



# 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 ❖ JUNE/JULY 2017

## Sudden Oak Death Risk

By Ron Rasmussen, SWAP Chair

The movement of Sudden Oak Death (SOD) from Northern California south to San Luis Obispo may be linked to the increase in rainfall over the past 2-3 years. Prior to the present time the disease has been limited primarily to Northern California. The mechanism begins with infection of California Bay Laurel followed by proliferation and movement of the pathogen (*Phytophthora ramorum*) to other species, especially the Coast Live Oak.



Coast Live Oaks like these we're preserving in the Elfin Forest could be at risk for SOD (Sudden Oak Death) if the pathogen reaches our small wilderness reserve. Photo by Jean Wheeler.

As seasonal rainfall has been concentrated mainly in Northern California in recent years, there has been little of this pathogen found south of Monterey County. With increased rainfall in 2016-17 the pathogen

## SWAP Projects for 2017

By Yolanda Waddell and Jan DiLeo



This Elfin Forest interpretive panel was damaged beyond repair and has to be replaced. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

In 2016, Treasurer Jan DiLeo encouraged the SWAP Board to establish a list of projects that we want to accomplish each year. That would enable the Board to focus our energy and funds on planned tasks, rather than “fighting fires.” The Board agreed and, after a few meetings to discuss needs, we had a list of six projects. At each Board meeting Jan presents an update of the progress on each project. In 2016, two projects were completed or dropped, and another was added. In January, a meeting with County Parks resulted in an offer by the County to help pay for most of the projects. The current projects are as follows:

### 1 – Replace Rotted Mutt Mitt Posts and Rusted Trash Containers

Conservation Chair Skip Rotstein surveyed the condition of our Mutt Mitt posts and trash cans at each entrance to the Forest. He found that two posts were rotted and three rusted trash cans needed to be replaced. By April, Skip and Ron Rasmussen had

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## 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  
Vicky Johnsen, Member at Large  
Pat Murray, Member at Large  
Vanessa Nelson, Member at Large  
Skip Rotstein, Member at Large

The SWAP Board of Directors meets monthly  
at 3 p.m. on the 2nd Monday of the month  
at the Community Room,  
Morro Shores Mobile Home Park,  
633 Ramona Ave., Los Osos.  
The next meetings are  
**Monday, June 12,**  
**and Monday, July 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: Bob Yetter  
SLO County Parks Supervising Ranger  
1144 Monterey Street, SLO, CA 93408  
(805) 781-1196  
Owners of dogs off-leash can be cited. If you  
witness dogs off-leash, vandalism or obvious  
crimes, call the County Sheriff at 781-4550  
or Bob Yetter at 781-1196.

## Projects *cont. from page 1*

coordinated replacement of the two posts. During the May 6th work day, three new trash cans were installed. This project is now complete.

### 2 – Trail and Erosion Control at Bush Lupine Point

It was proposed to permanently close an old trail leading downhill toward the west from Bush Lupine Point. Also, there was a serious erosion problem on the hillside next to the trail. The California Conservation Corps (CCC) was asked for an estimate to do the work, which included removal of a wooden pole fence adjacent to the trail, removing old green fencing and replacing it, and adding jute netting and waterbars where needed. The CCC will charge \$5,000 for labor and will provide a list of materials for SWAP to purchase. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approved the project in December, 2016. Work will begin as soon as the CCC can schedule it, perhaps late summer or early fall.

### 3 – Replace Damaged Interpretive Displays at Bush Lupine Point

Both of the interpretive panels at Bush Lupine Point have been badly scratched and cannot be repaired. A Canadian company, Folia Graphics, fabricated the original fiberglass panels in 2002. Unfortunately, the art work for the panels was sent to Folia in Quark, an electronic format that is now outdated. A U.S. company, Fossil, has provided a quote for fabricating the displays, but Fossil also does not use Quark. We are investigating methods for Quark file conversion and also the possibility of scanning paper copies of the panel art into a usable file.

### 4 – New Interpretive Display for Rose's Grove

Board member Vicky Johnsen presented the idea of an interpretive panel in Rose's Grove to protect the grove's ancient Coast live oak trees. Children and occasionally even adults have been seen climbing on the aged and sometimes brittle branches. Gaia Graphics gave SWAP an estimate of about \$3,000 to produce the panel. At present, they are talking to their artists to get ideas for the panel.

### 5 – Problem With Sand from 13th Street Trail on the Boardwalk

Because the 13th Street trail has a downhill slant toward the boardwalk, as well as an adjacent twenty-degree slope toward the trail, sand constantly builds up and flows under and onto the boardwalk. Moisture in the sand, especially during the rainy season, will provide a haven for termites. SWAP met with County Parks staff and Barrett Holland of SWCA Environmental Consultants in February. They suggested using jute netting along the side of the trail and planting native plants to anchor the sand. In March, Jan contacted botanist John Chesnut, who works with Los Osos Middle School students to grow native plants. Chesnut suggested planting in the fall of 2017, and will provide the plants. At SWAP's May 8th Board meeting this project was put on hold for a year in order to determine the extent of the problem and possible solutions.

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## Sudden Oak Death *cont. from page 1*

has been found in infected Bay Laurels as far south as SLO County. If Oak Trees are near the Bay Laurels they may be infected by the pathogen and be destroyed. So far there has been no indication of oak death but monitoring will continue.

When SWAP workers became aware of the possible infection of plants in the Elfin Forest by the pathogen and the danger to the Oaks, a survey was done to look for Bay Laurels in the Forest. No Bay Laurels have been found, but we will continue to watch for them. At this time there has been no loss of Elfin Forest Oaks.

# Elsie Deitz at 90 – Looking Back on Saving the Forest

By Yolanda Waddell; Photo by Robert Boxberger

While growing up in a small town in New Jersey and then attending the Cooper Union School of Art in New York City, Elsie Deitz would have scoffed if a fortuneteller had told her that she



would eventually live much of her life on the West Coast, and would help in saving a very special little forest. But when Elsie found work in New York City, a friend introduced her to a tall, good-looking man named Jerry Deitz on a blind date.

Jerry had returned to New York from teaching radio skills on U.S. army bases in Japan and Korea, after his army service in World War

II. More dates led to marriage in October, 1952, and a honeymoon in Los Angeles. While working in New York, Jerry studied for a Master's degree in electrical engineering at New York University.

Jerry had spent time as a recruit at Camp San Luis Obispo during the war, and thought he would like to live in this area some day. When offered a position with the Librascope Corporation (a division of Singer) in Glendale, he accepted, and Jerry and Elsie moved to Los Angeles, settling in Sepulveda, now called Northridge. Elsie returned to college for a Bachelor of Arts degree at Cal State Northridge. She decided to work in jewelry, and began showing in local galleries. Eventually, she and a group of artists founded the Contemporary Images Gallery in Sherman Oaks, displaying art and fine crafts.

Years passed by, and Jerry advanced to Senior Vice President of Engineering at Librascope. They often took "just pretend we're going to live there someday" trips to other parts of California. Shortly before Jerry did retire, they drove north to visit friends in Santa Rosa. On the way, they stayed overnight at a bed and breakfast in Los Osos, and popped into a real estate office to see what was on the market. The realtor guided them to a house on Green Oaks Drive. Three days later, Elsie and their daughter Carla drove to Los Osos so Elsie could sign the papers for the house. Of that, Elsie said, "The best way to deal with a major change in life, is just do it."

The Deitzes moved to Los Osos in the Fall of 1988. Being active politically, they became involved in Bud Laurent's campaign for County Supervisor.

After Bud's election to the County Board of Supervisors, they were invited to join the SWAP Board, with Jerry as Treasurer and Elsie as Special Events and Membership Coordinator. Elsie ably coordinated many fundraising events: rummage sales, school children's projects, and special events in the Elfin Forest such as a Chamber of Commerce mixer in Rose's Grove (then called Woodrat Hall). Elsie was a voice and image of SWAP during interviews on television and radio, and penned articles about the Forest for local newspapers.

Elsie remembers going with SWAP President Rose Bowker and Development Director Barbara Machado to visit Shirley Otto, the Elfin Forest's then-owner. The trio assured Ms. Otto that SWAP didn't want to take advantage of her financially – but we wanted to save that beautiful forest for future generations. That visit gave SWAP more time to raise the required funds. By early 1994, all but about \$50,000 of the required \$1.6 million had been raised. Supervisor Bud Laurent proposed that the County contribute that \$50,000 with the guarantee that SWAP would help to maintain the land. In July, 1994, the El Moro Elfin Forest Natural Area became San Luis Obispo County property.

Jerry and Elsie remained on the SWAP Board until December, 1997. Subsequent years have been filled with work on many community projects. Elsie continued to help SWAP when asked. In recent years, she has juried the art that was included in our 2009 and 2011 calendars, and helped with SWAP's Annual Celebrations.

In April of this year, the community celebrated Elsie's 90th birthday. Donations in her honor to the Prado Day Center for the homeless totaled over \$5,000. Elsie's beloved husband, Jerry succumbed to cancer in July, 2014. Past County Supervisor Bud Laurent said, "We are fortunate to have known him, to have benefitted

*Elsie Deitz continued on page 4*



*Jerry Deitz, Elsie Deitz, naturalist and author Mary Coffeen, and Guadalupe Dunes savior Kathleen Goddard Jones were among those celebrating the Elfin Forest purchase in June, 1994.*

*Photo in Oakleaves archives.*

## Eurasian Collared Dove



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

In our February/March issue, co-editor Yolanda Waddell wrote in her report on the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, “it is disconcerting to see Collared Doves, an introduced species, outnumbering our native Mourning Doves.” The numbers counted for Eurasian Collared Doves (*Streptopelia decaocto*) versus Mourning Doves (*Zenaida macroura*) in December were 29 to 1 in 2015 and 19 to 10 in 2016.

Yolanda suggested that I research possible conflicts between these species. In this article, I’ll explain why my research and observations in the Elfin Forest leave me somewhat reassured about the future of our Mourning Doves (that species was the subject of my page 4 article in October/November of 2011, which can be viewed in “Forest Library” archives on our website, [elfin-forest.org](http://elfin-forest.org)).

Spectacularly invasive, the Eurasian Collared Dove expanded its range enormously during the 20th century. Formerly in warm temperate areas from southeastern Europe through Asia to Japan, they spread westward throughout Europe. They reached Great Britain by the 1960’s. A number of pet birds escaped or were released in the Bahamas and on Guadeloupe Island in the mid-1970s. The species spread from there to Florida, and expanded north and west out of Florida by the 1980s. They now occur in urban, suburban, and farming areas throughout most of temperate North America.

Much of this rapid range expansion is credited to recent interest in bird feeding and tree planting in cities and suburbs. This species eats mainly cereal grains such as wheat, corn, millet, and sunflower along with some berries and green leaves. They nest in tall trees and buildings, usually at least 10 feet above ground. Mourning Doves also usually nest in trees, but sometimes nest in shrubs as well, and may do so in some of our taller shrubs in the Elfin Forest.

Eurasian Collared Doves are similarly beige to grayish in color but larger and more plump than Mourning Doves and lack the latter’s large black wing spots. Their most distinctive mark is the dark collar around their necks which gives them their common name. They also have squared ends to their tails rather than the pointed

tails only Mourning Doves have among American dove species. The call of the Eurasian Collared Dove is a rhythmic triple coo, less distinctive than the prolonged coo of their relative but also mournful. In fact, the scientific species name “*decaocto*” is that of a mythical Greek servant girl turned into a dove by gods to escape her wretched treatment but recalling her former misery in her mournful cry.

Like Mourning Doves, this species lays two eggs per nest and both parents feed their young on rich milk produced in the crop from their seed diet. Young leave the nest in little more than two weeks and are on their own in about a month. They can raise six broods a year in warm regions, again like Mourning Doves.

Eurasian Collared Doves are known to be aggressive and competitive. However, research projects so far indicate few negative impacts in Florida, where they have been longest and are most numerous. One such study by Cornell Lab of Ornithology in their Feeder Watch program examined reports by 444 watchers in Florida. They found numbers of native dove species greater at feeders with Collared Doves than feeders without that invader.

In seeking a photo for this article, I saw many Collared Doves on roofs lining the edge of the Elfin Forest or flying down to feeders. They occasionally flew over the forest but only circled before returned to a rooftop or feeders. Yet I repeatedly saw flocks of several Mourning Doves flying farther into the forest and one landed on a nearby shrub and eyed me patiently while I watched it. My photo of a Mourning Dove on page 8 of this issue was taken a few years ago, from the boardwalk adjacent to Siena’s View, well away from houses and feeders.

The Christmas Counts include all birds seen by reporters in their 15-mile-diameter circle, and reporters counting in the Elfin Forest used the Boardwalk and sand paths. I suspect the high counts for Eurasian Collared Doves reflect their numbers seen flying or landing above the feeders at homes on the southern edge of the Elfin Forest, not birds actually using the Elfin Forest. Mourning doves, on the other hand are seen well inside of and using the vegetation of the Elfin Forest.

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## Elsie Deitz *cont. from page 3*

from his counsel and presence, and to know what an impact he had, in his quiet and effective way, on Los Osos.” SWAP and Los Osos know that the same is true of Elsie.

Elsie is pleased that SWAP continues what early members worked so hard to accomplish. She said, “SWAP’s efforts at maintaining the Elfin Forest through the last 17 years of stewardship in removing invasive plants, keeping the boardwalk completely accessible and repairing things when necessary, have fulfilled the legacy the community was promised 23 years ago. With this year’s rainfall, the Elfin Forest provides a lush environment for the entire community to enjoy.”

***Thank you, Elsie Deitz, for all of your hard work that resulted in this very special legacy.***

# Blue Toadflax

By Dirk Walters, Ph.D.

WOW! Before I started to do a bit of research on this plant, I assumed it would be the usual routine; however, nothing seems to be straight forward with this plant.

The common name toadflax seems to be the most stable thing associated with the plant called Canadian toadflax, blue toadflax, Texas toadflax and old field toadflax. The thin green stems and narrow leaves have a passable resemblance to the famous fiber and linseed oil producing plant, flax (*Linum usitatissimum*) but the flowers are completely different. Toadflax has a fused bilaterally symmetric corolla (sum of petals) while true flax has separate petals and radial symmetry. I have no idea how 'toad' became associated with the name. Maybe it's because the species prefers open, often disturbed sites and maybe the authors of the name associated toads with this habitat. Or maybe, introduced toads have become numerous enough to be considered a pest in some places. Do any of you know?

If you look for the scientific name of this plant in almost any flower book it will be indexed under the genus name, *Linaria*. Within that genus, it might be found as *L. texana* or sunk to varietal status as *L. canadensis* variety *texana*. There is an easily recognized tie-in between the generic names of flax *Linum* and toadflax - *Linaria*. Just to confuse things further, Linnaeus originally placed toadflax in the same genus as the snapdragons and named it *Antirrhinum canadensis*.

Today if you look up any of those names in the new Jepson Manual you won't find them. If you look for 'toadflax' you will get to the right place only if you chose 'toadflax, blue.' This will lead you to the currently accepted name of *Nuttallanus texanus*. The new genus name is in honor of a famous early botanist and collector of American plants, Thomas Nuttall (1786-1859). He was born in England but in 1841 came to the US where he went on extensive collecting trips. The ending 'anus', is in accordance with Latin grammar writing rules.

Since the plant is a conspicuous component of vacant lots and roadsides almost everywhere in the western hemisphere I assumed it was a weed, probably from Eurasia. **But it isn't!** Most references say it is native to the eastern United States and has spread westward to California. Then, in the Jepson Manual I found its new name printed in bold-type, a code for a native California plant. So, I must conclude that it is an extremely wide spread species and may or may not be a California native. I actually haven't seen it in the Elfin Forest, but if I were to look for it, I would seek out areas of open sand away from shrubs where it can get full sun.

Lastly, I haven't mentioned the botanical family to which this plant belongs. (Plantaginaceae). Recent taxonomic work, using newly discovered tools of DNA sequencing and sophisticated computer based comparison methods, have placed toadflax in the plantain family rather than in family Scrophulariaceae. The obvious character that separated the old Scrophulariaceae from the old Plantaginaceae (plantains) was the size of their flowers. So, seemingly, it was easy to tell the two families apart. But, if one got out the microscope and examined the tiny flowers in the plantain family, one discovered that they were, in fact, tiny figwort flowers. This became clearer when the newer computer analysis determined that the most of the genera of these two families fell out in same cluster, i.e. they were more similar to each other than they were to the few genera left in Scrophulariaceae. So, beautiful, large-flowered blue toadflax was transferred to its rightful place in the formerly all tiny-flowered Plantaginaceae.

What are the 'obvious' characteristics that are now used to link them? According to a recent Plant Taxonomy text (Judd, et. al., 2002) the shared characteristics include primarily herbaceous habit, many seeded capsules, seeds with lots of stored food (endosperm), and anther cavities (locules) distinct and opening along two distinct lines. Other characteristics linking the genera include type of embryo development as well as the presence of Oligosaccharides, 6-oxygenated flavones and protein inclusions within their nuclei. As you probably realize, these new characteristics are definitely not obvious field characters!



Blue toadflax (*Nuttallanus texanus*).  
Photo taken in Elfin Forest by Liz Curren.

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## Another Lichen Name Correction

Our February/March Oakleaves included on page 7 of that issue, a photo by Marlin Harms that we incorrectly labeled *Cladonia asahinae* (popcorn lichen). We stand corrected. This is what we learned from State Parks Ecologist Lisa Andreano when she saw a photo of this particular *Cladonia* by Pat Brown:

“What a lovely photo! This lichen is currently called popcorn lichen, *Cladonia firma* (known from Europe). Kerry Knudsen and I have worked with a lichenologist from the New York Botanic Garden and a lichenologist from the University of Prague to look at it genetically. It is genetically different from *Cladonia firma*. We are trying to publish it as *Cladonia morroensis*, as it is only found here on Baywood fine sands.”

# Weed Warrior Report

By Yolanda Waddell and Ron Rasmussen

March 4th –

## Elbow Grease Applied in Many Places

Although a good-size crew of ten Weed Warriors came to work on March 4th, more hands could have been used. Vicky Johnson reported: “WHEWH! Lannie (Erickson) and I pulled Sahara mustard and Veldt grass for 3 hours and filled 3 bags-full and were only about half-way done. Could have used 2 more people and 3 more hours!”

Pat Brown and new Weed Warrior Catherine Hayes pulled weeds in the lower, Don Klopfer, grove, and called for help when they found a huge growth of Cape ivy. Skip Rotstein and Ron Rasmussen came to their aid during the later part of the morning. In other parts of the Forest, Dave Bowlus was doing erosion control along the entrance trails; Rich and Prisila Johnson were fastening loose boards and replacing loose screws on the boardwalk; and Barrett Holland, Ron Rasmussen and Skip Rotstein replaced a rotted Mutt Mitt pole at the 12th Street entrance. Maintaining the Elfin Forest and the structures within it certainly does require a lot of elbow grease!

## April 1st – Working Hard, Not Fooling Around

A lovely Spring day on the Central Coast, April 1st drew people to fields of wildflowers and the beaches. However, a dedicated band of six Weed Warriors came to the aid of the Forest. Dave Bowlus reported that he did “earthmoving” (erosion control) at the water bars and berms on the 13th, 14th and 15th Street trails, and near the Fairbanks Monument. Barrett Holland, new Weed Warrior Jan Donaldson, Prisila and Rich Johnson and Yolanda Waddell removed most of a large crop of veldt grass from the 16th Street entrance area. And Ron Rasmussen did boardwalk maintenance. Thanks to Jan Donaldson for coming from Cayucos to help us out.

## Let's All Pull Together

## Elfin Farewell to Spring

By Lannie Erickson

Merry old May has tripped lightly away,  
Sweet June has arrived on the scene  
For one last Saturday of vernal display,  
As our valiant weed warriors spring clean.

Some weeds have sneaked in, naughty as sin.  
Uproot them. May they go to perdition!  
We'll provide protection for a finer selection,  
Giving natives their favored condition.

We're going to be tough about tidying stuff,  
Leave Elfin Forest sparkling and gleaming  
When visitors come. And we may get some  
Of Ron's cookies as thanks for our teaming.



*In March, three Weed Warriors: (L-R) Skip Rotstein, Ron Rasmussen and Barrett Holland poured cement to anchor a new Mutt Mitt box pole at the 12th Street entrance. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.*



*In April, Jan Donaldson, Prisila Johnson and Rich Johnson joined forces to free shrubs at the 16th Street entrance from their veldt grass prisons. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.*

## Join 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.

# SWAP Education Committee Trains Two Docents

Cheryl Dove taught first grade at Baywood Elementary School for thirteen years before she retired. Every May she asked SWAP docents to lead an insect nature walk for the school's first graders. The shoe will be on the other foot, now, when she leads groups of first graders as a docent rather than as a teacher. SWAP Board member Vanessa Nelson loves to take her grandson on "nature wagon rides" in the Elfin Forest. Doing that has inspired her to want to become a docent so she can give pre-school walks.

Both Cheryl and Vanessa have been receiving docent training from Vicki Johnsen and Chris Van Beveren. The trainees have been learning names, characteristics and the uses of Elfin Forest native plants; are becoming familiar with names, habitats and habits of the Forest's resident birds; and will be able to tell students about fence lizards, dusky-footed woodrats, coyotes and other animals that live in the Forest.

In May, they prepared to help lead 55 Baywood School first graders on a nature walk about the Chumash Indians, and will have done so before this issue of Oakleaves reaches its readers. The first graders learned what Chumash children ate, what their daily lives were like, what games they played, how they made music, and what their houses were like. Thanks to Cheryl and Vanessa for joining our docent team.



*Checking out a Black sage shrub (it's in the mint family and has square stems) in April were (from left) docents Vicki Johnsen and Chris Van Beveren, and docent trainees Vanessa Nelson and Cheryl Dove. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.*

## Elfin Forest Visitors

In March, we received an e-mail from soil conservationist Celine Morales at the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service office in Santa Maria. She asked to subscribe to our online Oakleaves newsletter. We explained that we don't charge government agencies or their employees for a subscription to Oakleaves, and that we would add her name to our member list. We also invited her to come to the Elfin Forest for a tour. She accepted, and was given a docent-led walk in Forest on March 21st by Board members and docents Vicky Johnsen and



*Jean Wheeler and Pat Murray (at right) gave Jean's son and granddaughter Joey and Abby Rektor, visiting from Spokane, Washington, an information-filled introduction to the Elfin Forest in April. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.*

Ron Rasmussen. During the walk, we learned that the Natural Resources Conservation Service works mainly with ranchers and farmers, helping them to improve their drip systems, to be in wetland compliance, to control erosion and to develop their own conservation plans. Celine appreciated learning about the history and natural history of the Elfin Forest, and Vicky and Ron were glad to be more informed about the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

In April – Jean Wheeler's stepson Joey Rektor and his daughter Abby traveled from Spokane, Washington to visit Jean, who is co-editor of Oakleaves. A nature walk in the Elfin Forest was planned. SWAP Board members Pat Murray and Yolanda Waddell joined the festivity, and Yolanda took the accompanying photo. By the end of the walk, Joey and Abby were familiar with a good sampling of the Forest's plants and birds. Their favorite plant was California sagebrush because of its "sage-y" smell and its soft leaves. Jean gave them each a SWAP sweatshirt to remind them of the Elfin Forest when they were back home in Spokane.

# Coming Up in the Elfin Forest

*Text and Photos by Jean Wheeler*

We Spring into Summer with this June/July issue--very grateful to see our small wilderness area recovering so well after the first good rainy season in five years. The boardwalk is surrounded by shrubs in full flower. Especially eye-catching are bright orange sticky monkey-flowers. Chamise and black sage have white flowers while in open areas in June white flowers decorate pearly everlasting, croton, and horkelia.

Other yellow and orange flowers that can be seen in summer include deerweed, California poppies, and golden yarrow. Coastal dudleya has low rosettes of grayish-white succulent leaves nearly hidden under the edges of larger shrubs, protecting them from drying out in the hot sun. These give rise to foot-high reddish stems branching near the top with clusters of trumpet-shaped yellow-orange flowers sought by Hummingbirds for nectar.

Cobwebby thistle (pictured) is a native plant providing spikes of pink flowers. Also bearing pink flowers is California hedge nettle. Cardinal catchfly has red flowers with narrow pointed petals in the understory of the oaks.

This is the best time of the year for blue flowers along our coast. A particular favorite of many flower watchers is called wooly star. Look for its low clumps topped with many lovely blue blossoms South of the boardwalk near the Fairbanks monument. Bush Lupine Point was named for the lush blue flower spikes on silver-leaved stalks surrounding that view site and our other estuary viewpoint named Siena's View. Urban development has greatly reduced the prevalence of bush lupines along our central coast, so our Elfin Forest preserve is an important refuge for this species.

June and July are major butterfly months in the Elfin Forest. Our pocket guide (sold on page 11) charts a full dozen species of butterflies and 3 species of moths that may be flying in these two



months and indicates their host plants. For example, Acmon Blue and Silvery Blue butterflies are attracted to deerweed, while Variable Checkerspots seek leaves of sticky monkey-flowers to lay their eggs. Gabb's Checkerspots go for California poppies. Moro Blue butterflies seek to lay eggs on those lupines at Bush Lupine Point and



Siena's View. That species of plant is almost the only host for their caterpillars, and this butterfly is a species of special concern.

Although winter's flotillas of ducks, geese, and shorebirds are long gone, close inspection reveals there are still a lot of water birds around. For many species of ducks and shorebirds, some individuals remain all year or even arrive to nest here after vacationing for the winter farther south. Among waders, willets and killdeer remain very common. Also resident all year are great blue herons and black-crowned night herons, along with many snowy and greater egrets.

All of our raptor species are here, and likely to be actively hunting with fledglings to feed in June and July. Many chaparral and oak woodland birds are also busy raising young—such as hummingbirds, flycatchers, wrens, towhees, warblers, sparrows, thrashers, finches, scrub jays, blackbirds, and quail. Mourning Doves (pictured) mostly nest in trees taller than the shrubs around the boardwalk, but sometimes nest in tall shrubs and may nest in the somewhat taller trees of the lower northern part of our reserve. At any rate, they are often seen flying over and resting on shrubs during the day. The one pictured was perched on an oak near the boardwalk at Siena's View.

Enjoy a colorful and exciting summer outing along the sand trails and boardwalk of our Elfin Forest, marveling at the resilience of all these plants and animals, able to survive and prosper in our very drought-prone climate!



## OAKLEAVES

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Editing assistance by Pat Grimes.

Contributors to this issue: Robert Boxberger, Pat Brown, Liz Curren, Elsie Deitz, Lannie Erickson, Vicky Johnsen, Betsy Kinter, Mimi Oey, Ron Rasmussen, Yolanda Waddell, Dirk Walters, Jean Wheeler.

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# WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

## June 17, 9:30 a.m. – Summer Solstice Walk

Follow Dr. Jean Wheeler through the Elfin Forest a few days before Summer Solstice, the longest day of the year. Dr. Wheeler has taught thousands of geography students about the relative wanderings of the sun and earth, and what they mean to us in terms of our climates and the vegetation and animal life around us. Using charts and a globe that doubles as a beachball, she will take us on an imaginary orbit around the sun as we circle the Elfin Forest on the boardwalk, showing how annual changes in sun angle relative to topography impact our plants and the animals that depend on them.

## July 15, 9:30 a.m. –

### *Weather and the Elfin Forest*

John Lindsey, the PG&E Weather Man based at Diablo Canyon, will give a fascinating walk and talk about weather on the Central Coast. John, an authority on coastal weather, will help us to understand why the geography of San Luis Obispo County plays an important role in where rain falls, and how much or how little. This will be an excellent mini course in meteorology, and will give us an edge in discussing that universal topic – the weather.

*Walks in the Elfin Forest begin at times stated above at the north end (1100 block) of 15th Street off Santa Ysabel in Los Osos. Wear comfortable shoes, long sleeves and pants to avoid poison oak and mosquitoes. Park carefully, avoiding driveways and mailboxes, and leave pets at home. The easy paced walks last 1-1/2 to 2 hours. For more information call (805) 528-0392.*



*During her walk in April, Carolyn Doehring, MBNEP Restoration Projects Manager, displays a map of the Morro Bay estuary watershed. Photo by Yolanda Waddell*



*Don Quintana (kneeling with camera) gave tips to eager photographers on neat ways to utilize light to enhance their images in close-ups of plants, as in this case, and in more distant scenic shots. Photo by Jean Wheeler.*



## Elfin Forest Sightings

### The Beautiful – and Dreaded – Slender-leaved Iceplant is Back

On April 7th, Vicky Johnsen saw a plant that sent chills up her spine. Her photo shows that, to the unformed eye, it is a rather pretty iceplant with large yellow dandelion-like flowers. However, each of those flower heads turns into large capsules of seeds. SWAP Weed Warriors have spent years trying to remove this invasive plant from the Forest.

Vicky reported that she and her husband Craig had to dig deep to remove each plant's taproot that "seemed to go to China!" Vicky plans to keep her eye on the area where the iceplants were growing and make sure that none re-emerges.

# Thank You to Our Generous Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter, SWAP Database Coordinator

## NEW MEMBERS:

Elizabeth Curren  
Judith Resnick\*  
Bonnie Thompson

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## DONATIONS:

Estero Bay Newcomers Club  
Celine Morales

*\*Thanks to those listed above who donated more than the \$25 (regular) or \$15 (senior or student) membership dues. The additional donations will be used for special projects in the Elfin Forest. If you recently sent a donation to SWAP and don't see your name in this issue's New and Renewing list, be assured that your gift will be acknowledged in the next bimonthly issue. Gifts are processed by two different volunteers before reaching our editors, and newsletter copy deadline is one month before the date of the issue.*



## Former Los Osos Resident Visits

On April 12, former Los Osos resident Mimi Oey and her son came from the Bay area to the Central Coast on a Spring break trip, and visited the Elfin Forest. Mimi said, "It was so lovely to visit the Elfin Forest and take my son. We had a lovely time and it is so beautiful!" While there, she took this photo of a Western Fence Lizard.

Mimi attended Cal Poly and graduated with a Graphic Communications degree in 1991. She lived on 13th Street in Los Osos and frequently went walking in the Elfin Forest, the Los Osos Oaks, and went tide pooling at Montaña de Oro. Interestingly, she worked for Hay Printing, the long-time printer of SWAP's *Oak-leaves* newsletter. She remarked, "Elfin Forest is a special place. We had such a lovely and relaxing time. And Morro Bay and Los Osos were magical. I think my son would have just stayed if it weren't for school and work to return to."

## From Our Readers

### Is Common Yarrow Medicinal?

*Editor's Note: After she read Dirk Walter's article about Common Yarrow on page 5 of our February/March, 2017 Oakleaves, Vicky Johnsen sent us the following response to Dr. Walter's statement that Common Yarrow has no medicinal value.*

Dirk Walters writes that Common Yarrow has: "NO medicinal value." However, I read the following about *Achillea millefolium* (Common Yarrow) on page 279 of *Plants of Coastal British Columbia, Washington, Oregon & Alaska*, compiled and edited by Jim Polar and Andy MacKinnon, B.C. Forest Service Research Program:

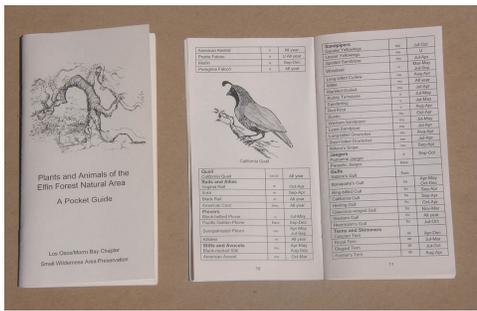
"Yarrow was used in a wide variety of medicinal preparations: by the Haida as a poultice; by the Tsimashian as a sore throat gargle; by the Nuxalk as a bronchitis medication; by the Kwakwaka'wakw for a variety of purposes; by the Diti-daht as a childbirth medicine and by other Nuuchah-nulth as a cold and cough medicine; by the Sechelt for colds and by the Squamish to cure measles; by the Cowichan as a blood purifier; by the Songish as a headache poultice and by the Saanich as a styptic and poultice; by the Swinomish as a bath for invalids; by the Klallam as a cold medicine with bitter-cherry bark; by the Quinault as a general tonic and eyewash; by the Squixin as a stomach tonic; by the Skagit and Snohomish as a diarrhea medicine; and by the Makah as a childbirth medicine."

In Jan Timbrook's *Chumash: Ethnobotany*, she writes that "yarrow was used as a medicinal herb for toothache. The plant was boiled and the liquid held in the mouth to reduce pain. Yarrow plants were mashed and applied externally as a poultice for cuts and sores or to stanch the bleeding of a wound (Bingham 1890:36). John P. Harrington's consultants also mentioned the plant being used in this way."

Finally, I see in my notes taken from a lecture at the San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden, by bay area herbalist Tellur Fenner: "Common Yarrow has antiseptic, disinfectant properties, stops bleeding, is an astringent. To make a tincture, one gathers the leaves, dries them, makes them into a powder, soak in alcohol up to a year."

## Thinking of Switching to Online Oakleaves?

Tired of looking at that pile of newsletters and magazines waiting to be read? If you use your computer a lot, we encourage you to take a look at the online *Oakleaves* at [www.elfin-forest.org](http://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. Just e-mail us at [oakleaves@elfin-forest.org](mailto:oakleaves@elfin-forest.org) with the subject: Switch me to online.



## Our Pocket Guide - A Gold Mine of Information

*Plants and Animals of the Elfin Forest Natural Area* is a 56 page 8 by 4 inch paperback packed with fascinating facts: charts of plants by bloom season, color and habitat; birds by habitat and peak months; butterflies by size, months in flight, color, and host or nectar plants used. Also lists of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects and other arthropods, lichens, and mushrooms.



# SWAP Shoppers' Order Form

See Photos of All Items at [www.elfin-forest.org](http://www.elfin-forest.org)

All Prices Include Sales Tax

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Useful 56-page guide to plants and animals of the Elfin Forest. Lists for mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, arthropods including moths and butterflies, gastropods, vascular plants, lichens, and mushrooms. Some with charts for seasonality, color and more.

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## SWAP VOLUNTEER POSITIONS NEEDED

Do you have some time during each month that you could give to SWAP and the Elfin Forest? Here are some of our committees that would welcome additional help. If you'd like to help, leave a message at 805-528-0392 or send an e-mail to [swap@elfin-forest.org](mailto:swap@elfin-forest.org).



Conservation Committee –

Weed Warriors to work in Elfin Forest

Publicity Committee – send out press releases

Volunteer Committee – SWAP booth workers, etc.

Education Committee – Docents, Research

SWAP Board – Monthly meetings, committee chairs

Newsletter Committee – writers, photographers

Membership Committee – phoning, planning events

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