



OAK LEAVES

A PUBLICATION OF FRIENDS OF EL MORO ELFIN FOREST

P.O. BOX 6442, LOS OSOS, CALIFORNIA 93412-6442 ❖ (805) 528-0392 ❖ DECEMBER 2021 / JANUARY 2022

Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest and the Covid Pandemic

By Skip Rotstein, FEMEF Chair

Our second year as Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest coincided with the second year of the Covid Pandemic. With Covid it seems that more visitors have come to walk in our forest. When music concerts cancel and amusement parks close, people do come to the forest. We were pleased to renew our Adopt a Park Agreement with San Luis Obispo County Parks under our new name. The Agreement renewal continued a successful tradition but it came with an unusual challenge.

Due to Covid, we had to cancel our group work parties. When elementary schools closed, our school tours were cancelled. Weekend nature walks were postponed indefinitely. How were we to honor our commitment to fight invasive plants, trim trails, and maintain the Boardwalk? How were we to educate children and the public about the Forest?

Individuals stepped up to the challenge. Jeff Reifel maintained the Boardwalk. Vicky Johnsen trimmed trails and organized small groups to remove invasives. Barbara Renshaw and Jeff Reifel kept displays in the Boardwalk Information Box up to date. Vicky, Barbara and Jeff acted as Forest Ambassadors when visitors had questions. Even Mother Nature cooperated. Our extended drought resulted in less invasive plant growth and less brush to trim along the trails.

FEMEF & Covid *continued on page 2*

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2021 Virtual Annual Celebration

By Yolanda Waddell

The 2021 FEMEF Annual Celebration was held on Zoom again this year because of the continuing effects of Covid-19. We met on Saturday, November 13. This year, Treasurer Dave Bowlus organized the meeting and was the Zoom host. The meeting was led by Board Chair Skip Rotstein and our speaker was Conservation Committee Co-Chair, Vicky Johnsen.



FEMEF's Board members and a number of volunteers worked hard to prepare for and provide an enjoyable meeting for those who attended. Dave Bowlus and our Recording Secretary, Beverly Boyd (Dave's wife), created invitations to the meeting in email and post card form. Database Coordinator Betsy Kinter emailed invitations to members who have provided us with their email addresses, printed address labels for the rest and put them on the postcards.

Conducting a formal Zoom meeting involves more knowledge of its intricacies than most users need. Dave received professional help from Ashley Risch and Mark Teague, who worked with us in 2020. They had records of last year's orientation for our previous Board Chair, Jan DiLeo, so they could streamline the planning process with a few emails plus taking Dave through a practice meeting. Also, they assisted during the Zoom meeting.

Annual Celebration *continued on page 2*



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

of the

Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest (FEMEF)

consists of the following members:

Skip Rotstein, Chair

Steve Hendricks, Vice Chair

Dave Bowlus, Treasurer

Yolanda Waddell, Secretary

Beverly Boyd, Acting Recording Secretary

Jeff Reifel

The FEMEF Board of Directors meets monthly on the 2nd Tuesday of the month

The next meetings are

***Tuesday, December 14
and Tuesday, January 11.***

**All Board meetings are open to the public.
To attend a FEMEF Board meeting, leave a message at 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 coming activities 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.

Annual Celebration *cont. from page 1*

Skip Rotstein began the program with a photo-illustrated salute to our volunteers who did a great deal of work in the Elfin Forest and behind the scenes during 2020 and 2021 pandemic years.

Conservation Co-Chair Jeff Reifel illustrated his report with photos as well, showing the excellent work done by committee volunteers during the two Covid years. Treasurer Dave Bowlus summarized his Annual Financial Report, and referred meeting participants to the printed report on page 2 of the Oakleaves October/November issue.

Our speaker, Vicky Johnsen, took her audience on "A Walk Through the Seasons with the Elfin Forest Plants and Flowers." Accompanied by a stunning array of visuals, Vicky told the stories of wildflowers, birds - including the amazing tubular nests made by Bushtits - and the Elfin Forest Coast live Oaks, showing what a visitor can enjoy in the Elfin Forest throughout each year.

The work of fifteen photographers and artists was shown in her presentation. Vicky has been asked to present "A Walk Through the Seasons" for a Friday, December 3rd Virtual MindWalk, sponsored by the Central Coast State Parks Association. You can learn more about MindWalks at ccspa.org.

The meeting ended with voting for board members who were up for election, using digital ballots that could be marked and submitted during the meeting. Board members, who were unanimously elected, included Steve Hendricks, who will serve for two years through December, 2023; Skip Rotstein, who will serve for two years through December, 2023; and Yolanda Waddell was elected for one year, through December, 2022.

Realizing that many people are "Zoomed out," we are grateful to those who took time on a Saturday afternoon to attend our virtual meeting. A surprise attendee was Dr. Les Bowker, who now lives in Massachusetts. Les taught ecology at Cal Poly, and was an active member of SWAP for over twenty years. He served on the SWAP Board, wrote informative text for grants, mapped the Elfin Forest, and gave walks for both adults and school classes ("I call this plant in the mint family a bump-bump plant because when you roll it in your fingers, it goes bump-bump."). Les is still active, working on trails and serving on Boards.

Next year we hope to resume an in-person Annual Celebration meeting, but we have benefitted from seeing members who are far away. Working with Zoom has brought some of us more into the digital 21st century than we could have imagined. We want to bring younger members onto our Board of Directors who will help FEMEF to be facile with the world's ever-advancing technologies, and can use those for the benefit of the Elfin Forest.

FEMEF & Covid *cont. from page 1*

This year we have gone virtual. Petra Clayton and Steve Hendricks contributed virtual tours of the Elfin Forest that are permanently posted on our web site. Jeff Reifel became our new webmaster. elfin-forest.org has been brought up to date so that information related to the Elfin Forest and Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest is easily available. Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest Board Meetings and our Annual Meeting are being conducted on Zoom.

We have two projects previously described in Oakleaves that are waiting to be completed. The Green Fence Removal Project and the Butterfly Hill Project have been prepared for approval and presented to San Luis Obispo County Parks, who then sent them for comment to the US Fish and Wildlife Service office in Ventura, and State Parks. When they are finally approved we will need the help of community volunteers to complete the job.

Tom Hay, FEMEF's Indestructible Printer

By Yolanda Waddell; Photos by Jay Waddell

Tom Hay, SWAP and FEMEF's printer since 1988, greeted us cheerily when we entered Hay Printing in north Morro Bay, and led us into his office. He gently moved Myra the cat and her pillow from a chair and asked us to sit down. Tom showed us how he



converts the digital newsletter, sent by our graphic designer Katy Budge, to a sheet of polyester that will be fastened to a printing press, using software that runs a digital plate maker.

Born in Boston, Massachusetts, Tom's family moved to California when he was six. They lived in Downey, in the Los Angeles area, and Tom took up surfing to get away from the city.

Downey high school had a printing program, and Tom signed up for the class. After high school, Tom chose to attend Compton Community College because it had a good printing program. In his junior year, Tom transferred to Cal Poly because its 4-year printing curriculum was considered to be No. 2 in the U.S. He obtained a Bachelor of Graphic Communications degree in Printing Management from Cal Poly in 1975. His first printing job was with San Luis Printing in San Luis Obispo, where he met his future wife, Mary, who was working as a graphic designer. Eventually Tom became General Manager of San Luis Printing.

Tom and Mary started Hay Printing in 1980, and Tom became a commercial printing broker. For eight years Tom and Mary worked as broker and designer in Morro Bay, specializing in restaurant menus. After 8 years as a broker, Tom bought his first press, and he and Mary opened their own print shop.

In January of this year (2021), with thirty years of use on his original press, Tom bought a new high tech printing press and two other pieces of printing equipment that he looked forward to using after they were installed. But on January 30, Tom went surfing off of Hazard Canyon in Montaña de Oro State Park. On the way in to shore a large rogue wave threw him onto some sharp rocks. He was unconscious in the water. Two surfers saw him, called to other surfers for help, pulled him to shore, and called 911.

Cal Fire and State Parks rangers responded to the call. They stopped bleeding and strapped him to a board to protect his five broken ribs. Then a California Highway Patrol helicopter lowered a sling, lifted him up, took him to the sand spit parking lot, and an ambulance transported him to a hospital. He spent four days in an ICU and a week in the hospital, with several surgeries to repair damage to his neck, broken ribs, and lung. Yet he still managed to go to work



at the print shop, with some help, three weeks after his surfing accident, printing our February/March Oakleaves on schedule! Recently he resumed surfing, feeling it is the best way to get his strength back.

Like most small business owners suffering from economic pressures of Covid-19, Tom and Mary are working hard to stay abreast of an increasingly digital world. They have improved their attractive website and Tom will install his new printers so that he and Mary can continue to produce high quality printing at a competitive price.

Over the years since SWAP began to take printing jobs to him in 1988, Tom has produced our Oakleaves newsletter, brochures, boardwalk guides, stationery, most of SWAP'S beautiful Elfin Forest calendars, and many other miscellaneous printing needs. His motto is, "You have to have a good price and a good product," and he certainly lives up to that. We look forward to more years of his excellent printing, rolling off of his new presses.



Tom demonstrates his new Heidelberg embossing press.



Western Grebe and Clark's Grebe

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

The two species featured here are much larger than the other three of the five species of Grebes listed for our area in our Pocket Guide (Shoppers' Page 11). Both range in length from about 22-30 inches while each of the other three species we list are only about 11-14 inches long.

As can be seen on my photo, these large grebes, wintering in our area between October and April, are hard to tell apart. The second bird from the right is a Clark's Grebe (*Aechmophorus clarkia*). The white on its face extends above the red eye, making that eye easier to see, and the bill is a brighter orange-yellow rather than the duller brownish or olive-tinged yellow of other birds in the photo, most or all of which are Western Grebes (*A. occidentalis*).

These two species are also of great scientific interest as they were considered a single species until 1985. They are about the same size. Both are grey to blackish (Clark's Grebe's are not quite as dark) on their backs and up the back and top of their long necks and heads. Both have white undersides and red eyes. The legs are placed far back under the birds, efficient for swimming but they can barely walk on land, and rarely come ashore. They have large black feet with three toes forward and one to the rear, all lobed and webbed. Their plumage is dense, enabling them to swim low in the water and to make long dives.

The two species are sympatric, meaning they have nearly the same overall distribution and habitats. They swim together in open water on the same lakes in western United States, and also swim together in winter on coastal estuaries like ours. Their wings are narrow; they hardly ever fly except during migration, and then only at night. They nest in similar kinds of areas on the same lakes but tend to group their nests in colonies of their own species. Western Grebes are generally much more numerous than Clark's Grebes.

Both species build floating nests made of vegetation two to three feet wide among reeds and rushes along shores, with barely a foot of water below the nest. They eat nearly the same diet, mostly small fish plus crustaceans, marine worms, aquatic insects and their larvae. The two species even have the same courtship displays, among the most elaborate avian ballets known. The mating pair

Are they Western or Clark's Grebes? Read the story!

give each other vegetation, then swim side by side, increasing speed and rising until not much more than the feet are in the water, rushing up to 150 feet, and ending by diving together. Pairs of both species brood 2-3 eggs, hatching in about two weeks. The young almost immediately climb on a parent's back and are carried to open water. They quickly learn to swim and do not return to the nest.

With so much in common and a few successful cross-breedings recorded, it is not surprising it took so long to determine that these are two separate species. By 1985 it was discovered that despite looking and acting so much alike and living in the same habitats both winter and summer, the two populations very seldom interbred, and DNA studies revealed substantial differences.

In the 1800's, the dense and waterproof plumage of grebes led to hunting for coats and capes, causing some crashes in grebe populations. Fortunately, that went out of fashion. Loss of natural wetlands has caused population declines. Creation of reservoirs and other wetlands has helped reduce declines, but these Grebes are on the Yellow Watch List for species with declining populations.



Which species of grebe is this?

California Peony

Text by Dirk Walters, Ph.D.; Drawings by Bonnie Walters

(Ed. Note: Revised by Dr. Walters from his Oakleaves article, August, 2000.)

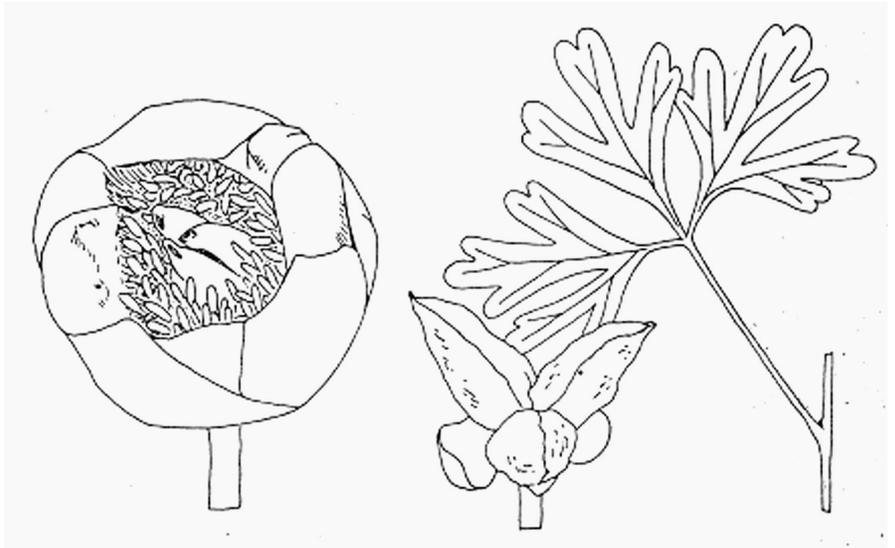
The plant revisited for this issue is *Paeonia californica* or the California peony. I've seen this plant in bloom as early as mid-December and would not be surprised to find it in late November. California peonies are very difficult to photograph in flower because the dried blood red flowers always hang down. In fact, it is often more entertaining to watch photographers trying to get its picture, than it is to find the plant.

Individual California peony plants are quite common throughout the Elfin Forest but are generally widely scattered. They do not seem to form clusters. By early summer, I would expect to find only the clusters of usually three large follicles (dry fruits with a single line of opening). The deeply lobed leaves would be nearly gone.

Thirty-one of the 33 or so species of the genus, *Paeonia*, are Eurasian. The last two species are found in the Western U.S. They include the more widespread, *P. brownii*, which can be found growing in Northern California and the surrounding states. The last species, *P. californica* is restricted (endemic) to coastal Southern California from Monterey to San Diego County. In plant books published before 1950, our California peony was not recognized as a separate species. All California peony plants, north and south, were called *P. brownii*. Today, all Elfin Forest peonies are recognized as being *P. californica*. The large-flowered garden peonies are all derived from hybridization among various mostly Asian species. The primary parent of the common garden perennials is *P. lactiflora*, whereas the shrub peonies are hybrids based on different species, *P. suffruticosa*.

Linnaeus, who is the father of taxonomic botany, named the genus, *Paeonia*, after Paeon, physician to the Greek Gods. The genus was named after Paeon, because Paeon supposedly prescribed it (*Paeonia officinalis*, the common peony of Southern Europe) for several ailments including as an antispasmodic, as a tonic as a treatment for convulsive and spasmodic nervous affection such as epilepsy, spasms, and chorea. Mary Elizabeth Parsons, in her 3rd edition (1907) of *The Wildflowers of California*, mentioned that the early Spanish Californians ate the thick root raw as a remedy for dyspepsia. My guess is they were simply using a similar California species for the same purpose as the one they used in Spain. She also stated that the Southern California Indian Tribes made it into a powder used in decoctions for colds and sore throat. On the other hand, Ms. Parson also records that the Northern California Indian Tribes considered it poisonous to the touch. I was not able to find any current reference to its use in medicine or as a food.

If you look up the genus of peony in one of the older flower books, you will find it in the Buttercup Family, Ranunculaceae. In



the newest Jepson manual, the genus is placed into its own family, the Paeoniaceae. Peonies and buttercups do share many superficial characters. They can even be hybridized if you remove the embryo from the endosperm and culture it separately. Then why would it be placed in its own family? The most obvious difference is the presence of a fleshy ring that subtends the stamens and later the developing fruits. This ring is unique to the peonies. Peonies also have very large black seeds that often have a fleshy growth (aril) attached to them. The way their large number of stamens initiate is also important. In buttercups and most other plants, stamens begin growth from near the petals and mature inward toward the pistils. But, in peonies, they initiate first nearest the pistils and then mature outward toward the petals. You say, picky, picky. I agree, but sometimes it takes less than this to indicate botanical relationships or lack of them.



OAKLEAVES

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: Tom Hay, Betsy Kinter, Bob Meyer, Jeff Reifel, Skip Rotstein, Jim Royer, Yolanda Waddell, Dirk Walters, Jean Wheeler.

Printed at Hay Printing, Morro Bay on recycled paper.

Labeled and mailed at Achievement House.

Deadline for copy to Oakleaves is the first of the month before issue.
If possible, all copy should be submitted by e-mail to: oakleaf@elfin-forest.org.



Photos from the Forest – Bob Meyer’s Favorites

Bob Meyer has been a Weed Warrior, active Conservation Committee member for many years, map and aerial photo expert for SWAP, Board member, and our first Webmaster. He is also a superb photographer, with an interest in taking close-up photos. On this page are five of his favorite photos from the Elfin Forest.

*Above: “Evan’s Grove” a grove of Coast Live Oaks
Clockwise from right: Fuchsia-flowered Gooseberry blossoms, Coastal California Poppy,
Morro Shoulderband Snail, and Coast Horned Lizard.*



Elfin Forest Work Report

Text & photo by Jeff Reifel, Conservation Committee Co-Chair

The early rains have really perked up things in the forest. Leaves on black sage have greened up. California peonies and fuchsia-flowered gooseberries are showing new leaves.

Dean Thompson and Jeff Reifel got out before the rain and contoured the sand trails for better drainage. Vicky Johnsen, Barb Renshaw and Jeff spread seed pellets over some of the eroded slopes before our second bout of rain in November.

Vicky worked with James Solum to trim back some of the vegetation along the boardwalk. Welcome back, James.

Jeff continues the seemingly endless task of keeping the boardwalk in shape.

The last of the black and white “-ONE WAY->” signs have been replaced with laser engraved wood signs. We now await more rains and the weeds that are sure to follow.

Webmaster Changes FEMEF Website’s Looks

By Yolanda Waddell

In the year since Jeff Reifel took the reins from our first Webmaster, Bob Meyer, he has been hard at work in making good changes to FEMEF’s Elfin Forest website at www.elfin-forest.org.

Jeff plans to give the website a more contemporary look while keeping the excellent information in its content. His intent is to make it more usable on mobile devices – cell phones and tablets – as the button links in the original website were too small to use easily.

Also, he wants to add more ways for our website users to learn about the Elfin Forest, as well as FEMEF and its activities.

On our home page, visitors to the site will find a brief description of the Elfin Forest, FEMEF’s mission statement, four links will lead to the current Oakleaves newsletter with color photos; plants, and birds that a visitor to the Forest might see in “What’s Coming Up;” ways to contact us; and a video of our most recent Annual Celebration. Jeff also posts notices and alerts regarding the Elfin Forest or FEMEF on the home page.

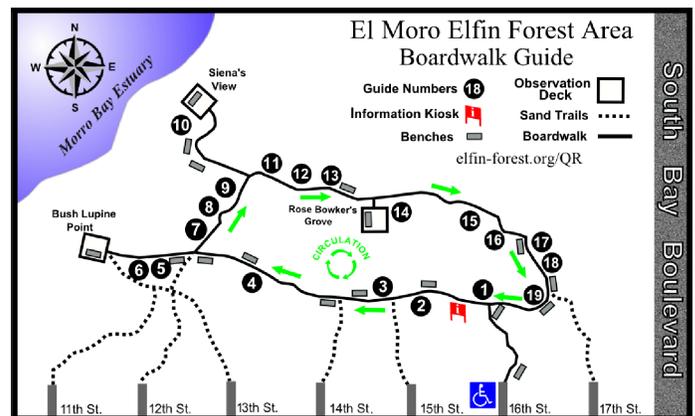
Six principal links are listed at the top of the home page. Clicking on each link takes you to a wealth of information. “Visiting” includes interactive maps and directions to aid the visitor in getting to the Forest and in parking. Questions that the visitor might have, such as “Can I bring my dog?” are answered. Jeff has added two videos of walks in the Elfin Forest, and an excellent online and printable version of the Boardwalk Guide. He also created the adjoining new boardwalk map in color for the website.

“About the Forest” prepares the visitor with the Forest’s ecology and history.

For those who want to know more, the “Conservation” link takes one to information about why and how the Elfin Forest was acquired and how it is being managed. “Flora and Fauna” contains lists that were developed for a Pocket Guide, Plants and Animals



In November, Vicky Johnsen joined Jeff Reifel and Barbara Renshaw in spreading seed pellets on a steep, eroded slope near Bush Lupine Point. The seeds are clustered into pellets to allow the remaining seeds, after birds eat some of them, to sprout, grow and aid in controlling erosion.



of the Elfin Forest Natural Area, published in 2005 by SWAP. This website version of the Pocket Guide provides a way to add photos, in the case of the Mammals and Plants lists, and to keep the Plants list up-to-date.

The “Forest Library” link gives online access to a resource library that includes easily searchable access to past issues of the Oakleaves newsletter. The Subject Index contains links to articles that have appeared in Oakleaves from August 1986 to the present. This section also has links to maps, aerial photographs of the Elfin Forest area, and a collection of important documents related to the Forest.

The final link, “Forest Store,” is a list with photos of Elfin Forest-related items for sale by FEMEF. There is a link to a printable order form; FEMEF merchandise is not for sale online at present. As time goes on, Jeff will continue his work to improve this very useful website. Our thanks to him for continuing to improve this online window to the Elfin Forest.

Coming Up in the Elfin Forest

Text & photos by Jean Wheeler

December and January are exciting months in the Elfin Forest, with winter rains beginning our major flowering season for the new year and bird life at maximum diversity and populations.

Our area is known as one of the top birding locales in our nation, especially in winter. That's why the Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival is held on Martin Luther King Weekend each year. It attracts hundreds of visitors from all over the U.S. and Canada, even some from overseas. The 2022 festival features 160 events over 5 days including workshops and major evening lectures in Morro Bay, as well as a great many bus and auto field trips to far corners of our county, and boating tours on our estuary, the ocean, and nearby lakes. Check their website for the January 13-17, 2022 festival at www.facebook.com/MBWBF.

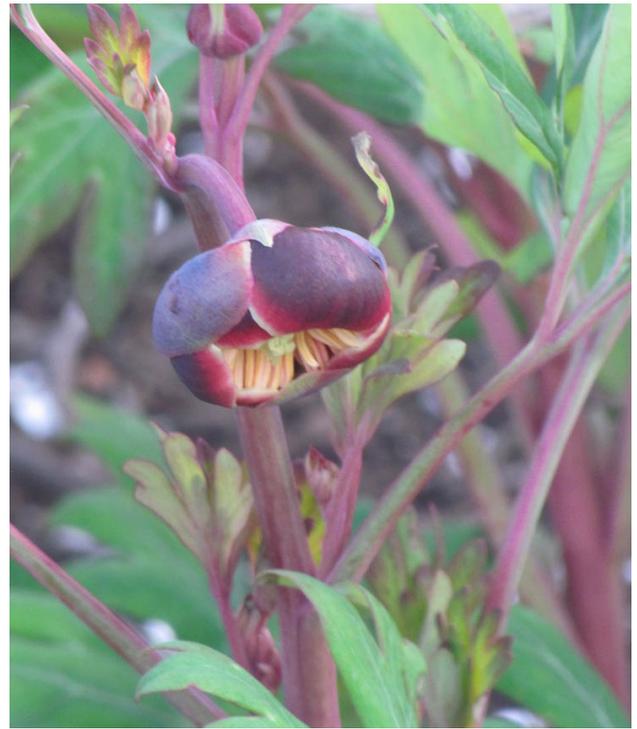
Virtually all species of water birds and wading birds listed on our website, elfin-forest.org under Flora and Fauna, are present in December and January. From Bush Lupine Point or Siena's View look for American White Pelicans and Canada and Brant Geese. Western and Clark's Grebes, featured in my article on page 4, should be easy to recognize swimming together with their heads topping tall S-shaped necks. Dabbling Ducks also common are Northern Pintails, American Wigeons, Northern Shovelers and Blue-winged, Cinnamon, and Green-winged Teal. Diving ducks typically seen include Greater and Lesser Scaup, Buffleheads, and Ruddy Ducks. Wading birds fishing for their next meal near the shores could include Great and Snowy Egrets, American Avocets, or perhaps a Great Blue Heron.

All the raptors listed on our website and a great many of the passerines are also present in midwinter. Watch the shrubs around the boardwalk for flitting Finches, Sparrows, Gnatcatchers, Wrens, Phoebes, Chickadees, Bushtits, Nuthatches, and other little brown and little grey birds. Larger common birds of the brush are Thrashers, Towhees, Scrub Jays, and Quail.

Unlike most of our nation, December and January in our Elfin Forest normally present lots of colorfully blooming shrubs and herbs. Hopefully the rain we had in late October will trigger our shrubs to bloom before 2021 ends. Buckbrush Ceanothus (in the California Lilac genus), should soon nearly surround the boardwalk with its white to lavender flowers. In more protected areas of the lower boardwalk is Morro Manzanita, found only along the coast between Montaña de Oro and Morro Bay State Parks. Its tiny bell-shaped flowers are white with a pinkish blush. Fuchsia-flowered gooseberries should also be opening, with their many long red trumpets providing lots of nectar to the long bills of Anna's Hummingbirds (pictured).

Perhaps by Christmas and surely by the end of January, California peonies (featured in his page 5 article by Professor Dirk Walters and pictured here in my photo) will be opening their drooping red balls of flowers among their large bright green leaves in the understory. Look for them especially near Siena's View and along the 11th Street sand trail. Other understory plants likely to be in bloom are the white to pink or lilac rays of asters surrounding their golden disk flowers, the yellow and gold of early California poppies, and white clusters of flowers atop green stems on California everlastings.

Take a break from holiday shopping madness and walk in the Elfin Forest that we protect through our generous donations and active volunteer efforts.



California Peony.



Anna's Hummingbird seeks nectar from Fuchsia-flowered Gooseberry

*In all things of nature,
there is something of the marvelous.
~ Aristotle ~*

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 Oakleaves editors at: oakleaf@elfin-forest.org or leave a message on FEMEF's answering machine, (805) 528-0392.

Support Monarchs and Other Pollinators with Native Plants

By Yolanda Waddell;
photo by Jean Wheeler

State Parks staff and volunteers at the Pismo State Beach Monarch Butterfly Grove were thrilled that more than 22,000 Monarch Butterflies were counted by



mid-November instead of the distressingly small number – 200 – that were counted in October, 2020 by the Xerxes Society. The Western Monarch butterfly population has declined dramatically – a 99% decline since the 1990s. Some scientists worry that the Western Monarch population will collapse within 50 years.

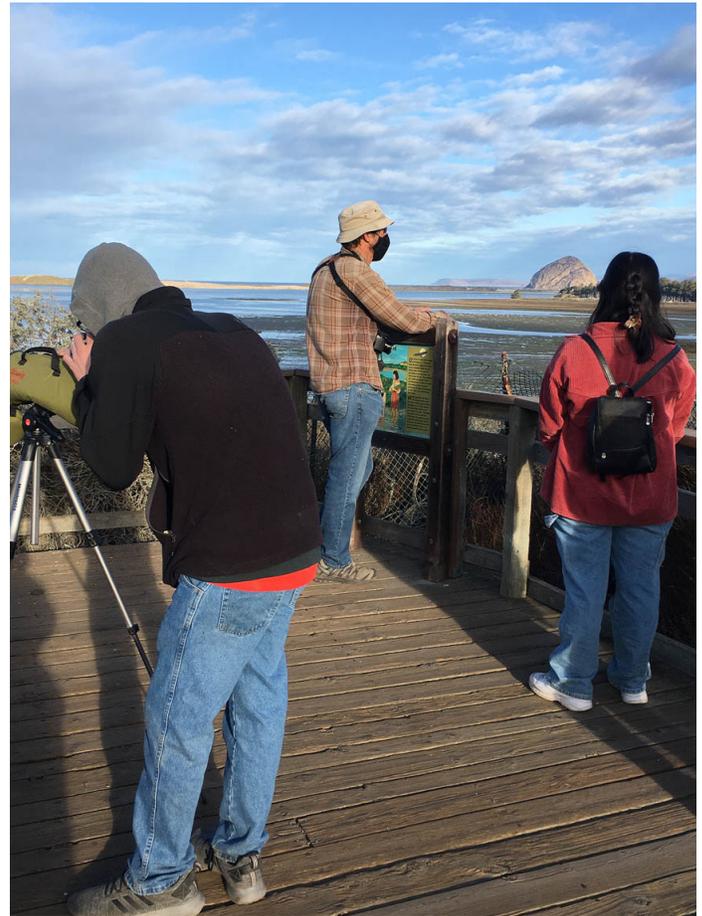
Though the reason for this year's increase isn't known, perhaps it may be due in part to some help from humans. Gardeners flocked to nurseries to buy Milkweed plants, the food plant for Monarch caterpillars, and also nectar plants for the adult butterflies. Perhaps farmers, whose crops depend on all pollinator insects including butterflies, did the same.

Recently, the Xerxes Society for Invertebrate Conservation distributed more than 34,000 free native, drought-resistant plants to farmers and other landowners throughout California. The plants are intended to restore key native plant growth for the Monarchs and other pollinators.

Though Monarch Butterflies are seldom seen in the Elfin Forest, they stop in many gardens along the Central Coast. It isn't too late to plant some native plants that will provide nectar for them and other butterflies and pollinators in the Spring. Here are some native plants that you might try: Arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*), Black sage, *Salvia mellifera*, Blue dicks (*Dichelostemma capitatum*), Buck brush or Ceanothus (*Ceanothus cuneatus*), Coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*), Dune ragwort (*Senecio blochmaniae*), Hollyleaf cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*), Mock heather (*Ericameria ericoides*), Morro Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos morroensis*). Their scientific names might be useful when asking for them at a nursery. All of these natives grow in the Elfin Forest and along the Central Coast.

The Xerxes Society warns against planting **any** milkweed in areas along the coast because the mild weather allows both tropical and native milkweeds to stay green. That allows microscopic parasites to live and multiply on the plants, and to be eaten by Monarch caterpillars. Researchers believe that the parasite sickens the adults, changing their life spans, migration patterns and ability to reproduce.

Though the outlook for Western Monarchs is dismal, the increase in their 2021 population count gives hope that we might be able to help by providing nectar plants for them during their long journeys across California.



On the day before the October Big Sit, Jim Royer, center, led a small group of bird enthusiasts on an Elfin Forest field trip to learn what species were out and about. Photo by Vicky Johnsen.

October 11 Big Sit Results

By Jim Royer

The 25th annual Big Sit at the Elfin Forest tallied 95 species seen or heard from the observation platform at Bush Lupine Point.

The weather was sunny and clear all day, warm in the late morning and early afternoon, cooling with an onshore breeze in the afternoon. High tide was at 5.9 feet at about 1:30 pm. All birds were seen or heard from the Bush Lupine Point wooden platform.

Highlights included Vaux's Swift, Red-breasted Sapsucker, White-faced Ibis, a large flock of Ravens, and many Osprey flying around us (as many as 4 in the air at once with 2 others perched on snags).

Our total was lower than usual, which continues the overall decline of species observed on this annual October Big Sit.



WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

Keep an eye on our website home page,
www.elfin-forest.org or check outgoing messages each
month at 805-528-0392 for any update about walks.

Thank You to Our Generous Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter, FEMEF Database Coordinator

NEW LIFE MEMBER:

Carmen Fojo

NEW MEMBERS:

Lasca Gaylord

Judith Stapelmann*

RENEWING MEMBERS:

David Cox & Carolyn Niblick*

Margaret Diehl*

Tom & Rita Hadjiyane

Jim Havlena & Mary Rogers*

Roger & Claretta Longden*

Denise Fourie & Mike Multari*

Carrie Pardo

Carolyn H. Pendery*

Nicholas & Dorothy Pier*

Darlene M. Reynolds

Claudette Saylor*

Deborah Schlanser*

Kathleen Spencer*

Bonnie Thompson*

Lou Tornatzky*

Kathleen Toscano*

Keith & Beth Wimer*

DONATIONS:

Mary Lou Wilhelm – in honor of Yolanda 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. 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.



*A gift of nature is an imperishable gift,
never broken, torn, lost, worn;
the gift that given once is given forever.
~ Emily Polk, Founder of SWAP ~*

New Life Members in 2021

By Yolanda Waddell

Four of our members chose to become life members by donating \$1,000 to FEMEF in 2021, and one life membership was added by the Shirley Otto Trust.

David and Linda Chipping, members since the late 1980s, will no longer receive renewal reminders from Betsy Kinter, our Database Coordinator. Long-time members Barbara Renshaw and Carmen Fojo also won't have to think about renewing each year. We are grateful for their many years and continuing support.

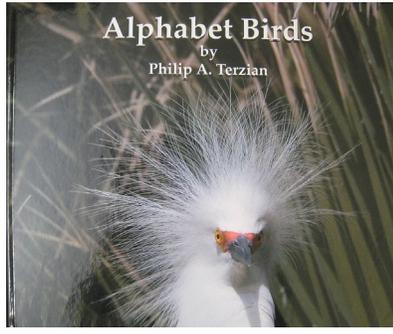
In 2021, we learned of the passing of Shirley Otto, from whom SWAP purchased 38.7 acres of the Elfin Forest in 1994. Her executor, Joe Bourdeau, donated \$1,000 from the Shirley Otto Trust Fund and told us he would like it to be considered as a life membership.

Life Members place their trust in Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest to protect the Forest for many years to come. They will receive a lifetime subscription of the Oakleaves newsletter, and a thank you gift of one of our merchandise items. Our thanks to them for their generosity and support of FEMEF's work in the Elfin Forest.

Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest Mission:

Preserve and maintain El Moro Elfin Forest Natural Area; inform and educate about the natural history of the Elfin Forest and the Morro Bay Estuary; promote and support scientific research in the Forest.

GREAT GIFTS!



FEMEF Shoppers' Order Form

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

All Prices Include Sales Tax

1. MURAL SHIRTS

Large mural design by artist Barbara Rosenthal on both front and back. Black shirt with words: "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) @\$20.00 = \$___
- ___ Short Slv. T-Shirt (XXL, XXXL) @\$23.00 = \$___
- ___ Long Slv. T-Shirt (S, M, L, XL) @\$25.00 = \$___
- ___ Long Slv. T-Shirt (XXL, XXXL) @\$27.00 = \$___
- ___ Sweatshirt (S, M, L, XL) @\$35.00 = \$___
- ___ Sweatshirt (XXL, XXXL) @\$37.00 = \$___

2. POCKET GUIDE

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.

___ @ \$3.00 = \$___

3. ELFIN FOREST MURAL PRINTS

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

___ @ \$35.00 = \$___

4. ALPHABET BIRD BOOK

With 26 clever verses and superb photos on facing pages, this book is sure to please young and old.

___ @ \$20.00 = \$___

5. MURAL MUG

15- ounce beverage mug with wrap-around mural design. Microwave safe, hand wash suggested.

___ @ \$15 = \$___

6. ELFIN FOREST CAPS

One size fits all caps with adjustable straps in back, 100% cotton. Two colors, forest green and maroon. Specify color when ordering.

___ @ \$15 = \$___ Color(s)___

SUBTOTAL OF ORDER

\$___

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

SHIPPING COSTS:

Within and near Los Osos, free delivery may be possible. Shipping costs otherwise depend on zip code and package weight.

Please call 805-528-0392 to arrange for delivery or shipping.

TOTAL OF ORDER WITH

APPLICABLE SHIPPING COSTS

\$___

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email _____

Phone (w/ area code): _____

Make checks payable and mail to:

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

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



FRIENDS OF EL MORO ELFIN FOREST
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Finish your shopping list with great El Moro Elfin Forest gifts! ~ page 11

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Benefit From a Year-End Donation

A donation to Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest will reduce your income tax bite as well as helping us to conserve our small wilderness area. This tiny preserve has many beautiful trees, shrubs, smaller plants and a great many fascinating birds, insects, mammals, and other critters that need our protection.

Donations help us fund special projects such as control of soil erosion, revegetation with native species, and the safe killing and removal of destructive invading plants without harming the native ones. It also makes it possible for us to hire scientific firms to analyze the condition of the Elfin Forest and its plant and animal inhabitants, and to provide us with sound advice on further actions needed to conserve this special ecosystem into the future.

Your donations also help us fund education efforts. These include school walks for students from lower grade through college classes, publicized walk programs for families, and educational publications including brochures, boardwalk signage, and this Oakleaves bimonthly newsletter.

We wouldn't be able to accomplish any, let alone all of this without your help!

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Member | <input type="checkbox"/> Renewing Member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Member \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Defender \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Steward \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Champion \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protector \$75 | <input type="checkbox"/> Guardian \$500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seniors/Students \$15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member \$1000 |

Donation only \$ _____

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.

EVERY membership counts!

Make checks payable to: FEMEF

Mail to: Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest,
 P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412-6442.