

# The Lake Merritt Institute

LAKE TRASH REMOVAL, FOUNTAINS, EDUCATION, LAKE MANAGEMENT EXPERTISE

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ISSUE I



**WINTER WATERFOWL MOVE IN:** They're here: Back from the arctic and points north. Stimulated to fly south by declining day length which creates changes in hormonal levels, many have flown thousands of miles to reach Lake Merritt, just as their ancestors have done since the ice ages. Even a casual glance at the Trestle Glen arm of the Lake reveals hundreds of them, including Goldeneye ducks, scaup, teal, coots, grebes, cormorants, mallards, shovelors, wigeons, pintails, canvasbacks, buffleheads and probably an exotic or two.

So grab you binoculars and bird book for a visit to the nation's oldest waterfowl refuge, established by state law on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1870.

**NATURAL HISTORY SERIES – Part Two, The Common Goldeneye:** *Bucephala clangula* is the scientific name and they arrive here every winter to dive for fish, crustaceans and mollusks. Adult males can be distinguished by mostly white under parts, a black-green head and prominent white spot below the eye. Winter females are gray below with a brown head and no facial spot. Broad white wing patches can be seen on both sexes when flying. The best viewing spots here are at the inlet / outlet by 12<sup>th</sup> Street and near the Rotary Nature Center. You may also observe the less common Barrow's Goldeneye, especially in the channel connecting Lake Merritt to the Oakland Inner Harbor.

Widespread but not abundant, the Goldeneye's diet is about 75% animal food. When not wintering at Lake Merritt or elsewhere, these medium sized ducks may be found nesting in trees near the lakes and bogs of coniferous forests in Alaska, Canada and on into the boreal forests of Eurasia.

**DD UPDATE:** The DD citizens coalition will meet on Monday, January 12<sup>th</sup> and tentatively on February 9<sup>th</sup> and March 8<sup>th</sup> at locations to be decided. The following updates are as of December 10<sup>th</sup>.

DD projects for Lake Merritt Water Quality will be determined by the Water Quality Task Force. At present, the Force is considering options for improving oxygen levels, and awaiting a report summarizing detailed water quality data collected from June, 2002 to June, 2003.

There is not enough space here to record the and numerous details and complex issues discussed in the December Coalition meeting notes, notes from the December Executive Committee meeting, and the document "Community Risk Management: How Should We Include Non-profit Organizations." Institute members are encouraged to request electronic copies of these reports by sending an Email to [lmi@netwiz.net](mailto:lmi@netwiz.net). We will then forward them to you.

## EVALUATION FORM

Tell us how we are doing. Your completion and return of this form will assist the Institute in accomplishing and improving its four main programs. Please return by mail or fax to 238-2290.

### **Clean Lake Program**

1. In general, does the Lake appear to be cleaner than in previous years?
2. Are you aware of any sections of the shoreline that need more frequent cleanup activity? If so, please describe the location.
3. Are you aware of our 4 U-Clean-It boxes for use by individuals to remove trash from the Lake?
4. On a scale of 1- 5, please rank the following in terms of usefulness in keeping the Lake free of trash. 1 = highest; 5 = lowest.
  - Increased removal of trash from the Lake \_\_\_\_
  - Educational campaigns to stop littering \_\_\_\_
  - Storm drain filters to keep trash from entering the Lake \_\_\_\_
  - More litter containers on streets \_\_\_\_
  - Strict enforcement of litter laws \_\_\_\_

### **Aeration Fountains**

1. Should the fountains continue to operate at Lake Merritt? Why or why not?
2. Do you support installation of a new, City owned fountain to replace the old (not now operating) fountain at the mouth of Glen Echo creek (by Grand Avenue and Harrison Street) using existing measure DD funds for aeration?

### **Education**

1. Are you aware that 4,650 acres drain directly into Lake Merritt (without treatment) through 60 storm drain outfalls?
2. Is your civic organization or school interesting in hosting an educational presentation about urban runoff and Lake Merritt? If so, please provide a contact person.

### **Lake Enhancement**

Please rank the following with one to five stars to indicate how much they would improve Lake Merritt.

Establish an urban fishing program, including stocking of steelhead trout \_\_\_\_

Prepare a goose management plan, including agreed upon methods of limiting goose populations during the summer molting season or restricting the areas they use. \_\_\_\_

Dredging to limit widgeon grass growth, increase circulation, improve oxygen conditions and reduce odor. \_\_\_\_

Thank you for helping us maintain and improve Lake Merritt!

## **NEW 18<sup>TH</sup> STREET AERATION FOUNTAIN BRIGHTENS THE HOLIDAYS:**

A ceremony was held on December 12<sup>th</sup> to commemorate Lake Merritt's fourth aeration fountain, shown here bathed in Christmas colors. With a tent protecting us from the rain, fine wine, sandwiches and cheese were served to a reporter from the Sing Tao newspapers, people passing by and Boating Center staff who arrived by Gondola. Speeches were heard from Andrew K.C. Wong (who provided funds for the fountain) and Dr. Richard Bailey (executive director of the Institute).



This unit is less impacted by urban runoff, but may have to be shut down during the widgeon grass harvesting season in June and July.

**INSTITUTE OBTAINS NITRATE METER:** We are awaiting delivery of a sophisticated colorimeter which can be used in both fresh and salt water to measure a variety of chemicals. Our first use will be for a nitrogen study by Engineers Without Frontiers, a UC Berkeley group who will take samples from both Glen Echo Creek and Lake Merritt. Upper level and graduate students will test the hypothesis that nitrogen laden runoff from the golf course and cemetery contribute to eutrophication of our Lake. If true, steps could be taken to reduce such runoff, which should lead to less algae, less widgeon grass, fewer plankton blooms and less biological oxygen demand.



*East Bay Conservation Corps members attack the trash.*

**TRASH, TRASH AND MORE TRASH:** December's 7.16 inches of rain brought 8,840 pounds of trash to the Lake, not including a tree trunk that is still floating around out there somewhere. Unfortunately the runoff did include large quantities of bark chips washed in from street and sidewalk medians. We also found a geocache, a goldfish, a rice and tobacco shrine and an electronic cash register. If you like to net plastic bags, cups, bottles and cans out of the water, now is the time and Lake Merritt is the place. Use the "U-Clean-It" stations (lock combination = 1314) or join us Tuesdays at 10:30 or Saturdays at 10 am.