

# OAK LEAVES

A PUBLICATION OF THE LOS OSOS / MORRO BAY CHAPTER OF SMALL WILDERNESS AREA PRESERVATION  
P.O. BOX 6442, LOS OSOS, CALIFORNIA 93412-6442 ❖ (805) 528-2579 ❖ AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 1997

## From the President:

### West meets East

by Rose Bowker, SWAP President

While on Cape Cod, Massachusetts visiting family, Les and I had an opportunity to visit the Cape Cod National Seashore, the Wellfleet Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary, and the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History.

All three areas are similar to the Elfin Forest in that they are on sandy soil bordering on salt water (the Atlantic Ocean and Cape Cod Bay). We were impressed by the way



A boardwalk at Red Cedar Swamp allows visitors access to the mysteries of the swampy forest while protecting the inhabitants.

that visitors to each of these areas were "gently guided" through special places and provided with information in an unobtrusive but accessible manner. We were particularly impressed with the self-guided boardwalk trail through the Red Cedar Swamp at Marconi Beach, Cape Cod National Seashore, and with very little impact on the swamp.

We were also impressed by a special self-guided

trail at the National Seashore for the visually impaired that made use of a walk with knots, signage in Braille, and showcased natural features appealing to alternative senses such as smell and touch.

*West meets East continued on page 2*

## Elfin Forest Animal Survey

Roger Gambs, Ph.D., a vertebrate biologist on the faculty of the Biological Sciences Department at Cal Poly, has completed a report on the terrestrial vertebrates of the Elfin Forest. The report considers the potential short and long term effects of constructing a boardwalk access on the 214 species (amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals) either known to, or thought to, occur within the Elfin Forest.

Dr. Gambs focuses on the 35 species that have been designated by the California Department of Fish and Game and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service as species that require special conservation or protection status.

He points out that although the high species diversity of the Elfin Forest is, in itself, a significant biological attribute, the "special species status" constitutes the primary focus of impact assessments and mitigation suggestions.

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Adverse impacts can be expected as part of the construction of the boardwalk. However, he suggests the following mitigation measures which can reduce the extent of such impacts:

- Avoid the use of heavy equipment during construction. (The proposed Elfin Forest Management Plan would prohibit the use of any motorized vehicles.)
- Limit the zone of construction related activity to a band of no more than 5 ft on either side of the proposed boardwalk route.
- Restrict visitor access to the developed boardwalk and turnouts to reduce the potential loss of breeding, foraging and resting habitat.
- Prevent visitor access to the shoreline of the bay and aquatic habitat.
- Improve and expand current erosion control activities.

*Animal Survey continued on page 3*

# West Meets East *continued from page 1*

Visitors to the Wellfleet Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary have access to over 8 miles of trails along which numbered posts have been placed. Visitors can purchase a guidebook (or "rent" one for \$1) that provides anecdotal information for each of the signposts that can be read while walking along the trails. A docent told us of plans to increase the use of boardwalks ~ both to provide easier access and to channel access as they have found that where there are boardwalks, visitors stay on them. The "zone of impact" is much narrower than on trails through the loose sand.

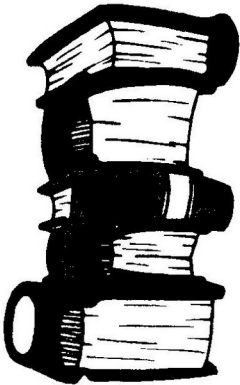
It was also very interesting to see the "respect" shown by visitors ~ Cape Cod is a very popular tourist destination. Despite the fact that each of these three areas receives a large number of visitors, it was very reassuring to see that the plant communities were not "intruded upon." Docents and rangers indicated that good use of signage, provision of access to popular areas, benches allowing visitors to stop and rest, and trash receptacles at reasonable intervals all contributed to reducing the impact of visitors.

We plan to share our slides of these areas with SWAP.

*Rose*



Round wooden floats on trailside ropes serve as markers along the trail for the visually impaired where text in English and Braille invites visitors to feel leaves and berries from the bayberry plant used for aromatic candles.



## BOOKS FOR YOU . . . **What Makes the Wind?**

*by Laurence Santrey, Illustrated by Bert Dodson, Troll Associates*

"Nobody can see the wind. But everybody can see what it does." begins this simple but very effective young person's science book. The beautiful and lively watercolors and charming text show the many effects of wind on the natural world. With examples from a child's experience (It's always warmer in the upper bunk because heat rises.), the book explains how the wind works in erosion and seed dispersal and illustrates terms such as front, mass, breeze and tornado. This book could inspire a trip to the Elfin Forest to discover what role the wind plays there.

## **SWAP BOARD MEETINGS**

The regular, second Sunday, potluck board meetings for September and October will be held at the NEP Office, at 3rd and El Moro Streets in Baywood Park at 5:30 pm on Sunday, September 14 and Sunday, October 12. Call 528-7136 to see what's on the menu/agenda. See you there!

September 14

October 12

## **1997 SWAP BOARD**

Rosemary Bowker, President  
Jerry Deitz, Treasurer  
Les Bowker, Recording Secretary  
Yolanda Waddell, Corresponding Secretary  
Janice Verity, Volunteer Coordinator  
Elsie Deitz, Special Events Coordinator  
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Ruth Allen & Robin Knapp, Membership  
Larry Grimes, Projects Coordinator  
Gordon Hensley, At Large  
Beth Wimer, At Large  
Daryl Rockholdt, At Large

# PG&E GRANT TO UNDERWRITE NEWSLETTER

SWAP has received a \$2280 grant from the Pacific Gas and Electric Company's Community Vitality Program which will enable us to increase the scope and circulation of Oak Leaves. In this way we will be expanding our outreach and education efforts to increase community awareness and support as well as volunteer participation in our ongoing educational, revegetation and restoration projects.

Under the terms of the grant, the "new" newsletter, which begins with this issue, will include more educational articles and it will be mailed to all SLO County schools and selected officials and community organizations. In addition, Oak Leaves will become a bi-monthly publication.



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Some of the features we plan include a column on Elfin Forest plants to help visitors recognize prominent and significant species, items from and for young people who have become involved with the Elfin Forest, and interviews with our walk leaders. We welcome ideas for new features as well.

Our thanks to the PG&E Contributions Committee from the Los Padres Division, the Morro Bay Power Plant and the Diablo Canyon Power Plant for underwriting the increased printing and mailing costs for supporting SWAP's revised expansion efforts. We hope to increase our reader's knowledge and enjoyment of the Elfin Forest and to encourage more volunteer participation in our projects.

## Animal Survey *continued from page 1*

- Plant native plants and eradicate non-native plants around the boardwalk and overlooks.
- Implement a comprehensive program of native plant re-introduction and weedy plant eradication throughout the Elfin Forest. This would significantly improve animal habitat.

Dr. Gambs' report indicates that while the boardwalk would provide visitor access to some sensitive areas, failure to build the boardwalk would not prevent adverse impacts. So long as people and pets continue to visit the Elfin Forest, there will be accompanying impacts on biodiversity and habitat. He suggests the addition of a low railing along the edges of the boardwalk and turnouts "might" tend to encourage visitors to remain on these structures and thereby reduce the impact of "cross-country" traffic.

On the question of requiring a quantitative study of the animals of the Elfin Forest prior to construction, Dr. Gambs stated that there is no need to obtain quantitative information on all species of wildlife now occurring in the Elfin Forest. In fact, he stated that he would "argue against such a requirement unless the Elfin Forest is being dedicated solely to ecological research." He went on to state that the most critical data base is not available to us: that of the biodiversity and population attributes of those species that were there prior to the development of Los Osos and Baywood Park. Such a database would allow an understanding of the impact of human influences on the present condition of the Elfin Forest. Some species were probably present that are no longer present. Other species may be present in greater or fewer numbers as a result of human impact.

This advisory report has been submitted to the SLO County Environmental Coordinator's Office who will use it in their staff report to the SLO County Parks Commission evaluating the universal access boardwalk.

## Moves from the "Moving Forward Committee"

The "Moving Forward Committee" is busily working on SWAP's transition to our new "Adopt-a-Park" responsibilities. SWAP is on the move, gearing up for changes, having fun, and starting new programs.

The committee is moving right along with plans for the "Fun and Festive" celebration planned for November 2nd at the Los Osos Community Center. We will elect new officers, have a showing of the slideshow winners, win prizes, and socialize at an indoor picnic-with all the trimmings. You'll be hearing more details as summer moves into fall.

The new SWAP Nominating Committee is already preparing the slate of officers to be voted on at the November 2nd general meeting. The committee members were chosen for their wide participation in community affairs. Jerri Chadwick, Sylvia Smith, and Patrick McGibney are the members appointed by the SWAP Board. Janice Verity is the SWAP Board representative.

Next year we hope to see many new faces active in SWAP. New and old alike look forward to the next phases of the Elfin Forest preservation.

✓  
Mark your calendar for the "Fun and Festive" celebration planned for November 2nd at the Los Osos Community Center.

Meet our Walk Leaders...

## Shirley Sparling

SWAP's Third Saturday Walks have been offered to the public every month for several years. Each walk is led by a generous individual who is willing to share her/his expertise and special interests with visitors to the Elfin Forest. The subjects have ranged from fungi to photography and astronomy to zoology. While expanding our awareness, the walk leaders have also enriched our appreciation of the Elfin Forest's diversity and its inherent value. This feature of the "new" newsletter will focus on the people who give us these gifts and acquaint us with those who help us to know the Elfin Forest better.



The Third Saturday Walk set for Saturday, August 16th, "By Their Leaves You Shall Know Them" will be led by Shirley Sparling, Ph.D. Dr. Sparling has retired from the Biological Sciences Department at Cal Poly where she taught for over 30 years, specializing in algae. We interviewed her between work at the Holloway Garden at Montaña de Oro and preparation for a walk scheduled for this weekend.

- Q: What does the title of your walk invite us to learn?
- A: When we identify plants, fruit or flowers make it an easier job. But because plants aren't always in bloom, we have to rely on leaves. Many times leaves are just ignored. It's fun to see if you can identify a plant by its leaves. For the walk, I will have a simple key to help people with the identification process.
- Q: You lead walks for the NHA, the San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden, and, of course, for SWAP. You seem exceptionally committed to on-site nature education for the public. Why do you think it is so important?
- A: I think learning often goes from the specific to the general. The concrete, visual experience available on a hike enhances the discovery of knowledge. People have fun while they learn, and they can use this new information in the future.
- Q: What is your favorite part of docent work?
- A: Leading the walks; helping people discover what's there.

## THIRD SATURDAY WALKS

### August 16

"By Their Leaves You Shall Know Them" is the title of Dr. Shirley Sparling's walk designed to help us identify a plant when it isn't in bloom. We'll learn how truly varied and individual each plant species is, and how easy it is to know a plant from its leaves alone.

### September 20

Take a journey through time while walking along the Elfin Forest's paths with Cal Poly geologist David Chipping. His story, beginning in the geologic past with the formation of the "Franciscan melange," will help us to better understand the land around us. A plant enthusiast as well, Dr. Chipping will show how local plant communities have formed as a result of geologic action.

### October 18

Discover what is underfoot in the Elfin Forest with Dr. Tom Rice, Cal Poly soils scientist. Dr. Rice will provide walk participants with a new understanding of the importance of soils which support plants, animals and ultimately, humans.

Walks begin at 9:30 am (unless otherwise noted) at the north end of 15th Street off Santa Ysabel in Los Osos. Wear comfortable shoes, long sleeves and pants to avoid poison oak and mosquitoes. Please park carefully, avoiding driveways and mailboxes. We ask that you not bring dogs or other pets. The easy paced walks last 1-1/2 to 2 hours.

**Call 528-4540 evenings for information.**

- Q: You told me you had to learn some new things to prepare for an upcoming walk. Does that ongoing learning play a big part in the challenge and fun of docent work?
- A: Yes. I don't enjoy it if I'm not well prepared. But it's fun to learn new things. Retired people can't rest on what they knew, and exploring in the library is great. Just yesterday I was researching the California poppy and discovered that it was originally declared the state flower by a floral society before being officially named by the legislature in 1903. The bill was actually vetoed by the governor twice!
- Q: Thanks for talking with our readers today. We'll look forward to discovering some things we didn't know before with you on the August 16th walk.
- A: You're welcome.



*Joe Dickerson discusses capturing light and fixing shadows on a recent Third Saturday Walk.*

## Shop and Save the Morros!

The Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club has set up a fund with Sclaris to benefit the Morros Preservation Fund. If you shop at Sclaris and save the receipts, one percent of the amount spent can be donated to the Morros Preservation Fund.


All you have to do is save your receipts and send them to the Sierra Club. They will total everyone's receipts and submit them to Sclaris. Then Sclaris will send a check for one percent of the total amount to the Morros Preservation Fund. This is truly shop and SAVE!!

Address the envelope for your saved receipts to:

Santa Lucia Chapter Sierra Club  
P.O. Box 15755  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

## Harbor Festival on the Horizon

Put October 4th and 5th on your calendar: SWAP will again be one of the loyal and dependable groups who participate in the Harbor Festival. Last year SWAP earned a nice check to support our projects, plus doing a public relations service for ourselves and the Morro Bay area. We will again be working under Flo Ross as overall festival chairperson for volunteers, and Janice Verity as the SWAP volunteer captain. Be expecting a call!



*Sunday  
September 7th  
3:30 p.m.*

**Calling all Friends,  
Elves and Docents!**

Come one, come all,  
eat, drink,  
be merry and mingle  
at the ...

## 4th Annual Estuary Day Barbecue

Space is limited at the Morro Bay State Park Campground, so please pick up your complimentary tickets for either beef or chicken a.s.a.p. - no later than September 1, and sign up to bring a side dish, salad, or dessert at:

The Morro Bay National Estuary Program Office,  
1400 3rd Street, Los Osos,  
Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

We will mail tickets to out-of-town attendees.

For more information  
call 528-8126, 528-7874 or 528-5800.

In the interest of reducing/reusing/recycling,  
please feel free to bring your own place setting (plate, cup, silverware, etc.)!

Soft drinks and bread will be provided.

Bring your tickets to the food line for a delicious meal.  
Those with tickets will be served first.

***We hope to see you all for a fun, fun day!***

**ESTUARY DAY is sponsored by:**  
Friends of the Estuary,  
Central Coast Natural History Association,  
The Docent Council,  
the local staff of the California State Parks,  
Small Wilderness Area Preservation (SWAP),  
and the Morro Bay National Estuary Program

## THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU

to P. Childers, D. Croy, E. Frye, S. Gottlieb,  
J. Heller, V. Holland, V. Jones, E. Kengel,  
R. Lane, A. Lindeman, E. Mathias, D. Miller,  
D. Norwood, N. Page, M. Peterson, F. Ross,  
B. Salter, M. Schwab, J. Smalley, N. Stephens,  
F. Villa, Y. Waddell and D. Walters.

## CCNHA Hosts Wine Tasting and Silent Art Auction



The Central Coast Natural History Association invites you to join them for a wine tasting – featuring Cottonwood Canyon wines – and a silent Art Auction on Saturday, August 23, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Museum of Natural History in Morro Bay. Delicious hors d'oeuvres will be served by Phoenix Fine Catering. Tickets are \$15 per person and are available at the museum. For more information contact Colleen Wheeler at the museum at 772-2694.

The partial list of artists participating in the silent auction include: Dennis Curry, Dorothy Cutler, Mark Greenaway, George Lepp, Jim Little, Judy Lyon, Blanche McDonald, Bill Olsen, John Partridge, Kolan Peterson, Ruth Roden, and Debbie Veldkamp.

The event is a celebration of the offer of Cottonwood Canyon Winery owners, Norman and Sharon Beko, to generously donate \$2 from the sale of each bottle of their Bistro Classic Pinot Noir Wine to the Museum's Exhibit Modernization Fund. The wine tasting and art auction will celebrate the release of this wine and the Beko's commitment to the museum.

If you can't attend the wine tasting and art auction, please support the Museum's Exhibit Modernization Fund with a donation, or visit one of Cottonwood Canyon's two wineries at 4330 Santa Fe Road, San Luis Obispo and 3940 Dominion Road, Santa Maria. For information about ordering the wine (in states where allowed by law), contact Cottonwood Canyon at (805) 549-WINE or (805) 937-9063

## NEW RESOURCE FOR SWAP

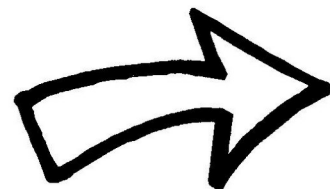
Aryan Roest, a zoologist retired from Cal Poly and a long-time member of SWAP, has compiled a Key to Reptiles and Amphibians and a Mammal Key for the Central Coast. Dr. Roest has donated this work which represents years of local observations to SWAP. We will be working to augment this valuable information with illustrations and eventually to make it available to the public. Many thanks to Dr. Roest for his ongoing generosity to SWAP.



*... and the next generation ...*

Young people have always taken a very active interest in the Elfin Forest. From penny drives and aluminium can collections during our intense fund-raising period to purchase the Elfin Forest, to History Day Presentations and community service projects, the next generation is already positioning itself to steward the Elfin Forest and similar places. From time to time, we will have feature pieces especially for the next generation.

On the next page of this issue we present the impressions of second graders from Sunnyside school who visited the Elfin Forest with Dr. Les Bowker in June.



## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF... THE ELFIN FOREST (A Slideshow Contest)

Here's an opportunity to create your own impression of the Elfin Forest with slides. With the help of photographer Ron Bayhan, SWAP is sponsoring a slideshow contest which will culminate in the presentation of the most representative set(s) of slides during our Annual Meeting on November 2nd.

The slideshow should include typical plant life of the Elfin Forest as well as landscapes and human beings. If possible, add some shots of birds, mammals (no dogs or domestic cats, please!), reptiles, amphibians, insects or spiders. Try to show the passage of a day from early morning until sunset; it doesn't all have to be shot on the same day, of course. We suggest attending one of our 3rd Saturday walks (listed on page 4) if you aren't familiar with the Elfin Forest trails.

The finished presentation should contain up to 20 slides, using the same type of film for all slides. Please number and write your name on each slide; place them in plastic sheets for ease of handling by our judges.

Send them to SWAP Slideshow Contest, P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos CA 93412. The deadline for submission is October 10. The winning slideshow(s) will be kept by SWAP for educational, training and promotional purposes.

In addition to the public showing on November 2, the winning photographer(s) will receive a gift certificate from 1 Hour Photo Lab and a photo credit each time the winner's slides are used.

For additional information, phone Ron Bayhan at 528-6444.

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June 6/1997

Dear Mr. Bower

Thank you for showing us the Elf forest my favorite plant was the Deer chocolate and My favorite place was ghost hall well I saw Butterflies and crickets I had lots of fun  
Sam Anthony

June 6, 1997

Dear Mr. Bower,

Thank you for guiding us through the Elf forest I really like the dark woods.

Love

Christina

Person

June 6, 1997  
Dear Mr. Bowers

Thank you for guiding us through the Elf forest I like the ghost hall well I saw the moss I saw to lizards  
Abuse

June 6, 1997  
Dear Mr. Bowers

Thank you for guiding us through the Elf forest my favorite thing is when we saw ghost bar I really really enjoyed it I like to visit  
Your friend  
Megan Hays

June 6, 1997  
Dear Mr. Bower,

Thank you for showing us the Elf forest I appreciate it. Thank you again some more to the Elf forest your friends mean a lot to me

June 6, 1997  
Dear Mr. Bower

Thank you for guiding us I like the things that you let me like not of the forest and teaching me the plant name like black sage I like the mystery  
Eric

June 6, 1997

Dear Mr. Bower

Thank you for teaching us about the different kind of plants I enjoyed everything that was there I'm glad we got to go there I hope I would of got poison oak but I'm glad I didn't get any poison oak  
Lagen

June 6, 1997  
Dear Mr. Bower

Thank you for showing us the Elf forest I really enjoyed it I saw a lizard and lizard toke

Your friend

Hardy

Thank you for showing us the Elf forest I like the things that you let me like not of the forest and teaching me the plant name like black sage I like the mystery  
Your friend  
Sunny Sanchez

June 6, 1997  
Mr. Bower,

Your friend  
Juan Carlos

Thank you for guiding us I appreciate it it was fun I like ghost hall the moss was Spoketame I would like to go again because it was fun what is your favorite plant I like poison  
your buds  
Robert

Production and mailing costs for this newsletter have been underwritten by a grant from Pacific Gas and Electric Company.

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## CELEBRATE COASTWEEKS

Have you been to the beach lately? Get ready to go, because it's time for Coastweeks, the annual celebration of our nation's shores and waterways. Coastweeks '97 will be held from September 20 through October 13, a three-week long celebration focusing on exciting and creative events to promote public awareness of our magnificent coastline.

Each week has a focus on a variety of environmental issues: week one examines pollution issues, week two looks at habitat topics, and week three centers around wildlife issues and events. The overall theme is

***Educate/Participate/Celebrate!***



On a local level, Friends of the Estuary will be sponsoring a Coastal Cleanup Day on Saturday, September 20 from 9 a.m. to noon — meet at the corner of Turri Road and South Bay Boulevard.

Call Jerri Chadwick at 528-5800 if you need more information.



## MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

- Member \$12     Defender \$100
- Steward \$25     Champion \$250
- Protector \$50     Life Member \$1000
- I want to help, please call me!

Have you renewed your membership on time? Check out the label on this newsletter for the date you last sent in your membership.

***EVERY membership counts!!***

Make checks payable to SWAP,  
Mail to Small Wilderness Area Preservation,  
P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412 - 6442