

The Oak Trees of Home

By: Grace Rowland

One year. That is all the time that I was able to spend with my loyal dog, Bosco, and I found myself watching my dad bury that dog in the side yard of our home in Kentucky. We'd moved a year earlier to our new home and it gave me joy knowing that Bosco lived the last year of his life running amongst the trees on our seven acres of land. As I watched my dad shoveling the last of the dirt on the dog's grave, I gazed up at the towering Oak tree before me, its rich green leaves dancing in the sunshine. Knowing my dog was buried beneath that tree gave me comfort. Just like this oak tree is important in my life and in the life of my family, other Kentucky oak trees are just as important. It is important to me that people in our state realize how special these Oak trees are.

Conserving, respecting, and enjoying the oak trees is important because the trees are a vital part of the ecosystem. Though my beloved dog is buried under an oak tree, other animals live on, in, and under the Oak trees. These Oak trees are a food source for animals like squirrels who eat acorns. Trees are homes to birds who build nests in the branches. As I sit under the Oak trees of home, I enjoy seeing the animals playing amongst the branches and making nests throughout the seasons. But animals aren't the only ones who need trees for survival. So do humans. Trees provide oxygen to breathe and help us with the water cycle for us to drink. While we may understand why the oak trees are important, we must also realize that there are threats to their existence.

There are threats to Kentucky's oak trees. Invasive species are harming Kentucky's oak trees. Some plants and trees are spreading very rapidly and overtaking the oak trees. We need to be aware of which plants are invasive to prevent them from harming the oak trees. Wildland fires are harming Kentucky's oaks. We need to be aware of which plants are invasive to prevent them from harming the oak trees. Each year, there are about 1,500 wildland fires. Plants and animals that rely on their shelter are being driven from their homes. Once we recognize the threat to Kentucky's oak trees, we must all play a part in conserving the trees.

All Kentuckians can play a part in conserving our oak trees. Planting more trees, especially oak trees will help the forests grow. Planting more trees will help provide more oxygen, water, and habitats for animals and humans. Educating people about oak trees in forests can play a big role. If people understand the importance of Oak trees, respect them, and enjoy what the forests have to offer, Kentucky's oak trees will thrive. Another thing that we can do is support tree conservations. Supporting these conservations will help with awareness and hopefully motivate people to care for these trees. Conserving the Oak trees is important, but enjoying them is just as equally important.

The oak trees of Kentucky are a vital part of the ecosystem, and conserving them is everyone's responsibility. But we should enjoy them as well! Today I stood at the small grave of my dog, Bosco, and smiled as I thought of him. And then I climbed the towering tree that stood over his grave, finding the perfect branch to sit and look at the leaves as they fell softly to the ground. I heard the birds chirping in the branches overhead and I smiled thinking about how much I love the Oak trees of home.

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