

The Lake Merritt Institute

A COMMUNITY BASED, NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

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"Tidings" is an editorial newsletter. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the City of Oakland.



YOUR FUTURE PARKING LOT: The deadline for completion of Boating Center work keeps drifting back, but progress is being made, as shown here. The outline of a new, circular entrance plaza can be seen, as can one of the new overhead light structures. Also renovated will be the boat ramp, two boat hoists, the courtyard, rest rooms (bigger and nicer), and most important of all, the bulk head wall underlying the sidewalk next to the Lake. Access will be via a new driveway, shifted away from the building. Trees have been preserved and a new, paved walkway will favor pedestrians and joggers. Best of all will be a vegetated swale to catch and filter runoff from the new parking lot. Inside, graffiti will need to be removed, and security upgrades installed. Although not finished by Earth Day (on April 18th we will meet across the street) everything should be complete by April 24th (we hope).

Some joggers were surprised to find a dead bat ray on the shoreline, but the Lake holds myriad of unseen life beneath the surface.



TAX TIME – NEED A DEDUCTION?

SUPPORT YOUR LAKE

JOIN THE LAKE MERRITT INSTITUTE!

We:

- **Remove trash from the Lake,**
- **Maintain the aeration fountains, and**
- **Give educational presentations about Lake Merritt.**

Donations can be sent to the Lake Merritt Institute, 568 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610, or via PayPal at www.lakemerrittinstitute.org

DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

Members receive a monthly newsletter about the Lake.

Thank you.

CLIMATE CORNER: By the time you read this, the movie Merchants of Doubt will probably no longer be playing at local theaters. Shown in March to very sparse audiences, this gem of a documentary is based on a book of the same title by Naomi Oreskes, who now teaches at Harvard. For those who have ever wondered why cigarettes continued to be sold for decades without warnings, flame retardants were required even though they poisoned your air, and why America has no national policy to prevent climate disruption, the answers are here. Be forewarned though; it is sometimes difficult to swallow the gross deceit perpetuated upon us by those paid to do the bidding of powerful industries. The audience groans when Marc Morano laughs about his role in promoting the use of social media to slander and threaten climate scientists such as Michael Mann, Ben Santer and James Hansen.

What is the common denominator between these issues? It is an intense fear of government regulation. When you really get to the bottom of it, the merchants of doubt are opposed to any government control, even if it is needed to protect the lives and welfare of the common citizen. In the end however, they are creating conditions from which only government regulations can protect us. Second hand smoke, toxic flame retardants, and climate disruption are dangerous to all of us, and eventually regulations catch up to the smoke and mirrors used by the merchants. It took decades for that to happen with smoking, but with climate disruption, delay insures that feedback loops will overpower our ability to effectively respond.

Knowing they could not dispute scientific findings head on, the product of this small group of individuals in so called think tanks (that are really lobbyists) is doubt. Funded by companies such as Exxon and people (?) such as the Koch brothers, they have sowed so much doubt that they have stalled meaningful action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for decades. But will Exxon really pay for the public cost of rising sea levels, or will the Koch brothers save us from drought? You know the answer.

One Solution: How many of you out there would support an East Bay educational forum on climate disruption? Such a series of lectures, conferences, movies, and events could be based in a local museum and be modeled on the highly successful and informative Climate One programs of the San Francisco Commonwealth Club. For those who cannot make the trip across the Bay, local programs could provide a way to become learn about why entire forests in North America are threatened, or what level of climate education is being taught in our schools. Can museums be successful in establishing climate policy as they have been in Mexico can be another topic of debate. If you are willing to attend and support such an adventure, respond to climatemuseums@gmail.com.

Redwood Tree Removal Public Hearing - 4:30pm, April 8, 2015 at the Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue (across from Children's Fairyland). Should climate change science be a factor when comparing the value of trees to pavement? A historic redwood at 552 Vernon is proposed for removal but is healthy and sturdy, and is 100-120 years old. Hearing commissioners are touring the Rose Garden neighborhood in advance. For more information, including requests for hearing documents, contact: VERNON-REDWOOD@GMAIL.COM



HOMELESS CAMPS: Despite improvements in the neighborhood, a few people still do not have a place to live, and many are taking up residence around the Lake. Some are neat, keeping their belongings out of sight, but others could not care less, as shown here.

It is time, the wise sea gull said, to bring back park rangers, those who can interact with the problem and create conditions that are better for both the homeless, and the environment.

Until then, Lake Merritt will not reach it full potential.

BIRD COLUMN: Cormorant Convocation

This morning started quite normally for birding at Lake Merritt's fourth Wednesday Golden Gate Audubon trip. The Double-crested Cormorants are nesting in the trees on the offshore islands, finally sporting their double crests, and living up to their name. They typically lay two eggs, but can lay as many as 9. Both parents tend the nest until the young hatch in about 25 days, but the young remain dependent on their parents for up to 10 weeks after hatching. A few of the nests now have young, but watch closely over the coming weeks and you will see dozens of young cormorants begging for food. It will get really noisy out there.

Shortly after we finished counting the breeding Cormorants on the islands and floats (about 130 individuals) we looked further across the lake and discovered a huge raft of about 300 Double-crested Cormorants swimming in a long line, all in the same direction and coming towards us. The first birds in line would dive, followed by the next in line, herding fish along. Soon they were inside the floats. Birds from the back flew to the front to be first in line to dive. The scene was spectacular and went on for at least half an hour. Brown Pelicans joined the feast. It was hard to turn our attention to the other birds that were present.

Hank, the resident injured White Pelican, has grown his breeding bump on the top of his beak. The bump will remain until he is out of breeding condition, then it will gradually dissolve. We found Ruddy Ducks looking very dapper; the male's bills are now turning a bright blue and their backs are a beautiful reddish chestnut. They have bright white cheeks and stiff tails that stick out at a 45 degree angle from their bodies.

Some of the Eared Grebes are developing their golden "ears," feathers which fan out behind their eyes. A Song Sparrow sang with great abandon from the top of a bush in the community garden, giving us excellent views. We caught glimpses of a small flock of Cedar Waxwings as they called overhead, but they didn't settle down long enough to get good looks.

It's good to see the annual cycle of life kicking into gear at the Lake where every day is a great day.

PROPOSAL SUBMITTED: The Institute has submitted our proposal to the City of Oakland in response to their request for qualifications for the Clean Lake Contract. Our current contract ends on June 30th. If selected, our programs will continue.

STOLEN FROM COUNCILMEMBER GUILLEN’S NEWSLETTER:

“As the weather gets warmer and we begin to spend more time in our parks and public spaces, I want to remind neighbors and visitors to please take steps to be mindful of a few things to keep our parks clean, safe and enjoyable for everybody. While City ordinances don't permit barbeque grills, I counted no less than eight BBQs around the lake on Saturday. Recognizing the popularity of these weekend gatherings, the Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission (PRAC) is now in the process of preparing recommendations on designated grilling areas throughout the City’s parks. At Lake Merritt, in particular, my office has received a number of complaints from neighbors about the dumping of charcoal into the lake and on the lawn leading to second degree burns on one child’s hands, excessive noise from amplified music and an overflow of trash left behind by picnickers.



In the late 1990’s, the City responded to complaints by banning the Festival at the Lake and prohibiting cruising. To help ensure that everybody is considerate of our parks and the surrounding neighbors, this spring and summer, please remember to observe park rules, take your trash with you when you leave, and keep noise at acceptable levels when your family and friends enjoy time at one of Oakland’s many great parks. If you would like to weigh in on the deliberations about park usage, I urge you to attend the PRAC’s meetings, which take place the second Wednesday of the month, starting at 4:30 pm, in the Lakeside Park Garden Center (666 Bellevue), to share your views. See you around town!”

RECENT SCENES FROM THE LAKE



I know that fish is around here somewhere,

said the green heron, who will soon be fishing at the new swale and shoreline, shown above.

Photos by Lee Aurich

This edition of “Tidings” was published entirely with private funding donated to the Lake Merritt Institute, and not with funds from the City of Oakland. To contribute to the Institute, use PayPal at our website or send a check to: The Lake Merritt Institute, 568 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610. Mail will go to a P.O. Box, but it is going through.