

The Lake Merritt Institute

And CENTER FOR URBAN RUNOFF AND WATERSHED RESEARCH

568 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610; 510/238-2290; lmi@netwiz.net; www.lakemerrittinstitute.org

VOLUME XI

"TIDINGS" - OCTOBER, 2006

ISSUE X

CREEK TO BAY DAY SUMMARY: Once again over 100 enthusiastic volunteers descended from the watershed to Lake Merritt on Coastal Clean Up Day (Creek to Bay Day in Oakland). They picked up trash from the land. They scooped trash from the water. They scraped, washed and painted two aeration fountains. They installed new storm drain filter warning signs. They devoured sweet rolls, drank coffee and ate pizza.



Institute worker James Robinson, Oakland High Teacher Kevin Jordan, former intern Danny Li and his friend get ready to volunteer. We don't know the name of the bashful young lady peeking around the corner, but she was in the right place at the right time. 0

Thanks to our council members for refreshments; to the Lake Merritt Institute for pizza & soft drinks; to many city staff members for coordination, planning and more; and to the Boating Center for being our host.

In the end there were 75 fewer bags of trash around the Lake. Citywide, over 1,000 folks worked at 21 locations. Given a choice of going on a hike, going to an A's game or helping to clean Lion Creek, a local cub scout troop chose cleaning the creek. Of course!



THE LITTLEST VOLUNTEER GROWS UP:

Some volunteers return every year.

Here we see a lass who began at a very early age, and is still cleaning up seven years later.

Stay with us through the years as she becomes a grown woman, and not (as strongly suspect) one who will ever throw trash on the ground.



GONDOLAS GRACE THE ESTUARY:

Lake Merritt is one of the very few places where you can enjoy an authentic gondola experience (unless you want to travel to Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Florida or Italy). Here on the placid waters, ringed by the necklace of lights and with the city skyline in the background, time slows down. Seabirds watch warily as you silently approach. Dancing waters of fountains float nearby as your gondolier croons in Italian. It is peaceful out here on the water. Let's hope this special service remains in Oakland – its definitely part of the THERE that is here, at least for now.



ST. PAULS / OAKLAND HIGH & LIGHTHOUSE SCHOOLS RETURN TO THE LAKE:

Summer is over and students are returning to the Lake. But instead of carrying just textbooks, they are carrying nets, boots, water sampling equipment, and notebooks in which to write their observations. They are studying the watershed. They are measuring oxygen levels. They are performing community service by cleaning the Lake. They are watching the plankton (who are watching back?).



Students raise their hands when asked if they used water today. They then have to decide where the water went.

After they learn that wastewater from their house does NOT go to Lake Merritt, they learn that sewage goes to a treatment plant, (via sewers) and rain to the nearest public water (via storm drains).

Their homework is to ask anyone they are having dinner with if they know where storm drain flows go, and if these flows are treated. Most people they ask don't know.

BOND MEASURE DD PROJECT SUMMARY: The wheels of DD move slowly, but they do move. Here is the status of future Lake related projects as of September 15th, 2006.

- 12th Street: Bids will be opened in mid-October. Construction to begin in late 2006/early 2007 and take two years.
- Water Quality: A Lake-wide aeration system is being considered. A recommendation for installation of a floating wetland “restorer” unit, a pilot tide flap valve and “don’t feed the

geese” signage was approved by Council on December 20th, 2005. A consultant is evaluating additional options.

- Fairyland: Bids to connect manure storm drains to the sanitary sewer were higher than expected. Options are being considered.
- Boathouse on Lakeside: Construction bids were significantly above budget. If negotiations with a contractor are successful, construction could begin in late September.
- Sailboat House in Park: Suspended; expected to resume in 2007.
- Dock by Lake Merritt Hotel: “The nature of proposed enhancements are being considered by City staff.” Note – the dock deck and support pilings were replaced in conjunction with a Lake Merritt Breakfast Club project.
- East 18th Street Gateway: Schematic design work temporarily paused.
- East 18th Street Pier: Design work nearly 100% complete. Construction scheduled to begin late 2006.
- Tree Removal Plans; Pedestrian and Bicycle Paths Around The Lake: Construction is expected to begin in early 2007 and take one year to complete. (Note – a lawsuit has been filed regarding tree removal).
- El Embarcadero Reconfiguration: Construction is scheduled to begin in early 2007 and take one year to complete.
- Central System Irrigation Controller: Construction scheduled for winter 2006.



Sam Merritt Shows Off Sea Slug Eggs

Students were surprised to see millions of tiny, yellow eggs embedded in gelatinous globs scattered on the walls and bottom of Lake Merritt.

This phenomenon has been seen every fall here for the last several years. The slugs are small (about 1/2 inch at most) gray and without hard shells.

Look for them yourself next time you're around the Lake. To see a photo of the eggs, go to our website, click on "Search" at the upper right and type in sea slug eggs. This takes you to "A Year In The Life Of Lake Merritt. Go then to page 37.

RETRACTION: In our September newsletter we speculated that city staff may have reverted back to using herbicides in Lakeside Park, which could be one possible reason for a perceived decline in phytoplankton and encrusting organisms. But since city workers are not using herbicides, it appears this is not the reason why fewer clams, mussels, barnacles, et cetera have been seen at the docks.

GLOBAL WARMING QUOTES: “If we wait for the proof; the proof will kill us” (St. Lucia ambassador Charles Fleming). “You’re Driving Global Warming” (Zachary Running Wolf). “RIP, John Doe; 2050 – 2051? or Stop Global Warming Now” (Dr. Richard Bailey). “Carbon Dioxide is the Earth’s Thermostat” (Unknown).

VOTE FOR THE CLEVELAND CASCADE: Our local, friendly stairway to the Lake (or from the Lake) has been nominated for historic preservation funding. One factor in determining which (of many) projects is funded will be how many votes are received from supporters, which can include you. Just log on to <http://www.partnersinpreservation.org/> and cast your vote – no strings attached. You can vote daily up until October 31st. As of this writing, the Cascade is in the running. If enough funds are raised, the waterfall will actually be restored. It won’t flow to the Lake of course, but it will really look good. So if you think there are not enough waterfalls in Oakland, vote for the Cascade.

MONTHLY BIRD REPORT – By Correspondent Hilary Powers:

September on the Lake



Autumn has - what? unsprung? - bringing the first of the main winter migrants: a party of about a dozen Ruddy Ducks (one still wearing his auburn party suit, worn but recognizable) and the rest all in their usual dun and beige. Worth looking at; they're among the smallest of the ducks (half the size of mallards and looking even smaller because of the way they carry themselves, head and tail high, like rubber duckies). We also saw the first Eared Grebe of the season, a brown puffball with a surprisingly long neck and brilliant red-orange eyes. (*Photo-Black Crowned Night Heron*)

In the dead tree that's fallen on one of the back islands, Ms. Kingfisher was keeping an eye out for passing fish. Definitely "Ms." - you can tell she's female because of the handsome rust-colored cummerbund; the males, which I've never seen there, are all blue and white. Also on the islands, the Double-Crested Cormorants have finally finished nesting, though a number of the elegant but snaky-looking dark birds are still hanging out at the lake. The one occupied nest had a Western Gull - the biggest white-headed gulls - lounging in it. (Purely to see how the other side lives, I'm sure; when they look for nest sites, Western Gulls generally choose bare rock.)

Over near the bowling green, we got a good look at the year's first warbler, a male Townsend's - recognizable for the black burglar's mask on his bright yellow face. Lots of Bushtits (a.k.a. flying mice), an Oak Titmouse or two (also gray, but half again bigger than a Bushtit, and with a crest like a jay), some Chestnut-Backed Chickadees, and a Downy Woodpecker, too.



A Red Phalarope Prowls the Lake

Just twenty-three species, but some unusual sights among 'em, making a good day at the lake. But then, as I'm sure I've said before, every day is a good day at Lake Merritt....

This edition of “Tidings” was published entirely with private funding donated to the Lake Merritt Institute. To contribute to the Lake Merritt Institute, contact us at 510-238-2290 or 568 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610.

