

Elfin Forest Bench Update

By Jan DiLeo, County Parks Planner

To provide Elfin Forest visitors with a place to rest, read, and enjoy the views, eighteen benches are planned. A bench is planned at the 16th Street entrance, 13 benches along the loop, and 2 benches at each viewing platform i.e., Bush Lupine Point and Siena's View. Bench locations along the loop will be located in the wider areas along the boardwalk.

There are two bench designs, i.e., a block style bench without a back and a more typical design which includes a back. The backless bench provides a very sturdy design which optimizes views of the bay and adjacent vegetation.

The bench with a back provides a more standard design and a more comfortable resting spot. Each bench has been donated by an individual or group. The bronze plaque located on each bench indicates the sponsor group or a dedication to an individual.

Mark Dariz, one of the architects who designed the Elfin Forest Boardwalk, is responsible for bench designs and construction. The California Conservation Corps (CCC) has been installing the benches as Mark has been completing them.

The York Bronze Company has been manufacturing the bronze plaque located on each bench. To date approximately eight benches have been installed. Although bench orders began in April 1999, bench installation delays have resulted due to manufacturing problems with the bronze plaque. The York Bronze Company was reorganized in September, 1999. As a result of their reorganization the company changed plaque designs in the middle of the County's orders. Since consistency and quality are important, the County ended up sending numerous plaques back until a consistent design could be provided. At this point most of the plaques have been received by the County; it is now

News From North Coast SWAP

Ranch Acquisition Moves Forward

By Kat McConnell, Chair of North Coast SWAP

The American Land Conservancy (ALC) in partnership with the newest chapter of SWAP National, North Coast SWAP, recently celebrated receiving \$3.5 million from the State towards the acquisition of the East West Ranch in Cambria. This latest grant brings fundraising efforts to

within \$1 million of the \$11 million purchase price and the project is on track for completion this year. The fledgling chapter wrote acquisition grants for \$2 million in combined Transportation Enhancement Act (TEA), Coastal Resources Grant (CRG), and **Environmental Enhancement** & Mitigation Program (EEMP) applications, \$1 million of which has already been awarded. The California Coastal Conservancy contributed another \$3.5 million with local governments and Cambria residents raising \$3 million.

North Coast SWAP, named for the northern San Luis Obispo County coastline, was formed in 1998 as a local

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partner to ALC in purchasing the 418-acre ranch to retire it from development. North Coast SWAP proposes to hold a conservation easement that will protect the ranch's entire



Kat McConnell, North Coast SWAP Chair; Jeff Stump, American Land Conservancy Project Manager for the East West Ranch acquisition; and Peter Douglas, Executive Director of the California Coastal Commission attended a fund raiser to purchase the East West Ranch in Cambria.

North Coast SWAP continued from page 1

mile and a quarter of coastal access as open space and implement a resource management plan to care for sensitive habitat.

The ranch will provide 388 acres of passive recreation along with a 30-acre community park slated for soccer fields and other active recreation facilities. North Coast SWAP will be working with the California Coastal Conservancy, the Cambria Community Services District, and residents to write the management plan addressing long term uses, wetland restoration and reforestation projects. The immediacy of having a local chapter of a recognized national land trust and the helpful mentoring of the Los Osos/ Morro Bay SWAP chapter have made the difference in the



K L E Α

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Kat McConnell, Pete Sarafian, Yolanda Waddell Dirk & Bonnie Walters, and Jim Weldon; editing assistance by Pat Grimes

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simply a matter of completing the benches.

If you have questions about benches, give Jan Di Leo (County Parks Division) a call at 781-4089. Sorry, all 18 bench locations have been bought. No additional bench locations are available at the Elfin Forest at this time.



Friends of the Estuary left, Past President Ellen Perryess, Treasurer Jim Havlena, and President Richard Watkins are joined by Hershey Louise in enjoying the bench donated by Friends of the Estuary to recognize their volunteers. Photo by Ruth Ann Angus.

Vandals Strike Bench



Vandals struck one of the benches donated along the boardwalk. Someone used a marking pen to deface the Friends of the Estuary bench at the intersection of the loop with the extension out to Bush Lupine Point. Gang-style graffiti including foul language was applied to the bench, presumably on Friday, June 30th. County Parks staff obtained pictures of the bench and contacted the County Sheriff's department. See "From the Chair" on page 4 for more information.

First of a Series

'Stories of the Boardwalk

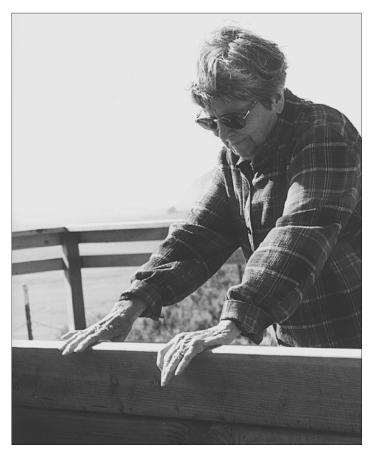
In walking through city parks, botanic gardens and downtown areas in several countries of the world, I've noticed benches with little bronze plaques on them dedicated to a well-loved person — and wondered about the stories that go with those benches. Now the Elfin Forest Boardwalk will have 18 benches with little bronze plaques; eight have already been installed. And I've been fortunate to hear some of the stories behind the benches. Some of the stories are short, and some involve quite a history. Here are two: a delightful one, and one that had an unpleasant twist to it.

The Lancellotti Bench was first thought of by Chris Lancellotti, who works at Cal Poly. She heard about the benches, and suggested to her sister that they buy one for their parents, Peggy and George Lancellotti. Sister Virginia thought it was a great idea, and their early order for the bench (to Jan DiLeo, County Parks Planner - see Jan's report on page 1) made it possible to get the bench placed at Bush Lupine Point, just where they wanted it.

When the bench was installed, Chris and Virginia planned a surprise birthday celebration for their mother's 90th birthday — in the Elfin Forest at Bush Lupine Point. Chris ordered a SWAP T-shirt for every member of the family - her surprise gift for them. After a festive birthday celebration at home, everyone put on their T-shirts and drove to the Elfin Forest, with Mom Lancellotti in tow. The previous year had been a difficult one for her because of the death of her husband George. So when she saw the bench with both their names on it, she shed a few tears. But her happy family changed her mood, as can be seen in the accompanying photo. Knowing that the bench is there, paying honor to their parents, gives great satisfaction to Chris, Virginia and their families. And many visitors to Bush Lupine Point will be glad to have a place to sit and enjoy the peace and beauty of the Elfin Forest and Morro Bay.

The Friends of the Estuary Volunteer Bench was placed at the intersection of the boardwalk loop and the extension to Bush Lupine Point. The dedication says "In recognition of Friends of the Estuary volunteers - part of the solution since 1990." It commemorates the important and sometimes difficult work being done by volunteer bay monitors. The volunteers have collected samples, assisted in doing studies of nitrate levels and helped gather other scientific data for the past decade. The information is helping scientists to assess the health and well being of the bay and estuary, and is expected to be instrumental in the continued preservation of that unique ecosystem.

After the bench was installed, Friends of the Estuary President Richard Watkins, Treasurer Jim Havelna and Past President Ellen Perryess were photographed with the bench. They were pleased to be able to recognize their volunteers, and also for Friends of the Estuary to have a visible part in supporting the



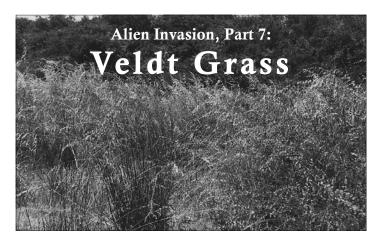
Above: Peggy Lancellotti is moved to tears on seeing the bench dedicated to her and deceased husband George.

Below: Peggy Lancellotti's 90th birthday was a special one, with a special gift - a bench from her family on the boardwalk at Bush Lupine Point. Front: Chris Lancellotti, Peggy Lancellotti, Virginia Lancellotti Knauss. Back: Erik Ulman (Chris' son) and Barbara Knauss Koonts (Virginia's daughter)



Elfin Forest boardwalk.

But — shortly after the photo was taken, the bench was turned into a target for taggers, who "decorated" the bench with graffiti. Apparently a wide felt tip pen was used, with permanent ink. As soon as their very busy schedule allows, County Parks maintenance staff will restore the bench to its original state — just a nice bench with a plaque that recognizes the work of people who



By Pete Sarafian, Conservation Chair

This is the seventh in a series of articles on alien plant species that are invading the Elfin Forest. Unchecked, the aliens will take over and destroy the plants that have been part of the Elfin Forest for centuries. It is hoped that these aliens will become more recognizable to members of SWAP and the Los Osos community. Community members are encouraged to volunteer to assist SWAP and San Luis County Parks Department in controlling these pests. Community involvement could make a big difference in restoring and maintaining the health of the park for the long term.

Veldt grass (*Ehrharta calycina*) is a member of the grass family Poaceae. It is listed in the California Exotic Pest Plant Council's List A-2: "Most Invasive Wildland Pest Plants; Regional." This

weed is found on coastal dunes and in sandy soils near the central coast of California. It is an annual-perennial grass, and is another invasive weed in the Elfin Forest that is native to South Africa. There are two other related species of invasives in California, Ehrharta longiflora to the south in the San Diego area, and Ehrharta erecta to the north, especially in the San Francisco bay area. All three come from South Africa.

The University of California introduced *Ehrharta calycina* to the central coast for erosion control in

"Veldt grass pushes aside and out-competes native plants, especially in disturbed soils, resulting in a rapid conversion of these areas

grazing lands. Until recently, the University actively imported the seeds. Cattle still use it for forage. Unfortunately, this grass has spread rapidly along disturbed areas such as roadsides and into native shrub communities. Veldt grass pushes aside and outcompetes native plants, especially in disturbed soils, resulting in a rapid conversion of these areas into grassland ecosystems. Although introduced heavily into the southern portions of the county near the Nipomo dunes, veldt grass now virtually covers most of the vacant lots and roadsides in and around Los Osos-Baywood Park as well. The infestation was virtually invisible only ten years ago. Now it is especially easy to see along South Bay Boulevard. In many areas, few individual native plants can be seen.

Veldt Grass continued on page 7

From the Chair

Bv Jim Weldon

Vandal: a person who willfully or maliciously damages public or private property or the beauties of nature.

The Friends of the Estuary bench on the Boardwalk in the Elfin Forest was vandalized with graffiti Late Friday June 30th or early Saturday July first. Friends of the Estuary and SWAP are discussing putting up a \$1,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the vandal responsible. Pictures of the graffiti have been turned over to the Sheriff's Department. If anyone has information, please Call Mike Baker at County Parks, 781-5899.

Please be diligent in your care of your park!

New Hazard To The Oaks

By Curt Beebe

The boardwalk has brought many more people into the Elfin Forest. It is charming to go under the live oak canopies, and see so many branches snaking toward the sun! But many side trails are developing, produced by visitors who want to enjoy the oak groves.

Now unfortunately, just in the groves we visit, portions of the canopy are dying. The soil on the side trails and under the trees has become sandy. The walked-on surfaces are no longer thick and springy like they were. The litter layer has disappeared.

Dehydration is a major killer of oaks. Litter layers under oak trees are normally thick. This litter holds excess water like a sponge. Oak trees draw on this water. In fact seedling oaks are unable to survive periods of drought without litter layer water. Thus one consequence of losing litter is that our forest won't regenerate itself.

Where is the litter layer going? For a possible answer we should consider the mycorrhizae. Mycorrhizal fungi live in coarse litters. They provide an important link between the litter layer and oaks. The mycorrhzae usually extract the water from litter, making it available to the roots of the tree. The tree "pays" for this service by supplying carbohydrates to the fungus. Walking under the trees pulverizes litter, which we know favors bacterial growth. Bacteria consume mulch as food, which makes the system unstable. That is why the litter disappears when it is tread upon.

So there is reason to be concerned. We need to monitor the Elfin Forest closely. And we should consider ways to protect the

august 14

SWAP BOARD MEETINGS

The SWAP Board of Directors meets on the second Monday of each month at 7 p.m.
Board meetings will be held at the Coast National Bank, 1193 Los Osos Valley Road on Monday, August 14, and Monday, September 11.
All Board meetings are open to the public.
To confirm the date, time and location (which are subject to change), phone 528-4540.

September 11

WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

Third Saturday Walks August 19 - 9:30 a.m.*

Learn the ancient history of the Elfin Forest from archaeologist Dr. John Parker, archeological consultant and director of the San Luis Obispo Chinese artifact cataloging project. Dr. Parker will take us back in time to learn about the ancient inhabitants of the Elfin Forest and Central Coast. He will also use artifacts to demonstrate the culture and processes of the

Chumash and earlier peoples. *A few strong-armed volunteers who can arrive at 9:00 to help carry the artifacts would be appreciated.

September 16 - 9:30 a.m.

Join Dr. Dirk Walters, Cal Poly biologist, for a botanical stroll through the Elfin Forest. Dr. Walters is a regular columnist in Oak Leaves, providing our readers with an ongoing series of articles on California native plants, especially those of the Elfin Forest. His focus on this walk, as in his articles, will be the stories that plants have to tell. Bring a magnifying glass if you have one. There are a number of late summer flowers in full bloom during September.

Second Saturday Walk October 14 - 8:30 a.m.

SWAP's monthly walk will be held on the 2nd Saturday in October. For the past few years, October has been the month for a bird walk and our leader has been Jim Royer, an avid birder and active member of Morro Coast Audubon. Jim is the coordinator for the Big Sit, a birding event that takes place at Bush Lupine Point on the 3rd Sunday of October. This year the 3rd Sunday precedes the 3rd Saturday instead of following it, and Jim likes to give his walk on the Saturday before the Big Sit (see page 7 for more information on this event). This walk is for those who just enjoy looking at birds, as well as those who know how to identify them. Jim will help us to spot Northern flickers, Spotted Towhees and other birds of the chaparral and oak woodlands. He knows most birds by their songs, and will tune us in to the ping pong call of the Wrentit and the clear song of the Bewick's Wren. We'll also look at shorebirds and ducks through his spotting scope. Bring your binoculars.

Walks in the Elfin Forest begin at 9:30 a.m. (unless otherwise noted) at

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,
1087 Santa Rosa Street, SLO, CA 93408, (805) 781-5930.

Photographer
Ron Bayhan
led SWAP's
3rd Saturday
Walk in May.
Here he
demonstrates
using your
hands to
frame a photo
to a walk
participant.



Summer Weeders Bust Out All Over

By Pete Sarafian, Conservation Chair

The first-Saturday work party in June was a record turnout of some sixteen volunteers. About half of the weed warriors helped Pat Sarafian dig and pull veldt grass in the meadow near Bush Lupine Point. This location is the worst infestation in the Elfin Forest preserve. Formerly a heavily disturbed area used by dirt bike riders, the open sand invited the invasion of alien plant species. The other half of the volunteers helped with narrow-leaved iceplant and yellow star-thistle control in various locations.

The work crew included Jay Bonestell, Ann Calhoun, Damian Camacho, Tony Collins, Kathy Dugan, Taylor Ernst, Rick Keller, Bob McDougle, Ron Rasmussen, Evan and Tim Rochte, Pat and Pete Sarafian, Yolanda Waddell and Branden Welshons as well as Branden's mom.

An even dozen weekend weed warriors showed up on July 1 for the first annual Independence Day weed party. After a tug of war contest with narrow-leaved iceplant and a "Put the veldt grass in the sack" race, the volunteers shared in a big, sweet (seedless) watermelon. Pete Sarafian cleverly hid the chocolate chip cookies baked and brought by Rick Keller and Carrie Fuller. When the weed party was over, he took them home, and boy were they good!

Other festive weeders included Jay Bonestell, Ann Calhoun, Mary Coffeen, Stanley Reichenberg, Pat Sarafian, Yolanda Waddell, Norma Wightman, and Keith and Beth Wimer.



Hardy
Weeders —
San Luis
Obispo
High School
students
Diana Gibson,
Charles Alamo
and Neil
Griffith —
cleared Yellow
star thistle
from the area
near Siena's
View.

Seventeenth in a Series

California Peony

By Dirk Walters, Ph.D; drawing by Bonnie Walters and photo by Pat Brown

The plant featured in this article is *Paeonia Californica* or the California peony. I've seen this plant in bloom as early as mid-December and would not be surprised to find it in late November. California peonies are very difficult to photograph in flower because the blood red flowers always hang down. In fact, it is often more entertaining to watch photographers trying to capture the peony's face, than it is to find the plant itself.

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

Thirty-one of the 33 or so species of Paeonia are Eurasian. Only the last two species are found in the Western United States. One is the more widespread, P. brownii, which can be found growing in Northern California, north and east. The last species, P. californica, is restricted (endemic) to coastal Southern California from Monterey to San Diego Counties. In plant books published before 1950, the California Peony was not recognized as a separate species; all the California peony plants, north and south, were called P. brownii. Today, all Elfin Forest peonies are recognized as being P. californica. The large flowered garden peonies are all of hybrid origin, mostly from Asian species. The primary parent of the common garden perennials is P. lactiflora.

Linnaeus, who is the father of botany, named the genus, Paeonia, after Paeon, physician to the Greek Gods. The genus was named after him, because Paeon prescribed it (Paeonia officinalis, the common peony of Southern Europe) for several ailments.

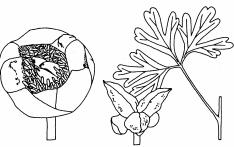
Mary Elizabeth Parsons, in her 3rd edition (1907) of *The Wild Flowers of California*, mentioned that the early Spanish Californians used the thick root as a remedy for dyspepsia (indigestion). My guess is they were simply using a similar California species for the same purpose as the one they used in Spain. She also stated that the Southern California Indian tribes made it into a powder used in decoctions for colds and sore throat. On the other hand, Ms. Parson also records that the Northern California Indian tribes considered it poisonous to the touch.

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



California Peony (Paeonia Californica)

Drawing by Bonnie Walters. Photo by Pat Brown.



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

Let's All Pull Together!

SWAP First Saturday work parties are held at 9 a.m. to noon on the first Saturday of each month. Volunteers should meet at the north end of 15th Street. Dress for sun and wind and bring work gloves if you can. Some work gloves, tools and drinking water are provided. Call 528-3194.

The Big Sit

For the past three years, members of Morro Coast Audubon have conducted Audubon's annual Big Sit at Bush Lupine Point in the Elfin Forest. And

for the past three years, the birders at Bush Lupine Point have turned in the highest total of bird species spotted in the United States. This year, Big Sit Coordinator Jim Royer invites SWAP members to join Audubon in a "Sit-a-thon," to raise funds for Elfin Forest projects such as revegetation.

Participants will be counting in shifts at the Elfin Forest on Sunday, October 15, with an experienced birder/leader for each time period. People will pledge a given amount of money for each species found (like a walk-a-thon). People who are interested in taking part in a fun event can just pledge to a birder/counter, or they can take part themselves as a counter (the more the merrier) with people pledging on their form.

Traditionally we have had a party at sunset to celebrate the successful count. Call Jim Royer at 528-8933 for more details and to take part.

Thank You to our New and Renewing Members

Compiled by Wendy Brown, Membership Committee

New Members:
Char Bruzenack
Jan & George Clucas*
George Dobbins
Brenda Ostrander
Stanley Reichenberg*
Dean Weldon

Renewing Members:

Ruby V. Avelar Sandra Beebe Alese Bell* Helen & Bruce Bennett* Gordon Black Ray & Sonya Bracken* Katy Budge* Andrew Chermak* Peggy Childers* Virginia Culbert Alice L. Cushing* Harry & Lurlie Edgecomb* Siegrid Fenn* Joanna Frawley Willma Gore Sterling & Virginia Gottlieb*

Larry & Pat Grimes*

Robin Knapp*

Burton & Dorothy Harris*

Iean & Marlene Mathias Sylvia McLaughlin* Donna Lee Miller Beverly & Bill Moylan* Mrs. Joseph Osherenko* Nancy G. Page* Richard S. Parker Billy R. Pewitt* John & Elizabeth Pierce Ronald E. Rasmussen* Iav & Tina Salter* Ruth Sansarica Constance Snapp* Gordon Snapp Lora K. Stelle Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Wondra

Ruth L. Zank

*Thanks to those listed above who donated more than the \$12 membership dues. The additional donations will be used for special projects in the Elfin Forest.

Veldt Grass continued from page 4

Veldt grass has had a devastating effect on native plants and the wildlife species that depend on them. It has an especially disastrous effect on mock heather (*Ericameria ericoides*). This plant is a favorite residence for the federally endangered Morro shoulderbanded dune snail. Thus veldt grass is expected to hurt dune snail populations both in and out of the Elfin Forest.

Veldt grass can be distinguished from other grasses in that it is a bunch grass that initially sprouts blue-green stalks in the winter and early spring when young. The joints in the stalks and the base of each leaf at that point have a red-purple ring. Some of the leaves acquire this red-purple color as the grass matures. The stalks reach heights of from 12 to 30 inches. In the late spring and early summer, the plant produces many small red seedlets on the main stalk and branches near the top six to ten inches. The seeds and branches all face the same direction. As the seeds mature, the seeds and stalks turn from reddish to a pale golden brown. Each seedlet begins as a tight bundle which then opens to form a two or three-pointed configuration. Once the seeds fall off the stalk, a two-pointed, v-shaped husk remains. In a mild year, veldt grass can be seen going to seed from late spring to late fall. It is a very prodigious seed producer, giving rise to a rapid expansion in infested areas. Seeds remain viable in the soil for at least three vears.

Ehrharta calycina has spread throughout much of the Elfin Forest, infesting at least the southern two-thirds of the park. It is especially prevalent in the large disturbed plateau area east of Bush Lupine Point. This area was badly eroded and denuded of ground cover by motorized vehicles in the past. The veldt grass infestation is also severe along the southern park boundary near homes and along the eastern boundary at South Bay Boulevard. The hillside along South Bay Boulevard has been the site of a restoration project by the Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County. They removed the veldt grass and planted various native species that might compete with the invasive. Several years of continued maintenance is required.

Mechanical control of veldt grass is most effective by uprooting its shallow root system when the plants are young and have no seeds to be accidentally broadcast. The plants can be removed or composted or left to desiccate on the surface if there are no seeds. However, each year that seeds fall to the surface requires doing at least four years of maintenance and replanting with native plants to effectively eradicate the invasive.

In the Elfin Forest, only a professional who is licensed or certified to apply herbicide chemicals and who has federal, state, and county permission may do so. The common household herbicides will kill veldt grass in yards, but far more effective industrial ones include Fusilade and Transline (not available to homeowners). Usually follow-up is required for at least one year after the initial spray.

No biological controls (insects, etc.) are available at this time. No one expects USDA to approve one in the near future. The closeness of veldt grass to important agricultural grasses and grains just about rules out biological controls. The risk of harm to agriculture is too great.

Anyone interested in helping to eradicate veldt grass or other

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How Do I Know When It's Time to Renew?



To find out, check the RENEWAL DUE DATE located next to your name on the address label. You can use the adjacent memberhsip form for your renewal. Select your membership category and mail off the form along with your check as your anniversary approaches. Joining S.W.A.P. for the first time is just as easy.

Our basic membership is \$12 which covers our operating costs and brings you our bimonthly newsletter, Oak Leaves. Membership donations above the basic level provide our all-volunteer organization with funds for habitat restoration and weed control projects. Questions? Phone our voicemail – 546-1199.

Thank you for your membership and support of S.W.A.P. We look forward to hearing from you!

PLEASE RENEW YOUR

MEMBERSHIP FORM

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Mail to Small Wilderness Area Preservation,

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