



# OAKLEAVES

A PUBLICATION OF FRIENDS OF EL MORO ELFIN FOREST

P.O. BOX 6442, LOS OSOS, CALIFORNIA 93412-6442 ♦ (805) 528-0392 ♦ SPRING 2025

## Nature - It's Good for Your Mental Health

*By Rebecca Rasmussen, FEMEF Board Chair*

It can't be helped. There will always be something to worry about. Some worries are close at hand. Others are far away. Some disturb our nights. Others trouble our days. If only we had something to help relieve the stress. Fortunately, we do, and it is El Moro Elfin Forest. We have the antidote in our own backyard.

The American Psychological Association states that time spent in nature not only relieves stress, but also improves our brain function. The sights and sounds of nature can help us focus our minds and increase our sense of happiness. I cannot help but agree with their assessment. After a short wander on the boardwalk, listening to the bees buzzing among the tiny blue Ceanothus flowers and breathing in the salty air, I always return to my car more content, focused, and ready to face the day.

Another way to relieve stress is to participate in a creative activity. For me, it is singing. I sing with a couple of local choirs, including Canzona Women's Ensemble. Imagine my surprise when the artistic directors announced that this spring Canzona would be collaborating with the Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo in a concert themed on songs of nature and the earth. My two worlds collided. During rehearsal, I was struck by the lyrics of one song in particular: Wendell Berry's following poem. It perfectly expressed my feelings about nature and the Elfin Forest.

Mental Health *continued on page 2*

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## Changes on the Board of Directors

*By Steve Hendricks and Yolanda Waddell*

In January, the FEMEF Board of Directors held their annual election of officers and made some changes. Steve Hendricks stepped down from his position as Board Chair and was elected to be Vice Chair. Rebecca Rasmussen was elected to be the Chair. Former Secretary Roger Carmody agreed to continue as Treasurer, and Dave Bowlus will continue as Secretary. The Board members unanimously elected Cuesta College student Hallie Cooks as Student Board Intern (see an article about Hallie on page 3). Comments by Steve Hendricks on leaving his position as Board Chair follow:

"I regretfully am stepping down as the Chair of the Friends of the El Moro Elfin Forest after nearly three years of leading this remarkable organization. However, I am not leaving the Board. I will stay on as the Vice Chair and help whenever I am needed. The Elfin Forest will be under the incredible leadership of Rebecca Rasmussen.

It has been a pleasure to work with a wonderful group of hard working and giving individuals. Like many of you, my family and I have visited the Elfin Forest often since moving to Los Osos in 2009. Until 6 years ago, I had no idea of the hard work it takes by so many to keep our wonderful slice of paradise looking the way it does. The amount of work that goes into maintaining the trails, keeping the boardwalk clear of branches and thorns, and removing invasive plant species to allow the natural native beauty of our area shine through is staggering. In addition, there is the behind the scenes work of the website, trail guides, QR codes, informative panels, boardwalk maintenance, *Oakleaves*, education, social media, etc. Dozens of people put in hundreds of hours each quarter keeping "our" Forest functioning like a well-oiled machine.

However, we really need folks to step up and give back to their community! The Elfin Forest is in dire need of volunteers to help with a plethora of projects. If you walk in the Elfin Forest or if the thought of its presence in your community brings you happiness, please consider volunteering and helping to keep the Forest in the beautiful state that it is in.

I would like to give a big thanks to all our volunteers,

Board Changes *continued on page 2*



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*of the*

*Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest (FEMEF):*

Rebecca Rasmussen, Chair

Steve Hendricks, Vice Chair

Roger Carmody, Treasurer

Dave Bowlus, Secretary

Beverly Boyd, Acting Recording Secretary

Hallie Cooks, Student Intern

Pat Brown

Ron Ruppert

The FEMEF Board of Directors meets monthly. Meeting days and times can vary and will be posted on the home page at [www.elfin-forest.org](http://www.elfin-forest.org).

FEMEF Board meetings are virtual and 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 (805) 781-4550

or Lasca Gaylord at (805) 781-1196.

If you see or smell smoke, call 911.



[https://www.facebook.com/  
FriendsofElMoroElfinForest](https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofElMoroElfinForest)



[https://www.instagram.com/  
el\\_moro\\_elfin\\_forest/](https://www.instagram.com/el_moro_elfin_forest/)

## Board Changes *continued from page 1*

members and donors. Without you, we would not have the people power and funds to complete our projects. I am also very grateful of the unwavering support provided by County Parks. They have helped whenever and however possible. Thank you to all!" ❖



*Blooming Ceanothus and Morro Rock. Photo by Rebecca Rasmussen.*

## Mental Health *continued from page 1*

### **The Peace of Wild Things**

by Wendell Berry (b. 1934)

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world and am free.❖

### **Thank you to our Members and Donors**

Your generous donations and membership renewals support future projects to maintain the Elfin Forest and boardwalk, refurbish and replace informational signs and aging benches, make other improvements, and fund projects to serve our mission: "to preserve and maintain the El Moro Elfin Forest Natural Area; to inform and educate about the natural history of the Elfin Forest and the Morro Bay Estuary; and to promote and support scientific research in the Forest."

# Welcome to our Student Board Intern - Hallie Cooks

By Hallie Cooks and Yolanda Waddell

FEMEF Board members unanimously voted to add Hallie Cooks to the Board as our Student Board Intern. She was nominated by Board member Steve Hendricks and introduced herself at the January Zoom Board meeting. Hallie wrote the following biographical information about herself:

It is a privilege to be welcomed as a Student Board Intern for the Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest. I am a second year student at Cuesta College, obtaining a degree for transfer in Environmental Science. My plan is to further my education at a four-year university but I am still undecided as to which one. When deciding on a major and what I wanted to pursue, I knew I needed to choose something worthwhile to me. As someone who cares deeply for the Earth, choosing to study the environment and how to protect it was a natural choice.

I love spending time in nature and try to be outside whenever I can. Some of my hobbies include hiking, backpacking, swimming, and camping. These activities have not only shown me the beauty of nature but also deepened my connection with the outdoors. I am so grateful to have the privilege of enjoying these experiences and want to help preserve our Earth for future generations to have the same opportunity. In order to protect the Earth, it is necessary to learn about our



Hallie Cooks. Photo by Amy Hinrichs.

impact on the environment and ways to live sustainably.

After finishing my education, I hope to pursue a career that allows me to work towards my goals of conservation. Joining the Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest is a meaningful first step towards building the experience and knowledge I need to pursue these goals. I cannot wait to begin working in and with the Elfin Forest while contributing to its protection. ❖

# George and Carol Pilling Chair Property and Records Committee

By Carol Pilling and Yolanda Waddell



George and Carol Pilling. Photo by Steve Harell.

FEMEF is fortunate that George and Carol Pilling agreed to take charge of our Property and Records Committee when Patrice Promack moved out of state and resigned as chair of that Committee. They will be in charge of the storage unit that contains all of FEMEF's belongings. Most of our organization's past paper records have been sent as archival materials to Cal Poly Special Collections. Now, most of our records are in digital form.

In addition to paper supplies such as brochures and business stationery, the storage unit contains all supplies to set up our booth at events. The main task for the Pillings will be to manage our merchandise: T-shirts, mugs, ball caps, etc. It involves maintaining an inventory and ordering new supplies, delivering them to places that sell our merchandise, and filling orders.

George and Carol have lived full time in Los Osos for the last five years, having purchased a home 22 years ago across the street from Sweet Springs. George was born in Boston, Massachusetts, and grew up in Philadelphia. He is an avid fly fisherman and has been fishing in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania since he was a youngster. He continues to do so a few times a year in the Sierras. He was a school district librarian until his retirement in 2011. Another passion is woodworking, which he has been doing since he was a child.

Carol was born and raised in northern California. She is a graduate of Fresno State where she received her teach-

Pillings continued on page 7

# Counting Coast Live Oak Tree Rings

*Text and photos by Ron Ruppert*

On July 28 last year, a fire broke out in the lower Elfin Forest. In order to control the burn the local fire department used chain saws to clear dense plant growth, including cutting off two 9-inch diameter coast live oak limbs. The author was able to use this event to gather two samples (“cookies”) for tree ring counting. The “cookies” (log rounds) averaged 7 inches in diameter and the base diameter of both trees averaged 15 inches. The samples differed in that one was rounder and the other was oval. Notice in Oak Rings 3 photo that the tree rings are wider along the top of the limb. This adds to the strength of the wood where stretching tension is greater.

The round limb is about 60 years old and the oval limb is about 70 years old. Since we know that the diameter of the base of each tree is greater than twice the limb diameter, we can make an estimate of the overall age of the trees. Trees slow their base diameter growth through time so it is estimated that the tree age is about 3 times the limb age. A conservative estimate for the tree from which the round limb was taken is about 180 years and the oval limb tree is about 210 years old. These are rough estimates. The best way to determine actual age would be to count the rings on the cut base. This is not possible, so we are left with an estimate. Soft woods (pines) can be sampled with a boring tool so that the whole tree does not need to be sacrificed. Oaks are much too dense to use the increment boring tool.

The trees in the burned grove are perhaps 100 years younger than in the “Rhinceros” oak grove (formerly called the “Dudleya” grove). Rings from a tree in that grove were counted by the author in the early 1990’s. An approximately 9-inch diameter limb was sawed off by “kids playing” in the forest. That limb had 211 rings and the estimated overall tree age is 350 years.

Another interesting phenomenon can be noted in counting rings. In Oak Rings 1 photo note that some rings are wider than others. This is an indication of the rate of growth in a given year. In this sample note that about 10 years ago there is a series of narrow rings (slow growth) that lasted for 8 years. The notable wide ring (faster growth) is about 18 years ago. Before that there



*Oak Rings 1. Narrow vs wide rings indicating growth rate. Photo by Ron Ruppert.*

is a series of 6 narrow rings and then another wider ring about 25 years ago. While it is tempting to correlate this rate of growth with total annual precipitation, one needs to keep in mind that the rate of growth can be affected by factors other than total annual precipitation. For example, the timing of rainfall has been shown to be very important along with average temperature and amount of coastal fog. The longevity of the oaks in our Elfin Forest is an interesting factor to consider. ❖



*Oak Rings 3. Wider rings along the top of the tree limb are due to greater stretch tension. Photo by Ron Ruppert.*



*Oak 1. Round limb from which “cookie” samples were cut. Photo by Ron Ruppert.*

# Fiddleneck

Text revised by Dirk Walters, Ph. D., from his February 2001 article;  
Drawing by Bonnie Walters. Photo by Pat Brown

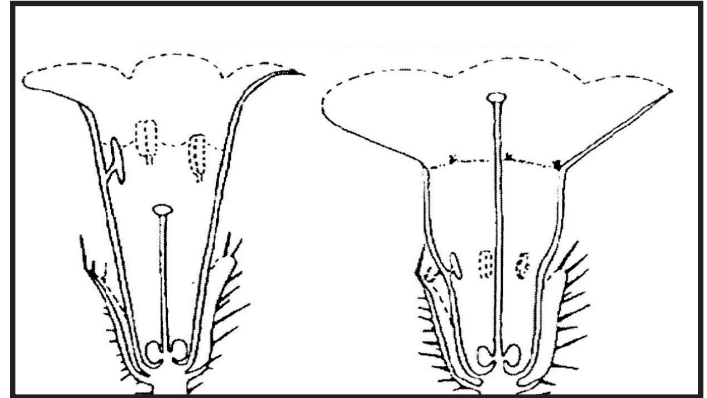
The plant chosen for this installment is the only fiddleneck listed in the species list. It is *Amsinckia spectabilis*, and it is a member of the *Boraginaceae* or forget-me-not family. This genus is very easy to recognize because of its yellow to orange flowers coupled with its very characteristic inflorescence. As can be seen the photo, the inflorescence seems to be uncoiling from the tip and resembles the end of a violin or fiddle. This accounts for the common name, fiddleneck. Botanists use the term scorpioid cyme for such an inflorescence, as it also resembles the end of a scorpion's tail. Scorpioid cymes are a major field recognition character for members of the *Boraginaceae*. The only other family that commonly possesses a scorpioid cyme is the *Hydrophyllaceae* or waterleaf family. The waterleaf family usually has compound leaves, more open, funnel-shaped flowers and a capsule fruit. They also usually have two distinct styles. On the other hand, the borages tend to have simple leaves, smaller, tubular flowers and four-nutlets as a fruit.

*Amsinckia spectabilis* is found along our coast from Morro Bay south into Santa Barbara County. It is relatively common in open areas dominated by various herbs. This includes open areas in the dune's portions of the Elfin Forest as well as in roadsides, pastures, and vacant lots. It is one of the larger flowered fiddlenecks. Its flowers can be over one-half an inch long. Most of the other seven species of fiddlenecks bear flowers one-quarter of an inch long or less. The two longitudinally sectioned flowers, drawn by Bonnie for Dr. David Keil's and my plant taxonomy textbook, show a characteristic found in a few of the fiddlenecks, including *A. spectabilis*. The right hand drawing shows a flower with a long style that places the receptive pad (stigma) in the opening of the corolla tube. In this drawing the stamens are placed well inside the corolla tube. The left drawing shows a flower section with a style totally hidden inside the corolla tube and the stamens borne at the upper end (mouth) of the corolla tube. That is, the positions of the receptive sexual parts of the flower are reversed. These two types of flowers are found in the same species, but usually on different individuals. It serves as a method to ensure at least some cross-pollination. Only long-proboscis insects can pollinate fiddlenecks because only they can reach the nectar at the bottom of the thin corolla tube. If an insect visits a flower with a long style, pollen is placed halfway up the proboscis. If the insect then visits a second long-styled flower, the pollen is too low on the proboscis to reach the high stigma. On the other hand, if the insect now visits a short-styled flower, the pollen is correctly placed for the deep stigma.

Other common names that have been used for this genus are fireweed and buckthorn. I do not know the origin of the name buckthorn, but the origin of the name fireweed was told to me by one of my students just after I arrived in California. In class, I called one of the *Amsinckias* a fiddleneck and the student said that he and his neighbors called it 'fireweed.' He said they called it that because, when it was present as a weed in hay fields, and then got baled with the hay, it caused a 'fiery' rash on any exposed skin of anyone who had to handle the bales. Almost all the fiddlenecks have stout hairs that can cause mechanical irritation to the skin. Fiddleneck in hay is also dangerous to livestock, especially young animals. The two most widespread species, *A. intermedia* and *A. douglasii*, and presumably



*Fiddleneck closeup*



*Longitudinal drawings of Fiddleneck flowers*

our species as well, contain an alkaloid of the Pyrrolizidine group called **amsinckinae**. If eaten in large amounts, it destroys the animal's liver and, if eaten in smaller amounts, it may ultimately cause liver cancer. Fiddlenecks are also partial to soils high in nitrates. The species are nitrate accumulators. Too much nitrate in the diet is not good for people or livestock. ❖

## 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 sighting to your *Oakleaves* editors at: [oakleaf@elfin-forest.org](mailto:oakleaf@elfin-forest.org) or leave a message on FEMEF's answering machine: (805) 528-0392.



**OAKLEAVES**  
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Editing by Yolanda Waddell; editing assistance by Jean Wheeler; finish editing by Faylla Chapman; photo editing Cheyenne Winn  
Layout by Rebecca Rasmussen

Contributors to this issue: Pat Brown, Hallie Cooks, Suzette Girouard, Steve Harrell, Steve Hendricks, Amy Hinrichs, Vicky Johnsen, Betsy Kinter, Jan Moore, John Nowak, Patrice Promack, Rebecca Rasmussen, Skip Rotstein, Ron Ruppert, Yolanda Waddell, Dirk Walters, JeanWheeler, Zarah Wyly.

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](mailto:oakleaf@elfin-forest.org).

# Weed Warrior Reports

By Vicky Johnsen, Conservation Co-Chair

In November, we had three workdays: November 2nd, 12th, and 22nd.

On November 2nd, the Saturday Work Day, we had 12 volunteers who worked 29.5 hours total. On Tuesday, November 12th, four volunteers worked a total of 6 hours trimming a sand trail. On Friday, November 22nd, five volunteers labored two & a half hours pulling Cape ivy down from a canopy of oaks and a large Morro manzanita for a total of 12 1/2 hours. That area had not seen any ivy removal in a very long time.

December 7th, 2024, Saturday Work Day, we had nine volunteers work for a total of 18 hours. Two helped Jeff Reifel repair a cracked stringer under the boardwalk by the steps down to the Habitat Trail. Dean Thompson trimmed oaks along the boardwalk. The remaining five volunteers pulled down Cape ivy just south of the Sienna's View platform. One volunteer, Alex Tappen, hauled away the entire mass of ivy to his truck to be composted later.

January 4th had an excellent turn-out of 14 workers, including 2 new volunteers. Tasks completed included trimming the portion of the Rein Orchid Trail from 17th street north. Roger Carmody, Julia Ferguson, Carol Pilling, Jan Moor, Pat Brown, Cindy Roessler and I managed to open up a trail that had been "ignored" for far too long. (see attached photos).

Dean Thompson and James Solum trimmed the oaks along the narrow trail out to Sienna's View. Jeff Reifel had enlisted the help of new volunteer Tyler Penney; they worked on the boardwalk, then went down to do battle with



Weed warriors, Julia Ferguson and Natalie Zaragoza, pulling down Cape ivy south of Sienna's View platform. Photo by Jan Moore.



January 4th weed warriors trimming the Rein Orchard Trail from 17th St. north. Photo by Vicky Johnsen.

one area of smilax vine infestation and got into poison oak. Luckily, I always keep packets of Tecnu, a poison oak scrub, and they were able to wash their hands and arms. One very good reason to wear long sleeves!

Zarah Wyly and her mom, Dawn, built back up a tall barricade of bush cuttings and added a Closed for Restoration sign at the illegal entrance to the Oak Grove just South of the Bush Lupine Overlook. Dave Bowlus continued his maintenance of our termite-infested wooden benches.

Doi brought an enormous "cauldron" of delicious Thai soup with chicken and veggies, which was very much appreciated. Pat Brown had prepared a Thank You card that most of the volunteers signed. ❖

## Join Us!

### 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 in layers of clothing with long pants, long shirt sleeves, work gloves, and sturdy shoes with closed toes. Take care not to park in front of driveways or mailboxes.

To request more information, call (805) 528-0392.

# Gardening with California Natives: Yarrow

By John Nowak & Suzette Girouard

This issue's article features *Achillea millefolium*, commonly known as yarrow, common yarrow, or woundwort; it also has many other synonyms. *Achillea millefolium* is found within the family Asteraceae. Five varieties and several cultivars are available in the horticulture trade. This lovely plant has many ties to ancient folklore. Named after the Greek warrior Achilles, it is said that he carried yarrow to promote slow bleeding from battle wounds. The species name *millefolium* comes from the Latin term mille, referring to the fern-like feathery leaves. These bi-pinnately compound leaves cause some to think that yarrow is a fern.

Yarrow grows widely throughout San Luis Obispo County in many plant communities. In the Elfin Forest, yarrow grows alongside *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat), *Arctostaphylos morroensis* (Morro manzanita), *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak), *Salvia mellifera* (black sage), *Toxicodendron diversilobum* (poison oak), and many other species.

Native Americans of our area and early European settlers found many uses for yarrow. Its pungent odor is a clue to the chemical makeup of its foliage, which contains many types of acids. Salicylic acid, which we now know as aspirin, is one of them. In earlier times, a tea was made and drunk for aches and pains. Leaves were placed on hot stones, and water was poured onto them, releasing a steam used to treat respiratory illnesses. Another tea was made to relieve stomach disorders. And mentioned above, yarrow has a blood coagulating property. It was not particularly used as food; however, in small amounts fresh leaves can be consumed.

In the garden setting, yarrow's fern-like appearance can create a feeling of lushness. The new growth comes on quickly after winter dormancy; within six months flower stalks appear and rise above the foliage. The flower color can range from white to cream to yellow, attracting pollinating insects such as beetles, bees, and butterflies (including the variable checker spot and the coastal bramble hairstreak). As the flowers mature, they slowly turn brown, and their seeds drop, providing food for small mammals such as the western harvest mouse and big-eared woodrat. Birds such as California quail, California towhee, California thrasher, and various species of finches also dine on these seeds.

*Achillea millefolium* is adaptable to many different soil types; however, it prefers moist, well-drained soil. It is considered semi-drought resistant, but it does best with monthly supplemental moisture, beyond the seasonal rainfall. Yarrow has few pests; however, rabbits, deer, and birds will consume it, frequently down to the soil. Yarrow has several attractive cultivars that are available from the horticulture trade. These cultivars have been selected for various attributes such as flower and foliage color, stem length, and smaller compact growth. Yarrow makes a great foundation plant for meadow creation and to accent a dry streambed. Maintenance consists of removing old flowers, thinning old leaves, and periodic division of roots before winter rainfall.

Yarrow is a wonderful addition to any garden. With its ancient history and many medicinal uses, it has earned its place as "plant of the season." ❖



Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

## The Pillings *continued from page 3*

ing credential. She taught math for 20 years before retiring. She is an avid gardener and is now learning how to weave on a floor loom as well as crocheting scarves and hats for many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

The Pillings lead active retired lives in Los Osos. The Elfin Forest is a special place for them. Carol is a proud Weed Warrior and Trail Trimmer and feels fortunate to be working with a dedicated group led by Vicky Johnsen. George has helped repair the boardwalk. They are glad to be part of FEMEF as co-chairs of Property and Records. ❖

### Praise From an Elfin Forest Visitor

This year I had the pleasure of attending the Morro Bay Bird Festival for the first time, and it was an unforgettable experience! My journey began with a guided walk through the Elfin Forest. Spending three hours exploring its picturesque pathways with docent Vicky Johnsen, I learned more about the incredible variety of flora and fauna that call this unique ecosystem home. It was a truly magical way to connect with nature and kick off my festival experience!

Jody Hollier, Marketing Coordinator  
Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce

# Coming Up in the Elfin Forest

Story and Photos by Jean Wheeler

Throughout springtime our small wilderness area is continually opening wildflowers in extravagant colors and there are flashes of bright colors from resident and visiting butterflies and birds.

Pink and white manzanita flowers of our winters turn into the tiny apple-like berries for which the plant is named. The long red tubes of fuchsia-flowered gooseberry provide nectar for nesting Anna's hummingbirds. Red flowers of cardinal catch-fly can be seen close to the ground under our oaks. Yellow and orange flowers are varied and abundant, including California poppies, deerweed, fiddleneck, golden yarrow, sticky monkey-flower, and suffrutescent wallflower.

Bush Lupine Point is named for the tall blue flower spikes (pictured) near that estuary overlook in late spring. Close to the nearby boardwalk trail junction are other lovely blue flowers, known as wooly star, close to the ground. Lavender to purple flowers are provided by cobwebby thistles and purple nightshade. White to lavender flowers occur on buck brush, also called California lilac. Other white-flowered native plants are California croton, chamise and wedgeleaf horkelia. These are only a few of the many species providing our gorgeous spring flowers.

"Flying flowers" of this season, butterflies rival floral colors of the plants. Variable checkerspot butterflies are orange and black. They lay eggs hatching into bristly black caterpillars on leaves of plants with orange sticky monkey-flowers. Gabb's checkerspot butterflies look rather similar but are somewhat more orange and cream and less black and brown. Other colorful butterflies include green bramble hairstreaks, silvery blues, and yellow and black anise swallowtails. Morro blue butterflies hover around the blue lupines near Bush Lupine Point. Areas supporting both the bush lupines and the Morro blue butterflies have been severely reduced in recent decades by housing development along our coast, so their support in our Elfin Forest is important to the survival of both these species.

A vividly orange and black bird quite often seen and heard singing from the very tops of our Elfin Forest shrubs is the spotted towhee (pictured). The California scrub jay is bright blue and screams his surname at all interlopers. Plump California quail have amusing head plumes. There are also chattering flocks of tiny, fuzzy gray bushtits, blue-gray gnatcatchers, and similarly talkative little brown birds, including sparrows and wrens. Avian migrants resting here as they pass through from winter homes farther south may include warbling vireos, hooded orioles, black-headed grosbeaks, and yellow Townsend's and Wilson's warblers.

Other residents increasingly active as summer approaches include western fence lizards, brush rabbits, ground squirrels, and coyotes. Many arthropods, such as bumble bees, honey bees, damselflies, and harvester and carpenter ants, are also interesting and often beautiful to observe.

What a gorgeous and exciting time to stroll along the sand trails and boardwalk of the small wilderness area we protect from development! ❖



Spotted Towhee. Photo by Jean Wheeler.



Bush Lupine. Photo by Jean Wheeler.



Gray Hairstreak Butterfly on deerweed. Photo by Pat Brown. April is a good month to see butterflies. See the notice for Pat Brown's 3rd Saturday butterfly walk on page 9.

## Thinking of Switching to Online *Oakleaves*?

If you receive a print copy of *Oakleaves*, we encourage you to visit our online version at [www.elfin-forest.org](http://www.elfin-forest.org). You will see photos in full color, and the text is easier to read on your computer. If you decide to be an online reader, you will receive an email when each new issue is posted on our website. Your decision would save paper, ink, and FEMEF dollars for other uses. Just email us at [oakleaf@elfin-forest.org](mailto:oakleaf@elfin-forest.org) with the subject "Switch me to online."



## WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST Docent-Led Third Saturday Walks

Reservations required; masks are optional. To reserve a spot on the walk, email us at [walks@elfin-forest.org](mailto:walks@elfin-forest.org) and indicate the number in your party in the subject line of your email.

*March 16, 9:30 a.m.*

### *Animal Tracks*

Evan Albright, an animal track expert, will lead an informative walk about who is “tracking up” the Elfin Forest. Visitors will learn how to tell the front feet from the back feet of a raccoon and how coyote and dog tracks differ. Evan will also demonstrate how to find other signs that a wild resident of the Elfin Forest has passed that way. Attend this walk and develop an awareness of the comings and goings of the Forest’s mammal, bird, and reptile inhabitants—and enjoy some things you wouldn’t otherwise readily see while walking along the boardwalk.

*April 19, 9:30 a.m.*

### *Butterflies and Native Plants*

In honor of California Native Plant Week, butterfly guru Pat Brown will introduce you to several native plants and talk about the butterflies that sip their nectar and the caterpillars that eat their leaves. Pat has photos of butterflies in all stages of development, from eggs to mature butterflies, and will share them along with fascinating butterfly facts. She’ll lead you to hang-outs of variable checkerspot, Moro blue, swallowtail, hairstreak, and other butterflies that make the Elfin Forest their home. She will also share information about butterfly books, web sites, and butterfly-related materials. She recommends that you bring a pair of close-focusing (5-10 ft.) binoculars.

*May 15, 9:30 a.m.*

### *Docent and topic to be announced*

### *Please check our website*

Check our website under “Visiting” and then “Walks in the Forest” Walks 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.

## Illegal Camping and Vandalism continued in January

*Reported by Zarah Wyly, Rebecca Rasmussen, and Pat Brown*



*Fire vandal debris determined to be brochures at 16th St. on January 12th. Photo by Zarah Wyly*

On January 2nd, Zarah Wyly found burned plastic and a pile of ashes, later determined to be a paper grocery bag, by the brochure holder at 16th and the boardwalk loop (pictured). There were more burned items, a bag of what looked like stolen goods, and an active campsite down the trail where the smaller fire was over the summer, west of 14th street.

Zarah noticed some large items tucked about 30 feet north of the trail just west of 14th street. The smaller oak fire occurred in that place earlier this year. There were sweatshirts and clothes on the ground, a garbage bag, a backpack, some water bottles, etc., but no one was around. She met Vicky Johnsen the next day to clean up the camp trash. As they went into the Forest and approached, there was a person lying face down among the items that were there before. Zarah told the Sheriff everything that was happening with two Elfin Forest campers as well as daily findings of burned items.

Vicky and Zarah removed the trash left behind and spoke with CalFire staff who looked around and are very concerned about the daily burning of items. They said they are ready to respond in case of a more serious fire.

On January 29, Rebecca Rasmussen found several scattered partially burned tree limbs in Rose’s Grove. On the back of one of the tree trunks was a painting (pictured). Also on the 29th, Zarah found ashes, a lighter, and fragments of burned trail guides. Two days previous (January 27), Pat Brown found the 16th Street trail guide box empty. She had placed 40 guides in the box. Zarah reported the fire to CalFire. They responded to the Forest, took photos, and made a report. Zarah and Vicky Johnsen have removed the guides from the other box on the west side of the Forest. ❖



*Vandalism on an oak tree in Rose’s Grove on January 29th. Photo by Rebecca Rasmussen.*

# Thank You to Our Generous Members

*Compiled by Betsy Kinter, FEMEF Database Coordinator*

## NEW LIFE MEMBERS:

Larry Morrison & Kathy Cahill  
Mr. & Mrs. Davidson Pattiz

## NEW MEMBERS:

Devon Bradley\* Donna Kube  
Brendan Crahan\* Sarah Wyly\*

## DONATIONS:

Virginia Beske Carmen Fojo  
Thomas Brown Joan Hughes  
Andrea Davis

*\*Thanks to those listed on this page 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 quarterly 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.*

## Photo from the Forest



*Cobwebby thistle on slope above South Bay Boulevard.  
Photo by Pat Brown.*

## RENEWING MEMBERS:

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....are great for yourself or as gifts! Our 15-ounce beverage mug has Barbara Rosenthal's gorgeous Elfin Forest mural wrapped all around the cup. Microwave safe, it's great for coffee, hot chocolate, or just about any other beverage you choose. Hand-washing is suggested.



# FEMEF Shoppers' Order Form

See photos of all items at [www.elfin-forest.org/store/default.htm](http://www.elfin-forest.org/store/default.htm)

All Prices Include Sales Tax

### 1. MURAL SHIRTS & SWEAT SHIRTS

Large mural design by artist Barbara Rosenthal on both front and back. Forest green fabric with the words "Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest" above mural and "Los Osos, California" below mural. (Zip Hoodie has mural on the back only.)

Indicate the desired size(s) (S,M,L,XL,XXL,XXXL)

- \_\_\_ Short Slv. T-Shirt size \_\_\_\_\_ @\$25.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_
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- \_\_\_ Pullover Hoodie size \_\_\_\_\_ @\$40.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ Zip Hoodie size \_\_\_\_\_ @\$45.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. 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 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. ALPHABET BIRD BOOK

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

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### 4. MURAL MUG

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

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### 5. ELFIN FOREST CAPS

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

\_\_\_ @ \$20 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Color(s) \_\_\_\_\_

### 6. NOTECARDS

Featuring scenes from El Moro Elfin Forest

\_\_\_ @ \$2.50 / each \_\_\_ @ \$10 / 5 notecards

### 7. 2025 FEMEF Calendar

Featuring photographs by Pat Brown. Make a \$20 donation, and shipping is free.

\_\_\_ @ \$20.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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## Oakleaves Needs Help!

Do you like to write or edit? Do misplaced commas and apostrophes annoy you? Here are opportunities to help FEMEF and the Elfin Forest.

**Text Editors** decide which articles, reports, and news items will be included in a coming issue. They edit, proofread, and sometimes write short articles, and then send the text to our graphic designer, who does the layout for each issue.



**Writers** research and write natural history articles, interview people of interest to *Oakleaves* readers, and report events in the Elfin Forest.

**Our need for help is urgent.** Only one very old lead editor remains after our other editors retired or resigned. FEMEF's *Oakleaves* newsletter brings news and information you wouldn't otherwise receive. If any of the volunteer jobs interest you, send an email to oakleaf@elfin-forest.org or leave a message at 805-528-0392. To see the current *Oakleaves* issue, visit www.elfin-forest.org.

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- I want to help, please call me!  
 FEMEF has permission to email me.

Memberships include an online subscription to FEMEF's quarterly newsletter *Oakleaves*.

- Check here to receive the online version by email.  
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All donations to FEMEF are tax-deductible.  
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