

FOUNTAINGROVE II

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



WHITE CROWNED SPARROW

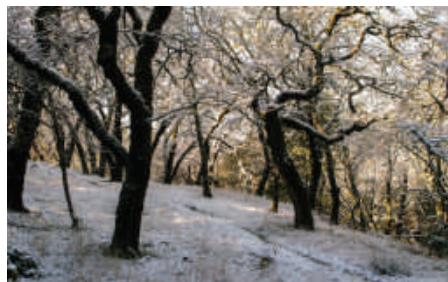
The excitement of seasonal change: crisp morning air and the endless wonders of our winter woodlands...



GOLDEN CROWNED SPARROW

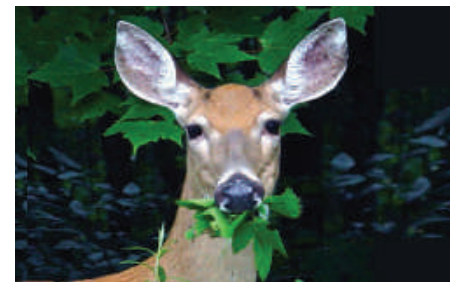
Welcome our winter sparrows!

You might have noticed with the onset of winter our resident sparrow population seems to have grown. If you're knowledgeable in the fine art of avian identification, particularly the many species of sparrowdom, you may have spotted a few newcomers as in the white crowned and golden crowned sparrows and more. So what's up with that? See page 6.



Do trees feel the cold in winter?

Obviously trees are wired a bit differently than are we humans, so do they feel what we feel, do they shiver when the mercury drops, it's unlikely. But they *do* react in self-preserving ways that enable their internal living cells (as opposed to their outer protective layers of dead cells) to survive our admittedly moderate Sonoma County winters. See more on page 7.



What's on the winter menu?

With hundreds of species of hungry animals in our wildlands, the table is always crowded at dinner time. Add to that the absence of some staple menu items in winter and the reliance on evolutionary adaptation, or personal experimentation — or some of both — takes over and defines what a healthy winter diet will consist of. More on page 8.

We all know this is a great place to live but do you actually know why?

You've heard the term, "*Mediterranean Climate*," but how much do you understand about the reasons for and the rarity of this most desirable of temperate zones? You'll have to look hard to find Sonoma County-like weather anywhere else on the planet given that only three percent of the earth's land mass enjoys our same pleasantly mild to absolutely perfect environment. So where else, might you ask, is the other two point something percent? Go to pages 4 and 5.



In the Mediterranean basin – one of our sister climate regions – Santa Margherita Ligure Bay, between Rapallo and Portofino on the northwest Italian coast. Think of it as just like home.

Why all the orange fencing?

Santa Rosa has begun replacing fire damaged roadway landscaping and underground irrigation systems in Coffey Park, then over Fountaingrove Parkway from west to east. Fencing will assure protection for trees and hidden root structures. Completion of project estimated to be one year.





FIELD WORK

Among the many responsibilities of the OSMA Board is the planning, contracting for and documentation of all services performed in the wildland. Clearing fire debris added the challenge of required inventories of felled trees in our open space burn areas. Total for 2022: 441 with 250 yet to document.

From the OSMA Board

This column displays questions, comments and suggestions from our members. Consider it a forum.

Fencing of the Rincon Ridge native plant preserve and new access via pathway.

There have been inquiries regarding the extensive split-rail fencing around the native plant preserve adjacent to Rincon Ridge Park. Per Santa Rosa Parks' redesign, this expands the area dedicated to the chaparral ecosystem that once dominated this ridge. The new pathway allows easy access for viewing. **Note:** To control vehicular access from Park Gardens Drive, yellow posts were installed. These are used elsewhere on bike trails. There's been confusion as to whether there is now a bike trail through the protected area. There is not, only foot traffic on the pathway. Viewing these endangered plants should be from outside the split rail fence. Learn more on the preserve, visit the Milo Baker Chapter of the California Native Plant Society at: milobaker.cnps.org/index.php/conservation/preserves/rincon-ridge



If you have a question, comment, photograph or a discovery made here in our Open Space, please share. Email: leslie@focus-re.com

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

Much accomplished, much to do.

The winter months are before us along with the start of 2023. As we all begin planning for the new year, so does your Association. Renewing contracts for a variety of services, deciding on the projects we need to accomplish in 2023 plus staying prepared always for the unexpected.

The stewardship of our 225 acres of Landscaped and Wildland Areas is long-term, complex, and critical to our local environmental health and fire safety. The OSMA Board has been focused on fire recovery for the past five years. This effort consumed the majority of board members' time and association financial resources, but the mission is 95% complete, the last 5% will be cleaned up in 2023.

We now can now start the process of transitioning back to an organization dedicated to maintaining OSMA Open Space Areas and a facilitator for OSMA Member volunteerism and fire safety enlightenment. The OSMA Board will be communicating to all its members outlining the various opportunities for Members to volunteer, meet your neighbors and receive fire safety advice.

Trees Cleared and Chipped

A couple of significant projects occurred during the time from our last Newsletter. First, the Association tree clearing vendor completed clearing and chipping approximately 20 acres of burned trees and shrubs East of Rincon Ridge Dr. Although the acreage is relatively small, this area was one of the most challenging areas to access and work due to steep rocky topography. Regardless of the chal-

lenges, we checked the completed box for this burn area.

Extensive Tree Planting

Secondly, the Association obtained a \$30,000.00 grant which provided the opportunity to plant 190 oak trees in an OSMA Open Space Area severely burned during the Tubbs Fire Disaster. This event expedited the ecological recovery of this area adjacent to Parker Hill Rd. by a decade.

A little fire safety could save your home...

Winter is a good time to assess your home's fire defensible zones. Trees need trimming back from the roof line, maybe remove the plants or bark installed up against your house or replace the wood fence connected to your home with a nonflammable fence. These are a few relatively inexpensive preventive actions that will increase your home's survivability in the event of a fire close to your home. The following is a link to information that will help homeowners assess effectiveness of your home's fire defensible zones. *Remember, being a Fire Wise community involves all 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* to protect our community from the threat of uncontrollable wild fire. Please, always be Fire Safe.

Copy this link and paste it in your browser:

<https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Wildfire/Preparing-homes-for-wildfire>

*Bruce McConnell,
OSMA Board President*



Saturday, Oct. 29, approximately forty OSMA volunteers planted 190 oaks on a burned hillside along Parker Hill Rd.

Our Mediterranean Climate

Whether living here was your plan, or you came to visit and decided to stay, it was a good decision.

An Italian winemaker in Sonoma once said of coastal California, “Anywhere that’s good for grapes is good for people.”

To that bit of wisdom, you’ll not find an argument around here. Our Mediterranean climate has long proven itself ideal for agriculture in general, wine grapes in particular — and those of us who enjoy those grapes. A fact worthy of note is that only three percent of the earth’s land mass enjoys this same climate profile. And it’s no surprise to find in each of these regions, premium vineyards stretching across similar landscapes and social customs and cultures not unlike our own.

So where, might you ask, is the other two point something percent of our companion regions? With five in all, the other four are an eclectic mix of South and South-western Australia, central Chili, the Cape region of South Africa, and the entire Mediterranean basin. We all (think family) enjoy warm dry summers and cool wet winters — and we live surrounded by natural, postcard-quality beauty — you get the picture.

As to why these climatological anomalies even exist, look to cold, adjacent ocean waters. Most of the Mediterranean climate areas are on the western coast of their continent between the equator and the pole. The cold ocean waters are due to a phenomenon called upwelling.

Winds along these mid-latitude regions flow parallel to the coastlines, the easterly rotation of the earth, however, modifies this direction to an offshore flow. This in turn pushes sun-warmed surface waters away from the shore



Our Sonoma Coast
An iconic Mediterranean coastline with frigid surf and incredible beauty. And our world renowned vineyards that thrive in this rarest of all climates.



allowing deep, very cold water to “well up” in its place. This adjacency of warm land and cold water makes for a permanent high pressure zone that alternately allows or prohibits moisture laden air – AKA, rain clouds – to enter.

During summer months when the land is hot, this high pressure gate is essentially closed, little rain gets through. During winter, the cooling of the land mass reduces the strength of the high pressure blockade allowing the jet stream to deliver our typical wet weather pattern. *(continue)*



Cape Town South Africa

One of our sister Mediterranean climate zones is the cape region of South Africa, also known for world class vineyards and premium wines.



Our Mediterranean Climate *(continued)*

While all five Mediterranean climate regions share the same distinct characteristics, they offer a variety of geographic locations all between 30° and 45° latitude, above or below the equator. Their mild environments led to agricultural and trade development as early as 5500 b.c., initially within the Mediterranean basin and eventually beyond as emerging civilizations grew around them.

These five regions are home to remarkable and globally significant levels of plant diversity, so much so that scientists have designated them, “biodiversity hotspots.” These regions collectively cover only 3 percent of the world’s land mass, yet they comprise 20 percent of all plant species on earth. Still, while recognized as among the planet’s most important ecosystems, they are also among the planet’s most endangered. The five Mediterranean regions are experiencing significant threats to their biodiversity due to changes in human land use and increasing climate change.

Here in California and more locally here in Sonoma County, and even more locally here in our Fountaingrove hills, we see evidence of this critical loss of biodiversity due to changes in land use. A token plant preserve within Rincon Ridge Park is all that remains of the diverse native chaparral biome that evolved here over thousands of years — until being erased by residential development.

The Mediterranean Basin, the namesake of this revered climate and lifestyle, the Mediterranean Sea, is surrounded by twenty-two countries on three continents, Africa, Asia and Europe. The entire basin shares the iconic climate profile found in only four other regions worldwide.

Chile’s Central Coast is classically Mediterranean in its moderate climate and scenic beauty, much like our own. Both are long Pacific coast lines encompassing the golden latitudes with their prevailing winds and consistent upwelling of deep cold ocean waters. Both are famed agricultural and winegrowing regions but with inverted seasons due to their being in opposing hemispheres.



Playa Punta de Lobos, Central Chile

Australia’s South and Southwest Coast are the two most isolated regions of our elite club due to their extreme southern positioning on the continent. Adding to their isolation is the fact they are shielded from developed areas to the north by great expanses of desert in the east or the outback in the west. The biodiversity of this region is perhaps the most secure of all five with little or no chance for unintended invasive plant life. Being another wine country, however, they do share their soil with premium varietal grapes for Australia’s world class wines.



Saint Tropez, France, Mediterranean Basin

Mediterranean Climate:

Occurs in only five regions globally including the area around the Mediterranean Sea.

Only 3% of Earth’s land mass.

Characterized by warm dry summers and cool wet winters.

Moderated by prevailing winds and upwelling of deep, cold offshore waters.

Located between 30° and 45° north or south latitude.

Rich biodiversity, many plants found nowhere else on earth.

From as far away as Alaska...

Some of our song birds migrate south for the winter — others travel thousands of miles to winter *here*.

We'll miss those departing but we welcome the annual return of Golden Crowned and White Crowned Sparrows.

Living as we do, neighborhoods surrounded by open space and wild habitat, opportunities are abundant to observe and become familiar with those we rarely see or even think about. Who is it really who lives out there? What do they do? How do they live? What do they eat? And how do they get by during the winter months?

You read about the miracles of migration, how some of the birds you watch zipping about your back yard all summer, fly to faraway, exotic places for their winter respite.



Others migrate thousands of miles to winter here in those same back yards. Two in particular are sparrows, the White Crowned Sparrow and the Golden Crowned Sparrow. While some of each species

live year round in parts of the western US, the majority nest and raise their young in Alaska and Western Canada heading our way from mid-September through October.

Even a casual watcher of birds should notice these two when



they arrive. Among typically drab sparrows, they command attention with their decorative crown coloring.

The White Crowned carry distinct black and white bands over their crown front to back. The Golden Crowned, upon arrival and just prior to their departure in April, have a single bright yellow band over an otherwise all black crown. During their stay, however, their crown coloring loses its luster (see left), only to regain it in time to return north for breeding.

Most sparrows are wary of bird feeders, preferring feeding on the ground near trees, shrubs or other forms of quick cover. Try a flat feeding station with sunflower or millet seeds.



If you haven't noticed an uptick in back yard bird activity, you haven't been paying attention. While these two species don't breed here, they're an integral part of our winter population. And you may hear one or both singing throughout the winter.



Have you ever seen a tree shiver?

Whether or not they “feel” discomfort, our native plants and trees are adept at dealing with the cold...

On the subject of trees suffering in winter, you might first think of snow covered firs in sub-freezing settings — not our coast live oaks in a Mediterranean climate.

OK, we do have an occasional frosty morning, maybe even a hard freeze, rare as that is, but our trees are still every bit as prepared, and take the same precautions as their less fortunate cousins where cold actually means *cold*.

We begin with the obvious – trees have bark. During spells of extreme cold, bark serves as an insulator protecting the living cells of the Cambrian layer just below the bark. The structure of bark with its air pockets throughout, greatly minimizes thermal transfer, or heat loss. The construction industry is even considering bark retrieved from logging



Live Oak Bark

operations as an alternate insulating material.

Bark alone, however, cannot offer the protection necessary when winter gets really serious. Trees utilize a more complex biological process

involving the intentional dehydration of the live cells in the Cambrian, increasing the sugar content of the remaining fluid (sap) within the cells. This increases the density of the sap lowering its freezing point. In essence, a natural anti-freeze.

Our shrubs have their own techniques to make it through winter months. Some will drop their leaves after transferring the plant’s stored nutrients to the roots for safe keeping until spring. Nutrients will then be utilized to restore leaves, renew photosynthesis and initiate another cycle of growth.



Late spring bloom of wavyleaf ceanothus

Some hardy native shrubs, such as our wavy leaf ceanothus, (*Ceanothus foliosus*) are extremely tolerant of sub-freezing temperatures — as well as drought conditions. In fact it’s advised that *Ceanothus* varieties not be watered at all once established. All that plus they bloom beautifully, usually in April, with brilliant blue blossoms that perform till July.

Most annuals cannot survive the winter. They live for only one season but during the summer produce seeds that easily survive the winter cold and germinate in spring.



A Sonoma County oak woodland on a frosty winter morning.

Being a Native Plant in Mild Sonoma County

So if your heart goes out to our native trees and plants that have to stand out in the cold all winter, try not to be too concerned. They evolved here and are perfectly satisfied with this rarest of all the Earth’s climates. As far as your imports, those you find at the nursery or elsewhere, it’s wise to look into their tolerance level and nurture them accordingly — or better yet, landscape your yard with native plants that attract pollinators — and know better than you what they need.

Ever eat an oak twig?

You may not find them appealing, but some of the winter fare in our wildland is surprisingly nutritious.

When the pantry gets lean, survival gets tricky. The wild foods of winter —with the risk of a splinter—are not a cuisine for the picky.

Our wild bird population rotates throughout the seasons, some migrating south to greener pastures while others arrive to winter here with us. Our resident mammals, however, enjoy no such travel options and must make do with what's available in the winter pantry when it's time to eat.

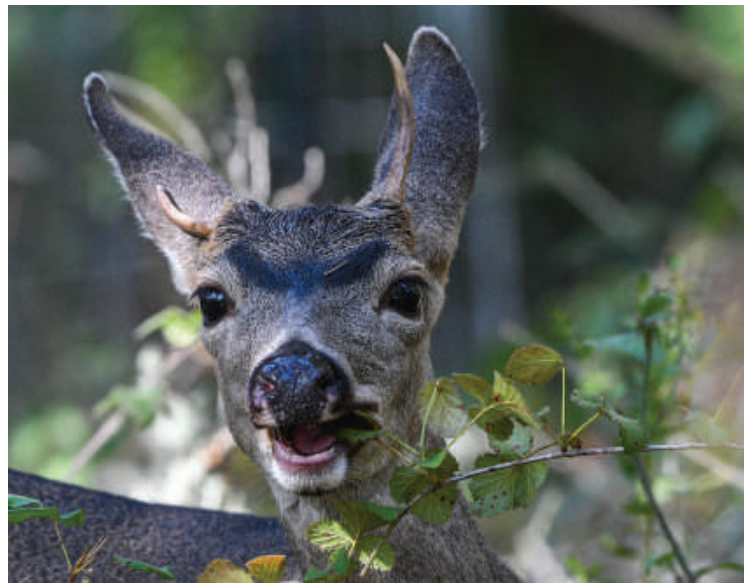
The largest of our mammal group is the black tailed deer (a subgroup of mule deer). A typical diet for an adult deer consists of a variety of grasses, forbs (flowering, herbaceous plants), leaves and twigs of woody plants, acorns and nuts. To stay healthy, an adult deer will consume about eight percent of its body weight daily in green foliage and woody branches and twigs. For a 150-pound deer, that can add up to twelve pounds of food per day.

This obviously becomes a challenge during winter months when most of the herbaceous growth has died back. The single most complete food source during the year for not only deer but many species in the woodland, is the acorn. A robust acorn crop will help feed deer through late fall and much of winter supplying large amounts of protein, carbohydrates and fats as well as the minerals calcium, phosphorus and potassium, also niacin (vitamin B3).

Throughout the winter months deer will eat woody *"browse,"* a term used for leaves, twigs, saplings and seedlings — even bark — and *"mast,"* a term for nuts, berries and fruits of trees

and shrubs that accumulate on the forest floor. Mast serves as a dense forage for hungry wildlife.

Among deer, oak trees are by far the preferred summer *and* winter food sources, providing the greatest amount of protein and being the easiest to digest. In this area, valley, black, blue, scrub, and live oaks all share this distinction. Also on the winter menu may be lichen, moss, and various mushroom varieties, maybe even a decorative plant or two in your own front yard. Something you may have already noticed.



Poison oak is a favorite and highly nutritious food source throughout the growing season, however the plant will lose its leaves early in the fall leaving bare branches or vines. The bad news for us humans is they are still infectious. The good news for animals is the leafless branches and vines are edible and still nutritious, a source of phosphorus, sulfur, and calcium.

Mushrooms are a food source hungry deer will not hesitate to avail themselves of year round for their higher calories and variety of nutrients — protein, potassium, B vitamins and minerals. Most mushrooms are found on the ground where they are actually the fruit of mycorrhizae fungi, the underground network enhancing the efficiency of roots for nearly all native plant life on earth. A popular variety, turkey tail mushrooms, are found not on the ground but on decaying hardwood — in this area primarily dead oak trees.

While we've focused primarily on deer, much, if not all we've covered applies to other herbivores as well. Our local predators, fox, coyote, bob cat, mountain lion, owls, etc., must hunt as usual but minus those favored prey who hibernate.



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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.