

# The Lake Merritt Institute

A COMMUNITY BASED, NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

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**CREEK TO BAY DAY:** It really is that time again. Football, migrating birds and Creek to Bay Day (aka Coastal Clean Up Day in California and International Coastal Cleanup Day worldwide). So mark your calendars for Saturday, September 17<sup>th</sup> from 9 am to noon and come on out. This year you have a choice of 25 locations from which to choose, including Lake Merritt and two sites in our watershed (Glen Echo Park and Oak Glen Park).

Details, locations and project descriptions may be found at [www.oaklandcreektobay.org](http://www.oaklandcreektobay.org).

The first 1,000 volunteers will receive a reusable aluminum water bottle and all volunteers will receive seed packets. There is no pre-registration but if you plan to bring a group of 10 or more to the Lake, you should call ahead to the site at which you want to work. At the Lake, teams will be sent out to clean sections of shoreline. Others will scrape storm drain barriers and clean aeration fountains. If all teams are filled, you can search out trash in the Park and watershed.

Last year, 1,087 volunteers removed over 4,000 pounds of trash from 27 Oakland sites and statewide, 73,377 volunteers removed 692,203 pounds of trash and 59,228 pounds of recyclables! Sponsors include the California Coastal Commission, the Public Works Agency – Environmental Services Division and the Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District.



*All Together Now: Heave.*



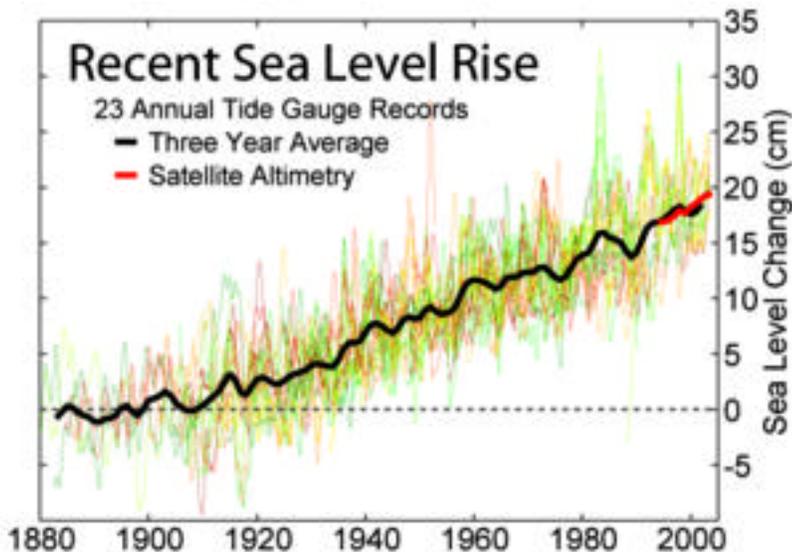
*It is amazing what grows on our fountains.*

## ALSO OF NOTE

- Check out the 7<sup>th</sup> annual California Stormwater Quality Association conference, September 26 – 28 at the Hyatt Regency in Monterey. See [www.casqa.org](http://www.casqa.org) for details. This event includes training for stormwater professionals, workshops, presentations and exhibits related to stormwater permit requirements.
- Register now for the 19<sup>th</sup> Biennial “State of the San Francisco Estuary Conference” held at the Marriott City Center in Oakland on September 20 – 21. See [www.sfestuary.org/soe2011](http://www.sfestuary.org/soe2011) for details. An opening night gala will be held at the Aquarium of the Bay in San Francisco on September 19<sup>th</sup>. The Institute will be attending sessions on “Climate Driven Ecological Changes” and “Lets Pick Up the Trash.”
- Annual North American Lake Management Society conference; October 26 – 28 at the Spokane Convention Center in the state of Washington. This years theme will be “Diverse and Sustainable Lake Management” and you just know there will be learned presentations on algae, invasive species, fisheries and water quality. Go to [www.nalms.org](http://www.nalms.org) for details.
- [www.pacificvoyagers.org](http://www.pacificvoyagers.org) describes a sustainable, inter-island transport project using sail canoes of an ancient, Polynesian design. Having started in New Zealand, the boats have made stops at Hawaii and other islands, and are now sailing down the coast of California.

## CLIMATE CORNER: Will Measure DD Protect the Lake from Sea Level Rise?

Sea level rise has been happening, and is projected to continue at a more rapid rate. It began rising most recently at about the start of the industrial revolution when coal began to be burned in large quantities.



Global sea level rise rose at an average rate of around 1.8 mm/yr over 1961 – 2003 and at an average rate of about 3 mm/yr from 1993 – 2003. There is widespread consensus that this rise will continue for centuries to come.

That may not seem like much, but when you realize that it is both unstoppable and irreversible, the problem becomes clearer.

A rise of 14 centimeters by the year 2050 is equal to about 5.5 inches, which is about 25% of the two foot current rise in Lake Merritt during most high tides. Twenty five percent in an election is a landslide; twenty five percent more in the price of an item is a deal killer; and a twenty five percent rise in water level is significant.

But wait: Lake Merritt is protected by flood gates which will keep out the higher levels. We are safe. Not quite, because the gates will have to be closed longer when water in the Channel and Bay are higher, leaving less time for the Lake to drain. Sea level rise also means that the pumps will have a harder time getting water out of the Lake when gravity flow is not sufficient to avoid flooding, such as when more intense rainstorms (which are predicted and are happening) occur.

Measure DD will somewhat compensate for higher sea level by removing bottlenecks in the channel and somewhat lowering the outlet level, thus allowing faster, deeper drainage. But eventually (remember, sea level rise will go on for centuries) higher water will overwhelm the flood control station and our children who still live in Oakland will be faced with another bond measure to keep Lake Merritt from flooding.

### **BIRD COLUMN: Quiet Isn't That Quiet**

Strolling across Bellevue and into Lakeside Park near the Nature Center, we paused as usual to describe the "magic tree" phenomenon to the assembled birders on the August 4th-Wednesday Golden Gate Audubon walk. That part of the park - basically, the rolling lawns bordered by Bellevue, Perkins, and Grand, running up to Children's Fairyland - has bunches and lots of trees, and one of them will have a wonderful mixed flock of little birds in it. Find that tree and you're in birder heaven; otherwise you're getting a crick in your neck peering into empty branches.

The description is a way of reducing expectations upon coming away from the lake, which even in August has birds wherever you look, so people aren't too disappointed with the next half-hour or so. But this time, it turned out we were standing right under That Tree, which was alive with Chestnut-backed Chickadees (our local chickadee; the only one you'll see here, so it seems common, even though its range is pretty well limited to the West Coast from the Bay Area up into Alaska and a bit in the Rockies) and Oak Titmice (all gray with little crests; doing well here but in trouble elsewhere in the state as a result of sudden oak death). And mixed in, we had a female Downy Woodpecker (all black and white, with a white patch in the center of her back) and a very bright male Wilson's Warbler (clear yellow underneath, with an ochre back and little black cap, almost never seen in the park). We went on to see most of the usual park birds, including a Black Phoebe lounging near the nest on the corporation yard (which didn't seem to be occupied), and lots of Anna's Hummingbirds (the green ones) zooming and chortling around. And the crown of that part of the trip, we got several good looks at a Red-shouldered Hawk (very well named; the wings are otherwise black and white, and the breast a strong cinnamon color - also a rarity here) being chased by a party of crows, and later moseying around in the garden.

On the lake - besides the usual Canada Geese and Mallards - a dozen or so American White Pelicans were visiting with Hank-the-rescue-bird, and several Great Egrets and

Snowy Egrets (all brilliant white, with yellow beak and black feet or black beak and yellow feet, respectively) seemed to be sizing up the bushes on one of the islands. We saw TWO Green Herons (mainly greenish gray, with rust-colored neck and upper breast) and lots of Pied-billed Grebes (stocky little brownish birds with triangular heads). The cormorant rookery was still in business, but for the first time this season some nests were empty; it looks as though everyone who wanted a family this year has got one. A floating dock of some kind seemed to have slipped its moorings, and 50 or 60 Double-crested Cormorants (mostly this year's bronze youngsters) were drifting lazily across the lake on it.

All in all a very good day at Lake Merritt, where every day is a good day....

### **IDAHO STATE LAW**

An actual law on the books in Idaho reads: “Dirt may not be swept from one’s house into the street.” Why have such a law? Because streets contains storm drain inlets, which lead directly to storm drains, which lead directly to public waters. So when you are sweeping (or leaf blowing) to keep your property clean, you are polluting the nearest creek, pond, lake or bay, which should be illegal. Why should the public have to deal with your mess?

What a grand idea! Why can’t we have a similar law here!

### **RECENT SCENES FROM THE LAKE**



*White Pelicans are often seen at Lake Merritt*



*Masks are also found in the Lake.*

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