Guides, and guided the writing of those Trail Guides. Jean Wheeler has served as *Oakleaves* Editor, photographer, and docent leader. Pat and Larry Grimes were among the earliest supporters seeking to buy the Elfin Forest for preservation, and Pat was a publications editor from before the successful purchase until Yolanda took on that job in 1999.

The successful accomplishment of the wonderful annual celebration was well supported by donations from many local businesses. We are very grateful to: Ralph's in Los Osos, Albertson's in Morro Bay, Trader Joe's in San Luis Obispo, Target in San Luis Obispo, Wayward Baking in Los Osos, Carlock's Bakery in Los Osos, and Diane Filippini of Filippini Ranch Winery. By their contributions, these businesses all demonstrated their great community spirit!



*Michael Bell, our Annual Celebration Speaker, projected maps and photos from the Nature Conservancy's Jack and Laura Dangermond Preserve, including this one of a mountain lion, among several species needing large ranges and benefiting from the huge drainage basin now fully protected there.*



# Fuchsia-flowered Gooseberry

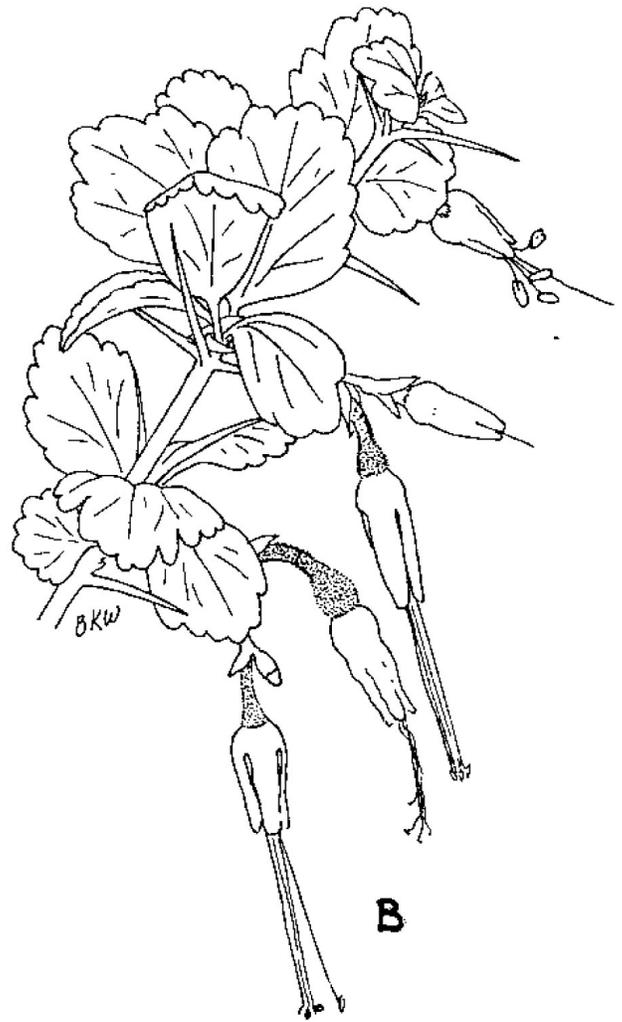
Revised by Dirk Walters, Ph. D., from his December 2014 article. Drawing by Bonnie Walters.

Bonnie's drawing of the fuchsia-flowered gooseberry (*Ribes speciosum*) was done many years ago for the front of a program used at one of the local California Native Plant Society chapter's annual banquets. Later, it was used as one of the components in a figure in Dr. David J. Keil's and my textbook in *Vascular Plant Taxonomy* published by Kendall/Hunt.

Jean Wheeler asked a very good question when she contacted me about updating this article. She had noticed an apparent inconsistency in the scientific name. It seems that I've been in error about the ending of the species name. In past articles I've mistakenly used the feminine ending *a* instead of the correct neuter ending, *um*. That it's my mistake is easy to determine. On looking up the genus *Ribes* in any recent flora, one can see that species names in the genus end in the neuter *um*. I was lazy and didn't check! But how does one know the genus *Ribes* produces neuter species names and why are there male, female, and neuter names at all? First, we must remind ourselves that scientific names are written in Latin, in which nouns must indicate their gender. Usually this is no problem, as the ending of the species name usually matches its genus. An example from the Elfin Forest is black sage – *Salvia mellifera*. The author of the name, *Salvia* (Linnaeus in this case) chose the feminine designation, probably based on history. But what about the genus name, *Ribes*? That is an irregular noun, not obvious of its Latin gender. In this case you must trust the author of the flora or article you are reading. Obviously, some authors bear checking regularly!

The fuchsia-flowered gooseberry is a shrub with thickish, dark green leaves approximately 1 to 1½ inches wide. The dark red flowers begin to be produced by late November or early December. So one should be able to find it blooming right now. Being one of the few native plant species to flower this early in the winter, it provides food to Anna's hummingbirds. Anna's hummingbird is our earliest nesting hummingbird, and it can nest this early partially because of the nectar provided by this beautiful gooseberry. Look for the fuchsia-flowered gooseberry on moister north and east facing slopes in clearings among oaks and among shrubs of chaparral throughout the coastal portion of the county. It grows from Napa County south into Baja California. This gooseberry is rarely numerous but occurs as scattered individuals. That means you will have to search for them. But the search is well worth the effort. By February or March, the flowers will be replaced by sticky, somewhat bristly reddish berries. Unlike commercial gooseberries, which are primarily species from Eurasia and eastern North America, our berry is quite dry and rather unpalatable.

Although its berries are not palatable, this plant is quite beautiful. It is easy to grow from cuttings taken from the base of the stems. The plant is excellent for attracting hummingbirds. Since it is one of our few native plant species commonly sold at commercial nurseries, it can be seen regularly in suburban



California landscapes. In the wild, it loses most of its leaves during the summer months. However, if given a small amount of summer water, it is practically evergreen.

The genus *Ribes* contains plants that are commonly called either gooseberries or currants. The name gooseberry is given to species of *Ribes* that bear sharp spines on their stems and sometimes also on the berries. Currants, on the other hand, are *Ribes* having stems and berries that lack these sharp spines and are therefore smooth. Some of us who grew up in the eastern United States may remember hearing bad things about gooseberries, even “the only good gooseberry is a dead gooseberry.” This is because a few species of gooseberry serve as the alternate host of white pine blister rust, a major disease of commercially important eastern white pine tree (*Pinus strobilis*). This thinking has pretty much been abandoned, even in the East. Foresters found that it was impossible to eradicate the gooseberry even after many years of trying. More important for us, there are no native white pines, commercial or not, growing in our area. All members of the white pine group growing in California are mountain trees restricted to moderate to high elevations and are of either no commercial value or resistant to rust. Besides, there are over 30 species of *Ribes* in California and 10 species (I checked Dr. David Keil's new book this time) in San Luis Obispo County. Wild gooseberries and currants are much too common and diverse in the West to have any hope of eradication.



*Weed Warriors on November 4 with Doi.*

*From left: Zarah Wylly, Dean Thompson, Doi, Natalie Zaragoza, Sharon Rooney, Vicky Johnsen, Jan Moore, Angela Logan, Patrick Logan, Jeff Reifel. Photo by Pat Brown.*

# Noi's 2nd Street Café Brings Lunch to Weed Warriors

*Text and Photo by Pat Brown*

On the Weed Warrior work day on September 2, sisters Noi and Doi from Noi's 2nd Street Café were out for a walk in the Elfin Forest. There was a lot of activity going on that day, from boardwalk repairs and bench painting to trail trimming. Noi and Doi were not aware of FEMEF and of all the work we do in the Elfin Forest. They were so impressed and appreciative that they said they would like to reward our workers with some of their Thai food. So as the Weed Warriors finished up on November 4, Doi was there with pans of delicious Thai food. The Weed Warriors enjoyed a wonderful Thai meal. FEMEF would like to thank Noi and Doi for recognizing our efforts and rewarding our volunteers.

## Weed Warrior Reports

*By Conservation Co-Chair Vicky Johnsen*

### Conservation Workparty Summary March-October 2023

After a two-year hiatus, the "First Saturday Work Day" was reinstated beginning in March.

Attendance has averaged 10-15 volunteers, who worked a combined total of 180 hours over the seven months since March.

Tasks have included removal of invasive species under the supervision of a snail monitor, training of the correct trimming techniques of vegetation along the boardwalk and sand trails, and the refurbishing of the wood benches.

In addition to the above activities, co-chair Jeff Reifel indicated that he has put in an average of 40 hours a month replacing boardwalk fastenings, boards and rails.

### A Work Day Report: September 2nd, 2023

*By Conservation Co-Chair Vicky Johnsen*

It was a very successful Work Day for 13 volunteers, and a total of 29.5 hours!

Dave Bowlus assembled the sandpaper, tarps, paint, and brushes for the chore of refinishing the memorial benches. Patrice Promack and Pat Brown worked two and a half hours each, and Dave stayed on until around 2:00 PM to complete the task. The next day Pat, Patrice, and Patrice's husband, Chris Bianco, returned to remove wet paint signs. Chris returned later to touch up blotches that appeared on some benches. Some benches have termite blemishes, and Dave will do superficial patching and painting to cover them, but no benches are physically weakened by termites.

Dean Thompson gave a modified "how to trim (prune) Coast Live Oaks" to a large group; eight of the trimmers were assigned various areas to trim while I was running around among them all answering questions. Jeff Reifel worked on the boardwalk fastenings and boards.

We added a new volunteer when Angela Logan saw us gathering at the beginning, went home, dropped off her dog, brought clippers, and worked along with the rest of us. I hope to see her back next month. Some areas remain to be properly trimmed along the boardwalk and on some of the sand trails.

### 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.

# Gardening with California Natives: Common Snowberry

By John Nowak & Suzette Girouard; photo by Marlin Harms

The common snowberry, *Symphoricarpos albus* var. *laevigatus*, grows under coast live oak trees, just in time for the holidays. This snowberry is one of four species and six varieties existing within the state, ranging from sea level to 10,500 feet, from north to south and east to west. Once rarely thought of as threatened, today its habitat is under constant threat due to climate change, fire, and development. Someday the snowberry may not be so common.

In the Elfin Forest, snowberry grows mainly on oak-covered, north-facing slopes with other plants that enjoy the same habitat, such as California hedge nettle (*Stachys bullata*) and California figwort or bee plant (*Scrophularia californica*). Both companion species find support leaning on the snowberry's 12-24-inch branches. This trio of plants shares a bloom period from February to June, providing an important supply of nectar for insects and pollinators.

The pink bell-shaped flowers of snowberry are followed by white berries throughout its branches from April to June. The fruits are not actually berries, but rather are drupes, a common feature of the honeysuckle family. Each drupe contains two seeds. These fruits are an important food source for birds such as the California thrasher (*Toxostoma redivivum*) and small rodents like the valley pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae*) or the western harvest mouse (*Reithrodontomys megalotis*) that nest above the ground in snowberry branches.

Snowberry fruits are poisonous to some mammals, including humans, containing a compound called saponin that can cause stomach distress. This might be why deer tend not to browse on snowberry while it is in fruit. Interestingly, some early pioneer accounts mention the Chumash crushing the fruits, floating the fruit mush on stream waters, and retrieving stung fish. This was probably due to the saponins, which are toxic to fish.

Snowberry has very few insect problems and can handle varied soil types but does need large amounts of moisture to do its best. Deer will browse during flowering and the fruit set. Woodrats (*Neotoma macrotis*) chew the branches to build protective piles for their homes.

In the garden setting, snowberry does best in semi-shade to sunny areas and provides much needed nectar for insects and pollinators. It can be used to stabilize slopes in disturbed shady areas because it spreads by underground rhizomes; the rhizomes spread out like a web, holding soil in place. Pruning the snowberry helps to stimulate new growth and is best done after the fruits have dropped.

Snowberry is not commonly available at retail nursery centers and is easiest to find at nurseries that specialize in California natives. The largest selection of snowberry species available is at Las Pilitas Nursery, located east of Santa Margarita, California. Also, as mentioned earlier, snowberry is easy to propagate by its rhizomes. Just divide the roots in late fall, plant them in rich soil, and provide moisture if rain is not adequate. Once established, water monthly over the summer to keep them fresh-looking.

Common snowberry is an excellent choice for your native plant garden. Best wishes and happy gardening.



Dean Thompson spotted and photographed a tiny gnome welcoming him to the Elfin Forest underbrush.



**OAKLEAVES**

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Deadline for copy to *Oakleaves* is the first of the month before issue.

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

# Coming Up in the Elfin Forest

*Story and Photos by Jean Wheeler*

Winter is an exciting season in the Elfin Forest, featuring our beautiful flowering shrubs and with the diversity of bird species at a peak for the year.

Buckbrush ceanothus (in the California lilac genus) should soon nearly surround the boardwalk with its white to lavender flowers (pictured). In more protected areas of the lower boardwalk is Morro manzanita, found only along the coast between Montaña de Oro and Morro Bay State Parks. Its tiny bell-shaped flowers are listed in our Pocket Guide as white, but often have a quite pinkish blush. Fuchsia-flowered gooseberries should also be opening, with their many long red trumpets.

Perhaps by Christmas and surely by the end of January, California peonies will be opening their drooping red balls of flowers among their large bright green leaves in the understory. Look for them especially near Siena's View and along the 11th Street sand trail. Other understory plants likely to be in bloom are the white to pink or lilac rays of asters surrounding their golden disk flowers, the yellow and gold of California poppies, and white clusters of flowers atop green stems on California everlasting.

Our area is known as one of the top birding locales in our nation, especially in winter. That's why the Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival is held on Martin Luther King Weekend each year. It attracts hundreds of visitors from all over the U.S. and Canada, even some from overseas. The 2024 festival is scheduled for January 11-15, and early registration is essential for field trips—they fill fast. You may encounter one or another of those field trips visiting on our boardwalk.

In our winter, shrubs around the boardwalk can be alive with flitting finches, sparrows, gnatcatchers, wrens, phoebes, 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 California thrashers (pictured), California and spotted towhees, California scrub jays, California quail, and mourning doves.

With global warming, we aren't getting the huge numbers of migratory geese and ducks that often seemed to nearly blanket the waters of the estuary in cold winters past, but we still have our year-round residents, and some birds are still migrating in. As we reported in our last issue, Dozer, the long-billed curlew, has returned for his 4th annual visit!

Large year-round resident wading birds to look for from Bush Lupine Pt. and Siena's View are snowy and great egrets, and the great blue heron. Look closely at sticks standing out above the water some distance out and you might see an osprey perched on one, as I did just yesterday. Hunkered down on the stick with the sun shining on the white feathers on the side of his head, at that great distance even through the binoculars, he looked almost like an American eagle!

Turkey vultures and several species of hawks frequently fly overhead, often just over the cliff bordering the bay. Peregrine



*California Thrasher.*



*Ceanothus.*

falcons nesting on Morro Rock can often be seen hunting over the estuary.

Take a break from holiday shopping madness and walk in the Elfin Forest that we protect through our generous donations and active volunteer efforts.

## Thinking of Switching to Online *Oakleaves*?

If you receive a print copy of *Oakleaves*, we encourage you to visit our online version at [www.elfin-forest.org](http://www.elfin-forest.org). You will see photos in full color, and the text is easier to read on your computer. If you decide to be an online reader, you will receive an email when each new issue is posted on our website. Your decision would save paper, ink, and FEMEF dollars for other uses. Just email us at [oakleaf@elfin-forest.org](mailto:oakleaf@elfin-forest.org) with the subject "Switch me to online."

# WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

## Docent-Led Third Saturday Walks

(Reservations required; masks are optional.)

*December 16, 9:30 a.m.*

### *Our Climate & Why Plants Are Here or Not Here*

Join naturalist Al Normandin as he discusses our wonderful climate and how it compares with other climates around the world. We will walk around the boardwalk identifying plants, learning how climate and other conditions determine their ranges, and also why familiar plants we all know don't grow here.

*January 20, 9:30 a.m.*

*Docent and Topic to be announced;  
please check our website.*

*February 17, 9:30 a.m.*

### *Fungus Foray – Mushrooms and More*

Join fungophile Dennis Sheridan on a delightful exploration of the Elfin Forest floor for fascinating mushrooms such as wood blewits, black elfin saddles, earthstars, golden caps, boletes, and poisonous amanitas. Dennis will take us on a trek to the lower oak grove next to the bay to find these marvelous fungi. Bring a magnifying lens and if you have a mystery mushroom in your yard bring a sample for Dennis to identify. This is not a mushroom collecting walk. All plants in the Elfin Forest are protected by law. Only a very heavy rain will cancel the walk.

*Reservations are required for all walks in the Elfin Forest. To reserve a spot on a walk, email us at [walks@elfin-forest.org](mailto:walks@elfin-forest.org). Indicate the number in your party in the subject line of your email. Walks 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.*



*Our birders at Bush Lupine Pt. for the 2023 Big Sit!  
For a recap, see "The State of the Forest" article on pages 1-2.  
Photo by Dave Bowlus.*

*Below:*

*Jeff Reifel fascinated listeners in Rose's Grove with his tales about the amazing ways plants manage to spread their offspring to far flung homes during a walk he and Barbara Renshaw led in October.*

*Photo by Marlin Harms.*



# Thank You to Our Generous Members

*Compiled by  
Betsy Kinter, FEMEF Database Coordinator*

## **NEW LIFE MEMBERS:**

Laura and Charles Kass

## **NEW MEMBERS:**

Faylla Chapman\*  
Shelly Larsen  
Claudia Norby  
Laura & Peter Petersen  
Susan Moore Sevier\*  
Mary Sturm  
Kathryn Veyna  
Susan & Dieter Walz\*

## **RENEWING MEMBERS:**

Andrea Bersie*	Gail Johnson*
Charles Blair*	William & Clover Johnson *
Carolyn Boomer & Mike Askew*	Heidi Kausch Sandra Mason*
Dianne Bougher*	Bob & Mary McCorkle*
William Bouton*	Marlys McPherson Beth Miller*
Mary Conkling Linda Cordes*	Jan & Jim Moore*
Paul Crafts Scott Danielson*	Marie Moore & Elaine Mason*
Jan Di Leo*	Linde Owen*
Andrea Dunlop & Max Miceli*	Cindy Roessler*
Thomas & Michele Esser*	Marcia Shannon*
Kathy & Emil Flock*	Dennis Sheridan*
Tom & Rita Hadjiyane Jan Harper*	James Skinner
William Jankos*	Lou & Lynette Tornatzky* Lisa Wallender*

## **DONATIONS:**

John Brunner & Michele Neilson  
Herbert & Dianne Filipponi

*\*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.*



*Left, Josh Farmer. Center Brian Hendricks, owner of Estero Bay Graphics, holding our new green shirt. Right, Lou Garcia.*

## FEMEF has New T-shirts

*Text by Rebecca Rasmussen, Photos by Dave Bowlus*

The FEMEF Board is pleased to announce the acquisition of a new batch of t-shirts and hoodies in stunning forest green. These perpetually fashionable wardrobe essentials feature beautiful mural artwork by Barbara Rosenthal printed on the front and back with the text "El Moro Elfin Forest" above and "Los Osos, CA" below. Local printer Brian Hendricks, owner of Estero Bay Graphics, handled the order and gave a tour of his facility as his machines were warming up to start the process. Each shirt is printed (or screened) six times with a different color. When combined, these six screenings imprint Barbara Rosenthal's image of the Elfin Forest that we all know and love. We think the result is stunning and hope you will agree.



*A closer view of "Sixtopus" the printer Brian Hendricks uses to enhance our new supply of green shirts for sale.*



## FEMEF Shirts & Sweat Shirts!

Our new green shirts and sweat shirts reflect our name change from SWAP to Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest. They'll make wonderful gifts, as will the older black SWAP shirts (at discounted prices), and other items for sale below.

*(At left) Our new shirt, in our sales area of the Fireside Room at our annual meeting.*



# FEMEF Shoppers' Order Form

See photos of all items at [www.elfin-forest.org](http://www.elfin-forest.org)

All Prices Include Sales Tax

### 1. MURAL SHIRTS & SWEAT SHIRTS

Large mural design by artist Barbara Rosenthal on both front and back. Forest green fabric with the words "Friends of the El Moro Elfin Forest" above mural and "Los Osos, California" below mural.

Check the desired size(s):

"New" Forest Green

\_\_\_ Short Slv. T-Shirt (S, M, L, XL) @\$25.00 = \$ \_\_\_

\_\_\_ Long Slv. T-Shirt (S, M, L, XL) @\$30.00 = \$ \_\_\_

\_\_\_ Hoodie Sweat Shirt (S, M, L, XL)@\$40.00 = \$ \_\_\_

"Old" Black

\_\_\_ Short Slv. T-Shirt (S, M, L, XL) @\$15.00 = \$ \_\_\_

\_\_\_ Long Slv. T-Shirt (S, M, L, XL) @\$15.00 = \$ \_\_\_

\_\_\_ Crew-Neck Sweat Shirt (S, M, L, XL)@\$35.00 = \$ \_\_\_

### 2. POCKET GUIDE

Useful 56-page guide to plants and animals of the Elfin Forest. Lists for mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, 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 26 clever verses and superb photos on facing pages, this book is sure to please young and old.

\_\_\_ @ \$20.00 = \$ \_\_\_

### 5. MURAL MUG

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

\_\_\_ @ \$15 = \$ \_\_\_

### 6. ELFIN FOREST CAPS

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

\_\_\_ @ \$15 = \$ \_\_\_ Color(s) \_\_\_

### 7. NOTECARDS

Featuring scenes from the El Moro Elfin Forest  
\_\_\_ @ \$2.50 / each \_\_\_ @ \$10 / 5 notecards

**SUBTOTAL OF ORDER** \$ \_\_\_  
(Please print when filling order, and indicate how many of each.)

**SHIPPING COSTS:** Within and near Los Osos, free delivery may be possible. Shipping costs otherwise depend on zip code and package weight.  
*Please call 805-528-0392 to arrange for delivery or shipping.*

**TOTAL OF ORDER WITH APPLICABLE SHIPPING COSTS** \$ \_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (w/ area code): \_\_\_\_\_

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.



FRIENDS OF EL MORO ELFIN FOREST  
 A Non-Profit Public Benefit Corporation  
 P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412-6442  
 (805) 528-0392 www.elfin-forest.org

Non-Profit Org.  
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*Address Service Requested*

Check out the new FEMEFT-Shirts & Sweat Shirts ~ page 10!

**Please check renewal date on your label.**

printed on recycled paper

## Give FEMEF Memberships or Make Tax Deductible Donations



For the person who has everything, a gift membership to FEMEF 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 can not only reduce your income tax bite, but will help FEMEF with special projects in the Elfin Forest such as soil erosion control, revegetation with native species, and boardwalk extensions or upkeep.

A life membership with a \$1,000 donation earns the Oakleaves newsletter for life and also a FEMEF mural 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    |                                          |

- I want to help, please call me!  
 FEMEF has permission to email me.

Memberships include an online subscription to FEMEF's quarterly newsletter *Oakleaves*.

- Check here to receive the online version by email.  
 Check here to receive the print version by U.S. mail.  
 Check here if you do not wish to receive *Oakleaves*.

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.