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Summertime in the City the Nautical Way, cont

There are also basic and intermediate sailing camps for the 10- to 17-year-olds. This program covers water safety, rigging, knots, drills and educational games with the classes held on sailboats. When they finish the program, participants are issued a card and are entitled to use the sailboats at no charge.

Another interesting program is the tall ship overnight camp for 11- to 17-year-olds. Youth enrolled in this course not only sail on the Bay, but they also spend the night and one full day aboard an 82-foot tall ship.

All of the programs operate from the beginning of June until late August; however, interested parties can partake in the boating opportunities throughout the summer and into late fall.



THE LAKE MERRITT
INSTITUTE AN URBAN RUNOFF AND
 WATERSHED RESEARCH CENTER

TIDINGS
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**Lake Merritt to Address
 Goose Droppings Issue**

By Douglas Brooks

While they are beautiful in their appearance and graceful in their movements, Canada geese are fast becoming more widely known for the feces they produce. On an average day, a 20-pound Canada goose defecates up to 28 times and can generate as much as 0.1 pounds (dry weight) of fecal matter, which by any standard is a lot of waste. Multiply that by the hundreds of geese that call Lake Merritt home and it's easy to see why much of the park area at the Lake is covered in goose mess during our warm summer months.

This issue isn't new, however, and has been ongoing for some time from here in Oakland to New York City to Canada. Some cities in similar situations have eliminated the geese with various and sometimes drastic measures, such as gassing the geese to death, expanding hunting grounds, or using chemicals on the grass to deter the geese. Here in the Bay Area, we prefer more humane measures.

Perspectives here in Oakland and the Bay Area are passionate on both sides and vary widely. Generally there are two primary perspectives -- one seeing Lake Merritt as the wildlife refuge voted into law by the state legislature in 1870, and the other focusing on Lake Merritt as a public park. While both perspectives are correct, this situation proves a difficult one for the City of Oakland; that is, until now.

It appears that the City of Oakland has found a way to appease both sides with a new invention known

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Canada geese at a Seattle park look on as the NatureSweep picks up after them. The NatureSweep will be used at Lake Merritt beginning this August.

as the NatureSweep. A machine still in its infancy, this tool will let park-goers rest a bit easier when spreading a picnic blanket at the Lake.

The NatureSweep's inventor Ed Zylstra came up with the idea while coaching a children's soccer team at ball fields in Victoria, British Columbia. During these practice sessions, many of the parents were not about to let their young ones slip and slide on such a mess, and they took the children home. Mr. Zylstra, a welder by trade, thought this goose mess was not fair to the children. So, he did something about it. Under its original name the "Goose Goo Gone machine," Zylstra invented a 4-foot-by-4-foot trailer that is towed behind a small lawn tractor. The trailer has a gas-powered motor that turns nylon bristles to "tickle" the grass without damaging it. The droppings and other debris go into a bin made of a special plastic that can withstand the nitrogen-laden droppings. A welcome addition is that the machine

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Summertime in the City the Nautical Way

By Kaletha Patterson



An example of a Dragon Boat

Jumping into your car for a weekend escape in the mountains may sound like the ultimate journey for you and your family but when you consider the packing involved, the high cost of fuel and that long distance drive, it may not seem like a viable option.

One alternative to leaving the city for fun and adventure this summer is to take a trip to the Lake Merritt Boating Center.

The center rents row boats, kayaks, pontoons, canoes, paddle boats and dragon boats.

Dragon boats are less familiar than some traditional boats and quite recognizable.

These very long boats originated in China centuries ago and are often very colorful and ornate. Used for dragon boat racing in many parts of the world, the boats provided at the center can accommodate approximately 30 people and are also used by local dragon boat racers. Each boat is equipped with a team that synchronizes the stroke of their oars to coincide with the rhythm and beats of an on-board drummer. Traditionally, the boats are dressed with a dragon head on the front and a tail at the rear.

Those who prefer to sail Lake Merritt in a sporty manner can rent sailboats; however, previous training is required in order to operate them.

John Tornatore-Pili, Swim Team Coordinator at the center, said Lake Merritt is good for the diverse range of boating opportunities offered because the water is typically smooth and calm. Even on windy days, a sail along the Lake can be gratifying since the water rarely becomes rough during the season.

Aside from the variety of boats at their disposal, the center is ideally situated in the heart of downtown, providing a quick escape for those seeking a break from their routine urban activities. As the oldest bird refuge in the country, the boating excursions also offer a wonderful view of the many bird species that visit the Lake throughout the summer.

The recreational facility offers something for the entire family with youth camps specifically designed to accommodate the needs and skill levels of various age groups.

Children between the ages of seven and nine can register to become a "First Mate" and children aged nine to eleven can join the group called "Skippers". According to Tornatore-Pili, both camp programs introduce the kids to kayaking and focus on teaching them strong boating skills.



Colorful kayaks

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A Quick History Lesson on the Necklace at the Lake

By Douglas Brooks

It was on the twilight of the City Beautiful movement on April 8, 1923, when the Oakland City Council approved Landscape Architect Howard Gilkey's design plans for the 126 Florentine lampposts that were to encircle Lake Merritt with 3,800 lights to help beautify the Lake. It would take an additional two years for the plans to come to fruition. The lights helped to illuminate the Lake and provided park-goers with a lit path as they encircled the Lake. The necklace would continue to shimmer until the blackout restrictions of World War II forced the lights to darken.

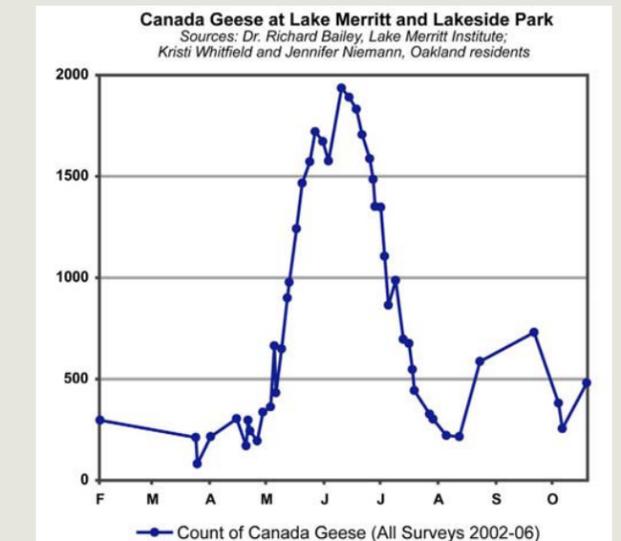
The Lake's necklace remained dimmed for over four decades, and it would take a major civic undertaking to light the necklace once again. In May of 1986, the Necklace of Lights Restoration Committee citizen group was formed. The civic club raised \$1.25 million, which was the price tag to turn on the lights, of municipal, county and state dollars, with private donors also contributing to the mix.

The Lake Merritt's Necklace of Lights continues to glisten and is also telling of a sign of the times here in Oakland, from the "Rainbow Necklace of Lights," as multicolored lights were displayed during Pride events, to the recent eco-friendly LED lights installed last year. The necklace has seen many changes but today continues to brighten the Lake.



Necklace of Lights in the evening

Lake Merritt to Address Goose Droppings Issue, cont



also picks up other smelly items, such as cigarette butts, old turf plugs and other small undesirables.

As an added bonus, the NatureSweep is relatively inexpensive. If the device proves effective, City officials may deem the machine priceless. But its actual cost to taxpayers is approximately \$13,000 per machine, so in the coming months we shall see the results of the NatureSweep. Officials with the City of Oakland expect the NatureSweep to be in action during the month of August and used as needed throughout the year. Thus, here at Lake Merritt we may indeed finally be able to live in goose-human harmony, putting to rest decades of the slick and smelly turf at Lake Merritt. For more information about Canadian geese at Lake Merritt, see the goose management study at www.oaklandnet.com/measuredd.