

The Lake Merritt Institute

LAKE TRASH REMOVAL, FOUNTAINS, EDUCATION, LAKE MANAGEMENT EXPERTISE
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"TIDINGS" - JANUARY, 2005

ISSUE I



**They know the tundra of Siberian
coasts,**

**And tropic marshes by the Indian
seas.**

**They know the clouds, and night
and starry hosts,**

From Crux to Pleiades.

Frederick Peterson. Wild Geese.

TUFTED DUCK SPOTTED ON LAKE: She swears it true: One of our steadfast volunteers saw a tufted duck, *Aythya fuligula*, on the Lake last month (note; this is not the duck shown above, which is a Canvasback duck). Here is what the Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Western North America has to say about the tufted duck. "Very rare visitor from Eurasia, mostly along coast; records are of single birds on ponds or sheltered bays among flocks of scaup or sometimes with Ring-necked Duck. Dives for clams and some plant food. Male distinctive: Black back and rounded black head with long dangling tuft. Female very similar to scaup, but generally with darker back, little or no white around base of bill, and small tuft. Both sexes show long white wing-stripe in flight. Hybridizes with scaup. Voice: Similar to Lesser Scaup."

As more and more of the natural world succumbs to shopping centers, housing and agriculture, Lake Merritt's importance as a wildlife refuge becomes increasingly important. It is also increasingly important that we become better stewards of this wonderful natural resource, or it will be come more urban than estuary.

THE INVASION OF LAKE MERRITT: It wasn't there before, but now seems to be popping up everywhere along the shoreline. Finding a rooted plant in the shallow waters of the Lake during November and December is highly unusual, but there it is. Although not yet positively identified, it appears to be Wireweed (*Sargassum muticum*) a brown algae from Japan. According to the book North Pacific Seaweeds by O'Clair and Lindstrom, it is thought to have been introduced in the 1930's in Puget Sound, Washington. By 1988 it had spread to the Baja Peninsula in Mexico and by 1994 to Alaska. In 1973 it was found in the North Atlantic Ocean, and it has also been found in San Francisco Bay and southern England.

This non-native, highly invasive species can tolerate salinity as low as 8.5 parts per thousand (sea water is 35 ppt) and at least one week of exposure to water 83° F in temperature. Wiry and tough, branched and bushy, it forms dense stands in quiet water and is anchored to the bottom by a holdfast, which may make it difficult for the harvester boat to dislodge. It grows as a perennial or annual, and some plants may be fertile all year especially from March through June at Santa Catalina Island.



“Wireweed” has invaded Lake Merritt. It appears to be spreading rapidly along the shoreline and perhaps in deeper areas. It has the potential to form dense stands across the bottom of the Lake.

Lake Merritt appears to provide an ideal habitat for this invader, which is increasingly showing up in our nets as we remove trash from the shoreline. Since it is capable of growing as deep as 16 feet and can grow to 6.5 feet tall, this plant may now be growing across the entire

Lake bottom, or may do so as the year progresses. If it does, will the harvester boat be needed year round? Will it out-compete the widgeon grass which typically grows from May – July? It is invading because Lake water temperatures are becoming warmer? Will it permanently change the appearance of the shoreline? These are questions we cannot answer. Lake Merritt may be about to change.

SAN FRANCISCO CONSIDERS FEE ON DISPOSABLE BAGS: (From the Oakland Tribune – “San Francisco’s Commission on the Environment will decide next month whether the city will take preliminary steps toward becoming the first in the country to support a 17-cent user fee on plastic and paper grocery bags.” HALLAUJAH! “As someone who has personally removed thousands of plastic bags from Lake Merritt, I applaud this proposal” said Dick Bailey, Lakekeeper and director of the Institute.

Although we don’t sort trash removed from the Lake or count the pieces, plastic grocery bags are one of the most common items found in our water. And, according to the Tribune, “Environmental groups estimate there are 46,000 pieces of plastic in each square mile of ocean.” “In recent years, governments in Ireland, South Africa and Taiwan have successfully begun charging consumers for the use of disposable bags.” Hmmm, maybe the Oakland City Council should consider such a fee.

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT WATERSHEDS: Hosted by the East Bay Watershed Center and Merritt College, this conference on volunteer stewardship will be held:

- JANUARY 13 – 16, 2005

- at MERRITT COLLEGE, OAKLAND
(Highway 13 to Redwood Road to Campus Drive)

- \$15 STUDENTS; \$25 GENERAL PUBLIC

- 0.5 UNITS COLLEGE CREDIT

- SPACE LIMITED; PRE-REGISTER
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Keynote speakers include: William Jordan III, Founding Editor, Journal of Ecological Restoration; Co-founder of the Society for Ecological Restoration International: Sharon Farrell, Founder, National Park Service Site Stewardship Program at the Golden Gate National Recreation Area: Sharon Fuller, Founding Director Ma'at Youth Academy, a project of the Earth Island Institute: Steven B. Rauh, former Editor of the Sierra Club Yodeler and former Assistant to David R. Brower; Co-director, ISPS: and Robin Mark Freeman, Chair, Merritt College Environmental Studies Program; Director, East Bay Watershed Center; Co-director, ISPS.

Sessions include: Bay Area Stream Buffers; Current Regulatory Efforts and Next Steps; Introduction to Citizen Watershed Restoration; Volunteer Watershed Management & Policy; Land Acquisition, Land Trust & Land Use Planning; Organizational Development for Creek Groups; Re-vegetation for Watersheds; Volunteers & Watershed Science; and Watershed Culture & Education. Field trips will be held on Sunday, as will a workshop entitled: Shaping an Effective Watershed Council.

For the latest conference information, go to <http://mountaincurrent.net/ebwc/>.



TRASH – A YEAR IN REVIEW: More frequent clean-ups resulted in the removal of 59,100 pounds of trash from Lake Merritt, the largest amount since we began the Clean Lake Program in 1998.

Top months for trash were January, February and December, during which 9,000 pounds per month were removed and weighed at the Davis Street Transfer Station. In second place were October and March (both over 6,000 pounds). Due to a lack of rainfall in the summer months, less than 1,600 pounds were removed each month from May through August.

Its called urban runoff, and it comes from an estimated 9% of the population who litter, mainly males in their teens and twenties. About 13% of the population spray yards with pesticides, hose down their driveways into the streets and don't recycle car fluids. *Numbers are from the California Water Boards; Erase the Waste.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP AVAILABLE FOR AQUATIC PLANT MANAGEMENT: The Aquatic Plant Management Society and the Aquatic EcoSystem Restoration Foundation are offering a \$60,000, two year stipend for a full-time graduate student to conduct research in the areas involving aquatic plant management techniques, or in aquatic ecology related to the management of regionally or nationally recognized nuisance vegetation. Proposals must be postmarked no later than April 30, 2005.

For further information, contact Mr. Donald W. Doggett, 239-694-2174, Fax 239-690-2785, <doggett@lchcd.org> and Mr. Carlton Layne, 3272 Sherman Ridge Dr., Marietta, GA 30064, 678-773-1364, Fax 770-499-0158, clayne@aquatics.org.

The Lake Merritt Institute is sponsored and supported by the Oakland Public Works Agency and members like you.