



OAK LEAVES

A PUBLICATION OF FRIENDS OF EL MORO ELFIN FOREST

P.O. BOX 6442, LOS OSOS, CALIFORNIA 93412-6442 ❖ (805) 528-0392 ❖ APRIL / MAY 2020

The Elfin Forest's Critical Habitat Status

By Pete Sarafian; photos by Bob Meyer and Yolanda Waddell

The Elfin Forest is home to two federally-listed endangered and threatened species, the Morro Shoulderband Snail (endangered) and the Morro Manzanita (threatened), respectively. Because the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) designated the Elfin Forest and some surrounding lands as Critical Habitat for these two species in 2001, additional requirements of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) apply. The Act, found in Title 16 of the Code of Federal Regulations, was passed by Congress in 1973 and signed into law by President Richard Nixon. The law seeks to preserve and restore animal and plant species to a viable, endur-



Morro Shoulderband Snail.
Photo by Bob Meyer

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The Founding of Small Wilderness Area Preservation (SWAP)

In 1971, four people with a passion for the wilderness signed the SWAP Articles of Incorporation. They were Emily Polk who had the idea of saving small urban and suburban wilderness areas; Ansel Adams who spent most of his adult life taking majestic photos of the American West; Margaret Owings, founder of Friends of the Sea Otter and defender of the Big Sur wilderness; and Edgar Wayburn, awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1999 and said by President Clinton to have "saved more of our wilderness than any other person alive." Wayburn's goal was to keep jewels of nature from being paved over or turned into housing tracts. He wrote in his autobiography, "In destroying wilderness we deny ourselves the full extent of what it means to be alive."



Emily Polk in her later years published books of her poetry.
Photo by Joan Sullivan.

Emily Polk was a conservationist, writer, artist and designer. She lived a rich life filled with adventure and travel. In 1966 she and her husband Ben Polk, a professor of architecture at Cal Poly, settled in Los Osos. During their walks around their neighborhood, they happened on a wooded area filled with twisted Coast live oaks.

Emily was inspired with a vision of preserving beautiful wooded areas like the one they encountered, and founded an organization she called Small Wilderness Area Preservation. She envisioned it as an activist group dedicated to preserving wild places that are adjacent to cities and towns.

Emily Polk contacted conservationist Edgar Wayburn, then President of the Sierra Club, with her idea of buying and conserving small pieces of land adjacent to developed areas. Wayburn agreed with her idea and contacted an attorney who drew up Articles of Incorporation for SWAP.

Ansel Adams died in 1984 at age 82; Margaret Owings died in 1999 at age 85; Emily Polk was 98 when she passed away in 2008; and Edgar Wayburn, age 103, passed on in 2010.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

of the

Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest (FEMEF)

consists of the following members:

Jan DiLeo, Chair

Skip Rotstein, Vice Chair

Dave Bowlus, Treasurer

Yolanda Waddell, Secretary

Beverly Boyd, Acting Recording Secretary

The FEMEF Board of Directors meets monthly at 2:00 p.m. on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at the Hobby House, Morro Shores Mobile Home Park, 633 Ramona Ave., Los Osos.

The next meetings are
Tuesday, April 14
and Tuesday, May 12.

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 FEMEF

If you have questions about FEMEF activities or want to volunteer, please call (805) 528-0392 and leave a message.

A recorded message will give information about our 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: Lasca Gaylord
SLO County Parks Supervising Ranger
1144 Monterey Street, SLO, CA 93408
(805) 781-1196

Owners of dogs off-leash can be cited. If you witness dogs off-leash, vandalism or obvious crimes, call the County Sheriff at 781-4550 or Lasca Gaylord at 781-1196.

Critical Habitat Status *cont. from page 1*

ing condition when in danger of going extinct. That may include species of unknown importance to ecosystems.

Since nature has been developing for billions of years, it is far more complex than our human understanding. We simply do not know what the impact may be of a certain species disappearing from the earth. Los Osos already has had one such species, the Morro



Morro Manzanita.

Photo by Yolanda Waddell

Bay Kangaroo Rat, possibly go extinct in recent history. When the number or importance of species extinctions reaches a certain level, ecosystem collapse may occur. Since all life is interconnected, ecosystem collapse represents a threat to human survival. We humans depend upon nature for our clean air, water and food. Short of complete ecosystem collapse, the quality of life is reduced for humans to experience nature if fewer and fewer species remain.

The ESA requires federal agencies, in consultation with the FWS or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to ensure that actions they authorize, fund, or carry out are not likely to “appreciably diminish the value of the critical habitat for conservation of a listed species.” (FWS) Thus direct or indirect alteration of Elfin Forest habitat must not degrade the habitat of the Snail and Manzanita. FEMEF’s activities in the Forest must ensure that these two listed species remain in a viable, enduring condition.

California Native Plant Week is April 11-19, 2020

Did you know that 90 percent of insects can only eat the native plant species with which they’ve co-evolved? From monarch caterpillars to desert birds, life depends on native plants. Even we humans need our native plants to support the web of life upon which we depend. From oxygen rich redwood forests to the wet meadows of the Sierra, native plants provide important ecosystem services that sustain life. And every plant matters, especially here in California.

The abundance of California’s native plants makes our state one of the world’s biodiversity hotspots. With approximately 6,500 types of plants, we have more plant diversity than any other state in the U.S. A third of California’s plant species are found nowhere else on the planet. Think of what that means for the species that depend on them. That’s why, in 2010, the California State Legislature designated the third week of April to be California Native Plant Week.

On April 18, in honor of California Native Plant Week, Pat Brown will give a nature walk featuring several of the Elfin Forest’s native plants and the butterflies that rely on them for nectar and food. See Walks in the Elfin Forest on page 9.

Meet Our Conservation Committee Co-Chairs

Text and Photos by Yolanda Waddell

Editor's note: We use the name SWAP in this article because of references to past events, prior to our name change to Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest, FEMEF.

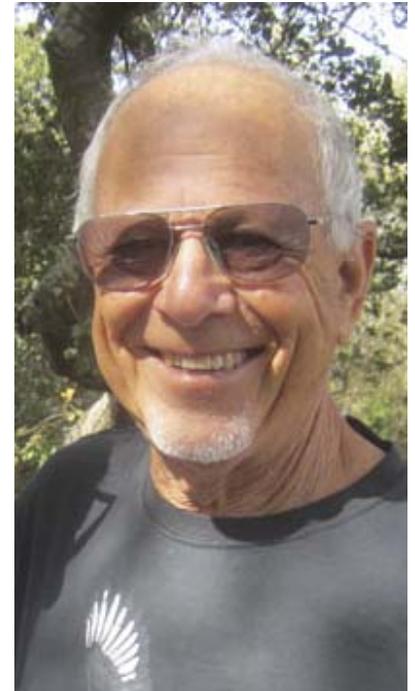
The FEMEF (formerly SWAP) Conservation Committee is involved in all work that is done in the Elfin Forest. Consisting of five active members, the committee is chaired by two of them: Skip Rotstein and Vicky Johnsen. Skip, who is also the Board of Directors Vice Chair, keeps the committee files, gives monthly conservation reports to the Board and prepares plans for Elfin Forest projects. Vicky coordinates our monthly work party activities (now held on Friday instead of Saturday) and tours the Forest weekly, keeping an eye out for invasive plants and any damage or other causes for concern. She, like the other Conservation Committee members, reviews projects and gives a well-informed opinion.

Skip Rotstein

Skip Rotstein and his wife Leslie purchased a vacation home in Los Osos in 2008, and it became their permanent home in 2013. Looking for ways to become active after they had settled in, Skip saw notices about SWAP's First Saturday work party in the newspaper, and joined the Weed Warriors. Conservation Chair (and also Board Chair) Ron Rasmussen invited him to attend a SWAP Board meeting; after a later conversation over lunch, Skip agreed to join the SWAP Conservation Committee and become a Board member.

In January, 2015, six members of the Conservation Committee met in Rose's Grove to select a new Conservation Chair. Ron Rasmussen, who had decided to resign as Conservation Chair, led the meeting. Skip agreed to be the committee chair and was unanimously elected by the other committee members. Since then, he has worked on many projects, including fence removal.

Last Fall, in keeping with recommendations made in the 2018 Elfin Forest Biological Assessment, Skip and other committee members met with County Parks staff in the Elfin Forest to determine what fencing could be removed safely. In September, 2019, Skip coordinated removal of the first 350 feet of green fencing. This February, Skip and committee members Dave Bowlus and Jan DiLeo surveyed Elfin Forest fencing to decide how much additional plastic fencing should be removed or replaced with wooden rail fence. Their report will be sent by County Parks to US Fish and Wildlife for approval.



Vicky Johnsen

In 2012, Vicky Johnsen saw a request for help with First Saturday work parties on the boardwalk bulletin board, and became a Weed Warrior. A while after that, she became a booth worker for Oktoberfest, and still later became a SWAP docent. In 2013, Vicky began leading nature walks in the Elfin Forest and has done so ever since.

In June of 2014, Vicky was elected to the SWAP Board of Directors and served on the Board for 3-1/2 years. Shortly after she retired from the Board, Vicky became Co-chair of the Conservation Committee, with the function of coordinating the First Saturday work parties. She and Skip Rotstein worked with Ron Rasmussen to pick up the equipment used for work parties, that was housed in Ron's garage.

Vicky's husband, Craig, built a storage shed adjacent to their home that now houses the hoes, rakes, shovels, clippers, gloves and numerous other items needed for doing weed removal, erosion control and vegetation trimming in the Elfin Forest. Each work party day, which begins at 9 am and lasts until noon, Vicky brings the needed equipment to the Elfin Forest, along with delicious cookies baked by husband, Craig. She assigns volunteers to the tasks for the day and oversees activities like vegetation trimming.

Her cheerful, energetic approach to work in the Elfin Forest is catching, and the Weed Warriors spend their volunteer time working hard to keep the Elfin Forest in good shape.

Painted Lady Butterfly

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

Photos by Pat Brown and Jean Wheeler

Vanessa cardui, listed in Linnaeus, 1758, is so colorful it is commonly known as the Painted Lady butterfly. It has also been called the Cosmopolitan, being by far the most widely distributed butterfly in the world.

Some sources list the Painted Lady in all continents except Antarctica. Other sources also exclude South America or Australia or both. However, *V. cardui* is known to occur along a short stretch of the southwest coast of Australia from Bunbury to Rottnest Island and Perth. A closely related species (or possibly a subspecies of *V. cardui*) occurs throughout most of the rest of that continent. Although listed as “rare” in Panama, this species is also listed among butterflies occurring in Ecuador.

Painted Ladies are about 2-2 ¼ inches wide. The upper sides of wings are salmon orange around a brown body with fairly large black patches on the forewing and 4-5 smaller round black dots on the hind wing. The outer tip of the forewing is a black triangle with large white patches. The undersides of the wings show networks of beige, gray, brown, and white and 4 large eyespots with outer rings narrow black, then orange, and wide blue to black inside.

Painted Ladies are famous for their migratory behavior. Swarms in the millions get a lot of attention. Smears on windshields, they may blind drivers, and in one year caused closure of a section of Interstate 15. Both photos with this article were taken as a 2019 wave of Painted Ladies moved north across our state. Pat Brown’s side view taken in mid-April emphasizes the underwings. My view from above is from mid-May.

Painted Ladies breed continuously throughout their migrations, with no evidence of overwintering sites. They migrate and breed through warmer tropical areas when higher latitudes are too cold, migrate and breed in higher latitudes as those warm up for summer. Scientists have observed that they tend to fly, at 25-35 mph, toward areas having heavy rains. These would support more plants with nectar for adults and leaves for their caterpillars. Females lay many eggs repeatedly in the 2-4 weeks they live.

Migrations move north from Central America through both eastern and western United States to Canada south of the Arctic. British Painted Ladies have been shown to migrate in a 9,000-mile loop between tropical Africa and the Arctic Circle in about six generations.

Adult males in western states perch in afternoons on shrub tops on hills (what Pat Brown calls “butterfly singles bars”) waiting for approaching females. Once mated, the female lays eggs on leaves of shrubs with good nectar for adults, from hundreds of host species, notably thistles, asters, mallows, and legumes. Males and females move on, reproducing repeatedly along their route as long as they live, about 2-4 weeks.

Caterpillars hatch in 3-5 days, go through 5 instar stages in 12-18 days, spin tents on leaves protecting them from wasps,



spiders, ants and birds. They eat the leaves, then spin chrysalises, emerging as mature butterflies in about 10 days, to follow rain and food on their route.

Painted Ladies depend for their species survival on high numbers of eggs laid in several localities per female along their migration route and on any of well over a hundred different potential host species. It sure seems to work for them as there is no concern about their species survival, and they pass through in millions or even estimated billions in some places at some times.

Please Report 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 Oak-leaves editors at: oakleaf@elfin-forest.org or leave a message on FEMEF’s answering machine, (805) 528-0392.

Fifteenth in a Series

Suffrutescent Wallflower

Text by Dirk Walters; Drawings by Bonnie Walters

Editor's Note: We are revisiting an article that Dirk wrote for our April/May 2000 Oakleaves. Dirk has made some revisions to the original article.

Bonnie's drawing for this article is the common wallflower of the coastal dunes and strands from Morro Bay south into northern Santa Barbara County. It is currently in full bloom in the Elfin Forest. The only published common name for it is 'suffrutescent' wallflower. This common name is simply a translation of the scientific name used in the most recently published California flora, **The Jepson Manual**. This name is *Erysimum insulare* var. *suffrutescens*.

The identity of our local wallflowers is confusing as different identification manuals have different names. Munz and Keck's **A California Flora** labels the ones around Morro Bay, *E. suffrutescens* var. *grandifolium*. On the other hand, Robert Hoover, in his **Vascular Plants of San Luis Obispo County**, uses the name, *E. insulare*. Why all the confusion?

First, the differences among the three types of wallflowers recognized in our county by Dr. Hoover are small and apparently somewhat inconsistent. The three also hybridize whenever they come in contact. The Elfin Forest wallflower has bright yellow petals and lives for several years (perennial). Since it has such a limited range it must be considered to be somewhat rare. The other two forms of wallflower occur in the interior of our county and differ from the one in the Elfin Forest in their much narrower fruits, in their being biennial, and in their having different color petals (orange to pale yellow). Dune wallflowers bloom from January to June with a peak in March to April.

Our dune wallflower is often not found growing alone and away from other more robust shrubs. It seems to be one of the plants that requires a nurse plant to get it started. The most common way you find them is with their flower stalks extending out of California sagebrush, California aster, black sage or other shrubs. Its long narrow leaves tend to be completely hidden under and within the crown of the larger shrub. When one does find it growing alone, a casual inspection will usually turn up the body of its nurse. That is, once established it can survive a few years beyond the nurse. Remember that the conditions on the open dune sand are very severe. Around noon it is usually very hot and dry. Sand is very porous and has little ability to hold water. Also, it is usually very windy which further increases evaporation. In contrast, under the shrubs, there would be shade and little wind, which would allow the temperature to be lower and the humidity to be higher as a result of the transpiration from the nurse shrub.

In all our plant identification books, wallflowers are placed into the mustard family or Brassicaceae (= Cruciferae). This family, of generally north temperate plants, is one of the easiest to recognize. It has 4 sepals and 4 petals placed in such a way as to form a cross. This is the reference in the older name, Cruciferae, which



translates as the 'cross-bearers'. In most flowers, the number of stamens is equal to multiples of the number of petals. In this case, that should be four, eight or twelve. But this family has six, two of which are shorter and four longer. So unique is this group of flower characters that it is sometimes simply referred to as **Cruciferous**.

Recent work is beginning to change the thinking on the relationship between the mustards and their closest relative, the caper family or Capparidaceae. The mustard family shares a lot of characteristics with this mainly tropical family. Due to this close resemblance, both families have been interpreted in the past as being equally evolved and having a recent common ancestor. The most recent evidence is forcing us to reconsider this interpretation. Based on DNA-based sequence data, the temperate mustards seem to have more in common with some species of capers than these capers have with other caper species. This means that what we have been calling mustards for the last 200 years are probably just the temperate expression of the more diverse tropical capers.

The good news is that this will cause a change in the names of our plants since the name, Brassicaceae, was applied before the name Capparidaceae. Therefore, it is the plants formerly treated as capers that will be transferred into the mustard family. Again, the good news is that there are no capers growing in the Elfin Forest.



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is published six times per year beginning in February.

Co-editors are Yolanda Waddell and Jean Wheeler.

Layout is by Katy Budge.

Editing assistance by Pat Grimes.

Contributors to this issue: Dave Bowlus, Pat Brown, Vicky Johnsen, Rich Johnson, Betsy Kinter, Frederick Leist, Bob Meyer, Mardi Niles, Skip Rotstein, Pete Sarafian, Joan Sullivan, Yolanda Waddell, Dirk and Bonnie Walters, and Jean Wheeler

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Weed Warrior Reports

By Vicky Johnsen and Skip Rotstein, Conservation Co-Chairs

January 4

The January work party was a resounding success! Whether it was the gorgeous weather, or everyone's New Year's Resolutions or Lannie Erickson's inspiring poem... or a combination of all three: eleven volunteers arrived ready to help out our Elfin Forest.

Skip Rotstein and Jeff Reifel worked on the erosion control channels in the on-going battle with the Forest's fluid "Ancient Sand Dune".

Rich and Prisila Johnson focused on their monthly "Boardwalk-Survey-and-Repair", which continues to be the major reason our Boardwalk is in such good shape. Rich also took photos of the various volunteer activities.

James Solum, Cindy Roessler, Dean Thompson, Lannie Erickson, myself and two "new" volunteers: Allen Duong and Robert (Bob) Brantley, armed with pruning shears and hand clippers, began the much-needed task of trimming various trails.

Everyone convened back at Vicky's van for well-earned, home-baked cookies (thanks to Craig). Good Job, everyone!

-Vicky

February 7

The Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest regular workday was moved in February to the first Friday of the month. Travis Belt, our new snail monitor, did a snail presentation and answered questions for half an hour in the parking lot. The volunteers split into two groups.

Priscilla and Rich Johnson worked on boardwalk maintenance while Weed Warriors Cindy Roessler, Dave Bowlus, Lannie Erickson, Skip Rotstein and Travis Belt walked to South Bay Boulevard. Clearing South Bay of veldt grass and slender leaf ice plant was the objective for the day. Two hours later, mission accomplished, the Weed Warriors finished the day with cookies baked by Craig Johnson.

-Skip



Allen Duong and Cindy Roessler interrupted their trail trimming to pose for the photographer during the January work party.

Photo by Rich Johnson.



Snail monitor Travis Belt (center) gave information and instructions about the Shoulderband dune snail prior to February's work party.

Paying close attention were (L-R) Cindy Roessler, Skip Rotstein, Lannie Erickson and Dave Bowlus. Photo by Rich Johnson.



Graffiti on these oak branches were later painted over.

Photo by Pete Sarafian.

Pete Sarafian Leads Ivy Removal

In February, Pete Sarafian led a Saturday work party of three Cal Poly volunteers pulling invasive ivy in a grove north of 10th Street. The volunteers, students of Cal Poly biology professor Jenn Yost, were Lindsay Peria, Zach Reposo and Dylan Stepke.

Many piles of ivy were left to dry. After two hard hours, only a small fraction of the ivy was removed. Pete mentioned the CCC's had been hired to clear the area of ivy 15 years ago.

In the same grove, Pete had seen graffiti (see adjacent photo) on the branches of a large oak tree, and brought paint, which Skip Rotstein used to paint over the offending graffiti.

Sahara Mustard Threatens Los Osos and the Elfin Forest

By Jean Wheeler; Photos by Dave Bowlus

A number of Eurasian and African mustards have invaded and plagued our continent. Sahara Mustard (*Brassica tournefortii*) is the newest and a very serious threat to native wildflowers and the wildlife dependent upon our native plants. *Estero Bay News* has published warnings about the invasion of this fast-growing and spreading foreign weed in January of last year and February of this year, imploring readers to pull it out by the roots before it can go to seed. Their articles state that the invasion by this mustard species has coincided with soil disturbance all over Los Osos from sewer construction. However, research suggests that the plant does not actually require soil disturbance to invade.

This dangerous threat has now been found growing along the South Bay Blvd. border of the Elfin Forest. The current *Estero Bay News* article also reports it along Santa Ysabel Street between 10th and 11th Streets, which is very close to another edge of our Elfin Forest. This will very likely become the next major invasive threat our dedicated Weed Warriors will have to face.

Sahara Mustard is a broadleaf annual plant producing a rosette as much as three feet in diameter of individual leaves from three inches to a foot long. Plants are a bit over three feet tall with spindly thin flower stalks and small, light yellow flowers with four petals. The leaf rosette is low but dense and it grows very rapidly after rains. It can quickly smother neighboring native wildflower plants that typically grow somewhat more slowly. Sahara Mustard also sets seed more quickly than native plants.

Research by U. C. Riverside compared wildflower success on plots where Sahara Mustard was pulled out by hand versus plots where the mustard was not removed. Wildflowers germinated well on both sets but were quickly smothered by the mustard on plots where mustard plants were not removed. Surviving wildflowers spent their energy growing tall but thin between mustard plants and produced 90% less seed than on plots where mustard was removed.

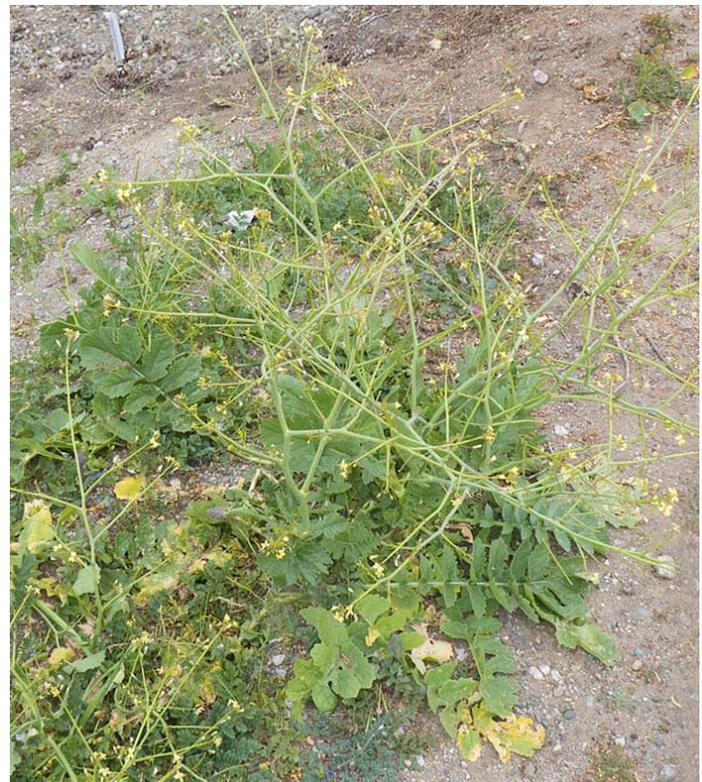
The *Estero Bay News* reported some success in fighting this vicious invader that may prove hopeful to our energetic Weed Warriors. They said that a huge batch was removed from the corner of Don and Mitchell Streets and had not returned in three years. So, if our determined Warriors can pull the weeds at the edge of the Elfin Forest before they set seed, there is hope this vicious weed can be prevented from moving on into the interior of our beautiful reserve. But beating the seed dispersal is vital. Seeds of *Brassica tournefortii* self-pollinate, one plant can reportedly produce about 16,000 seeds, and seeds can remain viable in the soil for at least three years.

Join First Friday Work Parties

We invite you to join us on any first Friday 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.

This 3 inch-long Sahara mustard plant was in flower and would have sent out seeds if it hadn't been pulled.

Seeds of *Brassica tournefortii* self-pollinate, one plant can reportedly produce about 16,000 seeds, and seeds can remain viable in the soil for at least three years.



This Sahara mustard plant has sent out many stems topped with small yellow flowers ready to produce seeds since they self-pollinate.

Coming Up in the Elfin Forest

Story and Photos by Jean Wheeler

April and May are extraordinarily colorful months in our small wilderness area. Probably the most widespread and obvious flowers around the boardwalk and sand paths are the 3-to-4-foot tall sticky monkey-flower shrubs with lots of bright orange blossoms. Their name is slightly misleading, however. It is the leaves that are sticky, not the flowers! Other yellow and/or orange flowers include California poppies, deerweed, fiddleneck, golden yarrow, and suffrutescent wallflowers. Pink tones are provided by cobwebby thistles and California hedge nettles. Red fuchsia-flowered gooseberries are nearing the end of their long blooming season but cardinal catchflies (red flowers in the undergrowth appearing to have been cut by pinking shears) should continue to bloom all summer.

Purple nightshade plants add that color, while Pomona milk vetch has creamy flowers on low plants. White to lavender flowers may be seen on ceanothus (buck brush or California lilac) or are clustered like white pompoms on black sage. Also white-flowered are California croton, chamise, and wedgeleaf horkelia. California blackberry and poison oak each have white flowers with green leaves in threes, but the blackberry plants have thorny stems while poison oak stems are smooth.

Rivaling or even exceeding the floral colors on the plants are the “flying flowers” of this season. Two orange and black butterfly species commonly seen in the Elfin Forest are Gabb’s Checkerspots and the Variable Checkerspots. With luck you may also spot one of the bristly black caterpillars with orange dots of the Variable Checkerspots grazing on sticky green leaves of almost their only host plant, the sticky monkey-flower. Gabb’s Checkerspot butterflies have much more of the orange and cream-colored rectangles and less of the black and the white squares than do the Variable Checkerspots.

Other butterflies to look for include small green Coastal Bramble Hairstreaks, Silvery Blues, large yellow and black Anise Swallowtails, black and cream Pale Swallowtails, brownish Common Buckeyes, and colorful Painted Ladies. Moro Blue Butterflies flutter around the blue flower spikes of the host plant for their caterpillars, the silver dune lupine (its leaves look silvery green). Both that lupine and its dependent butterfly have been severely reduced in area along our coast in recent decades because of coastal housing development. The stands of this lupine supported along the border of the estuary in our Elfin Forest are therefore important in assisting their survival.

For assistance in finding and learning more about our butterflies, don’t miss Pat Brown’s 3rd Saturday walk on April 18 (see page 9). She’ll even lead you to the “Singles Bar for Butterflies” in the Elfin Forest!

While admiring butterflies and flowers from the boardwalk and sand trails, your eyes will no doubt also be attracted by the flight of avian residents. Especially likely to be seen and heard are the bright blue California Scrub Jays, plump California Quail with their amusing head plumes, orange and black Spotted Towhees,



California Quail



Sticky Monkey Flower

chattering flocks of tiny fuzzy gray Bushtits and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, and similarly talkative little brown birds including several species of sparrows and wrens. Avian migrants passing through from winter homes farther south may include Warbling Vireos, Hooded Orioles, Black-headed Grosbeaks, and Yellow, Townsend’s, and Wilson’s Warblers.

Among other residents increasingly active as summer approaches are Western Fence Lizards, Brush Rabbits, Ground Squirrels, and Coyotes.

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



WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

Saturday Walks

April 3rd Saturday Butterfly Walk Canceled

We are sorry to cancel our April Butterfly walk due to the San Luis Obispo County Shelter In Place Order. This order, effective on March 18, remains in effect for 30 days. It states, “public and private gatherings of any number of people outside a household or living space are prohibited...” We don’t know at this time if the order will be extended and hope our May Wildflower walk can take place. Please check our website home page at www.elfin-forest.org and local newspapers for announcements about the May and future 3rd Saturday walks.



A young Elfin Forest visitor saw Barbara Renshaw drawing a plant during Barbara and Jeff Reifel’s January sketch walk, and decided to help her draw. Photo by Mardi Niles.

May 16, 9:30 a.m. – Wildflower Walk

Dirk Walters will take us on a delightful tour of every blooming plant that is visible from the boardwalk in the Elfin Forest. There will be bright yellows of Rush-roses, Deerweed, Golden Yarrow and of course California Poppies. White Popcorn flowers, Pearly everlasting and Yarrow plants are in abundance too, as well as pink Cobwebby Thistles and blue Wild Hyacinths. The Silver Dune Lupines at Bush Lupine Point should be covered with pale blue blossoms, and alive with honeybees and Moro Blue butterflies. Treat yourself to a springtime experience in Nature’s own garden.

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 closed-toe shoes, long sleeves and pants to avoid poison oak and mosquitoes. Park carefully, avoiding driveways and mailboxes, and leave pets at home. The easy paced walks last 1-1/2 to 2 hours. For more information or if you use a wheelchair call (805) 528-0392



Before taking visitors into the Elfin Forest to find mushrooms, Dennis Sheridan showed examples and shared information about different kinds of mushrooms that he had collected before his Fungus Foray walk in February. Photo by Jean Wheeler.



Frederick Leist saw these Puffball Mushrooms in the Elfin Forest’s lower oak grove next to the bay during Dennis Sheridan’s Fungus Foray walk in February. Puffballs are so named because clouds of brown spores are emitted when the mature Puffball bursts or is impacted. All of the Puffballs in this photo have burst and sent out their spores.

Thank You to Our Generous Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter, FEMEF Database Coordinator

NEW MEMBERS:

Katherine Keeney*
Kathy Cahill & Larry Morrison*
Joey Rektor
Kevin Scott

RENEWING MEMBERS:

Randy Ball*	Marlys McPherson*
Charles E. Blair*	Susan McTaggart
Carolyn Boomer & Mike Askew*	Hector Montenegro
William Bouton*	Jen Nelson
Susanne & Michel Chirman*	Marshall Ochylski
Lisa Coffman	Karen O'Grady*
Mary & Allan Conkling	Nova Poff*
Elizabeth Curren	Jim & Wendi Proffitt*
Katie & Jerry Davis*	Barbara Renshaw*
Kathy & Emil Flock*	Judith Resnick*
Larry & Pat Grimes*	Rita Robinson
Jan Harper*	Patrick & Dorothy Rygh*
Dr. Steve Jio and family	Nancy Stephens*
Penny Koines*	Katherine Tennant
Jennifer & Larry Levine*	the Ungar family
Sandra Mason*	Chris & Jim Van Beveren*
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DONATIONS:

Karen O'Grady for Maj. John O'Grattan
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**Thanks to those listed above who donated more than the \$25 (regular) or \$15 (senior or student) membership dues. The additional donations will be used for special projects in the Elfin Forest. If you recently sent a donation to FEMEF and don't see your name in this issue's New and Renewing list, be assured that your gift will be acknowledged in the next 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.*

Thinking of Switching to Online Oakleaves?

If you use your computer a lot, we encourage you to take a look at the online Oakleaves 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. Just e-mail us at oakleaf@elfin-forest.org with the subject: Switch me to online.



FEMEF docent Vicky Johnsen (center) led a nature walk in the Elfin Forest for people attending the Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival in January. Photo by Frederick Leist.



*Dave Bowlus spotted the sword-like leaves of a Rein orchid while weeding on the slope below the Orchid Trail (named after this orchid) in February. The Orchid Trail runs most of the length of the Elfin Forest above South Bay Boulevard. Rein orchids can be seen near the northern end of the trail. This orchid, *Piperia elegans*, is native to western North America. In late Spring, the plant will send up a stalk that reminds one of asparagus and beginning in June, densely packed flowers with curving white to greenish-yellow petals will appear.*



Elfin Forest Caps

One size fits all for these caps. They have adjustable straps in the back and are made of 100% cotton. Two handsome colors are available, forest green or maroon. Each cap has emblazoned in gold across its front the image of one of our coast live oaks, elfin-short but with a wide sprawling canopy, and the words "Elfin Forest Natural Area."



FEMEF 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.

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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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3. ELFIN FOREST MURAL PRINTS

Signed prints by artist Barbara Rosenthal, image size 4 1/2 x 16 1/2 in; mounted on foamcore

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Sahara Mustard Threatens Los Osos and the Elfin Forest – see page 7

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Help Boost Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest Membership

When we apply for grants to finance our work, agencies ask how many members we have. The more members we have, the greater is our ability to obtain grants for continuing restoration of the Elfin Forest. One thing you can do to help keep our numbers up is to check the renewal date next to your name on the address label of this issue. Also, urge your friends to join Friends of EMEF by sharing this newsletter with them and/or taking them on a walk in El Moro Elfin Forest.



Use the membership form at the right for your renewal or for new memberships for your friends. Our basic membership fee of \$25 covers our operating costs and brings members this bimonthly newsletter. Donations above that level provide funds to help us to control weeds, prevent erosion, and restore habitat. Thanks for your help!

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I want to help, please call me!

Memberships include a subscription to FEMEF's bimonthly newsletter, *Oakleaves*.

Check here to receive the online version only.

All donations to FEMEF are tax-deductible.

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