OSMA Newsletter Fall 2023

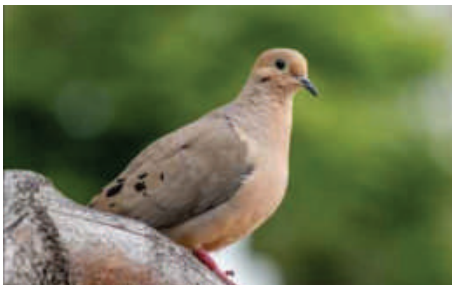
Fountaingrove II

The OSMA Newsletter is published quarterly by the Fountaingrove II Open Space Maintenance Association.

As the hours of daylight wane, we begin our transition to fall – as do our year-round Open Space neighbors.

We're all transitioning together. Some may experience emotion during this seasonal shift from summer to fall but how many will relate it to fewer hours of daylight as we leave behind the long days of summer? Humans, animals, plants – we'll all suffer lower serotonin levels and longer periods of melatonin 'down time' keeping a lid on our brighter, more energetic selves. See page 5.

What's different since the fire? We're at six years since the Tubbs fire raced through our community and most all of north Santa Rosa. If you were here, you will never forget, nor will you forget what else was here that will take decades to again be what it once was. Homes have come back surprisingly quickly and infrastructure is nearing completion. But what of our Open Space? Page 6.



The 'cooo' of a mourning dove. There's no more familiar bird call than that of our mourning doves. A gentle, almost owl-like, 'cooo' that leaves you reassured all is well with nature. We refer to them as our own doves, but in fact they are native from southern Canada, throughout the United States and as far south as Panama. They rarely migrate except for those furthest north. See page 7

Be still and listen. Every leaf on every branch on every plant is breathing.

Can you hear them? They don't breathe like you and I but they are inhaling and exhaling none the less. Every leaf on every plant from the trees overhead to the blades of grass and the weeds underfoot. No matter how large or small, every green surface is inhaling carbon dioxide and exhaling oxygen that we, and all animal organisms rely on to survive. It's a beautiful sound. *More on page 8.*

What in the world is happening on the Parkway?

We've all watched as the unimaginable unfolds, the relandscaping of miles of roadway.

Page 3.

Being a Fire Wise community involves every one of us. The OSMA exists to assure that all necessary steps are taken to preserve the health and integrity of our Open Space as viable habitat *and* protect our community from the threat of uncontrollable wild fire. This involves all of us. More on page 3.

FIREWISE COMMUNITIES

FIELD WORK
Images taken during the repair and stabilizing of our damaged access road illustrates the difficulty of this type of heavy work in a mountainous terrain. Not the least of the difficulty was bringing in and manipulating the heavy equipment necessary in a steep, narrow canyon.

From the OSMA Board

Maintaining access to all portions of our Open Space.

As can happen in areas where maintenace requires roads be cut along hillsides, unexpectedly heavy rains can cause slip-outs rendering the access unusable. The repair of these damaged areas requires serious engineering and the use of heavy equipment to insure there will be no recurrence.

Image below: *Slide area shortly after the slip out occurred during a period of heavy rain.*

Bottom image: *Roadway repaired and serviceable after removal of all unstable soil and rebuilt with several layers of large rock, compacted soil and a complex drainage system*

The OSMA Newsletter is a quarterly publication of the Fountaingrove II Open Space Maintenance Association as a service to our members.
Be sure to visit Fountaingroveii.com

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

The parkway project, tree clearing, habitat trees and more.

Fall is upon us, that time of year when nature begins its annual transition from growth to dormancy.

More Burned Tree Clearing With the changing of the seasons, we also begin our transition of activities. We're making a big push to complete the clean-up of burned dead trees. Yes, I thought we would finish in 2022, but we keep finding additional areas needing clearing. So, I am going to modify my reporting of cleaning up the burned tree areas; by the end of the year, we will have cleared all the burned areas at least once. Although it's been six years since the Tubbs fire, we continue to lose Douglas Fir trees

Continued clean-up of Douglas Fir since the Tubbs Fire.

for no apparent reason other than burn marks around their trunks. If this trend continues OSMA will be clearing dead burned trees for several years.

Damaged Fire Road In addition to the current dead tree and vegetation removal, a fire road damaged by heavy rain was repaired. This earthen slide area closing the only vehicle access road to +/- 75 acres of Wildland Area in the geographic center of Fountaingrove II required repairing a section of hillside and the roadbed. The repair work is completed, and the road is now accessible for vehicles. This was an important project to reestablish access into this area by maintenance or emergency vehicles. More on page 2.

Solar Powered Irrigation

Eight sets of Solar Panels will serve as the power source for the new irrigation controller system along Fountaingrove Parkway.

The Parkway Planting Project – We've all observed the increased emphasis on work to complete the planting project. It is reported the completion deadline is the end of the month, then there are a few weeks for the City of Santa Rosa to inspect the work and issue a Notice of Completion (NOC) at which time the warranty periods begin. There are two warranty timelines: one of 90 days for the planted vegetation and one year for the installed infrastructure. The ongoing cost of maintenance of the trees, shrubs, irrigation equipment and water usage within the three miles of planting strip areas between the sidewalk and curb along Fountaingrove Parkway, will be turned over to OSMA for permanent care and maintenance. The date of this transition has not been established.

The Repaving of the Parkway and road surface repair of interior roads. On September 26, 2023, the Santa Rosa City Council awarded a $21.8 million contract to replace/repair 33 miles of road in the Coffey Lane and Fountaingrove II neighborhoods over an 18 month time period. For more information on this project reference the City of Santa Rosa website and search for Transportation & Public Works News.

Why Habitat Trees? –Why does the Association create habitat trees? The direct answer is they are a requirement of the Fountaingrove II Design Program. The better answer is these were dead trees that were modified to create perching opportunities for birds — used mostly by birds of prey to rest and survey the area for a meal. Many were already in use by Acorn Woodpeckers to store acorns. The habitat trees are scattered around in the OSMA & Park Wildland Areas. Keep an eye out for a majestic hawk perched on one of the limbs. *CONTINUED ON PAGE 4*

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER *CONTINUED*

Habitat Trees
Rincon Ridge Park

Habitat Trees are dead trees modified to create perching opportunities for birds. Used mostly by birds of prey to survey the surrounding area for a next meal. On closer inspection, the bark of some are dotted with hundreds of acorns placed there by acorn woodpeckers for storage of food for approaching winter months. These woodpeckers form large families that maintain and protect their "granary trees" against those who might pilfer it..

OSMA Volunteer Day - How about a couple of hours a month to contribute to our local environmental health? I've had several OSMA Members express they were not able to volunteer during the week, but if OSMA scheduled a few hours on a weekend each month, that would work. So, let's try 8:30am – 10:30am, the second Saturday of each month starting November 11, 2023. The 190 oak trees planted a year ago adjacent to Parker Hill Rd. need some TLC. Almost all the trees require a little individual maintenance, such as weeding, relocating the irrigation, applying mulch around the base, etc. Great opportunity to meet your neighbors, have some fun, and 190 Oak trees will be forever grateful.

To be included on the OSMA Volunteer Day contact list, email *leslie@focus-re.com* providing name, address and a request to be added to the OSMA Volunteer contact list. Additional details relating to the November OSMA Volunteer Day event will be provided in a few weeks via email. ***Thank you for considering being a valuable volunteer.***

Our Annual OSMA Firewise Meeting was held at Rincon Ridge Park on Saturday July 22, this is a requirement to maintain our *Firewise USA Community Certification*. It was a worthwhile event attended by many of our OSMA Members. Fire professionals from Santa Rosa Fire and CalFire were in attendance along with all OSMA Board Members. Important and useful information relating to protecting your home and occupants from a wild or home fire was available to all who attended via handouts or individual discussions with the fire officials staffing their tables. Thank you to all who attended.

Stay diligent in maintaining fire safe practices around your home. Maintain your home's defensible space. Is there a wood fence and gate connected to your house? Consider replacing that few feet of wood fencing with a metal fence and gate. It may be the difference that allows your home to survive a fire event. Let us not forget, many homes met their demise during the Tubbs fire due to wood fences providing a direct path for fire to a house.

Bruce McConnell,
OSMA Board President

FIREWISE COMMUNITIES

Transitioning to Fall

It's a major adjustment from summer to fall, and that's not including the temperature change.

Here in the Northern Hemisphere, we have our autumnal equinox on September 22nd when the center of the sun crosses the equator on its way south.

On that day, the periods of daylight and darkness are essentially equal as the term equinox implies – *nox* being Latin for night. This is the beginning of autumn, or fall. We've all had our own experiences that have formed our opinions of the seasons, what we look forward to and sometimes not. But of the many polls conducted on the subject, the overall favorite season seems to be Fall, but it's not without it's overlooked challenges.

Summer with its long hours of daylight serves to super-charge us with serotonin, keeping our energy levels, especially our creative energies operating at maximum output. Add to that, periods of challenging heat as we've seen recently, and summer, for all its good time potential, can be over-taxing. Then right on cue, along comes relief in the form of mild temperatures, colorful trees, and a mysteriously mellow mindset that just sort of settles over us.

Welcome to Fall.

It can catch you off guard, you may suddenly feel a drop in energy, maybe a little difficulty keeping thoughts in order or projects moving on schedule—for no apparent reason. Unaware of what's happening to you, this can lead to all sorts of erroneous self-diagnoses. But not to worry, knowledge is your best friend. You are merely responding to the gradual reduction in daylight hours. Your serotonin level (your get-up-and-go hormone) will now begin to recede due to the loss of daylight. And per nature's plan, your pineal gland will up its production of melatonin, the relax and sleep hormone.

It's worth mentioning here that during this period, some of us may even find ourselves suffering from what's called, ***Seasonal Affective Disorder*** (nick-named SAD), a syndrome characterized by depressions that occur every year during the fall and winter months. It's no coincidence that these depressions and the shorter daylight hours occur at the same time. Something as simple as understanding the reasons behind it, can remove the mystery and help make it more manageable.

If you're wondering if animals are also subject to low light level bouts of depression, science says, ***yes***. Animals, both wild and domestic, are subject to the governance of light and darkness, and all shades in between. Watch your pet's behavior and you'll possibly get a glimpse of your own. Symptoms may include listlessness, lack of interest and motivation, even appetite changes, all attributable to lower serotonin and increased melatonin brought on by the seasonal loss of daylight. A fact few of us even suspect.

Autumn's Equinox

On September 22, the center of the sun crosses the equator as it moves to the southern hemisphere (the Autumnal Equinox or the beginning of Fall). All living organisms on the planet are synced to these heavenly movements and the ensuing 24 hour periods of daylight and darkness. All mammals possess an internal circadian (by day) 24 hour clock that is regulated by this daylight-darkness repetition. The term circadian rhythm refers to these cycles that regulate and reset our clocks with each day's first light.

Recovery can be long...

We've learned to be "resilient" in the six years since the fire. Our open space neighbors have been learning as well.

It's easy to feel protective of the wild things we share these hills with, so the loss of critical oak habitat and all it provides the wild community is concerning.

We're at that time of year again when summer's abundance is giving way to the sparseness of fall and winter. Many trees and fully decked out shrubs that offer much in the way of

nutrition are beginning to lose their leaves and will soon be spindly frameworks of branches that to us says, those poor animals have nothing to eat. But that's not necessarily so. Those here year-round are prepared for the fall-winter months while many of our summer birds are migrating south to Central, even South America. Others, as the white throated sparrow will migrate here from their Alaskan and Canadian breeding grounds.

There are dozens of species in our wild land that, like deer, follow their instinctive path as seasons change. What appears to us to be a barren nutritional landscape is in fact a rich pantry of nutrient-packed branches, twigs, leaves, assorted mushrooms, tree bark, acorns and as unlikely as it might

seem, *the forest floor. "Mast,"* is a term for nuts, berries and fruits of trees and shrubs that accumulate on the forest floor. Mast serves as nutritional forage for hungry wildlife of all sorts throughout the fall and winter months. But as resilient as our deer and other wildlife have proven to be since the fire, they struggle with the loss of more than a thousand mature oak trees that blanketed our Fountaingrove hillsides.

A classic woodland, these oaks provided nesting, shelter, shade and food for over a hundred species of birds and animals as well as thousands of caterpillar and insect species—which serve as food for the birds and animals. An autumn acorn crop can provide much of the carbohydrates, fats, vitamins and minerals needed to prepare critters from mice to squirrels to deer for the coming winter months. While other sources of required nutrients are available and being utilized, until such time as our oaks are re-established, our neighbors will have no idea how good life was pre-fire.

The Fall-Winter Pantry

While the nutritional outlook for this doe and her fawn appears bleak, their environment is prepared to see them through fall and winter with leaves, twigs, branches, bark mushrooms, mast and more from our remaining oaks and other trees and plants.

One of our year-round neighbors...

Loved by all for their romantic call, Morning Doves are ironically hunted as North American game birds.

The mournful yet alluring call of a Mourning Dove is thought by many to be a message from a departed soul. That they are also hunted for sport stirs much controversy.

There's not a more common back yard bird here in Sonoma County – or across the continent. But do you recall the last time you spotted a Mourning Dove in *your* back yard? Eye-catching they're not with their muted grey and tan coloring, but they do have decorative features and very definitely an unusual profile that you might notice. They have long, slender bodies, about 12 inches, with relatively small heads. The wings are accented with black spots and the long, fan-shaped, pointed tails have white outer tail feathers. There's no discernible difference between the males and females although males tend to be slightly larger.

Mourning Doves eat seeds almost exclusively. In fact they are attracted to more seed varieties than any other North American bird, preferring rapeseed, corn, millet, safflower, and sunflower seeds. Ground feeders, they even eat weed seeds.

A cool break from summer's heat in a back yard pond.

When pecking around for seeds on the ground, they walk, not hop as do some birds. They collect and store large amounts of seeds in an area of their throat called the *crop*. Later while resting, the seeds will digest. They will eat up to 20% of their weight in seeds per day.

As far as conservation studies, there are approximately 150 million Mourning Doves in North and Central America – so as a species it is not considered threatened. As a game bird, however, it's estimated well over 20 million are shot by hunters annualy, a horrific fact to those who believe the bird to be a spiritual symbol of peace and love.

Mourning Doves choose their mates for life.

Mourning Doves prefer to build nests in trees, but will also nest in shrubs or on the ground if necessary. From February to November, females lay eggs up to six times, two eggs each time. Their nests are poorly constructed and usually made of grass and twigs piled on top of each other.

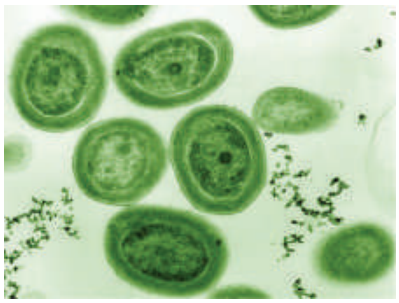
The pair share egg sitting duties and feeding chores later.

It all began with oxygen...

Go ahead, take a breath. Now think of all that's taken place in the past 2 billion years—just so you could do that.

Earth's earliest atmosphere was all but void of oxygen. Our atmospheric oxygen today is 21%. Just when and how that occured is somewhat of a mystery.

Very few of us ever give atmospheric oxygen a thought, we breathe it as do all the oxygen-dependent organisms on the planet, but how all this came to be rarely enters our minds. The miraculous chain of events that brought it about and brought our very existence into existence is beyond our comprehension.



We do know that it began with one of the greatest of nature's miracles, that being photosynthesis, the ability to use carbon dioxide and the energy in sunlight to break water into its component molecules, hydrogen and oxygen. This first occured with ***Cyanobacteria***, an anaerobic family of marine micro-organisms (of unknown origin) that used photosynthesis to create its own food – much as plants do today. Having no use for the oxygen, however, it was discarded into the atmosphere.

It's believed cyanobacteria formed primitive symbiotic relationships with higher forms of ***non***-photosynthetic cells, creating food for the host cell in exchange for a home. This in time would lead to the assimilation of the bacteria DNA into the host cell, signaling the evolution of photosynthetic algae and much later, terrestrial plant life. Both would spread over the planet setting the stage for the eventual evolution of oxygen-dependent animal species. These hallmarks in Earth history are believed to have occured about **1 billion** years ago for algae to **420 to 570 million** years ago for the rise and expansion of land plants across the continents.

We enjoy an atmosphere today with a consistent oxygen content of 21%. Of that total, rainforests and land plants contribute roughly a third while the oceans, the Atlantic, Pacific and southern ocean waters, with their massive quantities of Cyanobacteria, phytoplankton and microscopic plant life contribute as much as 70 percent. So who to thank for that breath you just took? Be generous with your appreciation not forgetting even the smaller donors right here in our own back yards and Open Space..

The Earth's surface as it likely appeared half a billion years ago. Evolving land plants contributed to the atmospheric oxygen, setting the stage for the evolution of animals.
Above left: *Free floating Cyanobacteria, the first known photosynthetic organisms.*
Above right: *Microimage of stomata, the breathing pores on the leaves of all land plants allowing CO2 to enter and Oxygen to be dispersed back into the atmosphere.*

OSMA Newsletter

Fountaingrove II

If you would like to sign up for email consent and receive this newsletter and other OSMA communications, contact Leslie Cohen at Focus Real Estate & Investments, Inc. 707-544-9443 x105 / leslie@focus-re.com

"The Wonder Seekers of Fountaingrove"

A reminder that Gaye LeBaron's historical record of the mystical origins of our community is available for a $15 donation to OSMA. Co-written with fellow historian Bart Casey, there is no more accurate accounting of our nineteenth-and early twentieth-century beginnings. Signed, hardcover copy, contact Leslie@focus-re.com.