



# O A K L E A V E S

A PUBLICATION OF THE LOS OSOS / MORRO BAY CHAPTER OF SMALL WILDERNESS AREA PRESERVATION  
P.O. BOX 6442, LOS OSOS, CALIFORNIA 93412-6442 ❖ (805) 546-1199 ❖ OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1998

## Good News from the Chair...

### Commissioner Nava to Speak at Annual Meeting, Boardwalk Funds Pending

I can't believe it! It's time for our Annual Meeting again! So get out your red crayon, circle November 7th and make plans to attend right now. Our special guest speaker this year will be Pedro Nava, California Coastal Commissioner and a civil lawyer practicing in Santa Barbara. Many of you will remember the key role Commissioner Nava has played in the debate over the SLO County North Coast Area Plan Update as well as the Los Osos wastewater controversy. From his perspective as a coastal commissioner and a long-time advocate of coastal protection, he will be sharing insight on coastal protection in the year 2000. I know our members will enjoy hearing his ideas on SWAP's role in the new century.

In addition to a super speaker and great fun getting together with fellow SWAP members, there will be some important business to take care of including electing next year's executive board and some important changes in our by-laws will be offered for membership approval.

This year has been a busy one for your SWAP Board. While we have devoted considerable time to bringing the Boardwalk Project to the construction phase and preparing for our new Docent Training Program, the Board has begun to consider future SWAP projects as well.

Speaking of the Boardwalk... I have lots of exciting news! After a few tense months where it looked like the County's grant to support the construction might lapse, an

**We are currently awaiting the delivery of a separate, generous gift of funding that will finalize our funding need for the boardwalk.**

*From the Chair* continued on page 2

**SWAP Annual Meeting**  
**November 7, 7-9 p.m.**  
 Monarch Grove Elementary School, Los Osos

**Featured Speaker:**  
**Pedro Nava**  
 California Coastal Commissioner,  
 civil lawyer practicing  
 in Santa Barbara

### Drawing Planned to Fund Trail Guide

Many visitors to the Elfin Forest wander along its trails and enjoy pygmy oaks, flowers in bloom, birdsong and the sight of lizards scurrying for cover at their approach. However, as a visitor in a foreign city knows, a guide which describes the history of the area — natural history, in the case of the Elfin Forest — makes the visit even more enjoyable and meaningful. To provide visitors with the means to better understand the habitats, plants, and animal life of the Elfin Forest, SWAP's Education Committee will publish a Trail Guide in the early part of 1999. The brochure will include a map of the trails and sufficient description to enable a first-time visitor to locate each stopping point. Information about natural history, ecology and some human history will be given. As with any non-profit's publication, funds will need to be raised to prepare the brochure's layout and then to have it printed. To that end, SWAP is conducting a fundraising drawing. Judi and Gary Tewell, owners of Los Osos Rexall, have donated a coverlet with images of Los Osos — including the Elfin Forest — for this fundraiser. See pages 6 and 7 for a photo of the coverlet and drawing tickets. All money raised will be used to pay for publication of the brochure. The winner of the raffle will have a beautiful coverlet to enjoy, but everyone will benefit when the Trail Guide is finally published. Send in those tickets by November 13!

# SWAP to Begin Elfin Forest Docent Training Program

SWAP's Education Committee will launch a docent training program this Fall in order to provide assistants for our Third Saturday Walks, school walk leaders, and walk leaders for additional advertised walks in the Elfin Forest each month. A series of four educational and enjoyable training sessions will begin on Saturday, October 24th and continue for three following Saturdays: October 31, November 7, and November 14. All sessions will begin at 9 am and finish by 1pm with the exception of the October 31st session which will include lunch and finish at 2:30 pm.

SWAP invites all who have an interest in the Elfin Forest which they would enjoy sharing with others, to become one of the first SWAP docents. For more information, contact Education Committee chair, Beth Wimer at 528-2027.

When the animals  
come to us,  
asking for our help,  
will we know what  
they are saying?

When the plants speak to us  
in their delicate, beautiful  
language,  
will we be able to  
answer them?

When the planet herself  
sings to us in our dreams,  
will we be able to wake  
ourselves, and act?

- Gary Lawless

## From the Chair *continued from page 1*

extension through next April was received. We are currently awaiting the delivery of a separate, generous gift of funding that will finalize our funding need for the boardwalk. When this last donation is in place, we will have enough to complete the necessary planning, studies and documents, plus finance construction of the entire trail. So, if you've been itching for a chance to help, I'm still hopeful that your opportunity to do some manual labor installing the boardwalk will happen before the annual meeting.

SWAP still needs your continued investment, now more than ever. Please plan to participate in the annual meeting (Invite a friend who might want to become a supporting member!).

Keep up the good fight.

*Gordon Hensley*

## Elves Wanted!!

Two elves are needed to fill positions on the SWAP Board for the upcoming year. This year the terms of the Volunteer Coordinator and the Newsletter Editor will expire. If you like to organize and plan events, consider becoming the elf who coordinates the efforts of our wonderful, willing cadre of volunteers. If you are a writing and editing type elf, you'll have a creative adventure putting out "Oak Leaves" with the guidance and help of our layout expert, Katy Budge. Both positions offer opportunities to work with a wonderful and very helpful Board, and to express yourself as well. If you have questions about the Volunteer Coordinator position, give Janice Verity a call at 528-8151; if you want details about the newsletter position, call Pat Grimes at 528-3035. Enthusiasm and energy required!



### SWAP BOARD MEETINGS

The regular, second Sunday board meetings for September and October will be held at the NEP Office, at 3rd and El Moro Streets in Baywood Park at 5:00 pm on Sunday, November 8 and Sunday, December 13. Call 528-4540 to see what's on the agenda. See you there!

november 8

december 13

### 1998 SWAP Board Members

Yolanda Waddell, Walks and Education Coordinator  
Bob McDougle, Treasurer  
Janice Verity, Volunteer Coordinator  
Pat Grimes, Publications Coordinator  
Gordon Hensley, Grants Coordinator  
Beth Wimer, Education Committee  
Robin Knapp, Education Committee  
Bethany Griffiths, Membership Co-chair  
Flo Appel, Membership Co-chair  
Teresa Larson, Education Committee  
Les Bowker, At Large  
Ann Doscher, At Large  
Caroline Gmelin, At Large

# Two Terrific Twosomes



Don and Bethany Griffiths



Flo and Karl Appel

Bethany Griffiths and Flo Appel are two board members who are part of a membership twosome who work together maintaining the SWAP membership records and sending our thanks to those who join SWAP. They have a great team system, and each volunteers to do other "board chores" as well.

In addition, Flo and Bethany are each part of another twosome which has turned out to be a great foursome when it comes to volunteering for SWAP. Bethany's husband Don has helped especially on "computer rescues" and Karl Appel is a stalwart of our restoration crew. Together they bring a wealth of talent and energy to SWAP.

## Autumn Bird Migration Begins Soon



This month, we should start seeing the first waves of the fall migration along the Pacific Flyway. Some estimates put the number of birds traveling this coastal route at over 16,000. Morro Bay is a popular stop on the Flyway, and one of the reasons we can see so many different kinds of birds in the area. Please remember that, in some cases, these birds have flown thousands of miles to enjoy some well-earned peace and quiet in the sanctuary of Morro Bay. More importantly, their populations depend on being able to rest and recharge using the rich food resources here in the bay.

In their zeal to enjoy the bird populations, people often get too close to the birds, disturbing their resting and eating activities. Please use binoculars and/or spotting scopes to get a close up look at the birds, and try to avoid disturbing them. Give the birds adequate space – read their "body language" and back away from them if they seem to start acting agitated or nervous. In short, give them the same treatment YOU want and need after a long journey!

## THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU

to New and Renewing Members:

to D. & M. Vincent, G. & P. Peterson,  
D. & L. Chipping, V.L. Holland, J & B. McDonald,  
J. & G. Tewell, E. & A. Olson, L. Holman,  
M. & P. Bhuta, O. Ayrat-Clouse, M. McLeod,  
G. & G. Taylor, R. Braun, E. Levine,  
E. & K. McConnell, J. & C. Pickett, A. Mertz,  
S. McLaughlin, B. & C. Sandoval, L. Christie,  
J. Milburn, M. & A. Conkling, H. & L. Hileman,  
W. Newman, J. Wright, J. Burnham, M. Bates,  
F. Bush, S. Gottlieb, M. Graham, L. Markwort,  
M. Parker, N. & D. Pier, G. & C. Rathmell,  
G. Raymond, N. Ruhl, C. Schanberger, L. Silva,  
L. Norwood, V. Jones, J. Montooth, C. Stephens,  
C. Taylor, M. Elijah, R. & P. Hudson,  
E. & M. Mayfield, M. Moore, A. B. Phillips,  
D. DuVernet, C. & L. Grimes, T. Larson, L. Miller,  
J. Pheihls, D. Norwood, D. & E. Dabritz,  
and B & A Bell.

# Oaks of the Elfin Forest

by Dirk Walters, Ph.D.

Why is it that people always tend to go elsewhere to find something interesting and/or exciting? I have done a "plant of the issue" for a couple of groups for a very long time. But, I've never written about our most common tree, not only in the Elfin Forest, but also in the whole of coastal San Luis Obispo County. Many of you will probably already know it from Bonnie's wonderful picture. It is our common coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*).

The early Spanish settlers in Southern California called this species, *Encino* after a similar oak native to Spain. Donald Peattie in his 1953 book entitled, *A Natural History of Western Trees*, states, "in our own time the Coast Live Oak is the American tree best known around the world". He makes this claim because it is the tree that is also the most common native tree in and around Hollywood, California. Thus it would be seen as a backdrop in all those outside shots in all those movies, especially "western" movies done in Southern California.

It is also a very picturesque tree. It is not that tall (rarely over 50 feet; the record is 75 feet), but it tends to be very wide, (up to 120 feet in diameter). It tends to branch from the base creating a number of horizontal trunks, which then bend up toward their tips. Each branch trunk can produce huge girths. In coastal habitats, such as the Elfin Forest, the species tends to take on a more shrubby form. Leaves and branches are mostly out away from the center, so that if one can get inside the canopy, one finds a large empty, room-like center. A couple of these oak-rooms are on the usual walk done by the SWAP volunteers on the third Saturday of each month.

The tree's leaves are evergreen and minutely hairy all over when young. As the leaves get older, they gradually lose the hairs over the approximately two-year live span of its leaves. A characteristic that is often cited as the one to use when identifying this species of oak is the "hairy armpits." The armpits in this case are the angles between the midrib and the primary lateral veins of the leaf. In this spot, the fragile hairs are protected, and thus tend to remain

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illustration by Bonnie Walters

*We are experimenting on you again.*

*For many years now, the pencil sketches Bonnie makes of the plants in preparation for the final inking have intrigued me. Of course they are looser and maybe even a bit sketchy. But, they have a charm all their own. Up until now, these sketches could not be used because the duplication process we used for most local newsletters simply did not have the sensitivity to pick up the subtle detail of a pencil sketch. We think they do now. Does it? We would love to hear your comments. – D. & B.W.*

longer than the hairs on the top of the veins and on the flat areas of the leaf. Thus the leaves of intermediate age will tend to have what appears to be a small tuft of hairs in these vein angles or "arm pits." Don't look at the youngest leaves; they're sort of hairy all over, and don't look at the very old leaves, they are essentially devoid of hairs (glabrous) everywhere.

Besides being variable as to hairyness, coast live oak leaves are also extremely variable in size and shape from tree to tree and even from different parts of the same tree. Leaves on the shady north side or from within the canopy tend to be much larger than leaves on the exposed outside of the tree, especially from the hot south side. I once had one group of students collect randomly 25 leaves from the north side of a single coast live oak while a second group collected leaves from the south side of this same tree. We then measured the length of the all the leaves and calculated their averages. We then did a simple statistical test to determine what was the chance that these two sets of leaves were representative of the same population or group. The statistical test indicated that

*Oaks of the Elfin Forest* continued on page 5

## THIRD SATURDAY WALKS

### *October 17 (starts at 8:00 a.m.)*

This walk will begin at 8:00 a.m. because walk leader Jim Royer, an avid birder and active Audubon member for almost twenty years, knows that the early birder sees the most birds. This is the weekend of the "Big Sit," a day-long Audubon event which restricts participating birders to a 17-foot circle. Last year, 101 species were spotted from Bush Lupine Point in the Elfin Forest! Jim will guide bird enthusiasts to places in the Elfin Forest where they can see the striking Spotted Towhee, hear the ping-pong song of the Wrentit and look at shorebirds and ducks through a spotting scope. Bring binoculars.

### *November 21*

Take a journey through time with Jeff Grover, Cuesta College geology instructor. Jeff will focus on the geologic history of the Morro Bay area from the formation of the ancient morros, or Seven Sisters, to the recent development of the dunes which form the Elfin Forest. He may even give us a glimpse of what the Elfin Forest and Morro Bay will be like in the geologic future.

*Walks in the Elfin Forest begin at 9:30 a.m. (unless otherwise noted) at the north end of 15th Street off Santa Ysabel in Los Osos. Only the heaviest of El Niño rains will cancel a walk; if rain is light, put on your poncho and join us! 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.*

*For more information call 528-4540 evenings.*

## Recent Walk Focused on Photography



*Pat Walsh, Cuesta College photography instructor, recommended using a monopod to the May 1998 Third Saturday Walk participants.*

### **Where To Call, Where To Write**

If you have questions about SWAP activities or want to volunteer, please call our phone message service at 546-1199.

A recorded message will have information about the Third Saturday Walks and other current events.

If you have questions, concerns or comments about anything that's happening in the Elfin Forest, call or write: Pete Jenny, SLO County Parks Facilities Manager, County Government Center, SLO, CA 93408, (805) 781-5930.

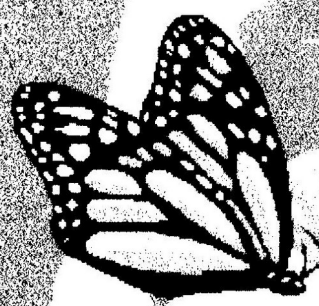
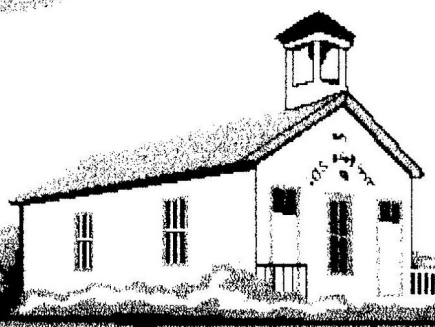
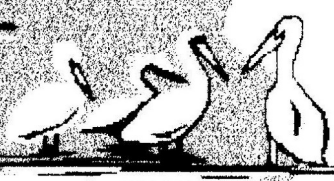
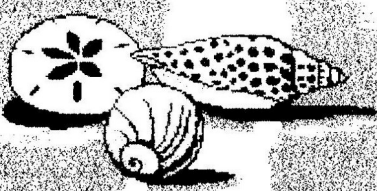
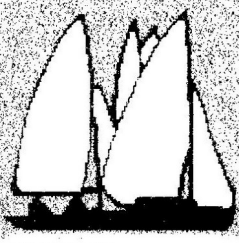
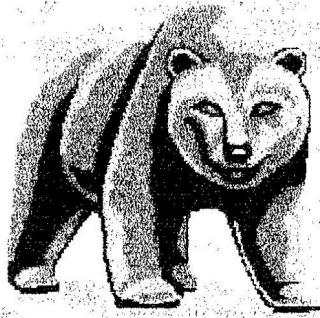


## *Oaks of the Elfin Forest* continued from page 4

there was much less than 1 in 100 chance that the two samples represented the same group. This means, that if we had not known the circumstances of their collection, we might reasonably conclude that the two samples had come from different trees or even different species of trees.

Coast live oaks are members of the black oak group which means they mature acorns every two years and they have the ends of their leaf veins protruding beyond the leaf margin to form harsh bristles. Other black oaks, with which you might be familiar, include the Sierra black oak (*Quercus kelloggii*), and the interior live oak (*Quercus wislizenii*). Black oaks, tend to produce more tanins in their acorns than do other groups of oaks, e.g. the white oaks which include the valley oak (*Quercus lobata*), canyon live oak (*Quercus chryolepsis*) and the blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*). Tanins are complex compounds that are very bitter to the taste

and tend to create extreme digestive blockage in animals that eat it, especially insects. Tanins are water-soluble and can be leached out of a batch of pulverized acorns. Native Californians would put the pulverized acorn meal into their spectacularly tight baskets and then place the baskets in a stream and let the stream leach out the tanins. I doubt if we could find a stream clean enough to do this today, or would want to incur the expense of using tap water to leach them. Yes, I think acorn meal is something we can only read about and not actually experience. Besides, many of our local native mammals, such as deer & ground squirrels, depend on acorns as a major food source. Of course, at least one acorn out of the thousands produced by a single tree has to germinate and avoid being eaten long to produce the next generation of acorns. Like many of California oaks, the coast live oak is having a harder and harder time doing just that.



CALIFORNIA

Small Wilderness Area Preservation Educational Projects Fundraiser

First prize: a Los Osos/Baywood Park coverlet donated by Los Osos Rexall  
Second prize: an original painting inspired by the Elfin Forest or  
Third prize: an Elfin Forest Mural Sweatshirt

Your contribution will help SWAP prepare materials for self-guided walks in the Elfin Forest.

Tickets are \$1 each, 6/\$5, 12/\$10, 17/\$15 or 24/\$20. Print your name and phone number as many times as you wish. Mail your entry with a check to "SWAP" for the appropriate amount to: SWAP, P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412. A prize drawing will be held at the SWAP annual meeting in November 1998. Good luck, and thank you for supporting this SWAP project.

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Feel free to copy this sheet for friends or for additional chances for yourself!

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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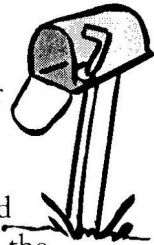
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# Please Continue Your Support of SWAP

Welcome to our new members and thank you to renewing members for your very important continuing support.

Check your address label for your "anniversary date" —the date you last paid your dues. (Our apologies for giving you the wrong date last month.) Please join those conscientious members who renew *BEFORE* we have to send a reminder letter, thus helping to keep our expenses down. We don't want to lose any people from our membership roster for lack of annual dues — each of you is an important partner in helping to preserve the Elfin Forest for future generations.



**RENEW YOUR COMMITMENT TO THE ELFIN FOREST NOW!**

## 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