O A K L E A V E S

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 ❖ JUNE / JULY 2013

Value of the Elfin Forest

By Ron Rasmussen, SWAP Chair

In the April/May issue of *Oakleaves* I discussed the value of volunteers in preserving the Elfin Forest. Their commitment to this task has much more value than simply maintaining the Elfin Forest itself. This means that there is money involved and, in fact, preservation of the Elfin Forest may have a beneficial influence on human life.

A primary value is the preservation of an ecosystem that is representative of what was once widespread along the Central Coast of California. For example, the Elfin Forest is a teaching tool that demonstrates to students the nature of biodiversity and how important this quality is to maintaining a healthy environment. With that understanding the students will have knowledge when, in their future, they may be concerned with decisions that might have an adverse impact on the environment.

Although the Elfin Forest is small relative to most larger State and County Parks, it is unique in having a wide range of habitats and their associated biota in its limited area. This fact makes it a living laboratory for studies of the resident plants and animals. A study of the physiology of the oaks as they grow under varying conditions is being done by Dr. Ed Bobich from Cal Poly, Pomona. Dr. Frank Kurczewski, entomology professor emeritus of State University of New York, Syracuse is studying the interactions of the *Tachysphex* digger wasp with other species. These studies are valuable contributions to knowledge and are only possible as long as the Elfin Forest is preserved in its present state.

***Value** continued on page 3*

❖ Inside This Issue ❖

A rare robber fly captured by entomologist Dr. Frank Kurczewski, looks small in a glass vial, but is a ferocious predator on other insects such as digger wasps.

Entomologist Visits Elfin Forest Again

Text and photo by Yolanda Waddell

Dr. Frank Kurczewski, professor emeritus in entomology from the State University of New York (SUNY), Syracuse, spent March of this year continuing his research in the Elfin Forest and Montaña de Oro State Park. Unfortunately the object of his study, three species of digger wasps named *Tachysphex miwok*, *T. clarconis* and *T. tarsatus*, did not emerge from their burrows while Dr. Kurczewski was in Los Osos. He is most interested in *Tachyspex miwok*, a rare species that no one has studied to date.

The wasps are called digger dasps because they dig a burrow in the sand, capture and sting one or more small insects – in the case of *Tachysphex* it's grasshoppers – and drag them into their burrows. Then they lay an egg on one grasshopper and close the burrow. When the egg hatches, the larva feeds on the grasshoppers and pupates. The following spring an adult wasp emerges from the pupa, and leaves the nest. Male wasps live only about two weeks and females live three to four weeks. All of this happens on a very small scale; these wasps range in size from 6.0 to 10.0 millimeters long, smaller than the diameter of a dime. Nevertheless, their burrows are moderately deep to keep the eggs and larvae away from extremes of temperature at the surface of the sandy soil in the Elfin Forest.

Dr. Kurczewski made the following observations about precipitation and emergence of the wasps from their burrows during the years 2009 through 2013:

***Entomologist** 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:

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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, June 13, and Thursday, July 11.

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.

Entomologist *continued from page 1*

Precipitation between December 1 and March 31

Year	Millimeters of precipitation
2009-2010	339.8
2010-2011	460.6
2011-2012	118.6
2012-2013	110.5

Emergence Dates of Mature Wasps

Year	Month Emerged
2009-2010	mid-March (the 15th and 16th)
2010-2011	Last week of March
2011-2012	Third week in February (more sunny days to warm the soil)
2012-2013	No emergence during Dr. K's stay

Dr. Kurczewski believes that lack of precipitation was one cause of the very late or non-emergence of the wasps. Another possibility is the unusually cold weather during February and March. It is possible that these insects went into diapause, a survival mechanism for over-wintering during cold weather or to withstand drought. It is the equivalent of hibernation in mammals.

Other hazards for digger wasps when they do emerge include continued growth of native plants, thus removing patches of bare sand that the wasps need for their nests. In addition, there was an abundance of California Quail in the Elfin Forest this year; quail are insect eaters. Dr. Kurczewski also observed more California Thrashers and Scrub Jays than last year.

While searching for the digger wasps, Dr. Kurczewski noted that the Common Robber Fly, *Machimus occidentalis*, hadn't emerged either. Last year this species of robber fly was a serious predator on the small population of digger wasps. This year the only robber fly that emerged from its nest during March was the rare robber fly, *Cyrtopogon sp. nov.*, that was identified last year by Dr. Eric Fisher. Dr. Kurczewski caught one of these robber flies in March and mailed it to Dr. Fisher. On looking at a more complete specimen than last year in addition to seeing an enlarged photo taken by SWAP's Bob Meyer, Dr. Fisher has tentatively concluded that this could be a new species. It will take more study and sharing the information with other entomologists before it is definitely determined that we do have a new species of insect in the Elfin Forest. The photo that accompanies this article shows the rare robber fly in a vial, about to be photographed and then frozen. The enlarged photo taken by Bob Meyer was too dark to be reproduced in print.

We look forward to Dr. Kurczewski's next visit in the spring of 2014, and thank him for sharing the results of his research with us.

Thinking of Switching to Online Oakleaves?

If you are more comfortable reading a paper copy of Oakleaves, we understand. However if you use your computer a lot, we encourage you to take a look at the online version at www.elfin-forest.org. Being able to see the 20 or so photos in full color makes it a very attractive alternative to the black-and-white printed copy. If you miss an issue for some reason, it is there, waiting for you. Simply click on "Forest Library", then "Oakleaves Index" and finally the year and month of the issue that you want to read. Try it – you may like it.

Dr. Ed Bobich uses a porometer to measure stomatal conductance – the flow of water vapor through the pores of a leaf – of coast live oak leaves in the grove near Bush Lupine Point.

Botanist Is Studying Elfin Forest Oaks

Text & Photo By Yolanda Waddell

Visitors to the Elfin Forest this summer may occasionally see a man standing among the oak trees fastening an instrument to the leaves and taking notes. He is botanist Dr. Edward Bobich, Associate Professor in the Biological Sciences Department at Cal Poly Pomona. Dr. Bobich is in the process of studying the coast live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*) in the Elfin Forest in order to "understand how the site affects the photosynthesis, water relations and structure of pygmy coast live oaks."

Dr. Bobich began his research in the Elfin Forest in March of this year. The measurements that he took in March provided information about the morphology of the trees and the growth of the previous season. Beginning in April, he started taking physiological and morphological measurements for the new season's growth in an effort to relate growth to metabolism.

Dr. Bobich has taught at Cal Poly Pomona since 2005, and has visited the Elfin Forest many times over the years. He has studied the physiological ecology of plants since graduate school, and has built his research program on the physiological and structural responses of plants to environmental stresses. He states, "For me, the Elfin Forest is perhaps the ultimate system in which to do research because the plants have completely altered their growth forms in that system."

During his visits, Dr. Bobich will be measuring photosynthesis, transpiration (leaf water loss), plant water status (the potential energy of the water in the plants), biomechanics of leaves (leaf resistance to deformation) at different stages of development, and stem water transport properties. He will be comparing the effects of the wet winter season versus the dry summer season on the trees. Finally, he will compare his results in the Elfin Forest to those of an inland population of coast live oaks and to previous studies that he and his colleagues have performed.

When I visited him while he was working in the Elfin Forest on May 4, Dr. Bobich was using an instrument called a porometer, attaching a clip to an oak leaf and getting a reading (see accompanying photo). A porometer determines the relative amount of stomatal opening for a leaf based on the amount of water vapor leaving the leaf. Stomata (plural for stoma, meaning "mouth") are the pores in a leaf. During the rainy season the stomata will usually open wider, and in the summer the stomata will close to prevent water vapor loss.

Before he began his Elfin Forest research, Dr. Bobich contacted SWAP and San Luis Obispo County Parks to obtain permission to work with the oaks. SWAP readily agreed to give him whatever assistance he needs, and Curtis Black, General Services Deputy Director of Parks, wrote a letter approving of the research. SWAP and County Parks are pleased that the living laboratory that is the El Moro Elfin Forest, will provide useful information to a research biologist.

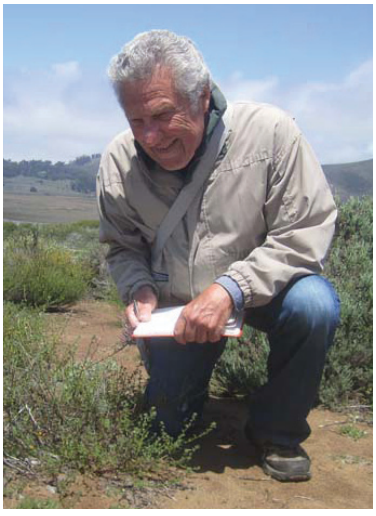
Value *continued from page 1*

Tourists from out of the area and even from other countries recognize the work that has gone into the preservation of the Elfin Forest. They carry this knowledge back to their homes and to their friends and families. When the latter are planning their own vacation trips they are more likely to include the Elfin Forest on their itinerary. It follows that the Elfin Forest has value for local innkeepers and merchants who will provide services for these new visitors.

For nearby residents the Elfin Forest is clearly a financial asset. When houses or property near the Elfin Forest are marketed, the real estate ads often cite the proximity to the Elfin Forest as highly desirable. Thus, they should be thankful for the Elfin Forest because it puts money in their pocket.

SWAP has been a partner with the Morro Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) almost since the latter was established. It is a natural partnership that has value to anyone who depends on the cleanliness and preservation of Morro Bay. Before SWAP volunteers accepted the role as stewards of the Elfin Forest, there was significant erosion of the sandy soil into the bay. Again, volunteers in collaboration with the MBNEP and San Luis Obispo County Parks have largely controlled this problem. The value of this activity extends to all who depend on the bay for their livelihood or recreation.

Finally, I believe that the Elfin Forest has value for the lives of those folks who are regular or occasional visitors. Many nearby residents are users of the boardwalk for their daily constitutional. Others like the fresh air. For others the serene views have a calming effect. These activities reduce stress, which can only be beneficial and certainly of value for their wellbeing.



Entomologist Dr. Frank Kurczewski has used the Elfin Forest for research for five years.
Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

The Elfin Forest is highly valuable for specific groups of residents as well as the community at large. Your help as a volunteer or through financial contributions will ensure that the Elfin Forest continues to be an asset for our community.

A Summer Activity in the Elfin Forest

By Yolanda Waddell

At the end of April, an intriguing message was left on the SWAP phone. The caller, Vicki Houdyshell of Los Osos, wanted to know if the numbers on the Boardwalk Trail Guide are the same as last summer. Trail Guide Chair Pat Brown phoned to tell Vicki that the Trail Guide is being updated, and there will be one change in numbers.

I chatted with Vicki after that and learned that she is a tutor for children from second grade through senior high school. She is preparing a summer activity for her eighth grade students and is using the Boardwalk Trail Guide to assist them in finding the plants described in the guide. Each student will receive a book with the name of a different Elfin Forest plant on each page. Students are asked to take a photo of the plant and draw the shape of its leaf; then a plant photo will be mounted on the page. Vicki hopes that the book will help develop observation skills and the value of leaving things alone. We commend her for developing a very creative project for her students. See page 12 for more ideas for summer activities.

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 for inclusion in future issues under "Elfin Forest Sightings." You can also leave a message on SWAP's answering machine, (805) 528-0392.

Coast Horned Lizard

By Jean D. Wheeler, Ph.D

In choosing a topic for this article, an email from Dean Thompson decided the matter:

"While walking in the Elfin Forest last Wednesday I saw a Coast Horned Lizard. It was about 5-6 inches long. This is the 3rd time I've found one out there and this was the biggest one of all. It was beautiful and I NEVER would have seen it if it hadn't moved as its coloration was so camouflaged."

That camouflage is apparent in the top photo by Dave Dabritz. The profile shot of the front of one of these lizards by Bill Bouton lets us see why "horned" is part of this lizard's name. It is definitely a reptile, not an amphibian as the common misnomer "horny toad" suggests. The nickname comes from the rounded toad-like look.

The camouflage is a splotchy blend of red, brown, yellow and gray, with two large dark spots behind the head. They can even change color shades somewhat to better blend with their background. The long spines on the head are rigid. They have two rows of pointed scales along their sides and a thick scattering of pointed scales on their backs and legs. The scales look fearsome but are not nearly as rigid as the head spines.

Horned lizards can remain motionless, squirming low into the sandy soil, which prevents dark shadows that could reveal them to a hawk, fox, or coyote. Threatened, they run quickly for a short distance, usually under a low bush, immediately motionless again and very hard to see. If grabbed, they will hiss, bite, shake their heads to jab with the head spines, and inflate with air becoming larger and harder to swallow. They may even squirt blood at high pressure from the corner of the eyes for up to four feet, which has been known to repel foxes and coyotes.

Coast Horned lizards live in open sandy areas in valleys, foothills, and low mountains, avoiding areas thick with invasive weeds. They eat ants, beetles, spiders, bees and other arthropods. Ants comprise as much as 50% of their diet, particularly a species of red ant called harvester ants. A major conservation concern is the replacement of native ants by invasive species, especially the Argentine ant, which is both less familiar and less nutritious.

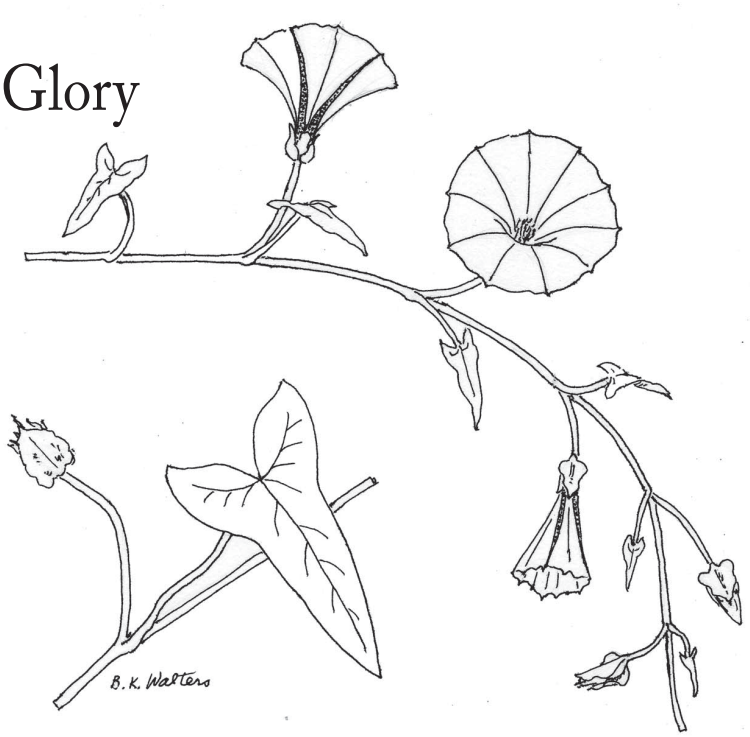
Coast Horned Lizards lay half a dozen to nearly two dozen eggs in loose, sandy soil from May to June that hatch in August or September. Some females may lay two clutches in a year.

Taxonomically, the Coast Horned Lizard has been listed as *Phrynosoma coronatum*, with six or more possible subspecies. It is still so listed on the internet. However, a study published in 2009 by a group of researchers from U. C. Berkeley and the U.S. Geological Survey led by Adam Leaché concluded that there are three species: *P. coronatum* and *P. cerroense* in Baja California and *P. blainvillii* in Baja and in California. They argued genetic, anatomical and ecological information must be used together in species designation, not just one of the three, especially when speciation is recent as in this case. They indicate the other two speciated from *P. cornoatum* in Baja California with only *P. blainvillii* spreading north into California, where they recognized at least three distinct populations.

Ninety First in a Series

Coastal (California) Morning Glory

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



Featured in this issue is the California, coast, island, or wild morning glory (*Calystegia macrostegia*). The common name, false bind weed, is sometimes used instead of morning glory. This species was chosen because of a request by Oakleaves' editor Yolanda Waddell. She wrote in an email, *"Every Spring for the past three or four years, I have seen one or two Island morning glories blooming at the intersection of the 12th and 13th Street trails, just inside the fence that borders the triangular conservation plot near Bush Lupine Point. What do you think of writing something about it?"* Bonnie and I encourage anyone to email, write, or even call us with comments or questions about the drawings or articles or both. After doing this since the mid 1970's, we especially like to receive suggestions for native plants that interest others.

Plants called morning glories generally produce large flowers with five fused petals in the shape of a funnel whereas bindweeds usually have smaller flowers. The common name means that flowers tend to open in the morning and close by the same afternoon. Usually flowers are white, but they may have pale pink veins. As flowers age, they take on a pinkish tinge.

There are at least two possible explanations for color changes in flowers. First it may be caused by ageing and dying of the petal's cells with no survival value. However, it has been documented that some flower color change is controlled by the flower to signal to its pollinator that it has been visited already so don't waste your time here. Why would a plant do this? If pollinators visit only unpollinated flowers, then they will visit more flowers, visiting only flowers still requiring pollination. Is the color change in morning glory ecologically significant? I don't actually know, but it would be interesting to find out.

Bonnie's drawing shows a single twining stem. Note the thin stem; it is less than one-eighth inch in diameter. From each leaf bud a stalked 1-3 inch flower or pair of flowers arises. This means they will be widely spaced along individual stems. But in the field, morning glory stems are rarely single. A given rootstock produces many stems growing side by side and twining around each other forming a structure like a rope. Since each individual stem is producing flowers, a given length of 'rope' produces many flowers that appear to be growing side by side.

Morning glory plants may cover large areas because the 'ropes' criss-cross to form a net. Flowers appear be arising from a mat. Most photos are distant shots of the mat and don't show details of the stem. Some books indicate that stems of this species of morning glory are somewhat woody at the base. To be truthful, I've never looked for this because one is overwhelmed by the mat of herbaceous 'ropes'. Leaves in this morning glory are extremely variable in size. On new stems, leaves may be only an inch or so long but later they can grow to be nearly 6 inches long. Leaves are triangular with two prominent lobes at the base.

Calystegia macrostegia is an extremely variable species. The most recent *Jepson Manual* recognizes six subspecies throughout its range, mostly along the coast from just north of the Bay Area to just south of the Mexican border. There are also subspecies on the Channel Islands. Therefore, this morning glory is essentially an endemic Californian, i.e. restricted to the state. The subspecies to be expected in our area would be *C. m. ssp cyclostegia*. Since this subspecies is found almost exclusively on the mainland, I think the best common name for it would be California morning glory or even better California coastal morning glory.

There are three genera that typically bear the morning glory common name. They are *Calystegia*, *Convolvulus*, and *Ipomea*. *Ipomea* is native to the old world and is the genus of garden morning glories. In older plant identification books species now separated into *Calystegia* and *Convolvulus* were all included in the genus *Convolvulus*. Currently these two are separated most easily on the size and location of two bracts that are attached to the flower stalk. In *Calystegia*, the bracts are large and totally hide the calyx. [*Caly* = calyx or sepals and *stegia*= Greek meaning to hide]. *Macrostegia* refers to the fact that the hiding bracts are large (macro).

Good heavens, of what uncostly material
is our earthly happiness composed...
if we only knew it.
What incomes have we not had from a flower,
and how unfailing are the dividends of the seasons.

– James Russell Lowell –

Filmmakers Bud Laurent (left) and Peter Coonradt screened their film, Between the Tides, for a full house at the San Luis Obispo International Film Festival in March. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

Longtime SWAP Friend Bud Laurent Produces Film

Bud Laurent is a marine biologist, former manager of Central Coast Marine Resources for the California Department of Fish & Game, and was District 2 County Supervisor from 1991 to 1999. He is also a life member of SWAP and was instrumental in aiding SWAP to raise the last $50,000 to buy the southern 40 acres of the Elfin Forest in 1994.

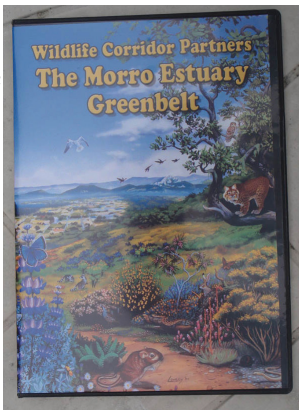
Recently Bud added film production to his resume. In March, his documentary film, "*Between The Tides*," was shown in Shell Beach as part of the San Luis Obispo Film Festival's Filmmaker Showcase. The film is about pioneering marine ecologist, Ed "Doc" Ricketts (1897-1948) and some of Ricketts' spiritual descendants whom Laurent knew during his years as a researcher and SCUBA diver on the Central Coast. Ed Ricketts became the character, "Doc" in John Steinbeck's novel, *Cannery Row*, and was the author of *Between Pacific Tides*. First published in 1939, Ricketts' very readable book dealt with seashore life from an ecological point of view, and is a favorite of marine biology students to this day. Reading the book again inspired Bud to make his film.

Much of the film was shot along the Central Coast including at tidepools in Montaña de Oro State Park. Bud teamed with filmmaker, Peter Coonradt, who shot and edited the film. *Between The Tides* had its world premier in June, 2012, at the Monterey Bay Aquarium. It has shown at universities, marine science centers and aquariums on the West Coast. A trailer of the film can be seen at www.betweenthetides.net.

Bud and his wife Marci now live in Corvallis, Oregon.

Wildlife Corridor Video Includes SWAP's Ron Rasmussen

By Yolanda Waddell



A video, The Morro Estuary Greenbelt produced by Wildlife Corridor Partners, is available at local libraries. Photo by Jean Wheeler.

In May, 2012, representatives of the partner organizations that created the Morro Estuary Greenbelt met to help produce a video that was recently completed and distributed to local schools, libraries and the partner organizations. The purpose of this video, *Wildlife Corridor Partners, The Morro Estuary Greenbelt*, documents the current status of the protected lands that form a continuous greenbelt around the Los Osos community from Morro Bay State Park to Montaña de Oro State Park. Marla Morrissey of the Morro Estuary Greenbelt Alliance (MEGA) coordinated production of the video using endowment funds held by the San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation.

As content for the video, representatives from each of the landholders of the Greenbelt was asked the following: 1) describe the land that is under your care; 2) talk about what you are doing to care for the land; and 3) what help do you need from the community? The interviews were given by three former Los Osos Middle School students, now in their 20s, who were active in the Los Osos Middle School Earth Club. The activities of the club were eventually incorporated into the school's Coastal Dunes Restoration and Education program.

SWAP Chair Ron Rasmussen, as the representative for SWAP, described the Elfin Forest, its plant communities and wildlife. He spoke about our Weed Warriors and their work, our trail guide, care of the boardwalk and benches, and our Mutt Mitt program. His request from the community was for more volunteers to help with all aspects of SWAP's activities.

The entire video that was shot last May can be viewed at the Wildlife Corridor Partners web site, www.wildlifecorridorpartners.org. We encourage our readers to visit the site and look at the video; it is most impressive to listen to the representatives of the many entities involved in the Morro Estuary Greenbelt, and to learn about the marvelous greenbelt. Our thanks go to Marla Morrissey for coordinating this project.

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.

Weed Warrior Report

Text and photos by Yolanda Waddell

March 2 – Our faithful Weed Warriors continued the bi-weekly watering of our 57 new native plants at 11th and 16th Street ends. The plants for the most part are responding very well, with gorgeous purple blossoms on Purple nightshade, and yellow-orange blossoms on Sticky monkey-flower. After all plants were watered, the crew headed to the slope above South Bay Boulevard. Even with very little rain in February, there was a good deal of Veldt grass growing at the south end of the Elfin Forest's part of the slope. Vigorous pulling resulted in a cleared area. Bravo, Weed Warriors! Participating in the watering and weeding were Garrett Adamiak, Jay Bonestell, Dave Bowlus, Lannie Erickson, Jack Fanselow, Vicky Johnsen, Rich Johnson, Bob Meyer, Ron Rasmussen (Conservation Chair), Gene Rotstein and Yolanda Waddell.

April 6 – Instead of working in the Elfin Forest in April, a group of Weed Warriors went on a field trip to Montaña de Oro, to learn some trail building and maintenance techniques from Les Bowker. Les, who is a past SWAP Board member and gives ecology walks in the Elfin Forest, is also very active with the State Parks Trails Committee. He showed us how trails are constructed to encourage run-off to the side when there is rain. Some trails require reinforcement with open-center concrete blocks. Les pointed out how the trail crews closed a trail because it was improperly placed, and then created a new trail. In Montaña de Oro, green mesh fencing isn't used to keep jaywalkers on the path; instead, they use wood fencing with lots of brush on the off-trail side. Of course, since dogs aren't allowed in the State Park, Montaña de Oro doesn't require as much fencing. However, the opportunity to learn other trail maintenance methods was valuable. Attending the field trip were Dave Bowlus, Lannie Erickson, Jack Fanselow, Bob Meyer, Sharon Meyer, Ron Rasmussen, Yolanda Waddell and Jean Wheeler. Our thanks to Les Bowker for his very informative discussion of trail building and maintenance.

In March, a crew of Weed Warriors tackled veldt grass at the south end of the Elfin Forest slope above South Bay Boulevard.

Some of SWAP's Weed Warriors went to Montana de Oro State Park in April to learn about trail building and maintenance from Les Bowker (right).

Craig Johnsen and his wife Vicky (behind the camera) posted No Smoking signs at each of the Elfin Forest's entrances. Photo by V. Johnsen.

No Smoking Signs Mean – No Smoking

It would seem obvious that one shouldn't smoke cigarettes – or pipes or cigars – in a place like the Elfin Forest where the vegetation becomes tinder-dry in the summertime. However, the presence of cigarette butts along the paths and at Bush Lupine Point and Siena's View indicates that the cigarette habit is stronger than good sense. For the past few summers County Parks has posted No Smoking signs at the overlooks and some of the entrances. Eventually, the signs are broken or disappear. Recently SWAP members Vicky and Craig Johnsen voluntarily purchased No Smoking Signs and posted them at each entrance of the Elfin Forest. We hope that visitors to the Elfin Forest will respect the signs and wait till they leave the Forest to light up. Thanks to Vicky and Craig for their good work.

Coming Up in the Elfin Forest

Silver dune lupine, Lupinus chamissonis

Text and Photo By Jean Wheeler

Although the exuberant springtime bloom in the Elfin Forest is declining, summer still puts on a fine show of flowering shrubs and herbs. Among the most noticeable colors are the yellow of deerweed and California poppies. Coastal dudleya flowers are also yellow, topping tall reddish stems above gray-green basal succulent rosettes. The orange of sticky monkey flowers are also still much in evidence. Silver dune lupine usually continues to show blue flower spikes into July. In the understory are the lovely blue flowers of wooly star, especially along the 15th street sand trail.

Black sage still has white to lavender blossoms showing in June, but by late July many will have already dried to brown or black pom-pom balls circling the stems. At the inland end of the boardwalk, chamise shows white flowers spikes. California hedge nettle has spikes with pink flowers. Cobwebby thistle also has pink flowers, and is a native, unlike the alien and invasive purple Italian thistle. White flowers include pearly everlasting in the understory, the tiny white flowers of short grayish-green croton plants next to paths, and white flowers and ferny-looking leaves of horkelia in open areas.

This is a busy time of the year for many birds of the oak woodlands, maritime chaparral, and coastal dune scrub in the Elfin Forest. They are likely to be feeding young in these summer months. Listen for a loud buzz to locate the Spotted Towhee calling from the top of a shrub. He's very distinctive with his black head, rust-colored flanks and rump, and white-spotted wings. His drabber cousin, the grey-brown California Towhee, may be seen darting between shrubs or on the ground between them.

Other birds to be observed over or among the shrubs or oak trees include flycatchers such as the Black Phoebe and the Western Kingbird; wrens including Bewick's Wren and the noisy but elusive Wrentit; Chipping, Lark, Savannah, Song, and White-crowned Sparrows; Black-headed Grosbeaks; Orange-crowned, Yellow, and Wilson's Warblers; Brewer's Blackbird and the Brown-headed Cowbird; House and Purple Finches; and the Lesser and American Goldfinches.

On the estuary, many individual ducks and shorebirds remain all year or even arrive to nest here after vacationing for the winter farther south. Among waders, Willets and Killdeer continue to be common. Also resident all year are Great Blue and Black-crowned Night Herons, along with many Snowy and Greater Egrets. Most of our raptor species are here all year, and likely to be actively hunting with fledglings to feed in June and July.

As you enjoy the colorful flowers and active bird life on a summer stroll along the boardwalk, look also for "animals that aren't birds." For example, observe lizards doing their pushups, or watch for bees, butterflies, damselflies, and many other insects.

Elfin Forest Sightings

Rick Quan used his camera's zoom lens to get a good shot of a pair of coyote tracks during Evan Albright's animal tracks walk in March. Coyote footprints are similar to those of a dog, but the pads and claws curve inward instead of splaying outward.

Elfin Forest visitor Tamah Roby e-mailed to us a photo of a California peony, *Paeonia Californica*, gone to seed. She said she had never seen anything like it before and asked us to identify it. We agree that it looks strange. Thanks to Tamah for her interesting photo.

WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST
Third Saturday Walks

June 15, 9:30 a.m. – Digital Photo & Birding Walk

Jerry Kirkhart and Mike Baird will cover the use of all types of digital cameras and iPhones for landscape, macro and telephoto photography. They will give tips on solving the problems of light contrast in an oak grove, getting a good close-up of the Forest's native flowers and catching birds and butterflies in flight. Bring your tripod, macro lens and cell phone, if you have them. Preferred are digital single lens reflex (DSLR) cameras. If your point-and-shoot camera has a macro setting, please review that function before coming, as they are all different. Also bring binoculars to identify birds in the Elfin Forest. Bring water and wear layers in case it is windy.

July 20, 9:30 a.m. – Walking Backwards to the Future

Ecologist Les Bowker wants us to experience plant succession in the Elfin Forest. We will follow him westward along the boardwalk from 15th Street until we are surrounded by plants of the Coastal Dune Scrub. Then we'll turn around and walk eastward until we can observe that the types of plants around us have changed; we'll see Ceanothus shrubs, Chamise and Manzanita. Now we are in Maritime Chaparral. Heading down (north) along the boardwalk from the Highest Point, we enter the area where Coast live oak trees are dominant – the climax community of the Elfin Forest. Heading into what is called the Celestial Meadow, but is no longer a meadow, Les will talk about plant succession that is happening before our eyes. Join Les for this fascinating blow-by-blow description of Elfin Forest ecology.

August 17, 9:30 a.m. – Geology Walk

Take a journey through time with Jeff Grover, Cuesta College Geology instructor. Jeff will focus on the geologic history of the Morro Bay area from the formation of the ancient Morros, or Seven Sisters, to the recent development of the dunes that form the Elfin Forest. He may even give us a glimpse of what the Elfin Forest and Morro Bay will be like in the geologic future. Of course, he will describe our local earthquake faults and talk a little about earthquakes in general. Jeff brings rock samples and draws diagrams of local geologic action. Join us for a lively and informative walk and talk.

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.

Animal track specialist Evan Albright (in white hat) points to some tracks next to the boardwalk during his March 3rd Saturday walk. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

In April, butterfly walk leader Pat Brown (left) delighted walk participants by changing a felt caterpillar into a felt chrysalis and then a felt Monarch Butterfly. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

Information table worker Vicky Johnsen encourages visitors to learn about SWAP and the Elfin Forest at the Los Osos Business Showcase in April.

Thank You to Our New and Renewing Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter, SWAP Database Coordinator

NEW MEMBERS:

Crystal Jack
Deborah Marzetta*
Holly Sletteland*

RENEWING MEMBERS:

Richard & Brenda Allmann*
Florence Appel*
Kathryn Bay*
Stephani Denker*
Robert & Marilyn Freiler
Richard & Charlotte Gordon
Jan Harper
Jerry Hull*
Aya Kimura*
Roberta Knapp*
Jean & Marlene Mathias*
Marilyn Moore*
Sheila Montooth*
Jack & Frieda Murphy*
Pat Murray*
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Julie Orr*
Carolyn Pendery*
Billy R. Pewitt
Monica Rowcliffe
Pat & Dorothy Rygh*
Barbara and Robert Rosenthal*
Max & Helen Sicher*
Kathleen W. Toscano*
Danna Weidner & Tom Cash*
Celia Zaentz*

DONATIONS:

Jarry & Brenda Kraft

In memory of Neville Baxter:
Yolanda & Jay Waddell

In memory of Stuart Denker:
Wayne & Cheryl Barden
Arnold & Joy Fencl
Bess Halstead
Jim & Perry Jamieson
Yolanda & Jay Waddell

In memory of Mike Jones:
Dan & Anne Franklin
Denny & Kitty Mynatt

In memory of Dorothy Norwood:
Yolanda & Jay Waddell

**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.*

OAKLEAVES
is published six times per year beginning in February.

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layout is by Katy Budge. Editing assistance by Pat Grimes. Contributors to this issue: Ed Bobich, Bill Bouton, Dave Bowlus, Dave Dabritz, Pat and Larry Grimes, Vicky Johnsen, Betsy Kinter, Frank Kurczewski, Pat Murray, Rick Quan, Ron Rasmussen, Tomah Roby, Yolanda Waddell, Dirk and Bonnie Walters, and Jean Wheeler.

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Remembering a Long-time Member - Chet Grimes

By Yolanda Waddell

Lewis (Chet) Grimes and his wife Lee became SWAP members soon after the Los Osos/Morro Bay Chapter of SWAP was formed in 1985. They wanted to support the work that their son Larry and wife Pat were engaged in -- Larry and Pat were original SWAP Board members -- to find a way to preserve what is now the El Moro Elfin Forest. They continued their membership until the present year, always donating more than the basic member fee.

When they moved to San Luis Obispo to be closer to Larry and Pat, Chet became a Weed Warrior. I remember one work party in the late 1990s when Chet deftly wove willow branches into wattles, cylinders that were staked along disturbed areas to prevent erosion. Chet was a cheerful man, pleasant to work with, and a wonderful contributor to the treasure that is the Elfin Forest. He passed away on April 18, 2013, from cancer. SWAP extends our condolences to Chet's wife Lee, to Larry and Pat, and to Chet's grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Brochure Sponsors Help With Printing

In 2011, we decided that the SWAP brochure needed a facelift. Instead of 2-color text with black and white photos, we wanted full color photos so the brochure reader could see at a glance the beauties of the Elfin Forest. Photos by eight local photographers and two new maps were worked into the resulting eye-catching brochure. We printed 5,000 copies of our new brochure in October, 2011, and by January of 2013, they were almost gone. In April of this year, Property and Records Chair Pat Murray gave an order for 10,000 copies to Hay Printing.

She asked for help with printing costs from the following generous donors:

Erick Amaya - Amaya Construction
Steve Dinielli - Broadview Mortgage
Leslie Lee - Morro Bay Realty
Jim Marshall – Jim Marshall Insurance Agency, Inc.
Andy Wallace - National Property Inspections

We thank our donors for their support and Hay Printing for an excellent printing job.

Beautiful Notecards Available from SWAP

Five lovely photos taken by Bob Meyer are available as color notecards with envelopes. You can order sets of all five views or as many as you want of any one (or more) of them using the form below.

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. 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) = $_____

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 = ____

For 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.

Please check renewal date on your label.

Summertime Forest Activities with Kids – pages 4 &12!

Los Osos / Morro Bay Chapter
SMALL WILDERNESS AREA PRESERVATION
A Non-Profit Public Benefit Corporation
P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412-6442
(805) 528-0392 www.elfin-forest.org

Things for Kids to do in the Elfin Forest During Summer

Explore with a camera. Come early when bunnies are **hopping** around and quail are foraging. Send "best" photos to *Oakleaves* at the end of the summer and we'll publish them.

Pack a lunch and have a ***picnic***.
Look at the flowers and butterflies.

Become a birder. Take binoculars and a bird guide and see how many birds you can identify.

Become a *writer*. Make a journal about your visits to the Forest, and turn that into a story.

Get exercise. **SHAPE UP** by walking or running around the boardwalk.

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.

6/13