

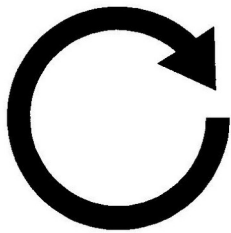
# OAK LEAVES

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 ❖ OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 1997

From the President:

## Coming Full Circle

by Rose Bowker, SWAP President



On Wednesday, August 20, I spoke to the Estero Bay Newcomer's Club at Knicker's, the new restaurant at the Dairy Creek Golf Course. I was pleasantly surprised by how many of those present had already visited the Elfin Forest either on their own or by attending one of our walks.

Membership in this organization is restricted to persons who have lived in Los Osos or Morro Bay for less than 5 years. Many of those persons were not familiar with our efforts to raise public awareness of the Elfin Forest and find sources of funding to complete the purchase. In fact, as a 20 year resident of Los Osos, I was considered very much the "old timer!"

As I began my talk, I told of the intrepid band of local residents with absolutely no organizational or fund raising experience who took on the task of finding a way to locate the millions of dollars that would be necessary to prevent the residential development of the Elfin Forest. Thanks to the generosity of local photographers (Larry Grimes, Yolanda Waddell, Dennis Sheridan and others) we were able to put together a slide show with a script (We were so afraid of forgetting to tell folks EVERYTHING!) and took the Elfin Forest on the road.

Our very first public appearance was a presentation to the Estero Bay Newcomers Club in Shell Beach. Pat Grimes spoke and I "assisted." Neither of us relaxed until we were in the car on the way home. I shared that experience with the current membership and said that it felt as though we had come full circle. It gave me a great sense of pride in our supportive membership and hard working board to be able to relate what we had been able to accomplish.

*Rose*

## SWAP Finishes Natural Resource Management Plan!

The San Luis Obispo County Parks Commission voted to accept the Elfin Forest Natural Resource Management Plan at its August 21 meeting. The plan has been 3 years in the making. It incorporates elements of the existing plan for Morro Bay State Park, reflects comments received from the public, and has been carefully reviewed and edited by State Parks, County Parks, and the County Parks Commission.

Parks Facilities Manager Pete Jenny spoke to the nature of the document. There had been some concern that the inclusion of potential projects (such as street end parking or restrooms) would mean that the projects would be implemented; there was also concern that the failure to identify a particular project would prevent that project from being considered without a rewrite of the plan.

Mr. Jenny stated that the word "plan" is misleading. The term "guidelines" is a better descriptor. From the

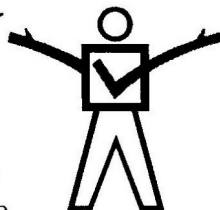
start, the document was intended to be an internal working document. It does not have the legal binding authority of an official planning document (such as the San Luis Obispo County Natural Areas Plan adopted by the County Board of Supervisors in 1992).

Copies of the final draft will be placed in the Los Osos Library. Dennis Philbin will add the text of the document to SLO County Parks' web page. SWAP has asked that the neighbors on the street ends be provided with copies. Other persons interested in obtaining a copy may contact SLO County Parks at 781-5930 or stop by Room 470 in the County Government Center in San Luis Obispo.

Mr. Jenny invited persons to contact him at any time by phone or in writing (Mr. Pete Jenny, SLO County Parks, County Government Center, San Luis Obispo, CA 93408). Written communications will be kept in a file with the final draft of the management plan.

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# SLO County Parks Adopts Mission Statement and Goals



As an outcome of a retreat attended by County Parks Staff and the SLO County Parks Commission, the following mission statement and goals have been adopted.

## Mission Statement:

*"San Luis Obispo County Parks ensures diversified opportunities for recreation and the personal enrichment of the county's residents and visitors while protecting its natural, cultural and historical resources."*

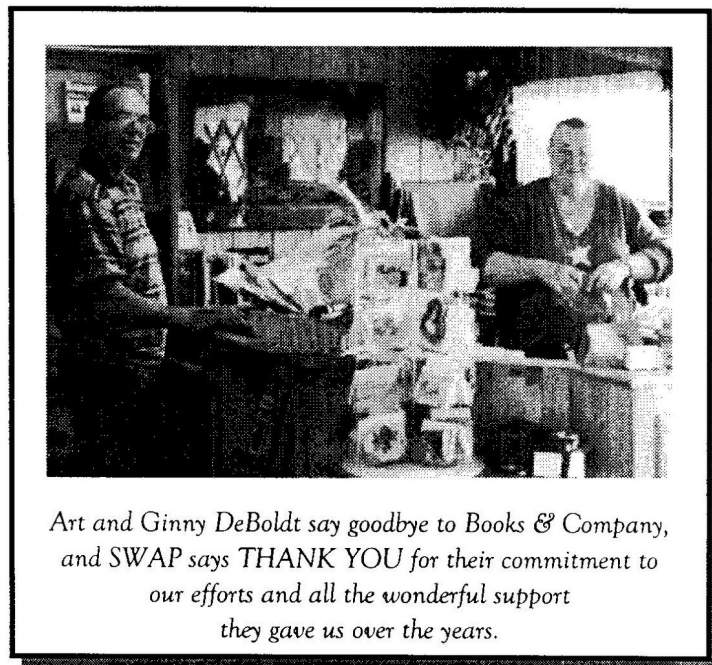
## Goals:

1. Provide an equitable distribution of park and recreation services throughout San Luis Obispo County, with special emphasis on the County's unincorporated communities. Funding priorities should be established through use of the Park's Capital Improvement Program.

2. Continue to evaluate park and recreation needs in relationship to costs and public satisfaction.

3. Ensure that all new park and recreation opportunities are thoroughly evaluated for their impact on routine operation and maintenance costs.

4. Provide revenue generating parks and recreation opportunities designed to provide for local needs and enhance tourism.



*Art and Ginny DeBoldt say goodbye to Books & Company, and SWAP says THANK YOU for their commitment to our efforts and all the wonderful support they gave us over the years.*

5. Pursue supplemental opportunities to meet the park and recreation needs of San Luis Obispo County by maximizing the use of grants, donations, cooperative ventures, and other creative means.

6. Maintain active and regular communication and coordination with other park and recreation service providers in San Luis Obispo County.

7. Complete a site master plan for all San Luis Obispo County parks, focusing first on those undeveloped and/or partially developed sites.

8. Continue to explore various funding programs that provide for greater self sufficiency and provide a stable financial source for the development, operation, and maintenance of County park and recreation facilities.

## **SWAP BOARD MEETINGS**

The regular, second Sunday, potluck board meetings for November and December will be held at the NEP Office, at 3rd and El Moro Streets in Baywood Park at 5:30 pm on Sunday, November 9 and Sunday, December 14. Call 528-7136 to see what's on the menu/agenda. See you there!

**november 9**

**december 14**

## **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  
 Patricia Grimes, Publications Coordinator  
 Ruth Allen & Robin Knapp, Membership  
 Larry Grimes, Projects Coordinator  
 Gordon Hensley, At Large  
 Beth Wimer, At Large  
 Daryl Rockholdt, At Large

## SWAP Committee News

### *Moving Forward Committee*

## Come to an "Inside Picnic"

Early Light Dinner

November 2nd ♦ 2:30 - 5:30 p.m.

South Bay Community Center

The "Moving Forward Committee" is planning a "Fun and Festive" celebration! Our annual meeting will feature a showing of the slideshow winners from the photographic contest, "A Day in the Life of the Elfin Forest," the election of officers, and socializing and fun at our "indoor picnic" (our unique concept). A donation of \$3/person at the door will help to cover the cost of food. Bring your lawn chairs because as picnickers we will be arranging ourselves on the floor. Leave your serious side behind!



We will need to know how many to plan for, so call Janice Verity at 528-8151 for a reservation. Please call by October 29th.

*Elise Dietz -  
528-74736*

### *Nominating Committee*

## New Board in the Offing

Jeri Chadwick, Patrick McGibney, Sylvia Smith and Janice Verity, SWAP's Nominating Committee, have had a successful summer. Some very special people have accepted roles for our 1998 board. Recently a walk and picnic dinner was held in the Elfin Forest for prospective board members. On one of those warm nights, the forest showed its many charms.

The Nominating Committee extends an invitation to our general membership to let us know if you, also, would be interested in being on the SWAP Board. We're flexible, casual, and involved in the myriad decisions that relate to upholding our "Adopt-a-Park" agreement with the County. We have potlucks on the second Sunday of the month at the National Estuary Program Office at 3rd and El Moro Streets in Baywood. Meetings begin at 5:30 pm and end at 7:30. Think about committing yourself to a leadership role in SWAP. If you are interested, call Janice Verity at 528-8151 or any of the other committee members listed above to find out what positions are available.

*... and from the Next Generation*

## The Armstrong Connection

Well over ten years ago, when the Los Osos/Morro Bay Chapter of SWAP was in its infancy, Susan and John Armstrong's family made the first major donation to the Elfin Forest Preservation Fund in memory of John J. Felt. It was a generous act honoring someone dear, but it was also a huge demonstration of faith in the dream of preserving local habitat and in a band of naive preservationists. In the familiar pattern of our members, the Armstrongs have contributed to SWAP in a variety of ways over the years, but recently we received a special gift from their daughter. Hilary, who grew up during the Elfin Forest Project, used it to inspire her senior English term paper at Morro Bay High School.

"Small Wilderness Area

Preservation: a History of Land Conservation in the Los Osos Community" takes its theme from Margaret Mead's well-known comment, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change the world; indeed it's

the only thing that ever does." Hilary's carefully researched and documented paper presents the history of SWAP and details the fund raising efforts and accomplishments of the small band of citizens who with the support of countless volunteers and donors such as her parents, were able to change their corner of the world.

Our thanks to Hilary Armstrong for a thorough record of SWAP's work and our best wishes for success in her academic career at Santa Clara University. We expect her knowledge of land conservation efforts and her parents' example will come into play again in her life when she will insist to some burgeoning group that indeed community projects can succeed.

Hilary's carefully researched and documented paper presents the history of SWAP and details (its) fund raising efforts and accomplishments

## New Education Committee

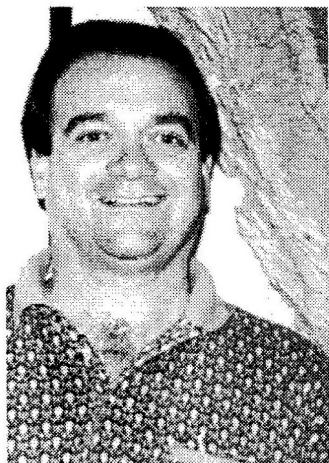


In keeping with its mission to provide information to educators and the community at large about the Elfin Forest, SWAP has formed an Education Committee. Committee members Beth Wimer (Chair), Robin Knapp, Teresa Larsen and Yolanda Waddell will focus at first on a revision of the Elfin Forest Teacher's Guide, and will also update our traveling slide program and the script which accompanies it. In future months, the committee will work on outreach to schools, development of a trail guide, and informational support for our new docent program. Persons interested in joining the committee or sharing ideas may contact Beth Wimer at 528-2027.

Meet our Walk Leaders...

## Tom Rice

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. While expanding our awareness, the talk leaders have also enriched our appreciation of the Elfin Forest. In these interviews we get to know the people who give us these gifts and help us to know the Elfin Forest better.



The Third Saturday Walk scheduled for Saturday, October 18th will focus on the soil beneath our feet. Dr. Tom Rice, Department Chair of Cal Poly's Soil Science Department and former director of the Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District and Project Coordinator for the Morro Bay Watershed Enhancement Project, will show visitors what "grounds" life in the Elfin Forest. We caught

up with Dr. Rice on the second day after his return from a visit to mainland China where he visited soil recovery projects in the interior of China.

*Q: Just what is it that you like so much about dirt?*

*A:* We soil scientists have a saying, "Everything is built on soil," and it's true. Dirt integrates all natural and human induced impacts and processes. Ultimately, soil serves as an historic record of climate changes and vegetative communities. If you understand soil, you can understand the past. Modified soils – agricultural or urban – reflect human impact for better or worse. Appropriate human stewardship of the soil will guarantee optimal use of the soil in the future.

*Q: What do soil scientists mean by "reading" soil?*

*A:* You examine the physical properties of soil and then analyze it in the lab to understand the chemical and biological properties which tell the story of its past. Deep subsoil (rock or alluvium) material reflects original material from which soil was formed. Comparing the two for things like pollen content, clay movement, salt movement and evidence of mineralogic change caused by climatic changes shows us the relative age of the soil.

*Q: What can we learn about a place like the Elfin Forest from the soil?*

## THIRD SATURDAY WALKS

### October 18

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

### November 15

Join entomologist and reptile enthusiast Dennis Sheridan as he tours the Elfin Forest in search of lizards, salamanders, frogs and other species of reptiles and amphibians. Learn how these elfin creatures survive and protect themselves from predators and, yes - boys!

### December 20

"Gifts of Forest and Bay" will be the theme of marine biologist and county supervisor Bud Laurent, who will help walkers view the Elfin Forest and Morro Bay estuary as a complete wetlands system. A tour of the Elfin Forest will include panoramic views of the bay and shell middens left by ancient Chumash who used the bay as a source of food.

*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.**

*A:* We can learn about landscape forms and the relative age of soils there and how that's reflected in the vegetative communities. There's a holistic relationship between sand type, slope, organic material and micro-climates. Deep recent uniform sand deposits (no change in color or texture) reflect fairly recent sand deposition by coastal winds whereas a variation in color or clay content shows long-term water percolation carrying suspended clays from topsoil to subsoil. We'll contrast the soil by examining the differences between the cool, moist soil under the oaks with the shallow, light soil of the grasslands and we'll look at how soil, slope and vegetative cover work together to create micro-climates hospitable to differing vegetative communities.

*Q: Thanks for the interview, and let us know if you put together a program on your visit to China.*

*A:* Sure. See you on the 18th!



*Heroic volunteer waterers who nurtured the revegetation project through this rainless season.*

## Coastal Conservancy Grant Project Completed

Project Coordinator Larry Grimes has submitted the final report on the Bush Lupine Point Revegetation Project to the Coastal Conservancy's Nonprofits Grant Program. The \$4000 grant supported stabilization and restoration of the eroded slopes on the point using "checkerboard" sites selected and replanted under the direction of consultant Peter Waldburger with site-specific seed and seedlings.

Through the persevering efforts of our volunteer watering crew and provision of a water source from the County, the report cites over a 50% planting "take." The "checkerboard" ap-

proach which provides ongoing public access to the restoration area has suffered very little vandalism and is significant for recycling dead plant material to stabilize the soil.

"Once again," said Grimes, "the collaboration of dedicated volunteers, Coastal Conservancy funding and County Parks support has proved a success in enhancing the Elfin Forest."

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## Help Protect San Simeon Point

The North Coast Alliance is working to protect San Simeon Point from the Hearst Corporation's proposed resort development. The California Coastal Commission will be holding a hearing in San Luis Obispo County in January on this project.

The North Coast Alliance is looking for both volunteers and donations to support their efforts. Persons interested in more information can contact Jackie Kelly at 927-9381. Contributions may be sent to North Coast Alliance/Friends, P.O. Box 762, Cambria CA 93428.

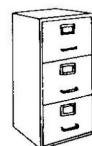
### THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU

to L. Armstrong, J. Baily, J. Barnes, R. Bentley, L. Bhuta, P.A. Boering, R. Bowker, D. Broneske, S. Burns, M. Campagna, A. Collins, K. Copeland, E. Cunningham, A. Cushing, L. Daniel, C. Dickey, J. duVernit, F. Elswick, D. Fourie, N. Fuller, P. Grange, L.C. Grimes, P. Grimes, D. Harris, H. Hileman, J. Hoffman, R. Judd, L. Kass, R. Knapp, N. Kolliner, E. Landreath, M. Leizegar, L. Markwort, MB Harbor Festival, W. McKeown, A. Mertz, M. Munson, K. Muschenetz, W. Newman, M. O'Connor, E. Olson, M. Parker, P. Perlman, B. Pewitt, PG&E, A. Phillips, E. Pierce, B. Priest, N. Pryor, R. Ruppert, C. Schanberger, J. Shepard, D. Sheridan, State of CA, L. Steinbeck, A. Tott, E. Townsend, P. Van Rhyn, J. Verity, D. Weir, J.B. White, J. Wright, R. Zank.

## Hooray for Harbor Festival Volunteers

Volunteers from SWAP again staffed two entrance gates at the Harbor Festival. Our group is efficient, friendly and dependable! SWAP not only helps the Morro Bay community, but earns money for their projects. Janice Verity and Bill Jackson were co-captains this year. We are especially grateful to students from Nancy Mann's class at Cuesta College. Several of her students were solid volunteers for SWAP. It's great to see this age group be involved in the community and support SWAP.

Thanks also go to Betty Priest, Bill and Norma Vaughan, Devra Cooper, Robert Cavallero, Les and Rose Bowker, Rob and Nancy Reid, Yolanda and Jay Waddell, Pat and Larry Grimes, Ann Calhoun, Karen Kimura, Roger Verity, Don and Chris Rose, Shauna Mathews, Shannon Ward, Sam Schmidt, Ashley Crowe, Una Ramos and Marcia Munson.



### SWAP WISH LIST:

Anyone out there with shelving or an old file cabinet to store our past? If you have one to donate, call 528-4540. Thanks!

# CCNHA Reschedules 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, October 25, from 6-8 p.m. at the Museum of Natural History in Morro Bay. (The event was originally scheduled in August.) 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



July 17, 1997

Mr. Jerry Deitz, Treasurer  
SWAP  
P.O. Box 6442  
Los Osos, CA 93412

Dear Mr. Deitz:

Please accept the enclosed donation in the amount of \$100.00 from the Cal Poly Staff Council in honor of Rosemary Bowker. Rose served as Council Chair for two consecutive years, as well as holding other offices, and continues to lend her help and expertise as an *ex officio* member. We are grateful to Rose for her devotion and for the leadership she has exhibited over the years.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 756-2279.

Sincerely,

*Pat Broering*  
Pat Broering  
Chair

■ CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC  
STATE UNIVERSITY  
■ SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA  
■ 93407

Many thanks to Pat Broering and the Cal Poly staff Council for their recognition of Rose Bowker's efforts and for their choice of SWAP as the vehicle for that recognition.

## Volunteer Opportunities with SWAP

Here are some specific jobs related to the Elfin Forest Natural Area that are looking for a matching volunteer. Are you interested in doing one of them?

- ✓ develop a self-guided tour of the Elfin Forest
- ✓ develop interpretive signage
- ✓ collect seed for revegetation work
- ✓ grow plants for revegetation work
- ✓ exotic weed control
- ✓ trail grooming and maintenance
- ✓ walk leader/docent
- ✓ develop "road show" display materials
- ✓ design informational flyers
- ✓ prepare CD rom from Elfin Forest slides
- ✓ make new lesson plans for teacher's guide
- ✓ develop activities for children
- ✓ prepare a bibliography of future funding sources
- ✓ coordinate outreach to public and private schools
- ✓ make seasonal surveys of plants, birds, wildlife

If you're interested in any of these specific projects or just want to be part of the SWAP volunteer crew, call Janice Verity, 528-8151.

# The Dusky-footed Wood Rat: At Home in the Elfin Forest

By Yolanda Waddell

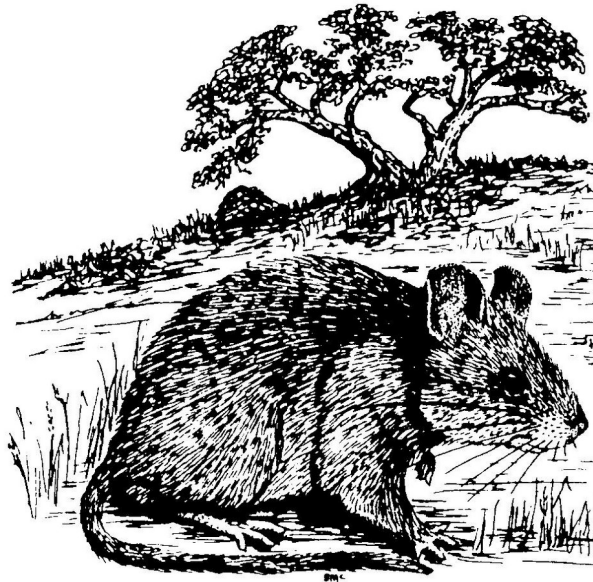
The Dusky-footed Wood Rat is a native American, one of 22 species of woodrats inhabiting North America. In California, the woodrat is widespread throughout the state west of the Sierra, preferring to make its nest in or under live oaks. The Elfin Forest's low-growing coast live oaks, with their spreading, twisting branches, provide a perfect home for the forest's woodrat population.

Few people have seen the mainly nocturnal woodrats, but their houses are very visible, looking like tall brush piles under the gnarled oak trees. A typical woodrat lodge or house has several entrances, a nest (bedroom), a food storage room (pantry), numerous passageways (halls), and a lookout terrace (front porch). It can measure 4 to 6 feet across at the base, and be up to 6 feet tall. Each house has one woodrat occupant except during mating and nesting season. A well-made woodrat house, one that sheds the rain, keeps out the heat and cold, and is near ready sources of food, is likely to house many generations of woodrats and last for decades.

The industrious woodrat works constantly to keep its house in good repair, picking up twigs and leaves as it goes on its rounds. If it should see something more attractive, such as a bright coin or shiny object, it will drop what it has and take the new piece. Because of this habit, it is often called a pack rat or trade rat. A Morro Bay Museum docent told me that the bright yellow plastic tape he tied to branches to mark a trail in the Elfin Forest kept disappearing. He learned who the culprit was when he saw some of the tape woven among the sticks of a woodrat lodge.

Woodrats are surprisingly large - 14 to 18 inches long, half of which is tail. They have rather large eyes and ears and soft fur ranging in shades of brown from buff to cinnamon. The undersides are whitish, and the tops of the Dusky-footed woodrat's hind feet are, of course dark, with white toes. They can climb quite well, and often travel through the forest along low branches rather than on the

ground. They eat as they go, enjoying coffeeberry leaves and berries, ceanothus leaves and flowers, chamise flowers, blackberry leaves and berries, and even poison oak. In the spring they munch miner's lettuce and some kinds of mushrooms; in the fall, they go for berries, seeds and acorns.



*This Becky McFarland illustration of a Dusky Wood Rat graces the cover of the Pocket Guide to the Plants and Animals of the Elfin Forest Natural Area. See the following page for information about where to get a copy of this guide.*

Dusky-footed Woodrats are timid, neat, and curious. They lead solitary lives for the most part, although other creatures such as salamanders, frogs and insects have been found living in woodrat lodges. They breed about three times a year with litters of two or three young being born in a lined nest in the mother rat's house. Chances of survival for young rats is limited by predators such as skunks, badgers, weasels, coyotes, and owls.

In Los Osos as in many places along the California coast, live oak groves and the plant and animal communities they support have been bulldozed away to make room for human "lodges." The woodrats are unaware of us, going about their busy lives, building and repairing houses, raising young, and continuing their species. Fortu-

nately for us and the woodrats, the Elfin Forest is still intact and contains a stable woodrat population, part of a marvelous ecosystem which has existed for thousands of years at the edge of the Morro Bay Estuary.

## Quick Facts:

### The Dusky Wood Rat ...

- is 14 to 18 inches long, half of which is tail.
- is one of 22 species of woodrats inhabiting North America.
- is timid, neat, curious, and industrious, working constantly to keep its house in good repair.
- lives in a lodge or house with several entrances, a nest (bedroom), a food storage room (pantry), numerous passageways (halls), and a lookout terrace (front porch). The lodge can measure 4 to 6 feet across at the base, and be up to 6 feet tall.

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

Diablo Canyon Power Plant  
Los Padres Customer Operations  
Morro Bay Power Plant

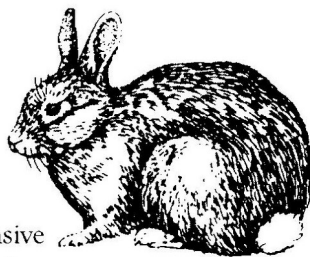


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# Elfin Forest Pocket Guide Available



SWAP is proud to have published the comprehensive "Pocket Guide to the Plants and Animals of the Elfin Forest Natural Area."

Edited by Yolanda Waddell, with illustrations by Becky McFarland, the extensive, 25-page guide covers 24 mammals, 13 amphibians and reptiles, 110 birds, 121 arthropods, 150 flowering plants and 35 fungi known to occur in the Elfin Forest. The species lists were compiled by Aryan Roest, Ph.D., Ron Ruppert, Jim Royer, V.L. Holland, Ph.D. and Dennis Sheridan. Funds for printing were provided by a grant from the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors' Environmental Projects Fund.

Copies of this guide will be available for \$1 on Third Saturday Walks, and is also available at Volumes of Pleasure Bookstore in Los Osos.

## 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