

# FOUNTAINGROVE II

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



This is that rainy time between fall and spring when it can get a little chilly. It's our Mediterranean Winter.



## You just gotta love our Coast.

In last Winter's issue, we took a look at our planet's five Mediterranean climate regions, their temperate, coastal climates, unmatched biodiversity, agricultural opportunities of every sort including the world's finest wine-growing regions. And all of this thanks to a coastal phenomenon known as upwelling. There's so much here to discover. Check out page 4.



## What the heck are nematodes?

There's nowhere they're not, they're too small to see, too many to count, so how can that be — when you've never even heard of nematodes? There are literally millions of species, too many to even categorize. Some are good, some are not. One shovel-full of dirt in your yard could easily have thousands of them. You can also find them here — on page 5.



## A very important role to play...

If there's one class of animal we have an abundance of in these hills, it's birds. Sonoma County is one of the top birding regions in the state. You can probably identify your back yard visitors, but how 'bout those patrolling high overhead or stationed on a branch in one of our habitat trees? Our red tailed hawks, scanning the area below for a meal. See page 6.

Toyon, with its red "Holiday Berries," has played a role in many local cultures.

Along our Parkway and throughout the Open Space, there's a native shrub that annually produces a bountiful crop of brilliant red berries, nature's timely contribution to the holiday spirit. It's exciting watching a thick coat of white blossoms become bright red fruit — it was even more so for the native tribes before us. Page 7.



***Thank you to all  
who came for our  
first Volunteer Day!***

***The fresh young oaks along  
Parker Hill Road are grate-  
ful as well for the TLC.***

***Be a proud volunteer.***

## 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 being  
fire wise.







### FIELD WORK

Our recent Board field trip was as much an exploration of the “outback” of our Open Space. Few of us realize the degree of true wilderness that surrounds our homes. The image above is along Fountaingrove Parkway above Brush Creek. Below, getting oriented on Daybreak. Below right, overlooking Rincon Valley from a property on Rincon Ridge Drive,



### From the OSMA Board

## Assessing the fire preparedness of our 225 acres of wildland open space.

New OSMA board members spent a recent Saturday getting an in depth tour of our wildland habitat areas, many of which suffered tremendous losses in 2017. Our recovery efforts since the fire have largely focused on the clearing of thousands of burned Douglas firs that provided a rapid pathway to the residential areas above. Also lost were large stands of oak, critically important to the overall health and ecological balance of our open space. Our oaks are the single greatest contributor to one of the planet’s most bio-diverse habitats — ours being one of only five Mediterranean regions worldwide.

Prevention of any such recurrence must be our number one priority. Board responsibilities, however are far more encompassing and will be shared in future newsletters.



*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](http://Fountaingroveii.com)***



# THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

## Restoration, Preservation, Fire Safety

Dear Neighbors,

I'm honored to address you as the newly appointed President of the Fountaingrove II Open Space Maintenance Association (OSMA).

I want to begin by acknowledging the incredible amount of wildland recovery that's been accomplished in our open space since the devastating Tubbs fire of 2017. Your Board's primary focus must always be on the greatest and most immediate task at hand, as it has been during this critical recovery period.

Now as we embark on a new chapter, I want to introduce two distinguished individuals who have joined our board, bringing with them a wealth of experience and expertise.

Firstly, let me extend a warm welcome to Wade Eakle. Wade is a retired ecologist from the Army Corps of Engineers, holding a master's degree in Wildlife Biology. With a career dedicated to environmental stewardship, Wade's insights and passion for preserving our natural spaces will undoubtedly play a crucial role in guiding our association towards sustainable practices.

Joining Wade is Matt McKamey, a licensed civil engineer and the principal at M3 Integrated Service. Matt's extensive background in engineering, infrastructure and construction adds a valuable dimension to our board, complementing our commitment to the restoration and

improvement of the landscaped and woodlands of Fountaingrove II.

The focus of our board remains steadfast in its dedication to the beautification, restoration, and, importantly, fire safety of the open spaces under our care. With these new board members, we're confident in the enhanced capabilities and perspectives that Wade and Matt bring to the table.

Together, we'll continue our mission to preserve and enhance the natural beauty of Fountaingrove II. By concentrating our efforts on landscaping, restoration initiatives, and implementing robust fire safety measures, we aim to create a sustainable and secure environment for our community.

I invite each of you to join us in welcoming Wade Eakle and Matt McKamey to the OSMA board. Their commitment to our shared goals will undoubtedly contribute to the success of our association.

Thank you for your ongoing support, and I look forward to achieving great milestones together.

Ernest Berghof  
President  
Open Space Maintenance Association (OSMA)



A Golden Crown Sparrow who summers in Canada and winters with us.

*It's no wonder we chose to be here.*

All who visit understand, but we who live here know first hand, there's no place like Sonoma County.

*Ours is a classic Mediterranean climate – a mere three percent of the planet's land mass enjoys a comparable environment.*

*Recalling last winter's newsletter, we find our companion regions scattered around the globe, including South and Southwestern Australia, central Chile, the Cape region of South Africa, and the entire Mediterranean basin. We all enjoy warm dry summers and cool wet winters – and we live surrounded by natural, postcard-quality beauty. But how is it that we and our family of like-regions came to be so favored by the Climate Gods?*

### **Upwelling, the Secret Ingredient**

Each of these regions happens to be located on the west or southwestern coast of their respective continents between 30° and 45° north or south latitude.

Winds along these mid-latitude regions flow parallel to the coastlines. However, the easterly rotation of the earth *beneath the winds*, creates what amounts to a westerly, or off-shore flow pushing sun-warmed surface waters away from the coast. That causes very cold waters from as deep as 1000 feet to “well-up” in its place. The resulting adjacency of warm land and extremely cold water creates a permanent, year round high pressure zone that moves north during our summer months, blocking low pressure systems of moisture-laden air, then south during our cool winter months, allowing those low pressure systems access to deliver our winter rains.

### **Biodiversity**

These near perfect climates led to all five Mediterranean regions being labeled “**biodiversity hot spots**”. While comprising only 3 percent of the planet's land mass, they're home to 20 percent of all plant species on earth. Still, while recognized as the planet's most important ecosystems, they are among the planet's most endangered, due to human-driven changes in land use.

Here in Sonoma County, even more locally, here in our Fountaingrove hills, we see evidence of this critical loss of biodiversity due to these changes. Barely a token plant preserve within Rincon Ridge Park is all that remains of the diverse oak and chaparral ecosystem that evolved here over hundreds of thousands of years – until being erased to make way for residential development.

### **Preservation**

Thankfully Sonoma County has policies and programs that encourage the preservation and restoration of our natural habitats before they all fall victim to growth and development. Credit also to our concerned citizenry, who support land acquisition designed to expand and protect open spaces and to our Sonoma County Parks system. There's always controversy with matters of growth, but failure to address these concerns with both eyes on the future, will only allow them to grow uncontrollably. It would benefit us all to become more aware of this miraculous spot on the planet we call home, and help protect it. **Consider as well becoming a Fountaingrove Open Space Volunteer.**



### **Our Sonoma Coast**

*Upwelling region off Bodega and within the Greater Farallones Marine Sanctuary.*

### **Native Chaparral Ecosystems**

*Generally consistent throughout the five Mediterranean regions. .*





## Nematodes are real things...

You've never heard of Nematodes so why do they deserve a mention — let alone all this attention?

*They're not the cute cartoony bunch pictured on page one, they're tiny worms, some microscopic, from the poles to the tropics. Some good, some bad but not to fear, so long as you're aware they're here.*

**And they are very definitely here.** Nematodes, are by far the most abundant animal form on the planet, their numbers being in the unimaginable range. Paraphrasing Nathan Cobb, considered the father of Nematology: ***"If all the matter in our world was suddenly swept away except the nematodes, our world would still be recognizable. We would find its mountains, hills, vales, rivers, lakes, and oceans, all clearly defined by a remaining film of nematodes."***

The actual nematode population is impossible to even guess. With millions of subspecies inhabiting every conceivable environment, one estimate is 60 billion nematodes for every human on earth. One handful of top soil could easily contain a million or more. Nematode evolution has been traced back some 400 million years, while some researchers claim fossil evidence indicates they've existed closer to a billion years.

Nematodes exist as both parasites and free-living organisms. Most are harmless, many even essential to the health of the environment. Free-living nematodes are some of nature's most efficient decomposers, recycling minerals and nutrients from bacteria, fungi and other substances back into the soil. They also mineralize nitrogen, a critical element in a plant's ability to perform photosynthesis.

Nematodes are most abundant in saltwater, freshwater, and all soil habitats. They even thrive on rocks, in mines and caves, in deserts, on the bottom of the ocean and in ice sheets. They've proven to be completely adaptable to any environment under almost any circumstance.

Parasitic nematodes are equally as adaptable and plentiful as their free-living cousins with varied strains inhabiting the bodies of both plants and animals. Plant parasites can wreak havoc with lawns and gardens on a local scale but the real damage they can do is with commercial crops causing devastating losses with few effective deterrents.

Nematode parasites of animals occur in almost all organs of the body, but the most common sites are in

the alimentary (digestive track), circulatory, and respiratory systems. ***One familiar infection is heartworm in dogs. All dogs should be vaccinated to prevent this potentially fatal infestation since there are no symptoms until it's too late to treat effectively.***

Humans are as susceptible as any animal if living conditions are less than healthy. Nematode related diseases are not uncommon in developing countries. Even in developed, health-conscious countries, nematodes can be a threat. Most of us are aware of the need to thoroughly cook meats, especially pork. The disease trichinosis is an infection by the ***trichinella*** nematode.

So much more there is to know about these tiny animals you've never even heard of. Given your time and interest level, you might consider researching more on your own. Nematodes have a long list of attributes as well as these cautionary facts. Our world, as we know it, would not exist without them.



Above: A free-living nematode in water. Less than 1mm.

Below: Fans of Spongebob Squarepants, will recall how a marauding band of voracious nematodes devoured Spongebob's pineapple house—as he slept! A frightening demonstration of nematode strength in numbers.



## Red Tailed Hawks

Our hawks are more than birds of prey, they're an indicator of the health of this entire ecosystem.

*If you watched a hawk swoop down and take a meal today, with whom did you identify, predator or prey? Nature has her plan—and both have roles to play.*

Birds are such a common sight here in our Fountaingrove hills, we oftentimes don't notice them. But one species that rarely goes unnoticed is the red tailed hawk. Native to most of North America, it's the largest of our hawks. But it's not the most formidable of our avian predators — that title goes to the great horned owl who is stronger and heavier and actually will prey on red tailed hawks. But the two rarely cross paths, hawks being diurnal (out and about by day) while owls are exclusively nocturnal.



Redtails are monogamous, and often mate for life. Nest building and brooding duties are shared. The same nest may be used year after year depending

on its condition. Females lay 1 to 5 eggs each year that are incubated by both parents. Hatching occurs at about 4–5 weeks, the young will be ready to leave the nest and fend for themselves approximately 5–6 weeks later.



**Hunting Techniques** of the red tailed hawk should be familiar to you if you've paid attention to our surroundings. Our hawks can often be seen perched high on a branch in one of our "habitat trees". These are mostly firs lost to the fire but trimmed partially back and left standing for this very purpose. If not on a high branch or other prominent perch, they can be seen patrolling the grassland habitats from the air in search of movement that means *food below!* A hawk's vision is eight times better than ours allowing it to hunt for prey as small as mice from as high as 100 feet.

This is actually a good time to watch for red tailed hawks since those who breed in the northern states and Canada, migrate to our lower latitudes to avoid the harsh winters. This increases our population till they again head north.



**Above Left:** Male or female parent incubating a 'clutch' of three eggs (females are larger).

**Above Right:** Soaring on thermal updrafts in search of prey in the grassland habitat below.

**Left:** Red tailed hawk on branch consuming a captured prey animal, an indication of ample food sources and a healthy biosphere.

**Below:** Collecting nest building materials.





## Who doesn't love bright red berries?

More than timely holiday decor, native Toyon has been a valued part of life in coastal California for centuries.

*Toyon is a native shrub still referred to by its name from the Ohlone people, a coastal tribe from the South Bay to Monterey.*

**Toyon, *Heteromeles arbutifolia*,** is a perennial shrub found from coastal Oregon, south through the Baja California peninsula – and notably, right here in our own Fountain-grove open space. Notable also – or perhaps especially – for their annual contribution to the aesthetics of our winter woodlands and chaparral environments. That



contribution being profuse displays of festive red berries just in time for the holidays. This aspect of the toyon's popularity arrived with European settlers who were taken by the plant's resemblance to traditional Christmas holly. Hence the fruit came to be known as "*holly berries* or *Christmas berries*."

The deeper role of the Toyon plant has been that of a '*provider*,' a source of nutrition for birds, insects and many mammals including coyotes and bear. Two of our visiting winter birds, American robins and cedar waxwings,



CEDAR WAXWING

rely heavily on toyon for sustenance as well as safe cover for roosting. They breed in the northern Canadian summer but winter here and as far south as Mexico.

Pollinators benefit from the massive springtime displays of white blossoms that announce the coming of the berries each year: bees, butterflies, bats, humming birds, and more.

Native tribes along the coast no doubt were anxious for the berry crop as well. Dried berries and jams were treats – although there were many medicinal types of applications as well. Also teas made from the somewhat leathery leaves.



TOYON BERRIES  
AND BLOSSOMS (RIGHT)

***A staple of California's coastal tribes long before European settlers discovered their "new" holiday decor.***

Sprigs of toyon or "Christmas berries" were once commercially marketed as a substitute for traditional English holly here in California. Today however, state law prohibits anyone from collecting branches of wild toyon. The plant can be added to private landscaping without issues.



OSMA Newsletter

# FOUNTAINGROVE II

*If you would like to sign up for email consent and receive this newsletter and other OSMA communications, contact Jennifer McNeil at Focus Real Estate & Investments, Inc. 707-544-9443 x116 / jenn@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 jenn@focus-re.com.