

# The Lake Merritt Institute

A COMMUNITY BASED, NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

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**DUCKWEED AND POLLEN AND ... OH MY!** One passerby said the Oakland Fire Department was out there. Our contract manager said the media was calling and calling. Pedestrians were peering into the water. They all said there was yellow paint in the Lake.

But no, the sky was not falling. It happens every year at this time (both the bright yellow and the loud cries in the night). To set their minds at ease, the Institute issued a bulletin:

**REWARD:** For the apprehension of Mr. Aca C. Ia, who has been littering the Lake Merritt watershed with his yellow leavings. This culprit is known to have dumped at hundreds of locations in the hills, and now it is all washing down the drain with the rain.

Those who have seen it describe the villain as very tall, bushy and profuse. Beware, there may be numerous accomplices, including Mr. Jun I. Per. If you see these scoundrels, do not cut them down. They are known to have a seasonal disorder, and will discontinue besmirching our waters when their flowers are fertilized.



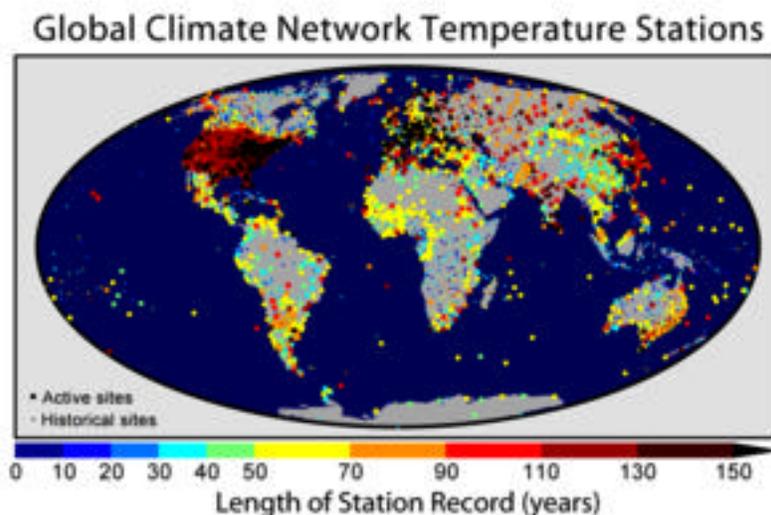
*Its POLLEN, not paint!*

**NO OTHER BIDS FOR THE INSTITUTE CONTRACT:** The only bid is in, and it was ours. No other company responded to the City's request for proposals for the Clean Lake Contract. Perhaps, like the Oakland Zoo and the Oakland Museum, the Lake Merritt Institute really is a unique organization; one of a kind. But we still don't have the contract. Council approval (in a fiscally challenged climate) is yet to come. Keep your fingers crossed.

**WEBSITE REINSTATED:** The website [www.lakemerrittinstitute.org](http://www.lakemerrittinstitute.org) that answers all your questions about Lake Merritt is back on line. Check it out.

**WEBCAM PROPOSAL:** Would you like to go to our website, click on an icon and see a real time view of Lake Merritt? This is our proposal and we have a site sponsor who has agreed to host a location high atop a tall building overlooking most of the Lake. Although cost estimates are not yet firm, the Institute hopes to include a pan and zoom feature so users could zero in on a flock of waterfowl, see who is riding the Gondola or check out the dock at the Chalet. The Lake's ever changing colors, moods and sights would be available for all to enjoy, day, evening or night. Details are yet to be arranged, and installation would not occur until we are sure the contract with the City is renewed.

**CLIMATE CORNER:** In spite of a couple of cooling influences – the sun's low activity, and La Nina – the planet continues to warm. 2010 turned out to be tied with 2005 as the warmest year on record, and 2000-2009 the hottest decade on record. 2010 began with a waning El Nino, but for most of the year we were under strong La Nina conditions – the strongest in 50 years. In addition, we're coming out of an unusually long period of low solar activity, which also tends to cool the earth. The sun's slowly increasing brightness will likely peak in 2012-2013, adding to the greenhouse-gas induced warming we're seeing. (copied from: [www.climate.nasa.gov/warmingworld/globalTemp.cfm](http://www.climate.nasa.gov/warmingworld/globalTemp.cfm)).



Book Review: *Hot – Living Through the Next Fifty Years on Earth.* 2011. Mark Hertsgaard. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Having traveled around the world to see the

impacts of climate change first hand, this local author and journalist provides first hand details from real people. In clear, no nonsense writing, he quickly describes the problem, but inspired by fatherhood, provides a message of hope and information regarding what we can do to minimize the coming damage.

Read the book that prompted the climate deniers to attack its author. Then see the video of his interview with leading denier Senator Inhofe, which prompted Mark to post the following in an article to the Huffington Post on February 21st. “Despite having no more scientific credibility than the Flat Earth Society, the climate cranks have held our nation’s climate policy hostage for decades now. One reason the United States has done so little to reduce greenhouse gas emissions over the past twenty years is that our government and media have listened as much to climate cranks as to real scientists.” “In a related interview, a public relations official for energy companies told us “the science doesn’t matter.” !!!



**NOTE:** A rehabilitated peregrine falcon was released at Lake Merritt in February by WildCare, a Bay Area organization that advocates for better protection of wildlife and our remaining open spaces. Given the bountiful habitat that Lakeside park provides for this amazing raptor, it may just stay around. So if you’re wearing a hat that looks like a pigeon and you see a large falcon with a black mask diving toward you at more than 200 miles per hour, be sure to duck.

### **BIRD COLUMN: Spring Springing Toward Lake Merritt**

Well, the work is finished on the islands, with a lot of wood chips and hopeful little plants scattered about. I was glad to see that banks of thick vines have been left on the sunny sides of the islands, in the hope of luring the egrets back to nest there, I think. Not that any were on the spot, though a couple of Great Egrets (the big white birds with yellow beaks and black feet) were showing off their bridal veil plumes in the paddock. The first of the Double-crested Cormorants - with their bunny-ear crests starting to grow - were checking out the real estate situation in the remaining trees, almost two weeks earlier than last year, possibly because it's really clear that this year it's the early, early bird that gets the home.

On one of the trees that's left with no branches at all, this year's Belted Kingfisher posed on the flat broken-off end of a trunk between sessions of chattering off after fish, looking rather like a statue on a plinth. And a Green Heron flew in, all lovely cinnamon and cream

below and greeny gray above, and posed a few feet below a Black-crowned Night-Heron, which looked a clean twice the size.

Out in the lake, the Ruddy Ducks are starting to turn ruddy - the females stay brown, but the males get spectacular auburn-haired-human red backs, black caps, white faces, and bright blue beaks for party dress. The Common Goldeneyes (black-and-white ducks with round white spots like the full moon on their cheeks) stay the same color, but they're clearly courting - swimming in flotillas and arcing their heads back halfway to their tails.

And for the first time I can recall, there were a lot of Common Mergansers - including a snow-white male with his dark green head as well as several of the red-headed gray females - swimming as a group and hanging out on the boom that separates the bird and boat ends of the lake. We usually see only one or two in a season, but for this trip they rivaled the Mallards. The boom also held a bunch of terns, and the group made a spirited effort to read them as something strange but finally concluded they were just our usual familiar Forster's Terns, some halfway between their eclipse and breeding plumages (trading black eye patches for caps and developing white wing primaries).

In the park, the most notable sight was a juvenile Cooper's Hawk - probably a female, as it looked almost too large to be a coop - sliding out of sight around the trunk of a tree that was being approached by a flock of Bushtits (tiny gray flying morsels just right for a light lunch). Probably about to be not such a good day for them, but for us, it was another good day at Lake Merritt, where every day is a good day....

## RECENT SCENES FROM THE LAKE



*Briars cut from the Island still litter the beach.  
We hope the contractor will remove them.*



*A tree trunk, likely from the Islands.  
This, and another like it, were removed.*

*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.*