



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) 528-0392 ❖ DECEMBER 2007 / JANUARY 2008

“And The Parade Goes On...”

By Ron Rasmussen, SWAP Chair

Another year has slipped by and SWAP continues in its role as steward of the Elfin Forest. In a way, the year began in December 2006 when SWAP’s Weed Warriors participated in the annual Los Osos Christmas parade. They were greeted with cheers as they walked through town, showing that the community supports the work of the many SWAP volunteers.

During some really cold winter days, frost broke the valve that controls the water supply to the Elfin Forest. However, there were also good effects of the freeze. The invasive Cape ivy was hit hard by the cold, but the oaks seemed to like it. The cold spell may have stimulated a profuse Spring bloom in the oaks and the crop of acorns appears especially good this year.

“And The Parade Goes On...” continued on page 2



SWAP Chair Ron Rasmussen announced that Mutt Mitt Chair Dorothy Norwood was chosen to be SWAP Volunteer of the Year and presented her with a framed Elfin Forest Print by Los Osos artist Ybi Van Ekren. Photo by Bob Meyer.

❖ Inside This Issue ❖

- 4 Big Sit! Results
- 5 Canyon or Bristly Gooseberry by Dirk Walters
- 6 Elfin Forest Sightings
- 7 Weed Warrior News
- 8 Coming Up In The Elfin Forest
- 9 Walks In The Elfin Forest
- 9 PG&E Grant
- 10 New and Renewing Members
- 11 SWAP Shoppers Order Form

SWAP 2007 Annual Meeting

By Yolanda Waddell

Although the real and legal purpose of a State-required annual meeting is a bit boring – to elect board members and make any necessary changes to the bylaws, our chapter’s annual meetings are always enjoyable and informative. This year, on Saturday, October 20, our speakers were Dr. Ken Levine and Elizabeth Scott-Graham of the SLO Botanical Garden. Ken gave a slide-illustrated talk about the wildflowers of the central coast of Chile, where the climate is almost an exact duplicate of California’s Central Coast. Though there are plants that can be found in both locations, there are many strange and beautiful flowers, shrubs and trees that

Annual Meeting continued on page 3



SWAP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*The Board of Directors
of the Los Osos/Morro Bay Chapter of
Small Wilderness Area Preservation (SWAP)
consists of the following members:*

Ron Rasmussen, Chair
Pete Sarafian, Vice Chair
Pat Akey, Treasurer
Yolanda Waddell, Secretary
Debbie Levi, Member at Large
Bob Meyer, Member at Large
Pat Murray, Member at Large

The SWAP Board of Directors meets monthly on the 2nd Monday at 7 p.m. at the Community Center of Sea Oaks Mobile Home Park, 1675 Los Osos Valley Road.

The next meetings are
**Monday, December 10
and Monday, January 14.**

All Board meetings are open to the public. To confirm the date, time and location (which are subject to change), call 528-0392.



CONTACT SWAP

If you have questions about SWAP activities or want to volunteer, please call 528-0392 and leave a message. A recorded message will have information about our 3rd Saturday Walks, Work Saturdays, and other events. If you have questions, concerns or comments about any problems in the Elfin Forest, call or write:

Chuck Lowe,

SLO County Parks Supervising Ranger,
1087 Santa Rosa Street, SLO, CA 93408,
(805) 781-4417.

Owners of dogs off-leash can be cited. If you witness dogs off-leash, vandalism or obvious crimes, call the County Sheriff at 781-4550 or Chuck Lowe at 781-4417.

“And the Parade Goes On ...” *continued from page 1*

Our newsletter appeared in a new format in the February/March edition. Because of increasing contributions more space was needed and the number of pages was increased to twelve. Now we can provide our members with more pictures and articles about life in the Elfin Forest. We also increased print size as several of our readers had requested.

A “retreat” was held in February 2007 to evaluate our finances and plan for a secure future. Among the recommendations was that SWAP should increase membership dues. SWAP directors have approved an increase in dues from \$12 to \$25 annually for regular membership. By itself, this increase will not meet all of SWAP’s expenses. A larger printing of the 2008 Calendar (as the 2007 Calendar sold out) will provide further income.

A highlight of the year was recognition by the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors of the work that SWAP has done in preserving and maintaining environmentally sensitive areas in the County. On May 22 in the Supervisor’s chambers a proclamation honoring SWAP was presented to SWAP Directors and a group of SWAP volunteers who were present. The proclamation has been framed and is displayed at the Los Osos Chamber of Commerce office. This recognition by the Supervisors shows that the work of SWAP and its volunteers is seen as a vital part of the community.

Our chapter has been fortunate in receiving grants and gifts from other organizations. SLO County Parks has donated \$3,000 to underwrite publication of our 2008 calendar. This generous grant, plus donations by 17 other sponsors means that 100% of the proceeds from calendar sales will go to support the Elfin Forest. Also, our vacant lot in Cambria, donated to SWAP by the Bea Richmond family, has been sold and the proceeds will provide additional security for SWAP’s future. Pacific Gas and Electric has given us an unrestricted grant for \$2,500. Together these funds provide insurance for preserving the Elfin Forest, and further can serve as seed money or matching funds when applying for a larger grant for special projects.

Our parent corporation, SWAP, Inc. has also done well. A bequest in the amount of \$5,000 was received from an estate in Los Angeles. These funds will be used as determined by the board of directors of the corporation at their annual meeting in November, 2007. Most likely they will be used to establish a fund to meet possible emergencies.

Not all has been good in the past year. Our community has lost some good friends of SWAP. John McDonald, John Perkins, Mary Coffeen and, most recently, Stan Thompson have passed on. They will all be missed.

Overall, though, it has been a successful year for our local chapter, and we look forward to another great year for the Elfin Forest.

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Annual Meeting *cont. from page 1*

are specific to Chile. Included in the slide program was a photo of a Hummingbird that is as large as a Robin. Elizabeth Scott-Graham, Executive Director of the SLO Botanical Garden, told about their new straw bale Education Center building that has recently been completed near the Preview Garden in El Chorro Regional Park. The building has its own water collection and wastewater treatment systems, is designed for maximum energy efficiency, and is built almost entirely with recycled or sustainably-produced materials. Everything about it will be used as a teaching tool.

Following the Treasurer's and Conservation reports (see "The 2007 State of the Elfin Forest" on page 7), Conservation Chair Pete Sarafian announced that an Elfin Forest mural print will be presented to the Weed Warriors of the Year, Rich and Prisila Johnson, who couldn't attend the meeting. He also thanked our snail expert, Dr. Tom Richards, for coming to Saturday work parties not only to identify and move Morro Shoulderband Snails, but to help with weed pulling as well. In addition, Pete spoke in tribute and memory of journalist and photographer Stan Thompson, a great supporter of our chapter with his photos and articles. Stan passed away suddenly of a heart attack while jogging in Morro Bay.

SWAP Chair Ron Rasmussen announced that Mutt Mitt Chair and booth worker Dorothy Norwood is the chapter's Volunteer of the Year, and gave her a framed hand-colored etching of the Elfin Forest by local artist Ybi van Ekren. Some years ago, Ybi gave 25 numbered prints to our chapter, and each year we present one to the Volunteer of the Year. Dorothy Norwood, who has been Mutt Mitt Chair almost since the Mutt Mitt dispensers at the seven Elfin Forest entrances were installed, coordinates a crew of volunteers who keep them constantly full. She also provides space in her garage for the boxes of Mutt Mitts so that our storage unit doesn't become too crowded. Thanks to her and her crew, the Mutt Mitts are always in place, ready for use.

SWAP Board members Pat Akey, Bob Meyer and Yolanda Waddell were re-elected to the Board. Thank you to Pat Murray and Ron Rasmussen for organizing and setting up the meeting and the lunch that followed. Certificates to buy food and drinks were kindly donated by Ralphs and Vons. Thanks also to Bob Meyer for taking the photos for this article, and to the El Morro Church of the Nazarene for providing us with a meeting room.



Speakers at the SWAP Annual Meeting were (above) Dr. Ken Levine, Education Chair of the SLO Botanical Garden, who gave a photo-illustrated talk about the native plants of Chile's central coast; and (below) Elizabeth Scott-Graham, who described the recently completed Education Center building at the Botanical Garden, and talked about the vision for development of a 150-acre garden featuring Mediterranean climate plants.

Photos by Bob Meyer.



"The life we are preserving by protecting nature is not just that of plants and animals — it is our own."

Steve McCormick
President, The Nature Conservancy

Big Sit! 2007 at Bush Lupine Point



By Jim Royer, Big Sit Coordinator; photos by Yolanda Waddell

We had 111 species by 10:30 am on October 14, and it seemed that we were well on the way to beating our prior best count of 122 species. And then the fog bank (seen offshore earlier) rolled in. We could no longer see the bay below our overlook. The birds in the coastal scrub at our level were quiet and much less active. The birding ground to a halt. An hour or two went by with no new species.

The day had started off beautifully - with a slight offshore breeze and clear skies. The incoming tide pushed the shorebirds by our vantage point, as the morning became light enough to clearly see them in our arsenal of spotting scopes. Rails were calling on the near shore. Thrashers and sparrows were calling around us from the bush lupine and low oaks. Birds rode the warming air overhead. A swallow took our binocular eyes into a mixed flock of swallows and swifts. A



Local expert birders, using spotting scopes, binoculars and their ears, identified 115 species of birds by sight and sound at the annual Big Sit! held at Bush Lupine Point in the Elfin Forest.

Jim Royer and walk participants scanned the Bay for ducks and shorebirds during the Pre-Big Sit! walk in October. In less than three hours, they spotted and identified 70 species.

Snow Goose lumbered by the quick little swallows and surveyed the bay before heading north to the harbor mouth, where an Osprey flapped into view.

We were racking up the species – a Pectoral Sandpiper and Red Knots among the shore birds and ducks in the mudflats and channels of water in the rising tide. A careful scoping of the ducks yielded a rufous-morph female Eurasian Wigeon and a Lesser Scaup among the numerous American Wigeon, pintail, and Green-winged Teal. Clouds of synchronized shorebirds and more scattered flocks of ducks gave away the hunting Peregrines. At least 3 falcons took turns terrorizing

their potential prey. Despite the name “Big Sit” we were all on our feet, scopes facing all directions so we wouldn’t miss anything from the different habitats. We were even making an effort to find birds we normally shunned, like Cowbirds, Starlings, House Sparrows, and Collared-doves (to add them to our count). A Black-throated Gray Warbler flew low over our heads; a new bird for the count.

As quickly as the species appeared around us, they vanished into the gathering mist. After noon the fog did rise off the ground to become a high overcast, but the overhead movement of passerines did not resume and we went hours with no new birds for the day. Fortunately we had the good company of most of the county’s best birders along with crackers and couscous, Danish pastries, organic apples, homemade peanut butter cookies and other good food and drink brought by many of the participants. Just as counters were feeling useless, a Golden Eagle soared by in the mid afternoon. Two hours later, a Glaucous-winged Gull stopped briefly to visit the other gulls in the estuary. Next, a Sharp-shinned Hawk blasted by, looking for the same birds we were missing. A Hermit Thrush called later in the afternoon. The count ended at 115 species, a respectable number for our count, but we had to wonder what total we would have had if the fog had stayed offshore.

Thanks for all who helped with the count. Results of all of the counts and more info on our count and others can be found at birdwatchersdigest.com.

Editor’s Note: Thanks from Los Osos/Morro Bay SWAP to Jim Royer and the birders for turning the Big Sit! at Bush Lupine Point into a fund raiser for the Elfin Forest. Several participants pledged to donate up to \$1.00 per species counted, or else made a specific donation. The money raised will be added to the Elfin Forest Special Projects Fund.

Canyon or Bristly Gooseberry

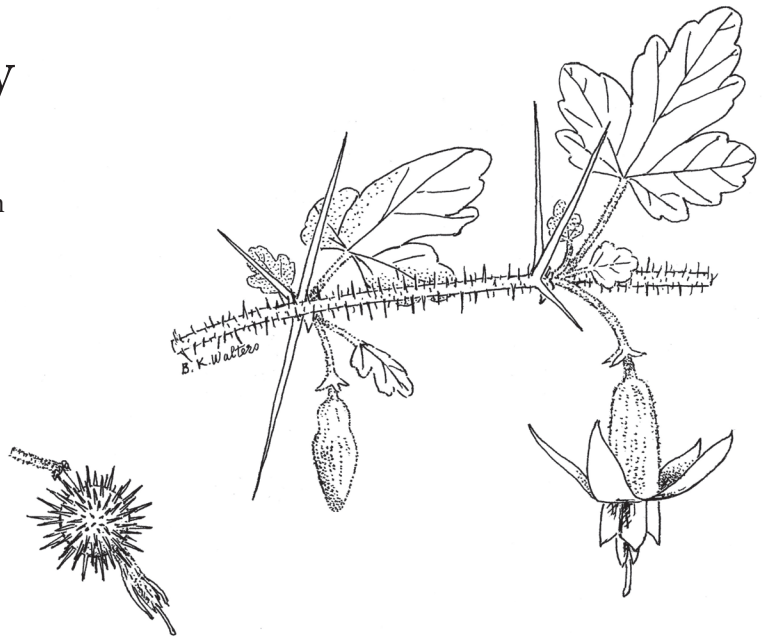
By Dirk Walters, Ph. D.; Drawings by Bonnie Walters

The plant profiled for this issue of *OAKLEAVES*, Canyon or bristly gooseberry (*Ribes menziesii*) is a species of gooseberry found in local canyons and, less commonly, in depressions within coastal dunes along edges of willow groves. It grows below 300 M (ca. 1000 ft.) from southern San Luis Obispo County northward into Southwest Oregon. The species is also found in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada.

A survey of the various local flora and shrub ID books creates a confused picture of the species. All concede it is extremely variable in leaf characteristics. Most of the time, leaves are relatively small (one inch or less wide), but in the shade they can grow to a couple of inches wide. Leaves are usually thick and without odor, but sometimes they can be thick with pronounced odor. They are supposed to have thick pubescence on their lower surface, although one of our local named varieties lacks the pubescence and is quite odoriferous. As you might expect, this tremendous variation has led to the description (and naming) of many varieties.

However, the most recent identification books simply acknowledge the variation by noting that several “poorly defined varieties have been recognized” statewide. This one species has to be one of the rarest species in the Elfin Forest. In fact, it appears in some editions of the Elfin Forest species list and not in others. I think it had been decided to drop it from the last list because no one could find it, but then, of course, I remember someone saying that it had been found. Yolanda Waddell reported that it was seen among the oaks and willows on the north-facing slope just above the bay, which is where we would find shade and moisture similar to that found in our coastal canyons – its more common habitat.

Canyon gooseberry is a typical gooseberry in that it has strong 3-parted nodal spines along the main stems. These three spines are the modified leaf that is attached to that node. (A node is that portion of a stem to which leaves are attached, while internodes are the leafless portions between leaf attachments.) The typical green, photosynthetic leaves are produced on the very short (dwarf) branches that arise from the bud in the upper angle between spines and stem axis. A dwarf branch is one in which the leaves seem to be arranged not individually, but in tight clusters. If one examines one of these leaf clusters closely, one will see a very short stem with adjacent petioles attached very close together but one just slightly higher than the other. In other words, the dwarf branch consists of several nodes with essentially non-existent internodes.



In spite of all of its apparent variation, canyon gooseberry is very easy to identify in our area. It is only one of two gooseberries with dark purple sepals and white petals. The profiled species is quite common and produces ovaries covered with ‘spines’ that turn into dark purple spiny fruits. The other species, straggly gooseberry or *Ribes divericatum*, is much less common and has smooth ovaries that mature into green fruits that lack spines.

Canyon gooseberry is not listed in any of the more popular guides to native plant gardening. I suspect this is due to its stems tending to be somewhat cane-like and its flowers scattered. The individual flowers are, however, quite beautiful. The deep purple sepals and floral tube do make a stark contrast to the white petals and anthers. The fruits of most gooseberries are excellent wildlife food. I suspect this species would be best in a ‘wildish’ back corner of a garden within the shade of trees. According to the Jepson Manual if planted in sunny location, it would require summer watering.

Wildness By Emily Polk

*The primeval oak forest closes around us.
We follow a deer trail,
Twisting deep between guardian trees
And suddenly enter a forest room.
There, its waters gleaming like a deep sea,
Flows a forest stream.*

*The mind grows with the joy of the scene.
Imagination leaps, finding hidden energies,
Calm and storm in the wisdom of wildness.*

Elfin Forest Sightings



A sudden and lengthy lightning storm in August brought photographer Allan Fraser to Bush Lupine Point to take a photo of some lightning. Much to his amazement, he saw lightning flashing across the entire sky in front of him, and quickly snapped it. This photo ran on the front page of the San Luis Obispo County newspaper, The Tribune, and was kindly lent to us by Allan to include in Oakleaves as an Elfin Forest Sighting.

Please Report Elfin Forest Sightings

Have you observed any unusual birds in the Elfin Forest? Mammals? Reptiles? Amphibians? Insects? Interesting activities or footprints of wild-life in our Elfin forest? Unusual plants? Please report any interesting wild-life activity or plants that you see to Jean Wheeler at jeanwheeler@charter.net for inclusion in future Oakleaves issues under "Elfin Forest Sightings." You can also leave a message on SWAP's answering machine, 528-0392.



Debbie Levi (left) and Pat Murray (right) delivered 2008 Elfin Forest calendars to County Parks Director Pete Jenny as a thank you for the \$3,000 grant that County Parks gave SWAP to help with printing the calendar. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

Hey, Hay!

Text and Photo by Bob Meyer

When SWAP got really serious about getting rid of the nasty invasive plants in the Elfin Forest it occurred to Pete Sarafian that if we threw all the veldt grass, cape ivy, African bridal creeper, etc. we were pulling into our green waste cans the seeds might get scattered all over the county. SLO County does compost the green waste before distributing the resulting mulch. Theoretically, composting kills the seeds, but if even 0.5% get through alive it could be a really, really big problem.

Pete figured it would be better to do our own composting on-site and keep any escapees local where we could jump on them. Therefore, in 2002 Mt. Sarafian began to rise at the end of 15th St. Mt. Sarafian grew and grew. We covered it with plastic sheeting so it would stay moist. Composting requires a fair amount of moisture. Soon Pete learned three things:

- 1). Almost every invasive plant we threw on the pile composted quickly and thoroughly -- except veldt grass. And of course we had more veldt grass than anything else! Veldt hay is almost immune to biological decomposition if kept even moderately dry. (Don't tell anybody, but, it would be probably better for building straw bale houses than the rice straw currently in use),

- 2). Veldt grass is a great substitute for thatch. If they had veldt grass in medieval England the peasants would have never worried about leaky roofs. It sheds water like you would not believe, and,

- 3). You can control the weather with a big pile of veldt grass. Whenever it would start to rain, and Pete was available, he'd run out and uncover Mt. Sarafian. Without fail that would stop the rain. He is convinced that he is responsible for, at least, the local drought.

For these and several other reasons we gave up on-site disposal of our noxious weeds. But, after several years of no additions Mt. Sarafian remains. Pete even got the Los Osos Fire Dept. to come out and hit the pile with 500 gallons of high pressure water. It just bounced off.



Weed Warrior Updates

By Pete Sarafian, Conservation Chair

Weed Warriors Victimize Veldt

The SWAP September conservation work party continued to hammer at veldt grass (*Ehrharta calycina*). Clumps were excavated by shovel between 15th and 17th Streets. Several juveniles and one adult endangered Morro Shoulderband Snail (*Helminthoglypta walkeriana*) were found and relocated to safe locations nearby. The grass front is now only a few feet from the southern boundary of the Elfin Forest. Helping dig out grass and inspect for snails were Jay Bonestell, Dave Bowlus, Rich and Prisila Johnson, Ron Rasmussen, Dar Reynolds, Pete Sarafian and Yolanda Waddell. Thank you to all our volunteers who help to make the Elfin Forest relatively weed-free and a truly representative picture of native coastal California as it once looked.

Weed Warriors Clobber Carpobrotus

The wonderful weekend Weed Warriors spent first Saturdays in October and November removing the last of the iceplant (*Carpobrotus edulis*) from the South Bay Boulevard highway embankment. In November we were able to finish the embankment and move on to the infestation at the southern border of the Elfin Forest next to the 14th Street entrance. Originally the highway embankment had three or four patches of iceplant left near the top of the hill. Those were removed in October, along with a large patch at the northern end of the embankment near the emergence of the so-called Orchid Trail by the highway. Two adult Morro Shoulderband snails were found and relocated to safe locations. No live endangered snails were found in the open patches of iceplant. Both snails that were found live were under iceplant that had invaded nearby native shrubs.

In November three more patches at the bottom of the hill next to the highway were removed, and no endangered snails were found. The iceplant crews did a great job. They included Donna Banks, Jay Bonestell, Dave Bowlus, Steve Cake, Rich and Prisila Johnson, Lannie Erickson, Bob and Sharon Meyer, Pat Murray, Ron Rasmussen, Dar Reynolds, Pete Sarafian and Concepcion Segundo. Thank you to all volunteers who worked so hard. This job was physically demanding but rewarding in seeing this invasive plant vanish from the Forest.

Let's All Pull Together

We are winding up the Old Year

Plenty of work left, no fear.

It's never too late

To pull weeds we hate

And get them the heck out of here.

We are starting out the New Year

Getting our butts back in gear.

It's never too early

To act rough and burly,

And do some hard work around here.

Yours in integrated pest management,

Pete Sarafian



Weed Warriors Rich and Prisila Johnson worked as a team, digging veldt grass and then searching each clump for the endangered Morro Shoulderband Snails. Snails that were found were moved to a safe place by Conservation Chair Pete Sarafian.

Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

The 2007 State of The Elfin Forest

By Pete Sarafian, Conservation Chair

As we come to the end of 2007, I look back at nearly a decade of work on and in the Elfin Forest with pride and astonishment. I have been with SWAP almost ten years. I take pride in the amount of work we volunteers have accomplished, and I feel astonishment in that the destructive weeds that seemed endless are coming under control. When first mapping the Forest, nearly two-thirds of this natural area was infested with over a dozen invasive plant species. These included Cape ivy, cheat grass, English ivy, fennel, iceplant, Italian thistle, Malta starthistle, narrow-leaved iceplant, ripgut brome, smilax (a.k.a. African bridal creeper vine), veldt grass, and water hemlock. The Ridge Trail where the boardwalk now goes was outlined by many hundreds of narrow-leaved iceplants (*Conicosia pugioniformis*).

Now such invasives are becoming rare, and actually have to be hunted for. We once hauled several bags of Malta starthistle (*Centaurea mellitensis*) from the large meadow in the center of the Forest, a task that took many man-hours of labor. Now the same area yields one person only a small fraction of a single bag in an hour or two. While such weeds never will be eliminated completely (there are too many weeds coming in from the surrounding community), this shows that they are becoming controllable. It used to take one person working five or six days a week and our monthly volunteer effort just to keep up with the weeds. Now, with some volunteer help, we can hold our own with about one man-day a week. There is an old saying, "eternal vigilance is the price of freedom." It also is the price of freedom from non-native weeds.

SWAP First Saturday Work Parties

SWAP First Saturday Work Parties are held at 9 a.m. to noon on the first Saturday of each month. Please dress for wind, fog, or sun. Layers work well. Long pants and long-sleeved shirts are good. Sturdy shoes are a must. Meet at the north end of 15th Street at the Elfin Forest entrance. Take care not to park in front of driveways or mailboxes. Call 528-0392.



Enjoying the day at the Oktoberfest and happily greeting visitors at the SWAP booth were (L-R) Pat Murray, Ron Rasmussen, Rosemary Baxter and Ann Calhoun. Photo by Les Christiansen.

It Was a Beautiful Day at the Oktoberfest

The weather smiled on the Baywood Oktoberfest this year. It rained on Saturday and Monday, but on Sunday, October 28, the sun shone, the sky was blue, and the wind didn't blow. Ron Rasmussen and Pat Murray arrived early to set up, hauling the SWAP booth awning, tables and display materials in Bob Meyer's big diesel truck. During the day, the booth was tended by Donna Banks, Rosemary Baxter, Ann Calhoun, Susan Chandler, new SWAP member Molly Fainstat, Clem Jeffrey, Dorothy Norwood, and Yolanda Waddell. Booth Coordinator Pat Murray reported that sales were good, and the booth attracted two hundred or more visitors. Special thanks go to Pat and Ron for staying all day and trucking the booth and its parts back to SWAP storage.



OAKLEAVES

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Co-editors are Yolanda Waddell and Jean Wheeler;

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Contributors to this issue: Les Christiansen, Allan Fraser, Betsy Kinter, Debbie Levi, Bob Meyer, Ron Rasmussen, Jim Royer, Ron Ruppert, Pete Sarafian, Yolanda Waddell, Dirk and Bonnie Walters, Jean Wheeler.

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If possible, all copy should be submitted by e-mail to:
ywaddell@kcbx.net AND jeanwheeler@charter.net.

Coming Up in the Elfin Forest

By Jean Wheeler

December and January are exciting months in the Elfin Forest, with winter rains heralding the major flowering season of the new year and the bird life at peak diversity and populations. As I write this in early November, we've had only a few light rains so far, yet many of us have noticed that the greening up of our favorite small wilderness area has already begun.

Among the earliest flowering plants of each new season, listed in our Pocket Guide (sold on page 11) as blooming from December through March, are the wild Peonies. These California natives are small herbaceous plants with small reddish flowers, not the large mounds with big showy flowers of garden fame. You have to look closely to find our wild Peonies, growing barely a foot high under bushes in the dune scrub or maritime chaparral. Another early winter-flowering beauty is the Fuchsia-flowered Gooseberry. This is the well known relative of the rarer Canyon Gooseberry featured in Dirk Walters' article on page 5 of this issue. The bright red color of the fuchsia-shaped flowers clustered along branches with small green leaves and lots of sharp thorns makes this good-sized shrub easy to spot. One of the dominant shrubs of the maritime chaparral community, Buckbrush Ceanothus, also comes into bloom during these months in response to winter rains. This is a white- or lavender-flowered ceanothus, rather than the vivid blue species known as California Lilacs growing wild elsewhere in the state or as garden cultivars.

Our area is known as one of the top birding locales in our country, and especially in these winter months when diversity of birds and populations of many (it's tempting to assert most) species are at a peak for the year. That's why Morro Coast Audubon and other conservation and wildlife groups sponsor the Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival in January each year (see below). Virtually all of the water birds and wading birds listed in our Pocket Guide are present and at peak populations in these two months, as are all the raptors listed, and a great many of the passerines. And look for the hummingbirds busily gathering nectar as they pollinate those fuchsia-flowering gooseberries.

Don't Miss the Bird Festival

The 12th Annual Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival will be held from Friday, January 18 through Monday, January 21. There will be presentations and a vendor show at the Morro Bay Community Center and a large number of field trips to choose from--north as far as the Big Sur coast, south to the Santa Maria Valley, east as far as the Carrizo Plain, on lakes of the area and Morro Bay, and even out to sea. For a detailed brochure and registration, call the Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce at 805-772-4467 or 1-800-231-0592 or go to the festival website at www.morrobaybirdfestival.org to download a brochure and register for the festival and specific field trips (many of which fill early). Registration deadline is January 4.

WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

Third Saturday Walks

December 15, 9:30 a.m. Solstice Walk

Winter solstice is a week from today, on December 21. Will the sun really stand still, as the word "solstice" means? Dr. Jean Wheeler has taught thousands of geography students about the relative wanderings of the sun, moon, and earth and what they mean to us in terms of our climates, tides, and the vegetation and animal life around us. She'll show us how large our seasonal differences in sun angle are. She'll explain how locations of some Elfin Forest plant species reflect in part their need for, or ability to tolerate, abundant solar energy. Yet other species survive only where protected from the heat of high summer sun angles.

January 19, 9:30 a.m. – Animal Tracks Walk

Join Evan Albright, an animal track expert, in learning who is "tracking up" the Elfin Forest. Evan will demonstrate how to tell which are the front feet or back feet of a raccoon, and what the difference is between coyote tracks and dog tracks. Visitors will learn to look for other signs that a wild resident of the Elfin Forest has passed that way, such as hairs on a fence or "scoot" marks where the animal squeezed through a fence hole. This walk will open up a complex world of the Elfin Forest's inhabitants, one that we would never suspect while walking along the boardwalk.

February 16, 9:30 a.m. – Fungus Foray

For our fourteenth annual Fungus Foray in the Elfin Forest, intrepid leader and fungophile Dennis Sheridan will take us on an exploration of the Elfin Forest floor for wood bluetts, black elfin saddles, earthstars, golden caps, boletes, poisonous amanitas and many other fascinating fungi. Bring a magnifying lens and, if you have a mystery mushroom in your yard, bring a sample for Dennis to identify. This is not a mushroom collecting walk, as all plants in the Elfin Forest are protected by law. Only a very heavy rain will cancel the walk, and if it hasn't rained, Dennis will give us an equally fascinating walk about the lichens that grow abundantly in the Forest.

Walks in the Elfin Forest begin at 9:30 a.m. (unless otherwise noted). Park at the north end of 15th Street off Santa Ysabel in Los Osos and walk up the path at the end of the street to the boardwalk. The walk will begin at that point. Wear comfortable shoes, long sleeves and pants to avoid poison oak and mosquitoes. Please park carefully, avoiding driveways and mailboxes. Please leave pets at home. The easy paced walks last 1-1/2 to 2 hours. For more information call (805) 528-0392.

3rd Saturday Walk Update: Lizards and Lyme Disease

While leading October's reptile walk, Ron Ruppert (photo above) was questioned about the association of deer ticks (carrying lyme disease bacteria) and western fence lizards. Ron was not sure of the facts, at the time, but further research indicates the following: Fence lizards do not get lyme disease and furthermore, a new study shows that when a tick (carrying lyme disease bacteria) feeds on a western fence lizard the tick is purged of lyme disease bacteria. That would (hypothetically) stop or slow the spread of lyme disease to humans in areas where fence lizards are common. Researchers are careful to point out that the lower incidence of lyme disease in the West may be due partially to this interesting fact but many other factors need to be considered before claiming that this is THE factor affecting the incidence of lyme disease.

PG&E Gives Grant to Los Osos/Morro Bay SWAP

SWAP recently received a very nice surprise in the mail. PG&E sent us a grant check for \$2,500! Thomas P. Jones, Manager of PG&E Governmental Relations, wrote, "I am pleased to be able to...entrust the \$2,500 check to SWAP in support of your continued efforts in the restoration and preservation of small wilderness areas."

"At Pacific Gas and Electric Company, we believe that it is very important to fund nonprofit organizations working to preserve our natural heritage and we are proud of our environmental partnership with SWAP. Together we can preserve, protect and expand the natural beauty of our Central Coast. We are grateful for the opportunity to acknowledge your organization's commitment to making the world a better place to live."

In the past, PG&E community relations staff gave valuable assistance to SWAP while we were working to purchase the Elfin Forest. And in the late 1990s, we received a grant from PG&E to pay for printing costs to increase our 4-page newsletter to 8 pages. PG&E is a very good partner indeed.



Ron Ruppert brought several live examples to his October reptile walk. Here he shows a feature of a male Western Fence Lizard. Photo by Jean Wheeler.

Thank You to Our New and Renewing Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter, SWAP Database Coordinator

NEW MEMBERS:

Lisa Coffman*	Burton Moyer and Marilyn Clark*
Bruce and Alyce Crawford	Tom and Susan Richards*
Allen and Marguerite Crown*	Aileen Snapp*
Molly and Ted Fainstat*	Charles Templin*
Jerry Garren*	Wild Birds Unlimited

RENEWING MEMBERS:

Ruby V. Avelar*	Robert and Gail Davis*	Vanita Jones	Darlene M. Reynolds*
Linda Bailey*	Bernard and Fran Deitchman*	Katie J. Karikka	Monica Rowcliffe
Rosemary Baxter*	Elsie and Jerome Deitz*	Heidi Kausch*	Patrick and Dorothy Rygh*
Sandra Beebe*	Pat Brock Diener	Roberta Knapp*	Pete Sarafian*
Alese Bell*	John Dilworth and Carole Maurer*	Christine Lancellotti*	Deborah J. Schreiber*
David and Rosemary Bentley	Alice Dobias*	Barbara Machado*	Joanne Smalley*
Daniel Berman*	Leo and Ileen M. Doering*	Peggy Mayfield	Gewynn and George Taylor*
Carolyn Boomer*	Shari and Alan Fraser*	Margaret Mehring*	The Ungar family*
Eileen Bowen	Chet and Lee Grimes*	Diana A. Minnix	Rick and Laura Vopatek*
David Bowlus and Beverly Boyd*	Jim and Karen Havlena*	Morro Group, Inc.*	Michael Walgren*
Jean P. Boyd	Joan Heaney*	Donna Murphy*	Lisa Wallender*
Wendy Brown*	Bonnie Heikas*	Pat Murray*	Edward Walter*
Steve and Sue Burns*	Joyce and Mike Heller*	Ray O'Dell*	Bonnie and Les Wamsley
Stephen Cake*	Isobell Hoffman*	Alan and Elaine Olson*	Karen West*
Susan and Ed Chandler*	Herbert and Debra Holt*	Donald S. Parham*	Keith and Beth Wimer*
Ruth Christiansen	Marsha Houston*	Robert Pavlik*	June Wright*
Kathleen Copeland*	Ginny Irving*	Dominic and Chris Perello*	Celia Zaentz*
David and Evelyn Dabritz	Joseph Johnson*	Nicholas and Dorothy Pier*	Ruth L. Zank*
		Rebecca Rasmussen*	



Betsy Kinter has taken on the important job of Database Coordinator for our chapter. Here she is (at right) learning about the process from now-retired Coordinator Wendy Brown. SWAP is grateful to them both. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

DONATIONS:

Baywood Inn / Papillon Restaurant
– for printing of Trail Guide
Steve and Jill Jobst – Big Sit! donation

Johnson Starlings & Associates, Inc. Real Estate
– for printing of Trail Guide
PG&E - \$2,500 grant
Ron Weaver – Big Sit! donation

**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.*

SWAP Calendars Make Great Gifts!

Order some below as gifts and the beautiful pictures will recall your thoughtfulness every month of the year. The T-shirts, sweatshirts, and mural prints listed below also make wonderful holiday gifts. And the lovely note cards, postcards, and pocket guides make good stocking stuffers! A gift donation or life membership in the name of your friend or relative would also be much appreciated.

October photo from 2008 Calendar: Owls in the Elfin Forest



SWAP Shoppers' Order Form

All Prices Include Sales Tax

1. MURAL SHIRTS

Mural design by artist Barbara Rosenthal on both front and back. Words on shirt: "El Moro Elfin Forest Natural Area" above mural and "Small Wilderness Area Preservation" and "Los Osos, California" below mural.

Circle Sizes:

___ Short Slv. T-Shirt (Sm, Med, Lg, XLg, XXLg, XXXLg) @ \$15.00 = \$_____

___ Long Slv. T-Shirt (Sm, Med, Lg, XLg, XXLg, XXXLg) @ \$17.00 = \$_____

___ Sweatshirt (Sm, Med, Lg, XLg, XXLg, XXXLg) @ \$25.00 = \$_____

2. PHOTOS OF THE ELFIN FOREST

Original photo note cards by Bob Meyer

___ @ \$3.00 or ___ 5 @ \$14.00 = \$_____

Original photo postcards by Bob Meyer

___ @ \$1.00 = \$_____

Indicate No. per View(s):

___ All 5; ___ Don Klopfer Trail; ___ Ocean View;

___ Wild Hyacinth; ___ Horned Lizard; ___ Dudleya

3. POCKET GUIDE

Useful 56-page guide to plants and animals of the Elfin Forest. Charts for bloom season, form, color, and habitat for 200 vascular plants plus lists of 56 lichens and 36 mushrooms known to occur. Habitat and peak months seen are charted for 187 birds. Also listed: 28 common mammals; 10 reptiles; 4 amphibians; 19 butterflies and moths (charted by size, months in flight, color, and host plants); 104 other arthropods and 7 gastropods.

___ @ \$2.00 = \$_____

4. ELFIN FOREST MURAL PRINTS

___ signed prints by artist Barbara Rosenthal, image size 4 1/2 x 16 1/2 in; mounted on foamcore @ \$20.00 = \$_____

5. 2008 ELFIN FOREST WALL CALENDAR*

Enjoy all year round these wonderful pictures of the Elfin Forest by outstanding photographers!

___ @ \$15.00 = \$_____ (*members: 2 for \$25!*)

Shipping cost if outside Los Osos/Morro Bay

Pocket Guides & Note Cards: \$1.00 = _____

Calendars & all other items: \$2.50 = _____

TOTAL OF ORDER \$_____

(Please print when filling order, and indicate how many of each)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone (w/area code) : _____

Make checks payable and mail to:

SWAP, P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412-6642.

Call in orders may also be made: (805) 528-0392.

(See phone numbers in box above for calendar pre-orders.)

* For calendar orders, call 528-1911 or 528-1861.

Elfin Forest 2008 Wall Calendars make great gifts;
 see page 11!

Los Osos / Morro Bay Chapter
 SMALL WILDERNESS AREA PRESERVATION
 A Non-Profit Public Benefit Corporation
 P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412-6442
 (805) 528-0392 www.elfin-forest.org



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2008 SWAP Calendars on Sale!

Sales of the Elfin Forest 2008 calendar have already brought in over \$3,000 for SWAP. Calendar Committee Chair Debbie Levi's goal is to sell the remaining 200 or so calendars by the end of 2007, so she is offering SWAP members a discount: two calendars for \$25. All calendars bought within driving distance of Los Osos will be delivered to your door. Otherwise, there will be a \$2.50 mailing charge. Use the order form on page 11, or call 528-1911. Calendars are available for \$15.00 each at the Los Osos Chamber of Commerce, Volumes of Pleasure Bookstore in Los Osos, and Coalesce Bookstore in Morro Bay.

Also, we'll be selling calendars at the Los Osos Holiday Parade on Sunday, December 8, beginning at 10 a.m. If you can spare 2 hours to sit at a calendar sales table, phone 528-1911 or 528-1861.

Dues Increase Reminder

Note! With the approval of our members, the chapter dues will increase to \$25 a year beginning January 1, 2008. Seniors and students can pay a reduced fee of \$15 per year. Thank you for your support of the Elfin Forest.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

New Member Renewing Member

Member \$12* Defender \$100

Steward \$25 Champion \$250

Protector \$50 Guardian \$500

Life Member \$1000

I want to help, please call me!

Memberships include a subscription to SWAP's bimonthly newsletter, *Oakleaves*. All donations to SWAP are tax-deductible.

EVERY membership counts!

Make checks payable to: SWAP.

Mail to: Small Wilderness Area Preservation,
 P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412-6442.