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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

This Month at the Lake	1
Thank You, Volunteers!	1
Bird Spotting on 10th Street, Oakland	2
The Monthly Bird Report	3
Fun Facts About Our Lake	3

Volunteer Name
Street Address
City, ST ZIP Code

The Lake Merritt Institute
568 Bellevue Avenue
Oakland, CA 94610

This Month at the Lake

By Stephanie Benavidez

The migration season for the winter migrants is off to a good start with the arrival of 50+ ruddy ducks. Thus far, we have also had up to 35 brown pelicans doing aerial acrobatics as they plunge for fish, especially in the Glen Echo area. These occurrences arrived in time for the third edition of the Schmap San Francisco Guide for tourists.

To date, no volunteers have reported sighting any baby seals, but a few of them reported seeing a few baby seals around 4 P.M. Labor Day weekend in the vicinity of the Grand Avenue storm drain.

On another note, the Public Works Agency has started the process of checking and documenting

the repairs for our 2008 Island Restoration and Wetland Installation by the Sailboat House parking lot.

To conclude, we have a children's book for sale called "The Grumpy Pelican" written by Jack Friar and illustrated by Peter Lee. The book promotes the Lake Merritt Wildlife Refuge, specifically our beloved white pelicans Hector and Helen and other residents. A percentage of the proceeds will go to the Rotary Nature Center/Wildlife Refuge. Please stop by the Center to view a copy and order your book before the holidays.

creeks, 45 storm drain inlets were stencil-painted with the message, "No Dumping, Drains to Bay (or Creek)" to remind people that our storm drains should carry only storm water to our creeks and the San Francisco Bay.

Students from the Lighthouse Charter School also received their first introduction to the Lake. They will be sprucing up the Lake this year and learning valuable ecological information at the same time. Throughout the year, the students will be studying Lake Merritt. Creek to Bay Day is sponsored by the Oakland Public Works Agency and the Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District.



A Volunteer collecting trash from the waters of Lake Merritt



Thank You, Volunteers!

By Lakshmi Rajagopalan

The Lake Merritt Institute wishes to thank all volunteers who participated in helping to make Creek to Bay Day 2007 a great success! Creek to Bay Day took place on Saturday, September 15, 2007, from 9 A.M.-12 noon as part of Coastal Cleanup Day.

This year, **155 volunteers** participated in a variety of projects around Lake Merritt. As a result of everyone's efforts, **85** bags of trash, including an old cell phone and cardboard used by the homeless, were removed from Lake Merritt. The volunteers also cleaned two aeration fountains and scraped mussels and barnacles off two storm drain outfall barriers.

To help reduce the future amount of trash in our

We're on the Web!
Visit us at:
www.lakemerrittinstitute.org

To contribute to the Lake
Merritt Institute, contact
us at
(510) 238-2290
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Answers to questions in Fun Facts About Our Lake
(1) 2002; (2) Over 200; (3) 1870; (4) The Necklace of Lights;
(5) True; (6) Children's Fairlyland; (7) 155 acres of land; (8) True



Bird Spotting on 10th Street, Oakland

By Georgia Silvera Seamans

The germ of this post was my "discovery" of the Lake Merritt Channel Park on 10th Street in Oakland. I was excited by the sculpture and the walkers along the path in the western section of the park (10th Street bisects the park). Other users of the western half of the park included Tai Chi and yoga practitioners as well as dancers on the Laney College courtyard abutting the park.

In the eastern half of the park, I observed homeless men emerging from the vegetation lining the channel. This section was also used by readers and sunbathers on a large lawn and by Canada geese. Both sides of the channel support bird life—herons, egrets, gulls, ducks, pelicans, and cormorants—but I observed more species in the western half and at low tide; more mud is exposed in the western half of the park.

On the way to the park for a second time, around 8 A.M., I saw a black-crowned night heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) on a concrete ledge. I've seen this heron previously through binoculars. I was unbelievably excited to see it clearly with my naked eye. I watched the heron, hoping it would "fish" nearby from a large man-made pond stocked with goldfish. I did not see it fish that morning or on subsequent days of observation, but according to Martin et al. in *American Wildlife & Plants*, the black-crowned night heron "occasionally makes damaging raids on fish hatcheries."

On the third day, I saw the heron and two others on the concrete ledge. I also observed that the grove of trees adjacent to the ledge and pond was filled with herons. The main heron was also present on the ledge at 4 P.M.

I was looking forward to seeing the herons on the

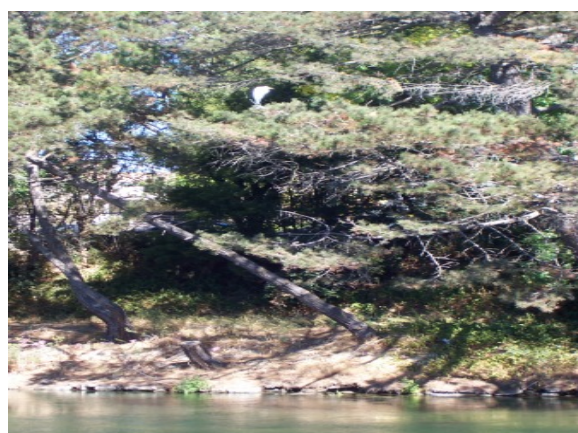


Heron and Gulls

morning of my fourth day, but there were no signs of them. I was happy to see a common egret (*Casmerodius albus*) feeding in the narrow mud bank when I walked by the eastern section of Channel Park. In the afternoon, the egret was perched in a Monterey cypress above the channel. The nest of the common egret is "a platform of sticks in large trees, dead brush over water, or in tule marsh." I learned from Mark Liolios (of Aquatic Park EGRET) that egrets like to perch on the dead branches of Monterey cypress.

I walked by the heron roost on my way out of the 10th Street area and observed a heron, a second bird, possibly a juvenile, in one of the grove's redwoods. This last observation highlights the real presence of nature in a city. I made this observation standing across the street from the grove.

The herons were not observed in Lake Merritt Channel Park.



Egret

The Monthly Bird Report

By Hilary Powers

LIFE AT THE LAKE GOES ON.....

The autumn in-migration has begun, even though the last double-crested cormorant is still stubbornly sitting on a nest. The rest of the year's flock—black adults and bronze-brown youngsters—are fishing or sitting on the floats drying their wings, but this one hasn't given up on the breeding season. Is it urgently trying to bring off yet another clutch? Or could a bird of such low status not get a nest until everyone else in the flock was done? No way to tell, but it's fascinating to guess.

Around the islands, ruddy ducks (the first of the traveling ducks to return) are swimming like little teapots, with their necks and tails both pointing straight up. A dozen or so pied-billed grebes, more than I've ever seen in one place, joined them, along with lots and lots of American coots (black with white beaks), a few mallards (the drakes looking happy to have their green heads back), the usual Canada geese, and a flotilla or two of gulls. Three brown pelicans (two with the white heads of adult birds) sat on the floats, and Ms. Kingfisher scanned for fish from the top of the tree on the farthest island. (We could tell it was not Mr. Kingfisher because she had a rust-colored vest along with the dark chest stripe and blue suit.)

In the garden and woods across Bellevue, the little tree-hopping birds were active—lots of bushtits (think flying mice) and chestnut-backed chickadees, plus some scrub Jays (the jays without crests), an oak titmouse (all gray with a crest and big bright eyes), and a female Nuttall's woodpecker (speckled black and white, with black stripes but no red on her head). Some half-mature American robins livened up the lawn, looking particularly scruffy with the typical robin red only on their bellies, while their upper chests were the streaked cream of babies.



A Cooper's hawk sat on a pine tree in the garden, giving us a really good view of the gray-and-peach plumage, the tail stripes, and the deep burnt-cinnamon eyes.

Back at the Lake, a couple of juvenile black-crowned night herons gave us the beady eyeball, proving that the rookery didn't entirely fail this year after all. The great egrets and snowy egrets (with yellow beaks and black feet, and black beaks and yellow feet, respectively) and the great blue heron were all full adults, fishing happily and giving no sign why they didn't breed here this year. The day was sunny and not too hot—and yet another good day, as all days are good days, at the Lake . . .

Fun Facts About Our Lake

By Kaletha Patterson

- 1) In what year was the Lake Merritt Master Plan approved by the Council?
- 2) How many citizens participated in the year-long community meetings which focused on enhancing the Lake and its park area?
- 3) In what year was Lake Merritt declared America's first state game refuge?
- 4) What name is used to refer to the lights which ring the 3.5-mile perimeter of Lake Merritt?
- 5) The lights were restored in 1987 following over 40 years of darkness as a result of World War II blackouts. True or False?
- 6) What is the name of the nation's first three-dimensional theme park for children, which has been on the site of Lake Merritt for over five decades?
- 7) Lake Merritt is a unique fresh- and salt-water lake and is the largest such lake of its kind located within an urban area. To understand its size, how much land do you think it covers?
- 8) Over 90 different species of birds are known to frequent the Lake. True or False?

See next page for answers