



# 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 ❖ DECEMBER 2012 / JANUARY 2013

## Highlights of 2012

By Ron Rasmussen, SWAP Chair

**11th Street collision:** 2012 started off with a BANG in the Elfin Forest. On late New Year's Eve, an errant pizza delivery truck crashed through the wooden fence at the end of 11th street and continued for 60 feet, making an eight foot wide gash through the vegetation before coming to rest at the green plastic fence along the 11th street sand trail. No one was injured, but a restoration project is now underway to replace the damaged plants.

**No more calendars:** SWAP supporters looking forward to the 2013 Calendar will be disappointed this year. After a six-year span (2007-2012) as Calendar Committee chairperson, Debbie Levi has decided to focus on her personal family needs and writing. Because production of a calendar is a yearlong effort and nearly a full-time job for the committee chairperson, other SWAP board and committee members who have their own responsibilities are not able to take over.

**Fencing changes:** Much work has been done this year to enhance Elfin Forest visitors' experience. Some stretches of the green fencing have been removed and replaced with black "symbolic fence" cable. The latter is now complete along the entire boardwalk. As the vegetation recovers, more of the green fence will be removed.

**Physical improvements:** The worn steps that provided access to the boardwalk from the 12th to 15th and 17th street

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## SWAP's Annual Community Celebration Draws A Crowd

Text & Photo By Yolanda Waddell

The Annual Community Celebration was held on Saturday, October 20, at the Morro Shores Mobile Home Park community room in Los Osos. Cuesta College Anthropology teacher Ethan Bertrando gave a lively and fascinating PowerPoint presentation that he titled "Prehistory of the Morro Bay Watershed."



*At SWAP's Annual Celebration, Archaeologist Ethan Bertrando explains the Millingstone age, an era of technological development among California Indians.*

As an anthropologist, Bertrando is interested in how civilizations develop. He related that before the times of the Chumash, coastal Indians lived in individual independent villages. As time went on, neighboring villages with a similar language formed alliances and selected an area chief. Work became specialized; there were shamans or priests, boat makers, bead makers, basket weavers, and numerous other specialties. Chumash beads strung in measured lengths were the currency of the tribe. The word "chumash" meant "bead maker" or "money." The Chumash were excellent business people, trading their shell money for such items as obsidian spear points that came from far away in the Sierra.

*Celebration continued on page 2*



## 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, December 13,  
and Thursday, January 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.

### **Annual Treasurer's Report**

We had more news than space in this  
issue of Oakleaves. Therefore, Jan DiLeo's  
annual Treasurer's Report covering July 1,  
2011 through June 30, 2012, will appear  
on page 12 of the online version at our web  
site, [www.elfin-forest.org](http://www.elfin-forest.org).

## 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.

## 2012 *continued from page 1*

sand trails have been replaced along with the addition of handrails. New Mutt Mitt boxes have been installed with funds from The Morro Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP). SWAP has collaborated with San Luis Obispo County Parks and the California Conservation Corps (CCC) to refinish all of the benches. An extension of the boardwalk on the 11th - 13th street sand trail where it meets the main boardwalk is planned and awaiting funding.

**Elfin Forest west end:** Out of sight of visitors but not out of the minds of SWAP volunteers are some problems that required action this year. A small "pot farm" was discovered at the far western end of the park and the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff was called to conduct a premature "harvest." In the same area, erosion control, re-vegetation and non-native vegetation removal are ongoing. The latter activities are necessary to stabilize the steep slope where the Elfin Forest meets the bay.

**SWAP's partners:** SWAP continues to partner with other environmentally active groups around the bay and estuary watershed. These include the MBNEP, The Morro Coast Audubon Society, and the Morro Estuary Greenbelt Alliance. SWAP participated with the latter group in production of a video that will be posted on their website.

**Education:** SWAP maintains an active Education Program. In addition to 3rd Saturday Nature Walks, docent-led instructive field trips for school age children are regularly conducted. Cuesta College anthropology instructor Ethan Bertrando presented a fascinating review of the history of the Chumash in our area at SWAP's very successful Annual Celebration that was held in October.

Overall, it has been a successful year for the Elfin Forest and the volunteers who have made it possible. To ensure the same outcome in future years SWAP will need the continuing help of volunteers from our community. To offer your help call SWAP's message phone at 805-528-0392. Visit SWAP's website at [www.elfin-forest.org](http://www.elfin-forest.org) for information about the history of the Elfin Forest and current activities.

## Celebration *continued from page 1*

The Chumash were excellent and artistic basket makers. Some of their baskets were collected by British explorers and can be found in the British Museum. They lined some baskets with tar or bitumen that they found along the shore, melting it with hot rocks to coat the inside of the basket. Coated baskets filled with water followed by hot rocks were used as cooking vessels.

Currently there are two principal groups of Chumash: the Northern Tribal Council in San Luis Obispo County and the Santa Ynez Tribal Council in Santa Barbara County. Anthropologists have made efforts to understand tribal boundaries of the coastal Indians with varying results. To this day no one has been able to agree on the exact boundary between the Chumash and Salinan area to the north. Ethan brought trays of artifacts including arrow and spear points, a mortar and pestle, and fish hooks.

The lunch for those attending was provided by members of the SWAP Board: Pat Akey, Jan DiLeo, Pat Murray (event coordinator), Ron Rasmussen and Yolanda Waddell. Our thanks to past board members Danna Weidner and Jay Waddell for their generous help. We appreciate the hospitality of Morro Shores Mobile Home Park in letting us use their community room.

The following Board members were unanimously re-elected: Jan DiLeo, Pat Murray and Ron Rasmussen. About 60 people attended the event.

# A New Look for the Benches and Boardwalk

*By Ron Rasmussen, SWAP Chair; photos by Yolanda Waddell*

After years of exposure to sunlight and salty breezes many of the benches on the boardwalk lost their protective finish and had a weathered look. To refresh the benches, SWAP and the California Conservation Corps (CCC) have given the benches two coats of a new finish that is intended to provide protection from the elements. The stain color is “California Rustic.” This stain is formulated to penetrate the wood and thus extend the protective life of the finish. Visitors may have noticed that the benches were temporarily removed. They were taken to the CCC shop near Cuesta College for the staining procedure. This was considered to be the most efficient method because the pretreatment included sanding and repair of some benches involving use of power tools. The new finish is expected to be protective for at least 5 years.

The steps providing access from the sand trails at 12th through 15th and 17th streets to the main boardwalk were also showing their age. In addition, SWAP had received requests to provide handrails to assist some visitors who use the steps. San Luis Obispo County Parks and the CCC have replaced the well-worn steps with new wood and also have added handrails. The handrails are made of weather-resistant plastic material in order to eliminate the risk of splinters. In the future, steps will be added near Bush Lupine Point where the 11th street sand trail meets the boardwalk.

## Big Sit! Tallies 116 Species

*By Jim Royer, Los Osos Big Sit! Captain*

The final tally for the 16th annual Elfin Forest Big Sit on October 14 was 116 species. Highlights included White-faced Ibis, Red Knot, Bonaparte’s Gull (2), a Short-eared Owl hunting around the bay mid-morning, Vaux’s Swift (in with dozens of swallows - 3 species), Red-breasted Nuthatch, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Lawrence’s Goldfinch and Pine Siskin. There were five species new to the count: Common Raven ( group of 5!), Dark-eyed Junco, Tricolored Blackbird, Hooded Oriole and Red Crossbill. Unexpected misses included Canada Goose, Black-crowned Night Heron, Sora, Dunlin and Golden-crowned Sparrow. It was beautiful weather for a fun day of birding. Our Los Osos birders came in second nationally and internationally. Cape May Point, New Jersey, on the Atlantic Flyway, was first with 134 species.



*A CCC crew has removed the old steps, dug deep holes to install rail supports, and is preparing to build a new step next to the boardwalk at the 13th Street trail.*



*The finished step with plastic “wood” rails at 13th Street. Additional steps and rails were built at 14th, 15th and 17th Streets.*



*CCC crewmembers give the refinished benches a final coat.*

# American White Pelican

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

A well-known limerick about this bird was written by Dixon Lanier Merritt in 1910 (but often attributed mistakenly to Ogden Nash):

A wonderful bird is a pelican,  
His bill will hold more than his belican.  
He can take in his beak  
Food enough for a week;  
But I'm damned if I see how the helican.

The American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) may look awkward, even ugly to some people. But to me this large white bird with the enormous beak is stately, even elegant. Among our largest birds, it can be four to more than five feet long with a wingspan up to nine feet. Weight averages about sixteen pounds but can reach nearly thirty pounds. Females are slightly smaller than males but otherwise they look alike.

Floating on water or standing on a shore this species looks all white except for a reddish-yellow bill (the species name means "red-billed") and yellow legs with large webbed feet. A thin black line may show along the edge of its folded wings. In flight, the outer black flight feathers seen from above or below contrast sharply with the brilliant white body and leading edge of the wings. They fly one after another in long lines and may soar in flocks on thermals.

In the breeding season, the reddish tinge is most pronounced on the large flat topped bill with big throat pouch below, on the iris and skin around the eyes, and on the feet. A horn or knob then grows up from the flat top of the bill, but is shed after mating and egg laying. This is the only pelican species to grow such a horn.

Breeding begins in March or April in large colonies on islands or around shores of fresh or brackish inland lakes of western U.S. and Canada, including Utah's Salt Lake and lakes of northeastern California. Nesting on islands probably



reduces predation by mammals such as foxes and coyotes. Up to three eggs are laid and incubated under the wide feet of both parents, but usually there is only enough food for one hatchling to survive.

American White Pelicans eat mostly fish but some crayfish and amphibians. They scoop fish in their large bills while swimming. A dozen or more birds often cooperate to drive fish toward shallower water. They don't dive for fish from high above the water as do Brown Pelicans (*P. occidentalis*).

In late summer or early autumn American White Pelicans migrate to coastal waters of California, the Gulf Coast, Florida and Mexico. Non-breeding adults range widely. Some may remain on or return early to winter waters. About fifty were reported this year in Morro Bay in late June and early July, well before successful breeders would return from inland lakes.

Populations of American White Pelicans have recovered well from serious declines in the middle of the last century when DDT caused eggshell thinning. However, there is still concern for the future from shoreline erosion and either flooding or draining of nesting lakes, from nesting disturbance by boaters and even low-flying planes, and by mass poisonings from nearby use of pesticides. Recovery from one population crash does not guarantee immunity from future problems. So we need to remain ever vigilant to protect our marvelous wild animals, including these large and strangely elegant fliers.

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## Elfin Forest Sightings

Visitors to the Elfin Forest during October noticed two interesting changes. One was a bountiful acorn crop on most of the Forest's Coast live oak trees. It seemed as if the trees were preparing for a difficult winter by producing as many acorns for future trees as they could. The other phenomenon was hundreds, perhaps thousands of Oak Moths fluttering in and around all of the oak trees. The reactions ranged from delight on the part of a group of first- and second-graders when the moths alighted on their arms and hands, to horror on the part of some adults who worried that the caterpillars that followed would strip the trees. The children were able to learn the characteristics of a moth up close, and the adults were assured that the Coast live oaks of the Elfin Forest had lived through many oak moth and caterpillar invasions over hundreds of years.

Oak moth photo at right by Pat Brown.



## Salt Grass

Text and Scanned Photo By Dirk Walters, Ph. D.

It's getting harder and harder to find a fall plant along the Elfin Forest boardwalk to profile, so I'm going to wander off into the salt marsh that borders the Elfin Forest to the north. This plant is quite common there but I suspect that most don't even notice it, or if they do, they ignore it as uninteresting. I placed myself in the latter category at least until I did a little research on the internet. The plant is known as sea shore salt grass, desert salt grass, interior salt grass, alkali salt grass, desert spike grass or more commonly just plain salt grass (*Distichlis spicata*).

As the common name implies it is a member of the grass family (Poaceae) that usually grows in areas possessing salty or alkaline soils. Thus its common name can refer to its preferred habitat or to its habit of excreting salt water onto leaf and stem surfaces. When the salt water evaporates from its surfaces it leaves behind salt crystals. It appears to me that salt grass also does best where the salty soils are periodically wet, so I would expect to find it in coastal salt marshes and the edges of interior salt flats or in any situation where evaporation exceeds precipitation. Salt grass is native to North America and can be found growing in practically every state in the lower 48 except the well watered, land-locked Midwest.

The genus name (*Distichlis*) refers to a characteristic of its leaf arrangement. The accompanying illustration is a photo-scan of some salt grass shoots. Even though the shoots were placed on a scanner with the lid closed, the leaves are not twisted in any way. That is because all of the leaves arise from the stem in a single plane, and that is precisely what a distichlis leaf arrangement is.

Annual plants are at a disadvantage because they must produce enough seed every year to assure that at least one of its seeds finds a suitable open site in which to germinate and grow into maturity. In areas like salt marshes, open sites are extremely rare and short lived because competing species also live for several to many years (perennials) and are able to hold a site for a long time by simply occupying it. Salt marsh plants also tend to expand laterally via vegetative means which takes less energy and is more certain than sexual reproduction. This means that the rare open site will likely be filled by neighbors expanding into it rather than by a seedling establishment.

Like most salt marsh plants, salt grass is a perennial. It expands via stout horizontally growing underground stems (rhizomes) that have sharp, hard tips. Because it spreads from below the soil surface and its aerial shoots are thin and grass-

like, it can often be found sticking up among shoots of other salt marsh species. Where it lacks competition, salt grass forms a solid stand that has been called a turf. Where this occurs, the plant has

been used by grazing animals, but mostly only after other more palatable forage has been eaten. Because it is salt tolerant and easily grown, it has also been used to reclaim pastures that must be watered using salt water in the interior Southwest U.S.

Salt grass does produce flowers, fruits and seeds. The specific epithet (*spicata*) refers to the fact that the spikelets (clusters of tiny florets) are borne directly on a central axis. However, not all of its spikelets are capable of producing seed. Only the female or pistillate flowers produce seeds and these are borne on individual female plants. The male flowers (staminate) are produced on separate male plants and produce only the pollen which produces the sperm. The reproductive shoot that bears reproductive structures (spikelets) in the illustration is female. This can be discerned in the photo-scan because the spikelets are buried among the terminal leaves. Male bearing spikelets are usually borne on a longish stalk that raises them high above the foliage. This exalted placement of the pollen bearing flowers allows the wind to spread the pollen over a wider area.

One other interesting factoid that is mentioned in several internet postings and is based primarily on the work of Sarah Eppley is that male and female plants have slightly different distributions within the same salt marsh or flat. Female plants tend to be lower or closer to the water than the male plants. In some plants (and in a few animals such as crocodiles) sex is determined by the environment, but this is not the case in salt grass. DNA studies as well as reciprocal transplant studies have shown that sex is determined genetically. Garden studies have shown that female plants are able to tolerate longer immersion by salt water possibly because they attract symbiotic (mycorrhizal) fungi to attach to their roots. The fungi would potentially protect the female plants by providing extra nutrients. Also, growing female salt grass plants appear to inhibit germination and establishment of male plants but not the reverse.



# Education Corner

By Pat Akey, Education Chair

In October, the education committee gave a field trip for first and second graders from the Valley View Adventist Academy. The children learned about the birds of the Elfin Forest, including seeing a Scrub Jay and hearing a Towhee.

The students also learned the characteristics of several species of plants by feeling and smelling their leaves. We generally emphasize the “leaves of three” of poison-oak. However, because most poison-oak plants in the Forest had lost their leaves, the children learned about the differences of poison oak during fall and spring. In Rose’s Grove, the children saw and felt Lace lichen, an interesting mixture of an alga and a fungus that hangs on the branches of Coast live oaks but doesn’t harm them.

Our greatest need as always is more docents. We train docents by leading them 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 at [pata@elfin-forest.org](mailto:pata@elfin-forest.org) or leave a message on the SWAP phone, 805-528-0392.



SWAP Chair Ron Rasmussen directs the attention of an interested group to the location of the Elfin Forest on our 1937 aerial photo.

Photo by Yolanda Waddell

## 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? Taken a good photo?

Please report any interesting sightings to your Oakleaves editors at: [oakleaves@elfin-forest.org](mailto: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.



Docent Yolanda Waddell, pointing to its web, tells first- and second-graders about the Trash-web spider. Photo by Susie Eastwood.

## Oktoberfest Recap

By Pat Murray, Oktoberfest Booth Coordinator

The Baywood Park Oktoberfest, organized by the Los Osos/Baywood Park Chamber of Commerce, took place on October 28th, the last Sunday in October, along a three-block stretch of Second Street. The weather couldn’t have been better; it was sunny and there was no wind. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of people attended with their families and dogs, many dressed for Halloween. Events began at 9 a.m. with the ever-popular Fun Run.

Our SWAP booth drew many visitors; of interest was the enlarged 1937 aerial photo of Los Osos. Those who stopped to look at it were asked to place a pin where their house would be on the image of a community that was sparsely populated in 1937. SWAP Chair Ron Rasmussen enjoyed pointing out the Elfin Forest, at that time part of developer Richard Otto’s property.

Thanks to our enthusiastic booth staffers. Vicky Johnsen, Pat Murray and Ron Rasmussen came at 7 a.m. to set up the booth. Vicky, Pat and Ron also worked shifts at the booth, joined later by Pat Akey, Jan DiLeo, Yolanda Waddell and Danna Weidner, all working in 2-hour shifts. Jan DiLeo’s husband, Dave Moran, came at the end of the day with an extra truck to help disassemble the booth and haul all of the parts and pieces back to SWAP storage.

The benefits of having a booth far outweigh the work. Hundreds of people learn about SWAP and the Elfin Forest, leaving with information, our brochure, and quite often a T-shirt or other merchandise item. If you think you would like to be a SWAP booth worker in the future, leave a message for Pat Murray, at 805-528-0392.

# Weed Warrior Report

*Text and Photos By Yolanda Waddell*

## Weed Warriors Turn to Construction

**September 1** – A recent grant from the Morro Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) provided SWAP with Mutt Mitts and a set of seven new dispenser boxes to replace the old, rather dilapidated ones. On this workday, Conservation Chair Ron Rasmussen asked Prisila and Rich Johnson to install the new boxes. See adjacent photo.

The other members of the fairly small work crew: Jay Bonestell, Bob Meyer, Ron Rasmussen and Yolanda Waddell, continued the veldt grass removal project near the houses between 15th and 16th Streets.

**October 6** – Ron Rasmussen thought of a use for some left-over plastic boards from the CCC's project to install handrails next to boardwalk steps (see "New Look for Benches and Boardwalk," page 3). The top rails at the Bush Lupine Point overlook were scarred with carved initials and worn by the salt air. He turned the Weed Warriors into a construction crew; they removed the old rails, sawed the plastic boards to size – not an easy task – and screwed them into place. They also installed erosion bars along the 13th Street trail approach to the boardwalk. The crew on that day in addition to Ron consisted of Jay Bonestell, Les Bowker, Lannie Erickson, Prisila and Rich Johnson, Bob Meyer, Colin Meynier and Yolanda Waddell. Thanks to all for doing whatever it takes to keep the Elfin Forest and boardwalk in good condition.

## 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 (o'clock).

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!

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## 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. Heavy rain cancels.



*Prisila and Rich Johnson installed new Mutt Mitt boxes at each of the Elfin Forest entrances.*



*During the October work morning, Les Bowker, Jay Bonestell, Rich Johnson and Prisila Johnson found that sawing a plastic rail board took energy and persistence.*



## OAKLEAVES

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Co-editors are Yolanda Waddell and Jean Wheeler;  
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Contributors to this issue: Pat Akey, Pat Brown, Jan DiLeo, Susie Eastwood,  
Betsy Kinter, Bob Meyer, Pat Murray, Jim Royer, Ron Rasmussen, Jim Royer,  
Yolanda Waddell, Dirk Walters and Jean Wheeler.

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oakleaves@elfin-forest.org.

# Coming Up in the Elfin Forest

*Clark's Grebe*

*Text and Photos By Jean Wheeler*

December and January are exciting months in the Elfin Forest, with winter rains heralding the major flowering season of the new year and bird life at peak diversity and populations.

Our area is known as one of the top birding locales in our country, and especially in these winter months when diversity of birds and populations of many species are at a peak for the year. That's why the Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival, held on Martin Luther King Weekend each year, attracts hundreds of visitors from all over the U.S. and Canada. The event is sponsored by the Morro Coast Audubon Society in collaboration with California State Parks, the Central Coast Natural History Association and the City of Morro Bay. See [www.morrobaybirdfestival.org](http://www.morrobaybirdfestival.org) for the schedule of events and field trips for this winter's festival from January 18-21, 2013.

Virtually all of the water birds and wading birds listed in our Pocket Guide (sold on page 11) are present and at peak populations in December and January, such as the Clark's Grebe in the adjacent photo, as are all the raptors listed, and a great many of the passerines. Sometimes from Bush Lupine Point or Siena's View, the water of the estuary seems nearly covered by the thousands of water and wading birds. The shrubs around the boardwalk can be alive with flitting finches, sparrows, warblers, wrens, titmice, nuthatches, and many other little brown and little grey birds. Watch for hummingbirds busily gathering nectar as they pollinate the red tubes of fuchsia-flowering gooseberries. Among the not-so-little birds of the brush are phoebes, thrashers, towhees, scrub jays, quail, blackbirds, and doves.

Soon after our first rains, some of our larger shrubs will be coming into bloom. Buckbrush Ceanothus, among the many species of the California Lilac genus, is one of the dominant shrubs in our maritime chaparral, so its white to lavender flowers will soon nearly surround the boardwalk. Tucked in more protected areas of the lower boardwalk is Morro Manzanita. This tall shrub is found only along the coast between Montana de Oro and Morro Bay State Parks, with the Elfin Forest preserve nearly in the center of its limited range. The tiny bell-shaped flowers of the Morro Manzanita are listed in our pocket-guide as white, but often have



a quite pinkish blush. Against that green, the bright red of the Fuchsia-flowered Gooseberry makes a cheerful holiday statement. Lower to the ground, look for the small red flower globes of wild California Peonies. These plants are only a foot or so high and usually partly shaded by bushes of the dune scrub or maritime chaparral.

Often coating both dead and living branches of shrubs and trees are symbiotic lichens. At least 56 kinds have been identified in the Elfin Forest. The branch pictured is completely covered with several types. Each consists of a fungus providing structure and algae providing food via photosynthesis. Lichens will be featured in Al Normandin's Third Saturday Walk on December 15 (see page 9).

Take a break from shopping and gift wrapping or relax after the happy holiday turmoil. Walk in the Elfin Forest that we protect through our generous donations and active volunteer efforts. Enjoy the burgeoning beauty of our marvelous little winter-blooming wonderland!

# WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

## Third Saturday Walks

### *December 15, 9:30 a.m. – Lichens and Beyond*

Join local naturalist Al Normandin for this end-of-the-year walk that will introduce us to the Elfin Forest's lichens and ferns. They are often outshone earlier in the year by the floral display in the Forest. We'll learn fascinating details about the ecology and diversity of the numerous lichens that can be seen along the boardwalk. We'll also take a look at the remaining late-season flowers that are still blooming. Only a heavy rain will cancel this walk.

### *January 19, 9:30 a.m. –*

### *Oyster Farming in the Estuary*

George Trevelyan, owner of Grassy Bar Oyster Co., raises Pacific oysters in the intertidal zone of the Morro Bay estuary's southerly reaches. He calls it a lunar powered farm because it is the tidal rhythm that feeds the oyster reefs with fresh seawater. We'll walk along the Elfin Forest boardwalk and stop occasionally to hear about the science and challenges of oyster farming. We'll also learn why preserving the Elfin Forest and controlling erosion makes a better environment for oyster farming. Don't miss this different and interesting view of Forest and Estuary. Only heavy rain will cancel.

### *February 16, 9:30 a.m. – Fungus Foray*

For our annual Fungus Foray in the Elfin Forest, intrepid leader and fungophile Dennis Sheridan will take us on an exploration of the Elfin Forest floor for wood bluetts, black elfin saddles, earth-stars, golden caps, boletes, poisonous amanitas and many other fascinating 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, as all plants in the Elfin Forest are protected by law. Only a very heavy rain will cancel the walk.

*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.*



*In September, Dirk Walters led a fascinating walk in the salt marsh adjacent to the Elfin Forest. Here he shows Frances Meehan and Chris Van Beveren a Sea lavender (*Limonium californicum*) leaf with salt crystals on it. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.*



*Jim Royer, standing on bench, led a very successful pre-Big Sit! walk on October 13th, identifying 66 bird species. Photo by Ron Rasmussen.*



*Archaeologist Barry Price (left) completed his 3rd Saturday walk in October by sharing a variety of artifacts from the early Chumash era. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.*

## Make the Switch to Online Oakleaves!

SWAP members continue to opt for the online-only version of Oakleaves. Try this: on your web browser, type in [www.elfin-forest.org](http://www.elfin-forest.org) and click on the "Forest Library" button. Then click on current issue of Oakleaves, with the pictures shown in full color. Back issues are archived there as well, and there is a subject index.

If you are comfortable with reading Oakleaves on your computer screen, just send an e-mail to [oakleaves@elfin-forest.org](mailto:oakleaves@elfin-forest.org) with the words "Online version only" in the subject line. We'll email you when each issue goes online. Thank you for "switching" nearly \$2 per copy in printing and mailing costs to conservation of the Elfin Forest instead!

# Thank You to Our New and Renewing Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter, SWAP Database Coordinator

## NEW MEMBERS:

Diane Dalenberg\* Jerry Mullins  
Sabra Scott Lodge Bernitta Wheelock\*  
Mary McCorkle\*

## RENEWING MEMBERS:

Susan & John Armstrong\* William Johnson  
Sandy Baer Dr. Nigel Lock  
Randy Ball Donald & Elizabeth Maruska  
Leslie Bowker\* Robert McDougle\*  
Ray Bracken\* Richard S. Parker  
Eleanor Brown Robert Pavlik\*  
Kathleen Copeland\* San Luisito, Inc-  
Scott Danielson Sage Ecological Gardens  
Susan & Pascal Grimaud\* Elaine Townsend\*  
Alta Hall\* Norma & Bill Vaughan\*  
Jim & Karen Havlena\* Mary Whelen\*  
Craig & Victoria Johnsen\* June Wright\*  
Jypsy Joe Johnson\* Rachel Yon

## DONATIONS:

Anonymous donors  
(from Annual Meeting and from Oktoberfest)  
James S. Koga  
Yolanda Waddell (for Big Sit)  
M.L. Wilhelm (from Annual Meeting)

*\*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.*

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## Cambria Chapter Leaves SWAP, Inc.

By Ron Rasmussen, SWAP Chair

The SWAP Cambria Chapter, Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve (FFRP), has decided to become independent of SWAP, Inc., the umbrella organization for SWAP chapters. The reason for this action was to save money. The officers of SWAP, Inc. are required to have Directors and Officers (D&O) insurance to protect them in the event of legal action against them for mismanagement. A previous understanding that it would also cover the officers of all SWAP chapters has been found to be not true. Since none of the officers of FFRP are officers of SWAP, Inc., they are not covered by SWAP Inc.'s D&O insurance.

A previous policy of SWAP, Inc. has been to assess the various chapters a per-member amount in order to pay the premium for the D&O insurance. To avoid this assessment, the FFRP has decided to become an independent entity, and to separately obtain insurance for their officers.

The FFRP, formerly North Coast SWAP, has been a branch of SWAP, Inc. for many years, and will remain a partner in preserving the Central Coast's natural resources.

## Remembering Myron Graham

By Yolanda Waddell

The October/November issue of Oakleaves contained a remembrance of Priscilla Graham, who passed away on June 26th of this year. In this issue we remember her husband, Myron Graham, who almost lived to be 100 years old. He was born on October 23rd, 1912, and died on October 4th, 2012.



Myron was an artist, businessman, politician, and lover of nature. He was also a people person, who didn't seem to understand the word, "stranger." This stood in good stead for our fledgling SWAP chapter in the mid-1980s when Myron and Priscilla, owners of Graham's Art Store in San Luis Obispo, built their dream home in Los Osos on Pasadena Drive. Myron quickly became involved in local projects, including our effort to save the Elfin Forest.

Unable to resist an invitation to join a Board of Directors, he joined our board as the Art Coordinator. He helped us to put on an "Artists in the Elfin Forest" event, inviting local artists to spend a day in the Elfin Forest, painting and drawing. Each artist donated one or more of their works to SWAP to be included in a traveling art exhibit. Getting the pieces framed turned out to be a monumental task, and Myron framed many of them himself. Then he helped us to schedule and hang the paintings in several venues around the county. Thanks to Myron, hundreds of people across San Luis Obispo County learned about the beauties of the Elfin Forest.

In the 1980s, members of the SWAP Board were deeply concerned about severe damage being done to the Elfin Forest – at that time private property owned by Shirley Otto - by off-road vehicles. When Myron learned of this, he picked up the phone and called Shirley Otto, whom he had never met. He chatted with her and then explained what the ATVs were doing to her property. Mrs. Otto became concerned about possible liability, and sent a letter to the Sheriff requesting that they keep the ATVs off of her property.

Myron Graham's legacy is large, from the creation of San Luis Obispo's Mission Plaza, Art Association and other organizations, to being one of the first Board Members of SWAP. All of San Luis Obispo County is grateful to him, including SWAP.



A fine holiday gift would be a full-color print (mounted on black foam core) signed by Barbara Rosenthal of the mural she painted on the wall of the Rexall Drug Store in Los Osos. Other good gift ideas are SWAP sweatshirts and T-shirts with the same mural image or, for kids, the Alphabet Bird Book by Philip A. Terzian. For stocking stuffers we suggest Elfin Forest photo or post cards by Bob Meyer or our Pocket Guide to our plants and animals.



## SWAP 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

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. ELFIN FOREST NOTE CARDS

Original print note cards

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

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

\_\_\_ @ \$25.00 = \$ \_\_\_

### 5. ALPHABET BIRD BOOK

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

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

### 6. 2012 CALENDAR *Remainder Sale*

Local photographers featured in SWAP's final calendar.

\_\_\_ @ only \$2 = \$ \_\_\_

### Shipping costs within zip 934 \_\_:

Bird Book, \$2.77 (book rate) per book = \_\_\_

Pocket Guides & Note Cards \$1.50 = \_\_\_

Mural Prints on Foamcore \$5.00 = \_\_\_

Shirts each: \$4.00 = \_\_\_

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

For more calendars or shipping costs outside 934 \_\_, call (805) 528-0392

### TOTAL OF ORDER

\$ \_\_\_

(Please print when filling order, and indicate how many of each.)

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

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

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

Email \_\_\_\_\_

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

Make checks payable and mail to:

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

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

## Holiday Shopping With SWAP!

SWAP's mural design short-sleeved or long-sleeved T-shirts or warm, comfy sweatshirts make excellent gifts for the holidays. Mural prints on foam core 5 1/2 inches by 17 inches signed by the artist Barbara Rosenthal and the Alphabet Bird Book with clever verses and superb photos also make ideal gifts. Good stocking stuffers are pocket guides to plants and animals of the Elfin Forest and lovely notecards or postcards from Bob Meyer's talented photography. A gift membership to SWAP or a tax deductible donation in the name of your relative or friend would also be much appreciated. Use the order form on page 11 to either call in or mail your order, and your gifts will promptly be mailed to you.

### Consider a Year-end Tax Deductible Donation

Your donation can not only reduce your income tax bite, but help SWAP with special projects in the Elfin Forest such as soil erosion control and revegetation with native species. Donating \$1000 would make you a life member. You would receive the Oakleaves newsletter for life and would also receive a SWAP mural T-shirt in appreciation of your major contribution to our efforts.

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

New Member                       Renewing Member

Member \$25                         Defender \$100

Steward \$50                         Champion \$250

Protector \$75                        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.

EVERY membership counts!

Make checks payable to: SWAP.

Mail to: Small Wilderness Area Preservation,  
P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412-6442.

12/12

# Annual Treasurer's Report

By Jan DiLeo, SWAP Treasurer

SWAP's fiscal year for 2011 to 2012 began on July 1, 2011 and ended on June 30, 2012. Our expenses exceeded our income by \$4,177 by the end of the fiscal year, and our net worth decreased from \$68,995 to \$64,818. Part of our \$2,690 expenses for Mutt Mitts were reimbursed by a grant from the Morro Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) after July 1, 2012. In spite of the decrease, SWAP still has a comfortable balance. That is due mainly to the generosity of our members; many donate in excess of the \$25 annual membership fee.

## SWAP TREASURER'S REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2011/2012

### REVENUES 07/01/2011-06/30/2012

MEMBERSHIPS AND DONATIONS	\$10,634.28
CALENDAR AND OTHER SALES	\$8,046.80
BROCHURE SPONSORS	400.00
CD INTEREST	\$264.25
SHIPPING & SALES TAX PAID TO SWAP	\$62.52
NEW CD	\$10,000.00
TOTAL REVENUES	\$29,407.85

### EXPENSES 07/01/2011-06/30/2012

PUBLICATIONS (OAKLEAVES & BROCHURES)	\$5,775.07
OFFICE AND OPERATING COSTS*	\$5,903.50
MERCHANDISE FOR SALE (CALENDARS & OTHER)	\$4,671.83
MUTT MITTS AND DISPENSERS**	\$2,690.90
EDUCATION COMMITTEE	\$260.64
CONSERVATION PROJECTS	\$1,276.78
SPECIAL PROJECTS, ELFIN FOREST REPAIRS	\$3,006.53
NEW CD	\$10,000.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$33,585.25
NET EXCESS (DEFICIT)	(\$4,177.40)

### ACCOUNT DATA

	AS OF 07/01/2011	AS OF 06/30/2012
BANK ACCOUNT	\$23,410.72	\$8,989.07
CDs (Incl. Int. Est.)	\$45,534.56	\$55,798.81
PETTY CASH	\$50.00	\$50.00
TOTALS	\$68,995.28	\$64,817.88
NET INCREASE (DEFICIT)		(\$4,177.40)

\*INCLUDES PHONE, SUPPLIES, STORAGE RENTAL, INSURANCE, POSTAGE, TAXES, DUES, ANNUAL MEETING, ETC.

\*\* WILL BE PARTLY REIMBURSED BY MBNEP