



# OAKLEAVES

A PUBLICATION OF FRIENDS OF EL MORO ELFIN FOREST

P.O. BOX 6442, LOS OSOS, CALIFORNIA 93412-6442 ♦ (805) 528-0392 ♦ WINTER 2024-25

## The State of the Forest

By Steve Hendricks, FEMEF Board Chair  
and Dave Bowlus, Board Secretary

Board members of Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest (FEMEF) continue to meet monthly on Zoom (See page 2 for meeting information) to discuss issues related to the Forest. Input from the members and the public is always encouraged and greatly appreciated. Please join our meetings if you are able. Below is an overview of some of the most significant happenings in the last few months.

### FEMEF Board Meets with County Parks Staff

On June 6 of this year, the members of the FEMEF Board had a meeting with San Luis Obispo County Parks and Recreation staff at the County Parks office in San Luis Obispo. The meeting was the first in-person meeting in nearly 5 years. The goal of the meeting was to discuss projects and issues in the Elfin Forest.

The highlight of the meeting was learning that the Los Osos Habitat Conservation Plan (LOHCP) has finally been approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. FEMEF has been unable to begin large projects over the last 5 years as we have been in a holding pattern awaiting this approval. Now that the LOHCP has been approved, we are waiting for the County to implement the approved plan. At that time, FEMEF can gain direction on how to proceed with our projects. Unfortunately, the County indicated that it may take several months before they are able to give us approval on specific projects. The waiting game continues, but at least we can see the light. Stay tuned.

State of the Forest *continued on page 2*

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## So Long, It's Been Good to Know You... *Oakleaves* Editors Have Retired.

By Yolanda Waddell, Jean Wheeler, and Pam Ouellette

Much to the surprise of the FEMEF Board of Directors, all three of the *Oakleaves* editors have decided to retire/resign from their positions after the Winter issue is complete. Jean and Pam will travel more. Yolanda needs to have enough time to de-clutter her paper-filled study and box-filled garage. Here is a little information about each of us:

**Yolanda Waddell** - I began editing *Oakleaves* in 1999. Pat Grimes, the previous editor, had been working on *Oakleaves* since 1991. She started with a 4-page newsletter and later worked with eight pages when funding was available for a longer newsletter. I found that editing an 8-page bimonthly newsletter was very demanding while I was still working, and even after I retired in 2000. Jean Wheeler agreed to be a second editor in 2002, to my great relief.

It has been a pleasure to be an editor/writer. I have enjoyed the process of finding newsworthy information to share with FEMEF members, working with articles from regular contributors, writing one or two of my own, and seeing the creative way that our graphic designer, Katy Budge, would put everything together. It has been a privilege and delight to work with Jean, Pam, Katy, our Board members over the years, our printer, Tom Hay, all the folks who gave their time and effort in making *Oakleaves*, and getting it to you, our members and readers. Thank you for your support.

**Jean Wheeler** - I have been an *Oakleaves* editor since Yolanda invited me to help produce our 8-page newsletter in 2002. By 2007, I was worried that good articles, often ones about animals of the Elfin Forest, had to be omitted because of lack of space, and smaller and smaller fonts had to be used to fit our articles into eight pages. Yolanda and I asked that *Oakleaves* increase to 12 pages. The SWAP Board agreed. In the summer of 2022, I recommended that *Oakleaves* should be a quarterly publication like many other non-profit newsletters, and we worked to make it happen.

*Oakleaves* Editors Retire *continued on page 3*



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*of the*

*Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest (FEMEF):*

Steve Hendricks, Chair

Rebecca Rasmussen, Vice Chair

Roger Carmody, Treasurer

Dave Bowlus, Secretary

Beverly Boyd, Acting Recording Secretary

Pat Brown

Ron Ruppert

The FEMEF Board of Directors meets monthly. Meeting days and times can vary and will be posted on the home page at [www.elfin-forest.org](http://www.elfin-forest.org).

FEMEF Board meetings are virtual and are open to the public.

To attend a FEMEF Board meeting, leave a message at 805-528-0392.

## CONTACT FEMEF

If you have questions about FEMEF activities or want to volunteer, please call (805) 528-0392 and leave a message.

A recorded message will give information about our coming activities and other events.

If you have questions, concerns, or comments about any problems in the Elfin Forest, call or write Lasca Gaylord

SLO County Parks Supervising Ranger  
1144 Monterey Street, SLO, CA 93408  
(805) 781-1196.

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 Lasca Gaylord at 781-1196.



<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofElMoroElfinForest>



[https://www.instagram.com/el\\_moro\\_elfin\\_forest/](https://www.instagram.com/el_moro_elfin_forest/)

# State of the Forest *continued from page 1*

## Invasives Have Taken Hold

With above average rainfall in the last two years, invasive Cape ivy and asparagus vine have taken hold in a few corners of the Elfin Forest. These vines can grow over the top of shrubs and trees and kill them! We discussed the issue with County Parks, and with the help of volunteer Zarah Wyly

(certified arborist), we got approval to spray herbicides in very specific areas only on the invasive vines. County Parks has an in-house spraying expert who will help us tackle these stubborn invasives.

## Annual Meeting Celebration

FEMEF celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Elfin Forest acquisition this year at its annual meeting on October 12. Pat Brown (long time member, volunteer and current Board member) gave a detailed history of the Elfin Forest. I think everyone learned something new. Thank you, Pat, for all the time you put into this very important project. More than 60 community members joined us for lunch, Pat's presentation, and the business part of our meeting.

## Vandalism has struck again in the Elfin Forest

Sadly, vandals have struck again in the Elfin Forest. Several oak trees have been whittled with an axe and the bark of several others was etched with weird designs. These activities cause permanent damage to the trees and could kill them. If you spot any malfeasants up to no good, please dial 911. The Sheriff is very quick to respond in Los Osos.

## Thank you to our Wonderful Volunteers

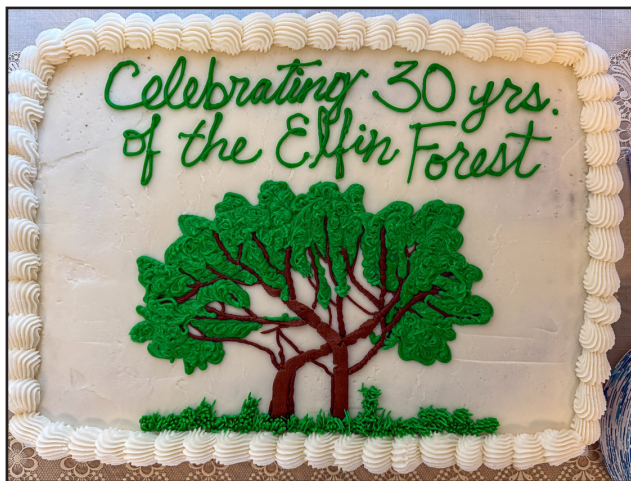
No State of the Forest update can be made without thanking our volunteers for all of the amazing work that they do. From the folks who helped with the planning and conducting of the annual meeting, to the Weed Warriors who keep our forest looking beautiful and weed free, to the board and committee members who do the behind-the-scenes work that keeps everything running smoothly. County Parks is always impressed with the work that we do. Thanks for making the Elfin Forest such a wonderful treasure in our community.

## We also need to plead for more volunteers

The *Oakleaves* newsletter is going through a major transition with all the current and long-time editors stepping down after the Winter issue. If we don't find any replacements soon, *Oakleaves* will be no more. If you or anyone you know likes writing and/or editing, please reach out. We really need your help! We also need more board members. It would be great to get some fresh eyes on issues in the Elfin Forest. You can email me directly if you are interested, at [steve@elfin-forest.org](mailto:steve@elfin-forest.org).

## Thank you to our Members and Donors

Your generous donations and membership renewals support future projects to maintain the Elfin Forest and boardwalk, refurbish and replace informational signs and aging benches, make other improvements, and fund projects to serve our mission: "to preserve and maintain the El Moro Elfin Forest Natural Area; to inform and educate about the natural history of the Elfin Forest and the Morro Bay Estuary; and to promote and support scientific research in the Forest." ♦



*Elfin Forest 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary cake. Photo by Bob Canepa.*



# Oakleaves Graphic Designer Katy Budge has Retired

By Yolanda Waddell and Katy Budge

Katy Budge has been the graphic designer for the *Oakleaves* newsletter for many years. In her words, "I've been doing the graphics for *Oakleaves* since dinosaurs roamed the Elfin Forest." She said in her resignation email that she is hoping to do more traveling and suggested that we look for a graphic designer who is very savvy about integrating newsletter content and social media.

I sent a list of questions to Katy about her experiences as the *Oakleaves* graphic designer and she very kindly emailed her answers to me. Here is our email conversation.

YW- When did you begin doing graphic design for *Oakleaves* and SWAP?

KB- The earliest *Oakleaves* issue in my files is April 1996, but I started back in about 1992.

YW- How did that happen?

KB- I had gone on a few Saturday walks and gotten to know some SWAP members through that, and through my board member work with Friends of the Estuary. Rose Bowker (SWAP Board member) was doing all the newsletter tasks and was looking for someone to take over the graphics layout, so I volunteered. I worked with Rose to begin with, and then with Pat Grimes for many years.

YW- Were you involved with SWAP before that?

KB- Other than enjoying the walks, no.

YW- What changes in ways of doing graphic design and publishing have taken place since then?

KB- So many! I can only speak to my end of the production process, but things are vastly different and much easier, especially since the advent of publishing programs on computers. I started back in the age of dinosaurs when we used hot wax machines, exacto blades, and t-squares to produce a layout. Everything had to be put down individually, from photos to logos to blocks of type. That layout board was then "photographed" to a piece of film, which was then "burned" onto a plate, which was put onto the printing press. Now, I arrange things in my publishing program using just a mouse and some keystrokes, then just make a .pdf file and email it!

YW- You are also a writer and had a column in our local newspaper, *The Tribune*. What did you write about?

KB- I wrote a weekly series covering restaurants, chefs, and food products.

YW- Did writing articles for *The Tribune* make it easier to work on *Oakleaves*?

KB- I wouldn't say one helped the other, but it was always fun



Katy Budge

to work on *Oakleaves* and the brochures and calendars because it was a different kind of creative work. I really loved working on those beautiful calendars, though I know they were a tremendous amount of work for all of you to gather the images. In fact, I know I've always had the end of things -- I get to just arrange all the things you've wrangled up and to make them look presentable!

YW- What are your plans for the future?

KB- Doing some more traveling. The main reason I'm retiring from *Oakleaves* is that I don't want my schedule to impact FEMEF's. And I'll continue my exploration of food and cuisine through reading, writing, and eating!

You can learn more about Katy in her [casafestiva.com](http://casafestiva.com) podcasts. It's obvious that she will continue to be traveling and writing actively on food-related topics. All of us in FEMEF wish Katy well in her future endeavors. We thank her for her many years of sharing her artistry and skill in converting several pages of text and a bunch of photos into a newsletter that is visually pleasing as well as enjoyable to read. *Hasta la vista, Katy.* ♦

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## Oakleaves Editors Retire *continued from page 1*

Working with Yolanda and SWAP/FEMEF Board and committee members has been a rewarding experience for the past 22 years. I appreciate very much the opportunities I've had to work with so many warm, very knowledgeable, and outstandingly productive members of SWAP/FEMEF. I'm proud to have contributed to the production of *Oakleaves*, and to the preservation of our Elfin Forest with the precious plants and animals for which it is home.

**Pam Ouellette**, a retired City of San Luis Obispo Water Resource Recovery Facility Chief Operator, joined the *Oakleaves* staff this year. She has written the Weed Warrior

articles for the past few issues, including her outstanding article in our Autumn issue about vandalism and the fires in the Elfin Forest. Now, having experienced the need to devote much of her time over a period of two months to producing *Oakleaves*, Pam realized that is difficult to plan trips to the many places in the world that she wants to see. This will be her last issue. We are grateful to Pam for the time and energy she has given to helping to make *Oakleaves* an outstanding newsletter.

We are very sorry that all three of us found it necessary to leave at the same time, but to paraphrase the end of an old Woody Guthrie dustbowl song ...we gotta be movin' along. ♦

# Raccoons

*Text by Jean Wheeler, Ph. D. Painting by Connie Harms.*

This charming painting by Connie Harms reminds me--morning footprints on damp wooden boards reveal that raccoons, like us, apparently enjoy a stroll on our lovely boardwalk! However, they take their excursions at night, being mostly nocturnal animals.

Our raccoon species, *Procyon lotor*, is native to North America and is the largest member of Family Procyonidae, which also includes ringtails and coatis. The name *Procyon* comes from the bright nighttime star of that name and *lotor* refers to "washing."

Their diet consists heavily of small fish, snails, frogs, turtles, and aquatic arthropods. Raccoons use their clever paws in dealing with these foods at water surfaces which has led to claims that they "always" wash their foods. However, they also often dine away from water on fruits, nuts, corn, other plants, and garbage. Occasionally, they prey on birds and bird eggs, kittens, small cats, and small dogs.

As a teenager on lakeside family vacations in Wisconsin, I enjoyed watching them from our windows as raccoon families raided our garbage can. I agree with the authorities that they really do eat quite a lot of food without washing it first!

Adult raccoons are up to about two feet long. They weigh from 12 to 40 or even 50 pounds. Their fur is mostly grayish brown, with a black facial mask, five to seven wide black rings around their long bushy tails, and a black tip to the tail. Their very strong and extremely agile front paws can easily open doors. They are rather unusual in not only being able to climb trees but will often descend trees headfirst. Raccoons are strong swimmers crossing rivers and small lakes but tend to avoid deep water. They prefer living in evergreen forested terrain with ponds, lakes, and marshes. The species



*Raccoon on a nighttime boardwalk stroll.*

is considered very intelligent, and studies have recorded the ability of raccoons to remember how to solve a task for as many as three years.

Raccoons normally breed in midwinter; gestation is for about two months, and usually 2-5 cubs are born in spring. Females raise the young until late fall. Some raccoons have lived in captivity for around 16 years, but few in the wild survive for 5 years. The death rate is highest in the second year. Most deaths are related to human proximity—hunting, trapping, motor vehicles, and dogs. Natural predators are mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes, and wolves.

Despite their short life span while living in proximity to humans, raccoons are rather rare among our native animals in not losing habitat to urban development. Raccoons have adapted to human presence, living in attics and chimneys, traveling in storm sewers and subways, and dining on pet food left outdoors. Oh, and of course those specialists engage in garbage-can-dining! ♦

## FEMEF's Annual Celebration

*By Dave Bowlus, FEMEF Board Secretary*

On Saturday, October 12, Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest (FEMEF) celebrated thirty years of protecting the 90-acre natural area in Los Osos. The luncheon event took place in the Community Room at Morro Shores Mobile Home Park. Over 50 members attended. Pat Murray, a resident of Morro Shores Mobile Home Park, arranged for FEMEF's use of the Community Room facility. The beautiful and informative programs, designed by Rebecca Rasmussen, were donated by Hay Printing in Morro Bay. Rebecca and her son Koen created lovely table centerpiece decorations using succulents. Local businesses that donated refreshments included Carlock's Bakery, Wayward Bakery, Trader Joe's, and Filiponi Winery.

An exhibition of historical documents featured a display assembled by Barbara Rosenthal and Pat Murray with photographs documenting the creation of the mural at Los Osos Rexall and the boardwalk construction project. Mark Dariz was a special guest; he designed the Elfin Forest boardwalk and built the benches. The boardwalk was



*Special guest Mark Dariz points to the boardwalk that he designed on an aerial photo of the Elfin Forest. Photo by Bob Canepa.*

Annual Celebration *continued on page 5*



# Milkmaids

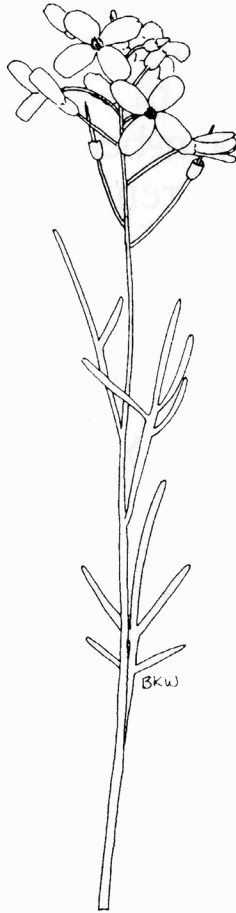
Text revised by Dirk Walters, Ph. D., from his April 2009 article;  
Drawing by Bonnie Walters

Bonnie's drawing for this article was originally completed back in 1975 for the first edition of Dr. David Keil's and my plant taxonomy textbook. My guess is that many of you will recognize it as milkmaids (*Cardamine californica*). This species belongs to the mustard family, Brassicaceae or Cruciferae. The four petals characteristic of this family are apparent in the drawing.

To be absolutely sure it's a member of the mustard family, one must get up close and count the stamens. There will be six, and four of them will be longer than the other two. It is said that many species in this family display their four petals as a cross or crucifix. This led to the older, irregular family name, Cruciferae, which translates as 'to bear' = *iferae* and 'cross' = *cruc*. The other name, Brassicaceae, is the one preferred by the current Rules of Nomenclature. It is derived from the genus *Brassica* paired with the family suffix -aceae.

The white to occasionally slightly pinkish flowers are a treat for wildflower lovers. In good to moderate rain-years, milkmaids are among our earliest bloomers. They usually bloom in late January or early February. Occasional flowers can be found as late as April from the coast through the Santa Lucia Mountains. Dr. Hoover reports that it's occasionally found east of the Santa Lucia Mountains, but at the time of publication of his original Flora, he had no specimens to verify that. Look for it on moist, wooded slopes throughout our area.

This is one of the first wildflowers I identified after coming to California and Cal Poly. I first identified it back in the winter of 1970. I had known a similar species from the eastern U.S called toothwort (*Cardamine concatenata*), also an early bloomer. Our milkmaids also used to be placed in genus *Dentaria*. I was told back then that both the names *Dentaria* and toothwort referred to the use of its short rhizome as an antidote for tooth ache. Mr. Ralph Baker, president of the local chapter of the California Native Plant Society at the time, told me that he and his childhood buddies had used the cut surface of the short rhizome as an antidote for toothache. I could not find any reference to either genus in any books on medicinal or poisonous plants on my shelf. Its use as a toothache antidote must be taken on hearsay, but I did hear the same story about the source of the name toothwort for the Eastern U.S. species. There are plenty of toothache remedies at the local drug store, so the best use of this plant is to enjoy it where it grows. ♦



## Please Report Sightings

Have you observed any unusual birds in the Elfin Forest? Mammals? Reptiles? Amphibians? Insects? Interesting activities or footprints of wildlife in our Elfin Forest? Unusual plants? Taken a good photo? Please report any interesting sighting to your *Oakleaves* editors at: oakleaf@elfin-forest.org or leave a message on FEMEF's answering machine: (805) 528-0392.

## Annual Celebration *continued from page 4*

constructed by the California Conservation Corps in 1999. While guests ate and circulated, Chris Bianco graced the gathering with song and guitar music.

FEMEF volunteer and Board member Pat Brown made a presentation on the history of SWAP (Small Wilderness Area Preservation, original name of the organization) through to the present-day iteration that is now known as FEMEF. She spoke about the local efforts to save the Elfin Forest from development and gave descriptions of restoring the Forest through removal of invasive nonnatives and replanting of native vegetation, research projects, visits by wild boars, and occasional problems with illegal camping and vandalism. The purchase of the Elfin Forest property was completed in 1994 after a five-year fundraising effort by SWAP volunteers. (SWAP is now doing business as FEMEF.) Event attendees Yolanda and Jay Waddell and Pat and Larry Grimes were recognized for their long-time activist roles as founders of the Los Osos/Morro Bay Chapter. Pat's presentation was recorded digitally and will be made available on the FEMEF YouTube channel and linked to our elfin-forest.org (or femef.org) website.

A short general membership meeting concluded with the Treasurer's annual report delivered by Roger Carmody, and an election for members of the Board of Directors. The ballot count after the meeting showed that all four Directors on the ballot were elected unanimously. ♦



## OAKLEAVES

is a quarterly FEMEF publication.

Editors are Yolanda Waddell, Jean Wheeler, Pam Ouellette, and Faylla Chapman  
Layout by Rebecca Rasmussen

Contributors to this issue: Contributors to this issue: Dave Bowlus, Pat Brown, Roger Carmody, Suzette Girouard, Steve Hendricks, Vicky Johnsen, Betsy Kinter, Pat Murray, John Nowak, Pam Ouellette, Patrice Promack, Skip Rotstein, Yolanda Waddell, Dirk Walters, JeanWheeler, Zarah Wyly.

Deadline for copy to *Oakleaves* is the first of the month before issue.  
If possible, all copy should be submitted by e-mail to oakleaf@elfin-forest.org.

# Weed Warrior Reports

By Pam Ouellette and Vicky Johnsen

For the August workday, Jeff Reifel and 6 volunteers from the California Conservation Corps pulled Cape ivy off the Coast live oaks below 10th street; the remainder of the 9 volunteers did some much-needed trail trimming. 2nd Street Noi's provided a delicious Thai lunch for the workers; Craig Johnsen made cookies for dessert. 36 total hours were invested in keeping the Elfin Forest pristine.

The September workday had another crew of hard-working volunteers from the California Conservation Corps. Led by Zarah Wyly, their morning was spent hauling the invasive Cape ivy off the canopy of the Coast live oaks. Zarah Wyly and Vicky Johnsen have been experimenting with various ways of dealing with Cape ivy as it has the potential to re-root if not killed by some method. The ivy was wound up into balls and left on a cloth tarp to dry out in the sun. A total of 18 bags were filled and loaded into a truck to haul away.

In October, Pat Brown, Natalie Zaragoza, Patrice Pro-mack, and Sue Shields worked beneath an oak grove south of the upper boardwalk removing an enormous area of narrow-leaved iceplant. Roger Carmody, Barbara Rosenthal, Vicky Johnsen, and Cuesta College students Alex Tappen and Luis Castro trimmed the 11th street sand trail. Thanks to that extra help from Alex and Luis, we got the entire job done! The total combined time by everyone was 57 hours and stretched into the late afternoon. The October workday was foggy, cold, and drizzly. Still, 10 volunteers showed up ready to work.

Natalie Zaragoza, Pat Brown, Ron Ruppert, and Jan



*On a rainy November Saturday, Vicky Johnsen (second from right) led vegetation trimming along the boardwalk. Afterward, volunteers were treated by Doi from Noi and Doi's 2nd Street Café to a delicious lunch. Photo by Pat Brown.*



*In September Zarah Wyly led a hard-working CCC crew in hauling invasive Cape ivy off the canopy of Coast live oaks.*

*Photo by Pat Brown.*

Moore finished up the enormous job of digging up and removing a large corm (root) of narrow-leaved iceplant to ensure that the invasive plant could not regrow and broadcast its seeds. This particular infested area had been worked at least four times before by Natalie and other volunteers. Sue Shields and Vicky Johnsen trimmed the entrance from the Habitat Trail down to the Klopfer Grove. They wove a thick wall of branches to close off the oak grove that had been vandalized. James Solum meticulously trimmed a large Morro manzanita in the same area that was blocking the sand trail. Dean Thompson trimmed the narrow boardwalk extension up to Sienna's View. Ten hungry workers were treated to another delicious Thai luncheon courtesy of Doi and Noi from Noi's 2nd Street Thai. Pat Brown gave them a signed thank-you card for the meal.

Zarah Wyly and Vicky Johnsen met with Supervising Ranger (who has an herbicide application permit) and Lasca Gaylord on August 17th to discuss how FEMEF can tackle removing both Cape ivy and Smilax. It was decided that the FEMEF Conservation Committee needs to draw up a detailed plan (maps, etc.) to submit to US Fish & Wildlife for an approval that can be filed at County Parks and built into our: "Adopt-A-Park" agreement. Our past herbicide applicator, Pete Sarafian, operated under a plan that needs updating. Zarah will put together a digitized map with GPS coordinates for the remaining areas in the forest (oak and manzanita groves) that need attention. She will help create a plan to submit for approval. ♦

## Join Us!

### First Saturday Work Parties

We invite you to join us on any first Saturday from 9 a.m. to noon at the north end of 15th Street in Los Osos to enjoy satisfying physical activity in fresh air amid lovely surroundings. Please dress for wind, fog, or sun in layers of clothing with long pants, long shirt sleeves, work gloves, and sturdy shoes with closed toes. Take care not to park in front of driveways or mailboxes.

To request more information, call (805) 528-0392.



# Gardening with California Natives: California Buckwheat

By John Nowak & Suzette Girouard

This month's article features genus *Eriogonum*, buckwheat, a "bee smart" genus and how the relationship between the two "B's" – the buckwheat genus and bees, the *Hymenoptera* family, can help us in our gardens.

You might have noticed dune buckwheat, *Eriogonum parvifolium*, growing along a trail in the Elfin Forest. Its flowering umbels bloom during dry summer, September-October, when most trees and shrubs have finished. One might wonder how this beautiful plant established itself in Los Osos and what may have contributed to this success--possibly our native bees and their cousins. Late season bloom is critical for insects that rely on the nourishment produced by buckwheat flowers. For the plant, it's all about replenishing its seed bank. Buckwheat needs bees to help ensure their future generations. Likewise, bees need buckwheat's nourishment, to support the hive and prodigy for their future. My feeling is that buckwheats may have taken advantage of what is a down bloom period for other plant species, allowing them to become established in many plant communities throughout California. According to *California Native Plants for the Garden* by Carol Bornstein, David Fross and Bart O'Brien, there are "more than 125 species" of native buckwheat identified in California.

In the garden setting, buckwheat is prized for its blooms as well as attracting insects and wildlife. Their blooms range from white to yellow to pink with flowers of some species, including ours, drying to rust-colored red in late fall. Large distribution throughout many climate zones and soil types makes it easy to find appropriate species suitable for your location. California's native buckwheats grow in a variety of sizes, from small shrubs to prostrate forms. It is most important to select the right buckwheat for your area and soil type (i.e. coastal, inland, mountain, or desert). Most of all, native buckwheats require partial to full sun. In selecting and planting buckwheat in your garden, select a soil that is well drained, avoid a windy location not conducive to bees & butterflies, plant soil amendments and fertilizers, and water monthly once established. Remove the ever-changing flower heads by late November, and if you collect flower heads for seeds, make sure to store them in a paper bag (not plastic). Prune back in December to encourage new Spring growth.

Although California native buckwheats are easy to grow, they come with some challenges and can be susceptible to aphid attacks. In this case, I recommend spraying aphids directly with insecticidal soap or neem oil. Follow with applications weekly until insects are controlled.

In conclusion, *Eriogonum* has advanced in the Elfin Forest and throughout California, possibly from its close relationship with bees who benefit from its late bloom period. These adaptations have created a unique opportunity to bring fall color to our gardens as well as provide an important source of nutrition for insects and wildlife. ❖



Dune Buckwheat. Photo by Yolanda Waddell.

## FEMEF

### Annual Summary of Income and Expenses July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024

by Roger Carmody, FEMEF Treasurer and Jan DiLeo

#### Income

Memberships and Donations	17,986
Merchandise Sales	5,645
Investment Income	619
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>24,250</b>

#### Expenses

Publication - Oakleaves	3,379
Tools - Maintenance	453
Outside Services - Snail Monitor	250
Storage Unit	2,398
Insurance	3,296
Administrative	2,707
Merchandise Purchases	6,478
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>18,961</b>

Net Income 5,289

Note: Income and expenses are reported on a cash basis. The Annual Summary does not include any non-cash contributions of time and expertise donated by members and volunteers.



# Coming Up in the Elfin Forest

*Text and Photos by Jean Wheeler*

Winter is a very exciting season in the Elfin Forest. Wildflower displays are extravagantly abundant and colorful here, while at the minimal season in most of our nation. Wildlife activity is also peaking. Young birds and mammals of 2024 are newly on their own. Adults are mating and building nests for 2025 progeny, and many may be born before spring officially arrives.

Our area is one of the top birding regions in our nation. Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival, held on Martin Luther King holiday weekend each year, attracts hundreds of visitors from all over the U.S. and Canada, and even some foreign birders. The festival is scheduled for January 16-20, 2025, and early registration is essential for field trips—they fill fast!

Virtually all species of water birds and wading birds are present and at peak populations here by early winter. Look onto Morro Bay from Bush Lupine Point or Siena's View for American white pelicans and Canada and Brant geese. Dabbling ducks include northern pintails, American wigeons, northern shovelers (pictured), and all three teal: blue-winged, green-winged, and cinnamon. Diving ducks commonly seen include greater and lesser scaup, buffleheads, and ruddy ducks. Birds likely to be wading close to our shore include great and snowy egrets, American avocets, long-billed curlews, marbled godwits, and willets.

Look for osprey flying low or even perched on sticks protruding above water. Northern harriers, red-tailed hawks, peregrine falcons, American bald eagles and turkey vultures often fly over the estuary or over the Forest.

Shrubs around the boardwalk can be alive with flitting finches, sparrows, gnatcatchers, wrens, phoebes, chickadees, bushtits, nuthatches, and many other little brown and little grey birds. Among the larger common birds of the brush easily seen from the boardwalk are California thrashers, California and spotted towhees, California scrub-jays, doves, and California quail.

Buckbrush ceanothus is one of the larger shrubs supporting those flitting birds. Its white to lavender flowers nearly surround our boardwalk. Tiny bell-shaped flowers, white but often blushing pink, festoon tall Morro manzanita shrubs along the lower boardwalk. Bright red, fuchsia-flowered gooseberry trumpets line up on branches of shorter shrubs, supplying Anna's hummingbirds with a major food source in their very early nesting season. Understory blossoms include California poppies, asters with white to lilac ray petals around golden disks, and clusters of white petals atop green stems on California everlastings. California peonies (pictured) open drooping floral balls between December and early February along the 11th street sand trail and near Siena's View.

Enjoy a mild and gorgeous winter stroll on our boardwalk in the Elfin Forest we protect through our generous donations and active volunteer efforts! ❖



*Northern Shovelers*



*Peony.*



*A small Coast live oak tree, the size of a shrub, produced a bumper crop of acorns in September. Photo by Vicky Johnsen.*

## Thinking of Switching to Online *Oakleaves*?

If you receive a print copy of *Oakleaves*, we encourage you to visit our online version at [www.elfin-forest.org](http://www.elfin-forest.org). You will see photos in full color, and the text is easier to read on your computer. If you decide to be an online reader, you will receive an email when each new issue is posted on our website. Your decision would save paper, ink, and FEMEF dollars for other uses. Just email us at [oakleaf@elfin-forest.org](mailto:oakleaf@elfin-forest.org) with the subject "Switch me to online."



# WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

## Docent-Led Third Saturday Walks

Reservations required; masks are optional. To reserve a spot on the walk, email us at [walks@elfin-forest.org](mailto:walks@elfin-forest.org) and indicate the number in your party in the subject line of your email.

**December 14, 2:00 p.m.**

***The Stories of the 9 Sisters, the Salt Marsh and the Bay.***

(Due to popular demand, a second opportunity for this walk is offered to those who were unable to sign up for the November date. Replaces the 3rd Saturday Walk for December.) Morro Rock is the most famous of this chain of volcanic peaks. Join Faylla to learn about the Nine Sisters and how they came to be right in our backyard. We will also focus on the plants of the forest and the development of the Salt Marsh and Morro Bay.

**January 18, 9:30 a.m.**

***Docent and Topic to be announced; please check our website.***

**February 15, 9:30 a.m.**

***Fungus Foray – Mushrooms and More***

Join fungophile Dennis Sheridan on a delightful exploration of the Elfin Forest floor for fascinating mushrooms such as wood blewits, black elfin saddles, earthstars, golden caps, boletes, and poisonous amanitas. Dennis will take us on a trek to the lower oak grove next to the bay to find these marvelous 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. All plants in the Elfin Forest are protected by law. Only a very heavy rain will cancel the walk.

Check our website under "Visiting" and then "Walks in the Forest" Walks begin at times stated above at the north end (1100 block) of 15th Street off Santa Ysabel in Los Osos. Wear closed-toe shoes, long sleeves and pants to avoid poison oak and mosquitoes. Park carefully, avoiding driveways and mailboxes, and leave pets at home. The easy-paced walks last 1-1/2 to 2 hours.

For more information or if you use a wheelchair, call (805) 528-0392.



During his August reptile walk, Trevor Ruppert displays a gopher snake. Photo by Pat Brown.



In September, retired Cal Poly professor Wally Marks displayed examples of plant pathology, including a branch with oak galls.

Photo by Dave Bowlus.

Below: Prior to a walk about seeds in October, Jeff Reifel displays examples of seeds from other places. Photo by Pat Brown.





# Thank You to Our Generous Members

*Compiled by Betsy Kinter, FEMEF Database Coordinator*

## NEW LIFE MEMBERS:

Judith & Jack Stapelmann

## NEW MEMBERS:

Kim Bethel	Sam Stoddard*
Diane Filipponi*	KJ Swan
Marcia & Dave Lamkin*	Natalie Zaragoza
Mike Post*	

## RENEWING MEMBERS:

Carola Bundy*	Roger & Cle Longden*
Faylla Chapman*	George Lusich*
Cheryl & Gary Dove*	Beth Miller*
Kristin A. G. Drury	Linde Owen*
Larry & Pat Grimes*	Laura & Peter Petersen
Tom & Rita Hadjiyane*	Cindy Roessler*
Francine Harrell*	Oscar Sarafian*
Jim Havlena & Mary Rogers*	Susan Moore Sevier*
William Jankos*	Dennis Sheridan*
Margaret Lange	Susan & Dieter Walz*

## DONATIONS:

Anonymous donation through Fidelity Charitable  
Elizabeth Allen  
John Brunner & Michele Neilson  
Andrea Davis  
Tom Hay and Hay Printing, Morro Bay – printing of  
FEMEF Annual Celebration programs  
Barbara Rosenthal - donation of Elfin Forest mural prints

*\*Thanks to those listed above who donated more than the \$25 (regular) or \$15 (senior or student) membership dues. The additional donations will be used for special projects in the Elfin Forest.*

*If you recently sent a donation to FEMEF and don't see your name in this issue's New and Renewing list, be assured that your gift will be acknowledged in the next bimonthly issue. Gifts are processed by two different volunteers before reaching our editors, and newsletter copy deadline is one*

# Photo from the Forest



*Pat Brown spotted this paper wasp nest in the Elfin Forest.  
Photo by Pat Brown.*

## 30th Anniversary Ribbon Cutting!

Lucky for us, the fog cleared on the afternoon of October 10 for a short-but-sweet ribbon cutting ceremony. Many thanks to the Morro Bay Chamber Of Commerce for helping to organize this event commemorating the Elfin Forest's 30 years as a SLO County Park.

Pictured left to right: David Sozinho, Beverly Boyd, Dave Bowlus, Pat Murray, Rebecca Rasmussen, Corey Walsh, Roger Carmody, Pat Brown, Jean Wheeler, Steve Hendricks, Yolanda Waddell, Jay Waddell, and Ray Riordan.

Photo by Jody Hollier. ❖







## Limited- Edition 2025 FEMEF Calendar!

Available only through this issue, this beautiful calendar features photographs of the Elfin Forest taken by our own Board Member Pat Brown. They'll make wonderful gifts. Only a small number have been printed, so get yours while you can.

*(At left) The 2025 FEMEF Calendar cover.*



# FEMEF Shoppers' Order Form

See photos of all items at [www.elfin-forest.org](http://www.elfin-forest.org)

All Prices Include Sales Tax

### 1. MURAL SHIRTS & SWEAT SHIRTS

Large mural design by artist Barbara Rosenthal on both front and back. Forest green fabric with the words "Friends of the El Moro Elfin Forest" above mural and "Los Osos, California" below mural.

Indicate the desired size(s) (S,M,L,XL,XXL,XXXL)

\_\_\_ Short Slv. T-Shirt size \_\_\_ @\$25.00 = \$\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Long Slv. T-Shirt size \_\_\_ @\$30.00 = \$\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Pullover Hoodie size \_\_\_ @\$40.00 = \$\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Zip Hoodie size \_\_\_ @\$45.00 = \$\_\_\_

### 2. ELFIN FOREST MURAL PRINTS

Signed prints by artist Barbara Rosenthal.

Image size 4 1/2 x 16 1/2 in. Mounted on foamcore.

\_\_\_ @ \$35.00 = \$\_\_\_

### 3. ALPHABET BIRD BOOK

With 26 clever verses and superb photos on facing pages, this book is sure to please young and old.

\_\_\_ @ \$20.00 = \$\_\_\_

### 4. MURAL MUG

A 15- ounce beverage mug with wrap-around mural design. Microwave-safe; hand-wash suggested.

\_\_\_ @ \$15 = \$\_\_\_

### 5. ELFIN FOREST CAPS

One-size-fits-all cap with adjustable straps in back, 100% cotton. Two colors, forest green and maroon. Specify color when ordering.

\_\_\_ @ \$15 = \$\_\_\_ Color(s) \_\_\_\_\_

### 6. NOTECARDS

Featuring scenes from the El Moro Elfin Forest

\_\_\_ @ \$2.50 / each \_\_\_ @ \$10 / 5 notecards

### 7. 2025 FEMEF Calendar

Featuring photographs by Pat Brown.

\_\_\_ @ \$20.00 = \$\_\_\_

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

**SHIPPING COSTS:** Within and near Los Osos, free delivery may be possible. Shipping costs otherwise depend on zip code and package weight.

**Please call 805-528-0392 to arrange for delivery or shipping**

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FEMEF, P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412-6442.

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




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2025 FEMEF Calendar Available for a limited time - page 11

***Please check renewal date on your label.***

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## Benefits from a Year-End Donation

A donation to Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest can reduce your tax bite as well as help us to conserve our small wilderness area. This tiny preserve, with beautiful trees, shrubs, smaller plants, and many fascinating birds, insects, mammals, and other critters, needs our protection.



Donations help us fund special projects such as control of soil erosion, revegetation with native species, and removal of destructive invading plants. They also enable us to hire scientific firms to analyze the condition of the Elfin Forest and to provide us with sound advice on actions needed to conserve this special ecosystem into the future.

Your donations also help us fund education efforts including school walks for students from lower grades through college classes, publicized walk programs, and educational publications including brochures, boardwalk signage, and this *Oakleaves* quarterly newsletter.

### MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
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Email \_\_\_\_\_  
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Member \$25           | <input type="checkbox"/> Defender \$100  |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Seniors/Students \$15 |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member \$1000    |  |

- ☐ I want to help, please call me!  
☐ FEMEF has permission to email me.

Memberships include an online subscription to FEMEF's quarterly newsletter *Oakleaves*.

- ☐ Check here to receive the online version by email.  
☐ Check here to receive the print version by U.S. mail.  
☐ Check here if you do not wish to receive *Oakleaves*.

All donations to FEMEF are tax-deductible.  
EVERY membership counts!  
Make checks payable to: FEMEF  
Mail to: Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest,  
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