

# The Lake Merritt Institute

A COMMUNITY BASED, NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

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**CREEK TO BAY DAY – Coastal Cleanup Day The Oakland Way:** There are other sites in Oakland but of course we hope to see you here at the Boating Center on Saturday, September 19<sup>th</sup> from 9 am to noon. We promise a storm barrier to clean, two fountains that need work, scattered trash around the Lake (but we didn't put it there) and something to paint. For more information, go to [www.oaklandcreektobay.org](http://www.oaklandcreektobay.org) or call (510) 238-6222.

**DEAD MANS FINGERS:** Although it looks like a type of sponge, it is actually an algae, and if you are a lake walker you have seen a lot of it floating around this summer. Typically appearing when the water warms up in the late summer and fall, it usually disappears when winter rains and runoff take over the Lake. This year there is definitely more of it than we have seen in past years.



Also known as Sea Staghorn (or *Codium fragile* to the scientists) it is native to this area, occurring from Alaska to Baja, Mexico and the Sea of Japan.



**A NATIVE OYSTER:** In 1966 Jim Carlton noted that Olympia oysters were not common in the Lake, and we have certainly found that to be true. This author is aware of only two specimens that have been seen here in the last 15 years. Formerly common in San Francisco Bay, this small (it only grows up to 2 inches in diameter) oyster was a prime food source for native people, but was all but exterminated by over harvesting and sedimentation from gold mining in the Sierra mountains. Interestingly, both Lake specimens

were found in conjunction with aeration devices, one on a bubbler air hose and one on a branch near an aeration fountain. Perhaps if our oxygen levels were higher, it might thrive here.

**LAKE CHALET FEATURES LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT:** Although not yet installed, the building which houses the Lake Chalet dumpsters will have soon have a green roof. Rain falling on it will be absorbed and filtered by the garden of native plants and specially chosen soil components. After that, the water will be filtered again by a swale, which is a long, gently sloping, landscaped depression that collects and cleans stormwater. In this manner, those nasty molecules of copper from brake pads, petroleum aromatic hydrocarbons from tires, litter from dumb people and even doo doo from dogs and birds are prevented from reaching Lake Merritt. A little bit less pavement and a little



*Left: The new Lake Chalet swale*

*Right: Site of the new green roof*

**MEMBERSHIP ROLES TRIMMED:** Members who are not current on dues have been dropped from our newsletter list. Please be sure to respond to our annual reminders (we give you three chances) on the anniversary of your contribution and you won't miss an issue of "*Tidings*." Thanks to Dean Galloway, our stalwart membership director for keeping the records and sending out letters.

*YOUR ADD COULD BE HERE*

**NEW MEMBERSHIP RATES:** You can still be a member for \$35 a year, but your newsletter will have to arrive via email (in color). If you want a paper copy (black and white) the minimum rate will be \$50 so we can cover the cost of printing, stamps, paper and envelopes. Either way, it's a bargain.

**HERB KONG STRIKES AGAIN:** Volunteer Herb Kong has created another bulletin board. This time our excellent carpenter has outdone himself, adding a wooden shake roof to his design. Located along Grand Avenue between Bellevue and El Embarcadero, this board replaces a former, semi-rotted structure and marks the spot above Oakland's first storm drain filter. Thanks Herb; we couldn't do it without you!



**ANGELINO SANDRI JOINS THE BOARD:** The Institute Board of Directors welcomed Angelino Sandri as he was voted on to this dedicated band of lake dignitaries in August. Mr. Sandri is known to many of you as the owner of Gondola Servizio, the company that soothes your day with calm rides on long, beautiful, black boats made in Venice. We all immediately celebrated with a gondola ride to the Lake Chalet, where a new dock, store and reservation office are taking shape. Welcome Angelino!

**DUCKS 1 – SPEEDBOATS 0:** Those remote controlled, model power boats are fast, very fast, and the operator was running one around the Bandstand fountain. Round and around it went, bouncing off the waves. Then, either deliberately or due to carelessness, he rammed it directly into a small group of mallards. You might think a duck could get out of the way but it happened so fast that the bird didn't have a chance to even flinch.





Whop! Hitting the wing broadside like a ramp, the boat careened up into the air several feet, then dropped straight down into the water, submerged. It bobbed up a few seconds later; bow up and stern (where the electrical components are located) down. It was dead in the water. As for the duck, it ruffled its feathers and kept on paddling. Retrieved several days later, the boat was intact, with one little feather wrapped around the propeller. The moral of the story, don't mess with Lake Merritt ducks.

*We aren't afraid of no remote controlled speedboats!*

**LAKE ARTIST ON FACEBOOK:** Peter Lee, one of the artists who captured the Lake so many times in so many ways, has moved away. Now residing in the Los Angeles area to care for family, his work may still be found at [www.mesart.com/peterleeartist](http://www.mesart.com/peterleeartist). Peter also has a Facebook page and where he stays in touch with friends.

### **BIRDS RETURNING TO LAKE MERRITT; Bird Notes Returning to *Tidings***

Starting in October 2009, with the seasonal migration, regular reports from the fourth-Wednesday Golden Gate Audubon walk will once again appear in these pages. To join the walk itself, meet us at the spherical cage near the Nature Center on Wednesday, September 23, 9:30 a.m.

The August walk saw some grand things. Young Cooper's Hawks were eyeing the birds in the spherical cage like kids at a bakery window, and squabbling with a parent on one of the cormorants' trees on the lake islands. Four of the American White Pelicans that have been spending the summer with our rescue bird were still here, sunning on the 12th-street dock and flying across the lake (about a foot off the surface) like a phalanx of sea planes. And over by the Garden Center, a *pair* of bright yellow Saffron Finches!

The hawk fledglings and the pelicans will probably be gone in a month—but who knows what new wonders will appear at the lake, where it's always a good day....

—Hilary Powers

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