



OAK LEAVES

A PUBLICATION OF THE LOS OSOS / MORRO BAY CHAPTER OF SMALL WILDERNESS AREA PRESERVATION
P.O. BOX 6442, LOS OSOS, CALIFORNIA 93412-6442 ❖ (805) 528-0392 ❖ APRIL/ MAY 2012

SWAP Needs Help Now

*By Ron Rasmussen
SWAP Chair and Conservation Committee Chair*

SWAP is critically in need of volunteers to continue its work. Without “new blood” we may be forced to cut significantly many of our activities that are crucial to preserving the Elfin Forest. Here I review some of SWAP’s activities that are most important to preserving the Elfin Forest and are of significant benefit to the general community. I also hope to entice you to contribute some of your precious time as a volunteer.

The role of the Los Osos/Morro Bay Chapter of SWAP is to be the guardian of the El Morro Elfin Forest Natural Area. SWAP is an all-volunteer organization but is obligated to meet this responsibility by an “Adopt-A-Park” agreement with San Luis Obispo County Parks. While it is unlikely that failure to meet this responsibility would result in jail time for anyone, it would certainly reflect unfavorably on the citizens of this community. To ensure that this obligation is fulfilled, the Chapter Board of Directors has established committees charged with specific parts of the agreement.

A primary duty is Conservation. This committee plans and performs such actions as re-vegetation, removal of invasive plants, control of erosion and minimizing pollution. Some of this work can be done by SWAP volunteers, but larger projects, such as the recent fence modification project, require outside help. In this latter case, SWAP collaborated with County Parks and California Conservation Corps

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MB High Photographers Visit Elfin Forest

By Yolanda Waddell; photo by Liz Moore

A past acquaintance was re-established last October at the Baywood Oktoberfest when a young woman in the booth next to SWAP’s mentioned to Pat Murray that she had done the artwork for our Elfin Forest interpretive panels. Graphic artist Liz Moore is now the teacher of the ROP (Regional Occupational Program) technology classes at Morro Bay High School. She teaches professional imaging (photography), digital imaging, electronic media, web page design, flash animation and video production. Last Fall Liz was named Santa Lucia ROP Teacher of the Year for 2011-2012.

Liz had brought some of her students to the Oktoberfest to display their photos. In conversing with her, it occurred to us that the Elfin Forest would make a good subject for the photography students, and that SWAP could display their photos at the Morro Bay Bird Festival.

In December, a group of Liz’s photography students visited the Elfin Forest, took many photos, and printed the best of them. Ron Rasmussen mounted the photos on a display board for our information table at the Bird Festival. Our thanks to Liz and her students for sharing their talents with SWAP, and for providing delightful images of the Elfin Forest and its avian residents. Shown in the photo above are (L-R) Megan Massey, Lauren Kaufan Carlson, Michelle Cordova, Chandler Richmond, Jasmine Franklin and Ally Evans.



SWAP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*The Board of Directors
of the Los Osos/Morro Bay Chapter of
Small Wilderness Area Preservation (SWAP)
consists of the following members:*

Ron Rasmussen, Chair
Jan DiLeo, Treasurer
Yolanda Waddell, Secretary
Pat Akey, Member at Large
Pat Murray, Member at Large

The SWAP Board of Directors meets monthly
at the Community Room, Morro Shores
Mobile Home Park, 633 Ramona Ave., Los Osos.

The next meetings are
**Thursday, April 12,
and Thursday, May 10.**

All Board meetings are open to the public.

To confirm the date, time and location
(which are subject to change),
call (805) 528-0392.



CONTACT SWAP

If you have questions about SWAP activities or
want to volunteer, please call

(805) 528-0392 and leave a message.

A recorded message will give information
about our 3rd Saturday Walks,

Work Saturdays, and other events. If you have
questions, concerns or comments about any
problems in the Elfin Forest, call or write:

Mark Wagner

SLO County Parks Supervising Ranger
1087 Santa Rosa 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 Mark Wagner at 781-1196.

SWAP Needs Help Now *continued from page 1*

(CCC) to plan and contribute materially to the project. The Conservation Committee has two sub-committees: one is responsible for maintaining and replenishing the Mutt Mitt dispensers, and one keeps the plants and bushes along the boardwalk trimmed so that the way is clear and safe for visitors in the Elfin Forest.

A second duty is to provide educational activities for the community. The Walks Committee plans the scheduled Third Saturday nature walks as well special walks for groups. The Education Committee has developed a docent training manual specific for the Elfin Forest and our docents lead K-12 school walks. The importance of this activity to the community can be seen in letters from children who have attended one of the field trips to the Elfin Forest. The comments show their fascination with the plants and animals of the natural world, which they may not otherwise have noticed.

The Publications Committee's duties are important to the community at large as well as to the Elfin Forest itself. Brochures are distributed in several locations including the Los Osos and Morro Bay Chambers of Commerce. These brochures attract visitors from outside our area to come see what the Elfin Forest offers. SWAP's Oakleaves is recognized as one of the best newsletters in the area for an organization of our size. It is now free on line for all who log on to SWAP's website. The Web Site Committee writes, designs and maintains our site at www.elfin-forest.org. The Elfin Forest Calendar, produced since 2007, has been uniformly praised by those seeing it and has also been a significant source of financial support for SWAP's activities. Unfortunately, because of loss of key volunteers, it is unlikely that SWAP will produce a calendar for 2013.

Other committees with specific tasks include a Volunteer Committee that coordinates volunteers who perform various duties such as working at our information booth and helping with special events such as our annual meeting. The Property and Records Committee keeps track of SWAP's inventory of materials and items such as stationery and T-shirts that SWAP may offer for sale. This committee also keeps our storage unit in order, as we have no office.

This short review shows that, although SWAP is a relatively small organization, it needs the contribution from many dedicated volunteers of the most precious gift that they can offer; that is their time. Now, as their number continues to decline, each of the remaining SWAP volunteers must wear several hats. Without new volunteer and community support, a future dismal fate of SWAP and the Elfin Forest is inevitable. Please seriously consider becoming a volunteer and contributing some of your store of knowledge and experience to SWAP and your community. The amount of time you wish to contribute depends on you. But the more time you give, the greater your personal satisfaction from knowing the high value of your contribution to your community.

The SWAP Board meets once a month to review the activity of the past month and to plan for the future. The meetings are open to all who are interested, either in helping in some way or even becoming a board member. Attend a Board meeting (see box at left) to learn firsthand what is needed to preserve El Moro Elfin Forest Natural Area.

Please Report Elfin Forest 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?

Please report any interesting sightings to your Oakleaves editors at: oakleaves@elfin-forest.org for inclusion in future issues under "Elfin Forest Sightings." You can also leave a message on SWAP's answering machine, (805) 528-0392.



The Murphys' Bench

By Yolanda Waddell

"Enjoy Rose's Grove – Jack and Frieda Murphy and their dog Rod." That is what the plaque says on a very welcoming bench that meets the eye when one walks into the Rose Bowker Memorial Grove. The authors of that greeting, Jack and Frieda Murphy, bought the bench as a token of their appreciation of the Elfin Forest, where they walk with their dogs daily.

The Murphys' personal story has a good amount of drama and romance. Born in Indonesia, at age 3 Frieda went to a prison camp with her family during the World War II Japanese occupation. Indonesia became an independent country after Japan fell in 1945, but the Netherlands fought to take it back as a colony. Frieda lived through five more years of war until Indonesia finally became a republic in 1950. She wanted to leave that war-torn land, and married a young Dutchman who took her to his homeland. Her two daughters were born there, and then the family moved to the United States, eventually ending up in Los Angeles.

Frieda went to work in the 1970s at the San Gabriel Valley Division of Southern California Gas Company. Her department head was Jack Murphy. Jack noticed that Frieda ate lunch by herself every day at a table in the company's courtyard. He stopped to chat with her, and after awhile they became close friends and then husband and wife.

In 1975 Jack bought a house adjacent to what is now the Elfin Forest and in 1982, after he retired, he and Frieda moved to Los Osos. They loved the wilderness in front of their house, and bought the 25-foot lot adjacent to theirs when they had a chance. They refused a number of offers for their extra lot from a developer who had three lots adjoining theirs. When the developer put his two lots up for sale, they bought them through Frieda's daughter in Sunnyvale to prevent the sale price from being raised. Owning what Jack calls "a pretty nice hunk of land," they have willed the three lots to San Luis Obispo County Parks to eventually become part of the Elfin Forest.

A few years ago Jack and Frieda adopted a small fluffy black and white dog from Woods Humane Society Animal Shelter, and named him Rod. Every day they took Rod to the Elfin Forest for a walk around the boardwalk. When the boardwalk was extended into Rose's Grove in 2009, they purchased a bench to go on the deck under the oaks.

After their bench was installed, Jack took a photo of Frieda with Rod, shown next to this article. Then Rod became very sick and died of heart failure. They were very sad, and to cheer themselves up, they bought two more dogs that look similar to Rod. In the second photo, the white dog on the left is Jessa and the black and white one is Jade.

During their walks, Jack and Frieda always stop at their bench. Frieda said that they have seen all kinds of people enjoying the bench. It pleases them to have provided a resting place that will be used for generations to come. Thinking about both the bench and the land that they will leave to the county, Jack said, "It's a legacy." And indeed it is a gift of nature to future generations.



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Elfin Forest Visitors:

On a lovely March day, Los Osos resident Sandy (right) brought her friend Andrea (left) who lives in Clovis, for a walk in the Elfin Forest. They enjoyed sitting on the Murphy bench in Rose's Grove for awhile, to relax and chat. With them is Sandy's dog Chief.

Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

Jerusalem Cricket

By Jean Wheeler, Ph.D.

The bug seen and photographed by the January 7 Weed Warriors is usually called a Jerusalem Cricket or a Potato Bug. Both names are quite deceptive. Not only is it from western United States, not Jerusalem, but it isn't even a true cricket! Although it sometimes nibbles on potatoes, they are not its preferred choice of food, and it has only occasionally become a pest for commercial potato growers.

Several Navaho names translate to something like "big red-skull bug." A Hopi name means "shiny bug" and there is a Spanish name "niña de la tierra" or "earth child." It is thought that the name Jerusalem Cricket was applied by Franciscan priests who heard the Navahos call them "skull insects" and thought of Skull Hill outside Jerusalem, believed site of the crucifixion of Jesus.

Not only are the common names a problem, but so is the scientific nomenclature. While true crickets belong to family Gryllidae, Jerusalem Crickets (*Stenopelmatus fuscus*) belong in family Stenopelmatidae. Few members of this family have been scientifically described, and whether there are any other genera in the family or how many different species there are remain very much open to question. Estimates for the number of species in this genus range from more than 50, to over 100, to around 200.

Jerusalem Crickets are much larger than common true crickets, big around and as much as two inches long. They have very large heads resembling those of tiny bald men or human babies. They are light brown in color with black rings around the abdomen. The large jointed legs are spiny but they cannot jump like most crickets.

Also unlike true crickets, they do not have wings. Although they make a drumming sound during mating, they do so by banging their abdomens on the ground rather than by vibrating their legs as true crickets do. Also unlike crickets they have no hearing organs, but have organs on their feet that sense the drumming vibrations in the soil.

Big and ugly as they are, many people are frightened by these bugs. They can bite with their large mandibles, but only if provoked and they are not venomous. They don't cry like babies, a common myth, but they can give off a strong bad odor.

Jerusalem crickets use their strong mandibles and their feet and legs to burrow under soil. They feed on roots, tubers, dead animals, and other insects. They spend most of their lives under ground, emerging mainly at night, so we usually see them only in early morning or evening or if we dig them up. Females dig a long burrow a half a foot or so below the ground and lay several oval whitish eggs. These hatch into nymphs that gradually grow into adults. Life span is thought to be about three years.



County Parks has seen to it that the wood rail fence at the end of 11th Street, damaged by a runaway pizza truck, has been repaired with brand new rails. See page 1 of the February/March Oakleaves for the article about the accident and a photo of the broken fence.

Photo by Yolanda Waddell.



OAKLEAVES

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Co-editors are Yolanda Waddell and Jean Wheeler;
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Contributors to this issue: Pat Akey, Jan DiLeo, Betsy Kinter, Bob Meyer, Liz Moore, Jack Murphy, Ron Rasmussen, Yolanda Waddell, Dirk and Bonnie Walters and Jean Wheeler.

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“Ice Plants”

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

Bonnie’s drawing is a generalized drawing representing two species commonly called ice plants, both of which are fairly common along the coast and within freeway and railroad right-of-ways. However, neither is to be found in the Elfin Forest due to the hard work and persistence of the Weed Warriors. Hopefully, the Weed Warrior resolve will remain and these species will not return, especially to the area observable from the boardwalk.

The two species, *Carpobrotus chilensis* and *C. edulis*, should be easy to distinguish. According to the new Jepson Manual, *C. chilensis* has smaller flowers (3-5 cm. compared to 8-10 cm) and leaves (4-7 cm. as compared to 6-10 cm) in *C. edulis*. Flower colors are reported to be different as well: *C. edulis* produces yellow petals while petals in *C. chilensis* flowers are reddish to pinkish. However, color can be misleading as the yellow flowers of *C. edulis* dry pinkish. Newly dry flowers in both species are quite showy. Most Identification manuals indicate that the two species can be separated on the shape of their succulent leaf cross-sections – rounded triangular in *C. chilensis* and sharp triangular in *C. edulis*. *C. edulis* is said to have the leaf angle pointing away from the stem axis bearing a few teeth toward the tip. I have to admit that I haven’t observed that characteristic particularly in our area. After indicating how different these two species are, I need to note that the literature reports that they hybridize. In other words, separation may not be quite as easy as the characteristics would indicate.

I find the common name, ice plant, to be misleading but understandable. First, let’s look at the misleading part. There is nothing in their appearance that indicates ice. Their ranges, like most of us people in Southern California, avoid areas where any significant ice would be found. I suspect the water in their succulent leaves would quickly freeze if they were exposed to severe or even extended near freezing temperatures. Growing ice crystals in their water filled cells would destroy cell membranes causing cell death which leads to leaf and plant death.

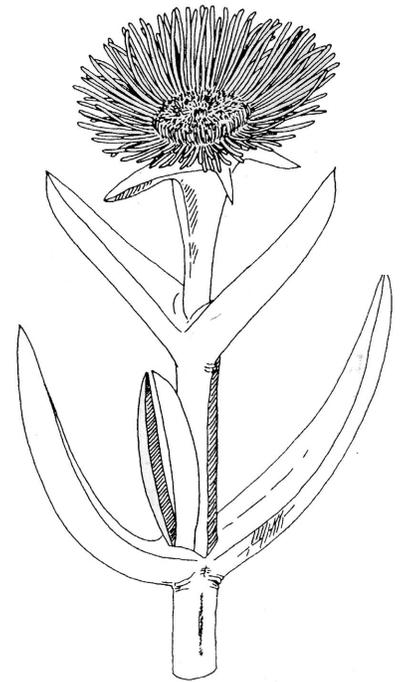
So where does the common name, ice plant, come from? I believe this is an example of a common name being more stable than the scientific name. Up until the middle of the last century the species now found in *Carpobrotus*, along with a number of other cultivated succulent ground covers, were all included in a single large diverse genus, *Mesembryanthemum*. Some botanists even separated *Mesembryanthemum* into its own family, Mesembryanthaceae, due to their showy petals. Today, there is essential unanimity that not only should the old genus, *Mesembryanthemum*, be split up, but that it belongs in the family Aizoaceae. The non-ice plant genera in the Aizoaceae lack showy flowers because they lack showy petals. Those of you who know it can recall New Zealand spinach, *Tetragonia expansa*. There is a plant still in the genus *Mesembryanthemum*, whose stem and leaves surfaces are covered with large silvery cells that resemble ice crystals at a distance.

This species, *Mesembryanthemum crystallinum*, is occasionally found around Morro Bay. I believe the common name for this species with this distinctive surface feature became the default common name for all the species in the broadly defined genus, *Mesembryanthemum*.

In older flower books, *C. chilensis* is said to be native to coastal California. How could this be? I’m guessing that it was a very early introduction and I think it went like this. An early merchant ship delivered its cargo to Southern Africa. It didn’t have a full load to pick up there, so it filled out its cargo hold with ballast. In the early days, ballast consisted of soil dug up from a nearby beach. That beach soil contained seeds and probably also pieces of ice plant. (I observed a ‘dried’ succulent growing off a several year old herbarium sheet at my undergraduate school.) The ship then sailed to Chile and/or California where it picked up a full load of paying cargo. In order to make room for this paying cargo, the crew just dumped the African soil on New World beaches. I hope this practice is now illegal! It makes sense to me that this happened before the first botanical surveys were done in California so that the species was recorded as ‘native’.

It should also be noted that *C. chilensis* appears to me to be a little less invasive than is *C. edulis*. That is, native plant diversity seems to be diminished less where *C. chilensis* grows. I mentioned earlier that the common names of these species were more stable than the scientific ones, but I have not explained the individual species common names besides the generic name, ice plant. The only name I know for *C. edulis* is freeway ice plant. The ‘edulis’ part of the scientific name refers to the fruit being eaten by Southern African peoples. A source on the internet noted that young leaves were also cut-up into salads. The Jepson Manual gives *C. chilensis* the common name of sea fig. This is a much better name than the older, and I assume politically incorrect name, Hottentot fig.

Both species were widely planted as a ground cover, especially for steep, bare slopes such as road cuts. I believe they are no longer recommended for this purpose. Their leaves and stems are heavy; their roots are shallow. Thus when the soil became saturated, the shallow roots and even heavier wet stems and leaves actually increased soil slumping. And, of course, this was exactly what they were planted in the first place to prevent!



Elfin Forest Sightings: Shoulderband Snail



During the February work party, Weed Warrior Kathryn Bay asked Bob Meyer, our Snail Monitor, to take a look at a snail shell she found while pulling veldt grass. Bob checked the shell and found that the snail was dead. However, while they were looking at the shell, Bob glanced up and saw a live Morro Shoulderband Snail doing its best to make a quick getaway. Never without his camera, Bob took the adjacent photo before moving the snail to a safe hiding place. Note the snail's four eyestalks and the distinct band on its shell.

Morro Shoulderband snails generally make their homes in the duff under mock heather plants, but they also like to snuggle into the tight root systems of veldt grass. That makes it necessary for Weed Warriors to check the roots of each veldt grass plant that they pull, and it is also mandatory for a Snail Monitor to be on hand whenever Weed Warriors work with veldt grass.

Education Corner: Docents, Binoculars and Monoculars Needed

By Pat Akey, Education Chair

The Education committee is looking for binoculars and monoculars for use by our students in the Elfin Forest to observe birds, butterflies and insects, adding to the students' knowledge of these subjects. Please let us know if you can donate extra binoculars or monoculars to the Education Committee by calling Pat Akey at 528-4832 or e-mailing pata@elfin-forest.org.

Our greatest need as always is more docents. We train docents by leading you through the Forest to learn first-hand the information in our very helpful docent manual. Our field trips are very satisfying to both students and docents. We lead students from first grade through college. Please contact me if you are interested.

Local elementary and middle schools will be given fliers this month to notify teachers of our programs for this Spring.



Pat Murray and Ron Rasmussen did the setup for our SWAP information table at the Morro Bay Bird Festival in January. Displays on the table include bird photos taken by local photographers (left) and Morro Bay High School student photographers. Pat is happily showing us the new SWAP brochure with color photos. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

Why Switch to Online Oakleaves?

By Yolanda Waddell, Oakleaves Co-editor

As of the beginning of March, Betsy Kinter, our Database Coordinator, reported that 99 SWAP members are reading *Oakleaves* online. I assumed that the number would be 100 by the time you read these words in April, and have asked our printer, Tom Hay, to reduce our printed newsletters to 400. That number is 100 fewer newsletters than at this time last year.

SWAP Treasurer Jan DiLeo prepared a financial *Oakleaves* report for the year 2011. The total cost of graphic design, printing and preparing for mailing by Achievement House was \$5,547 in 2011. The cost of each copy of *Oakleaves* was \$2.05. The amount saved by printing fewer copies of our newsletter can be used for purchase of materials for Elfin Forest maintenance or other projects.

Pat Grimes, former *Oakleaves* editor who still assists us with editing, wrote, "I have to admit I really enjoy reading *Oakleaves* online. It's bright, easy to read, and I can always find my copy!"

Co-editor Jean Wheeler, the SWAP Board and I encourage you to take a look at the current online issue of *Oakleaves* with the pictures shown in full color, at www.elfin-forest.org. If you are comfortable with reading text on your computer screen, just send an e-mail to oakleaves@elfin-forest.org with the words "Online version only" in the subject line. Thank you!

Weed Warrior Report

Story & Photos By Yolanda Waddell

February 4 – Seven Warriors tackled two action fronts. With shovels in hand, they dug sand from behind each water bar along the 13th Street Trail, and added shallow trenches to carry water to the side of the trail. That prevents sand from being washed down the trail and onto the street. After completing the job, they pulled veldt grass at the southern edge of the Forest between 15th and 16th Streets. Take a look at the Morro Shoulderband Dune Snail photo that Bob Meyer took (page 6) during the weeding. In addition to Bob, the Weed Warriors were Kathryn Bay, Jay Bonestell, Lannie Erickson, Victoria Johnson, Ron Rasmussen and Yolanda Waddell.

March 3 – Normally during March, there are many veldt grass and other weed seedlings visibly popping up in many areas of the Elfin Forest. That wasn't the case as of the beginning of March, when there was so little rain to cause seeds to sprout. Conservation Chair Ron Rasmussen sent the Weed Warriors on a weed inventory of places in the Forest where they have been a problem in the past. Very few weeds were found except for two bags of slender-leaved ice plant pulled by Prisila and Rich Johnson near 17th Street. Bob Meyer brought in a bag of trash from the slope below Bush Lupine Point. Other than that, the Elfin Forest was found to be in very good condition. Participating Weed Warriors were Jay Bonestell, Lannie Erickson, Prisila Johnson, Rich Johnson, Bob Meyer, Ron Rasmussen and Yolanda Waddell.

The **April 7th** work party will include installing cable in stanchions along the 12th Street trail to complete the symbolic fence on that trail. If there is time, Weed Warriors will also work on putting up symbolic fencing along the Orchid Trail above South Bay Boulevard.

Let's all pull together

By Yolanda Waddell

Saturday is almost here

and I hope you still have time

to help us pull and clear

more veldt grass, starting at nine.

We need to stop veldt's seeds from traveling

back into the Forest, our previous work unraveling.

There's not much left, we're almost done

Please help us. Come join the fun!

SWAP 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. Layers work well. Long pants and long shirt sleeves are good. Sturdy shoes are a must. Take care not to park in front of driveways or mailboxes. To request more information, call (805)528-0392.



Above: In March, Weed Warrior Lannie Erickson surveyed the entire Celestial Meadow for weeds and shows that there wasn't much to put in her bag except for some small Slender-leaved ice plants.

Below: During the February Elfin Forest work party, (front to back) Kathryn Bay, Jay Bonestell, Vicky Johnson, Ron Rasmussen and Lannie Erickson pulled the evil veldt grass, preventing it from creeping back into the Elfin Forest.



Coming Up in the Elfin Forest

Text and Photo By Jean Wheeler

April and May are perhaps the most abundantly colorful months in the Elfin Forest year. Wildflowers are blooming in all colors, and butterflies are at their most active. Birds are building nests or feeding hungry hatchlings.

Yellow to orange flowers include California poppies, deerweed, fiddleneck (pictured), golden yarrow, suffrutescent wallflowers, and sticky monkey-flowers. Cobbwebby thistles and California hedge nettles have pink flowers. Red flowers include fuchsia-flowered gooseberries coming to the end of their long blooming season while Indian pinks (red flowers appearing cut by pinking shears) should begin to open before the end of May.

Blues are provided by blue dicks in the understory and the tall blue spikes on silver dune lupine shrubs. Purple nightshade plants add that color, while Pomona milk vetch has creamy flowers on low plants.

White flowers abound like pompoms on black sage. Also white-flowered are California croton, ceanothus, chamise, wedgeleaf horkelia, and wild cucumber. California blackberry and poison oak each have white flowers and three leaves now, but the blackberry plants have thorny stems.

Coffeeferry, hollyleaf cherry, and toyon are all tall shrubs with white or yellow flowers at this time of year along the lower boardwalk. The flowers are so tiny they are hard to see, but the berries they become on these shrubs later in the year will be much more noticeable.

April and May are the major butterfly months in the Elfin Forest, and butterflies are featured on our Third Saturday Walk on April 21, led by Pat Brown (see page 9). Of the 22 species of butterflies listed on our website (elfin-forest.org) under the Flora and Fauna button, only the Monarch Butterfly is not listed as flying during either April or May.

Butterflies are sometimes called “flying flowers” and they are attracted to many plant flowers for nectar to keep them flying strongly long enough to mate and lay eggs for the next generation. Females seek out especially plant species that will support their caterpillars. Males often patrol near those host plants seeking females not yet mated. Males and females not yet mated can also be attracted to open hilltops, which serve as their “singles bars.” In the Elfin Forest, an open hilltop between two oak groves south of Bush Lupine Point along the sand trail from 11th Street to the boardwalk is nicknamed “Butterfly Hill.”

Look for our many birds also flitting among the flowers and butterflies. Especially likely to be seen and heard are the bright blue Western Scrub Jays, orange and black Spotted Towhees, chattering flocks of tiny fuzzy gray Bushtits, and the large brown California Thrasher with its down-curved beak. Among arrivals in April or May from winter homes farther south are Warbling Vireos, Hooded Orioles, Black-headed Grosbeaks, and Yellow, Townsend’s, and Wilson’s Warblers.

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



Celebrate California Native Plant Week and Earth Day in April

By Yolanda Waddell

In 2011, the California Legislature established California Native Plant Week to take place during the 3rd week of April each year with resolution ACR 173. The resolution recognizes the vital historical, artistic and economic contributions that California’s native plants have made to our state. In particular, it recognizes that home landscaping and gardening with native plants can cut residential water use from 60 to 90% over conventional gardening. This year, Native Plant Week will be April 15th to 22nd.

On Saturday, April 21, SWAP will celebrate Native Plant Week with Pat Brown’s annual 3rd Saturday butterfly walk. Pat will emphasize the importance of native plants as food for our local butterflies. The walk will begin as usual at the north end of 15th Street in Los Osos, at 9:30 a.m. (see page 9 for more information).

In 1969, Senator Gaylord Nelson (D-Wisconsin) established Earth Day on April 22nd to focus public attention on environmental issues. Citizens around the world combine efforts to protect our global environment. Everyone at SWAP shares this vision. We invite you to honor Earth Day by visiting The Elfin Forest during the next several weeks. Take advantage of our 3rd Saturday walks (see page 9) and learn more about our local natural wonder. You can also visit the San Luis Obispo County Earth Day Festival – a free event - on Saturday, April 22, at El Chorro Regional Park. Look online at www.earthdayalliance.com for more information.

WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

Third Saturday Walks

April 21, 9:30 a.m. –

Butterflies and Native Plants

In honor of California Native Plant Week, butterfly enthusiast Pat Brown will lead a walk from the point of view of a hungry butterfly. As you tour the Elfin Forest with her, Pat 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 taken many 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 hang-outs 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 hand lens and a pair of close-focusing (5-10 ft.) binoculars.

May 19, 9:30 a.m. – Wildflower Walk

Even if there haven't been many April showers, the Elfin Forest always has May flowers because the Forest's hardy native plants are used to doing without water. Dirk Walters will take us on a delightful tour of almost everything that's in bloom in the Elfin Forest. There will be bright yellows of Fiddlenecks, Rush-roses, Deerweed, Golden Yarrow and of course California Poppies. White Popcorn flowers, Pearly everlasting and Yarrow 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.

June 16, 9:30 a.m. – Sketch Walk

Join artist and naturalist Barbara Renshaw for a stroll along the Elfin Forest boardwalk. Take in views of the Morro Bay estuary, oak groves, expanses of coastal sage scrub and chaparral, and the volcanic Morros beyond. You'll stop in the Rose Bowker Oak Grove to enjoy the ancient gnarled Coast live oak trees. Barbara will tell you a bit about the native plants that you see along the way and will choose a few favorite places for sketching. No drawing experience is necessary. Bring a pad of drawing paper, colored pencils or pastels, and some drinking water. Bring a camera too. You'll be pleased to discover the artist hidden inside of you.

Walks in the Elfin Forest begin at times stated above. Park at the north end of 15th Street (16th Street for wheelchairs) off Santa Ysabel in Los Osos. Walks begin on the boardwalk at the end of the 15th Street path. Wear comfortable shoes, long sleeves and pants to avoid poison oak and mosquitoes. Please park carefully, avoiding driveways and mailboxes. Please leave pets at home. The easy paced walks last 1-1/2 to 2 hours. For more information call (805) 528-0392.



During January's 3rd Saturday walk, Black Brant specialist John Roser used a world globe to point out the arctic nesting grounds of that sturdy goose that flies thousands of miles to its winter homes in California, including the Morro Bay Estuary.

Photo by Yolanda Waddell.



In spite of little rain in February, Dennis Sheridan and his enthusiastic mushroom aficionados found some very interesting fungi to look at and learn about.

Photo by Jean Wheeler.

We'd Like Mail!

We encourage our readers to submit photos, letters to the editor, or interesting and timely information by e-mailing to oakleaves@elfin-forest.org. We look forward to hearing from you.

The Editors.

Thank You to Our New and Renewing Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter, SWAP Database Coordinator

NEW MEMBERS:

Craig & Victoria Johnsen*
Marshall Ochylski

RENEWING MEMBERS:

| | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Kay Blaney* | Pat Murray* |
| Marguerite Crown* | Carolyn Schanberger* |
| Beth Currier | Max & Helen Sicher* |
| Pat Brock Diener* | Lani Steele* |
| Frank & Gail Freiler* | Janice & Roger Verity* |
| Isobel Hoffman* | Bonnie & Wes Wamsley |
| Steve & Jill Jobst* | Roy Wolf* |
| Barbara Machado* | |

*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.



Members Remembered

Three of our long-time members have passed away in recent months. We are sad to lose them and send our condolences to their families.

Ernest Eddy, a resident of Los Osos and long-time member of SWAP with his wife Barbara, was born in 1920 and passed away on Tuesday, October 25, 2011 at age 91.

Joanna Frawley, a bird lover and past president of Morro Coast Audubon Society, helped and contributed to SWAP during the years when we were raising funds to purchase the Elfin Forest, and then continued on as a member. She was born in 1928 and died December 2, 2011 at age 83.

Sylvia Rosenberg joined SWAP after she moved from Long Beach to Los Osos in 1997. She was an energetic Elfin Forest Weed Warrior for a while and then went north to help pull weeds at the Piedras Blancas Lighthouse. She loved the outdoors and nature, and was active in many other environmental organizations. Even though ill with cancer, Sylvia continued her membership in SWAP until the time of her death on November 10, 2011, at age 76.



Graffiti Erased Quickly

On Sunday, January 15, Conservation Chair Ron Rasmussen received a phone call from one of the Elfin Forest watch-people, Dean Thompson. Dean told Ron that three of the Forest interpretive panels had graffiti on them. He guessed that the misdeed was probably done on the evenings of January 13th or 14th, a Friday or Saturday night.

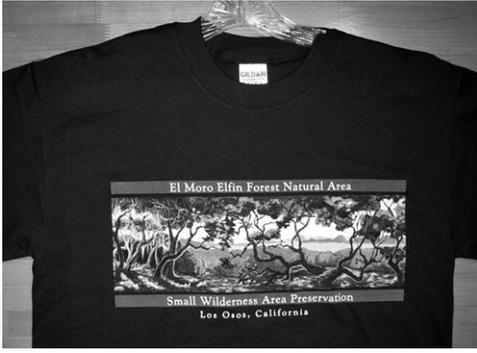
On Monday the 16th, Ron went to the hardware store and found a mild, low toxicity solvent. The solvent worked well, removing graffiti from the two panels at Bush Lupine Point and

one at the intersection of the boardwalk and the 16th Street boardwalk extension. Ron guessed that the panels might have been marked up with nail polish. The solvent didn't harm the panels; however, a previous vandal scratched through the plastic coating of the "Sheltered From the Wind" panel and disfigured the girl's face.



The interpretive panel, "Sheltered From the Wind," carried a different message for two or three days until Ron Rasmussen removed the ugly face. The second photo shows the panel back to normal. Photos by Ron Rasmussen.





Beautiful Mural Shirts

Order these gorgeous shirts for yourself or as gifts. They are black with artist Barbara Rosenthal's lovely mural print in color on both the front and back of each shirt. They are available in adult sizes from small to triple extra large as short-sleeved or long-sleeved T-shirts or as thick, warm sweatshirts.



SWAP Shoppers' Order Form

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

All Prices Include Sales Tax

1. MURAL SHIRTS

Mural design by artist Barbara Rosenthal on both front and back. Words on shirt: "El Moro Elfin Forest Natural Area" above mural and "Small Wilderness Area Preservation" and "Los Osos, California" below mural.

Circle Sizes:

- Short Slv. T-Shirt (S, M, L, XL) @ \$19.00 = \$ _____
 Short Slv. T-Shirt (XXL, XXXL) @ \$22.00 = \$ _____
 Long Slv. T-Shirt (S, M, L, XL) @ \$23.00 = \$ _____
 Long Slv. T-Shirt (XXL, XXXL) @ \$25.00 = \$ _____
 Sweatshirt (S, M, L, XL) @ \$25.00 = \$ _____
 Sweatshirt (XXL, XXXL) @ \$27.00 = \$ _____

2. PHOTOS OF THE ELFIN FOREST

Original print note cards

_____ @ \$3.00 or _____ set of 5 @ \$14.00 = \$ _____

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Indicate No. per View(s):

All 5; Don Klopfer Trail; Ocean View;
 Wild Hyacinth; Horned Lizard; Dudleya

3. POCKET GUIDE

Useful 56-page guide to plants and animals of the Elfin Forest. Charts for bloom season, form, color, and habitat for 200 vascular plants plus lists of lichens and mushrooms known to occur. Habitat and peak months seen are charted for 187 birds. Also listed: 28 common mammals; 10 reptiles; 4 amphibians; 19 butterflies and moths (charted by size, months in flight, color, and host plants); 104 other arthropods and 7 gastropods.

_____ @ \$2.00 = \$ _____

4. 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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5. ALPHABET BIRD BOOK

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

_____ @ \$21.65 (including tax) = \$ _____

6. Last Chance - 2012 CALENDAR CLOSEOUT!

Local photographers featured in this 9"X12" calendar.

_____ @ only \$2 = \$ _____

Shipping costs within zip 934 __:

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Pocket Guides & Note Cards \$1.50 = _____

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Calendars: \$2.75 for 1, \$3.75 for 2 = _____

For more calendars or shipping costs outside 934 __,

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

2012 Calendar Closeout Sale - only \$2! See page 11 to order.

Los Osos / Morro Bay Chapter
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Wanted: A Few Good People

Help SWAP Chapter support the Elfin Forest with just a few hours a month of your time.

Become a Board member – visit a Board meeting on the second Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. and try us out. The SWAP Board meets in the Community Room at Morro Shores Mobile Home Park, 633 Ramona Avenue, Los Osos. Call 772-9514 or e-mail ron@elfin-forest.org.

Help us to produce a 2014 Elfin Forest calendar. Our calendar, currently on hiatus, has been an excellent fundraiser for SWAP. Do you like to work with images and text? You would enjoy this. Leave a message at 582-0392 or e-mail yolanda@elfin-forest.org for details.

Join our Education and School Walks Committee. We need school walk docents and people to develop a good docent training program. Call Pat at 528-4832 or e-mail pata@elfin-forest.org.

Become a Weed Warrior or join our Conservation Committee. Our work parties are the first Saturday of every month from 9 to noon. E-mail our Conservation Chair, Ron Rasmussen, at ron@elfin-forest.org or call 528-0392.

Service to the community is a way to spread happiness and to be happy.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

- New Member
- Member \$25
- Steward \$50
- Protector \$75
- Renewing Member
- Defender \$100
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- Guardian \$500
- Seniors & Students \$15
- Life Member \$1000

I want to help, please call me!
 Memberships include a subscription to SWAP's bimonthly newsletter, *Oakleaves*.

Check here to receive the online version only.

All donations to SWAP are tax-deductible.
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