

The Lake Merritt Institute

A COMMUNITY BASED, NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

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NEW TRAINING VIDEO AVAILABLE

A new five minute video “A Guide to Cleaning Lake Merritt” is now available on YouTube! If you ever had questions about how to get here, where to find us, what to do and how to do it, this is for you. Our famous cast includes Dr. Bailey, fabulous volunteers in action, waterfowl, and trash. Created in response to an ever increasing number of volunteers (thanks guys) the show gives visual examples of how to load the trash barrel, how to scoop trash, what to do (and not do) with the net. Like Lake Merritt and like the Lake Merritt Institute, it is a truly unique experience (who else has a video of people scooping trash out of a downtown, tidal estuary?). So the next time you’re cruising at www.YouTube.com, check us out, see how much fun we have, then join us for the real thing.



A zeppelin’s eye view of Lake Merritt in 2008, courtesy of Frederic Leist.

Note the tree lined Glen Echo Creek / storm drain channel and the aeration fountains.

INSTITUTE CONTRACT PUT OUT TO BID

Early this month, The Lake Merritt Institute responded to a request for proposals issued by the City of Oakland for the Clean Lake Contract under which we clean the Lake, maintain the aeration fountains, give educational presentations, provide technical assistance to the

City, coordinate volunteers and provide other services. Companies who submitted proposals will be ranked and an evaluation of rankings is scheduled to occur by February 18th. Contract negotiations may begin on March 1 and the contract could be awarded in June, with a start date of July 1. The Institute's current contract extends until June 30, 2011 and provides most of our funding.



CLIMATE CORNER

Dedicated to the thousands of people displaced by floods in Australia

An International Climate Change Education Portal

Do you want to find climate educational material for the lower, middle and high schools? How about university classes? What resources are available other countries? Who is doing hands-on climate science and where are the museum exhibits?

These and other questions are answered at www.climatechangeeducation.org.



But it doesn't stop there. There are videos, links to events, solutions and art/media related websites. And if you crave instrumentation to document the climate and carbon world around you, climatechangeeducation.org has some recommendations. It's really amazing how much information can be found here, including books, games and a special

section on what's happening in California and who is doing it. A great site for a planet in need of better information.

Book Review: *The Climate War: True Believers, Power Brokers and the Fight to Save the Earth*, 2010, Eric Pooley, Hyperion, New York. An excellent, up to date and detailed description of the politics that got us into this mess and are keeping us in it. Read who is doing what and why the United States still has no comprehensive climate policy. Featuring lots of behind the scenes information from a seasoned reporter.

MLK DAY OF SERVICE COMES TO LAKE MERRITT

The Institute, Hands On volunteers and staff from Kaiser Permanente teamed up on Martin Luther King Day of Service to remove trash from the Lake, work at the Garden Center and even dug a badly needed drainage trench behind the Boating Center. Ten bags of trash were removed as the groups covered most of the shoreline using our "U-Clean-It" boxes. In a separate action, 40 trees were planted in the park surrounding Lake Merritt by Urban Releaf, Oakland's premier tree planting organization. Helping out in the digging, watering etc. were numerous groups including Keep Oakland Beautiful and others too numerous to

mention. The event was featured on a “Good News in Oakland” video and photos can be found on Facebook.

BIRD COLUMN: Earth Moving at Lake Merritt

Lots of birds at the lake for the January 4th-Wednesday Golden Gate Audubon walk, and lots of birders, too - 23, plus the two leaders - out to enjoy the perfect warmth of a sunny day. But the big news is the activity on the islands near the Nature Center, where just about the only bipeds in sight are wearing hard hats these days. The renovation of the islands (piping in fresh water and creating ponds or restoring, removing most of the invasive vegetation and replanting with natives likely to survive out there, and generally cleaning up and shoring up whatever needs attention) is almost finished, and should be completely done before the cormorants start looking for real estate around the beginning of March.

The Mallards (traditional green-headed park ducks) and American Coots (black with white beaks) don't seem to care about the construction, swimming between the islands freely, and the scavenger flock of Greater and Lesser Scaup (black heads, gray backs, white wings; come on the walk to find out how to tell them apart) was crowding around the Nature Center, along with a few Canvasbacks (auburn heads, black ski-jump beaks, white backs) and one Ring-necked Duck (black back, gray sides, bright white ring around the bill). And assorted Coots and Mallards, of course.

Despite the commotion, we saw a Great Blue Heron standing tall on the tippy top of the tallest island tree, and a Snowy Egret (the smaller of the two white heron-type birds) on the rocks at the end of the farthest island. And of all things a Green Heron (actually mostly rust-colored) launched itself out of the surviving thornless blackberries and flew off between two of the islands - a rare bird and shy, and what it was doing putting up with all the kerfluffle I do not know.

We trooped down the lake to El Embarcadero - pausing en route to admire the courting Common Goldeneyes (black-headed drakes with white backs and a full moon on each cheek; brown-headed ducks with gray sides and black beaks with an orange tip) and assorted grebes of various species (all five of the regulars) - pursuing a report of the hybrid hoodie-goldeneye described here last November. No sign of him, but we got long leisurely looks at this year's Tufted Duck, now with properly brilliant white wings, black body, and black-green head showing quite a respectable tuft, so no one complained. There was also a pair of Western Grebes (long white necks and black caps) dancing with each other, one waving a tasty clump of weed.

Absorbing these treasures took long enough that we had time only for a quick gallop through the park to Children's Fairyland and back through the vegetable garden, entertained by Anna's Hummingbirds (the green ones) and a couple of burglar-masked

Townsend's Warblers. All told, we saw 45 species of birds, which seemed pretty good - especially since we missed several regulars (no raptors, no woodpeckers, no swallows....) - and it was yet another great day at Lake Merritt, where every day is a great day.

INSTITUTE TO BE FEATURED IN OAKLAND MAGAZINE

Our work at Lake Merritt will be mentioned in an upcoming issue of *Oakland Magazine* (perhaps the March or April issue). Look for the photo and details on what we do, why we do it, and how. This is the second time (the first was in the January / February, 2005 issue) we have been so honored by one of the premier Bay Area magazines, which features fine dining, travel, snapshots, a calendar, letters and more.

JACK LONDON AQUATIC CENTER INC. CEASES OPERATIONS. On February 1, 2011, the Board of the Jack London Square Aquatic Center (JLAC) announced that the organization would terminate its management agreement with the City of Oakland, effective February 28, 2011. The decision was attributed to financial difficulties related to declining City support and fund-raising challenges. Over the years of its operation, the Center has focused on Oakland's youth and has introduced many members of the community to their waterfront and to aquatic sports. The JLAC board advised that they will "turn the facility back to the City of Oakland...in hopes that Oakland Parks and Recreation will continue to use it." Readers may wish to express their views to the City Council about the future value of this facility and the continuation of its programs by Oakland Parks and Recreation. Note: This article was copied from "Waterfront Action."

OAKLAND MUSEUM MAY INCLUDE LAKE INFORMATION

Work continues on creating new natural science exhibits at the Oakland Museum of California. Appropriately, some of the space may be dedicated to Lake Merritt, but details are yet to be worked out. Watch for the eventual re-opening.

RECENT SCENES FROM THE LAKE



Testing the Bandstand fountain at the dock



Elephant found in the Lake, but missing a rocker

This edition of "Tidings" was published entirely with private funding donated to the Lake Merritt Institute. To contribute to the Institute, use our website or send a check to 568 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610.