

The Lake Merritt Institute

And CENTER FOR URBAN RUNOFF AND WATERSHED RESEARCH

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OAK-NESS MONSTER SURFACES IN LAKE MERRITT: No one knew what it was. On a Friday evening, just before dark, it appeared out in the Lake - rising from the depths on its own power. It was a strange, beast like form with red eyes and an undulating, black body. A odd, white mist hovered around it, and turbulence shook the water.



Dr. Kenneth Spelunker, a geologist at UC Berkeley, said it is possible that global warming may have caused a local expansion of the planetary crust, creating fissures leading down into the earth. "There may be a flooded chamber below the Lake that could be connected to other underwater chambers" he said. Dr. Spelunker also noted that there have been recent reports regarding other, unknown creatures elsewhere, e.g. Lake Champlain in New York, in China, and in Oregon. If the monster surfaces again, we will attempt to obtain better photographs.

TWO GONDOLA BOATS LEAVE LAKE MERRITT: Gondolier Angelino is shown here during the sale of two boats formerly rowed on Lake Merritt. The buyer's gain is our loss. Only one boat now remains, and it will be available for limited service in November and December. Reservations are now being taken for these months and for Valentines Day, which often books up.



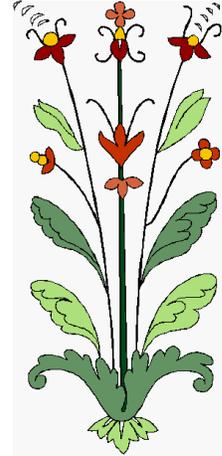
Without a regular source of business, such as may be provided by the restaurant to be opened in 2007?, the distinctive boats will disappear. For more information, go to their website at: gondolaservizio.com.

THE WAY A WATERSHED REALLY WORKS (Editors Note: This multi-part series is taken from “A Sand County Almanac” by Aldo Leopold, 1949. Oxford University Press. It is re-printed here to remind us, regardless of our comings and goings, of what is continually happening on the land and water around us.

Odyssey – Part 1

X had marked time in the limestone ledge since the Paleozoic seas covered the land. Time, to an atom locked in a rock, does not pass.

The break came when a bur-oak root nosed down a crack and began prying and sucking. In the flash of a century the rock decayed, and X was pulled out and up into the world of living things. He helped build a flower, which became an acorn, which fattened a deer, which fed an Indian, all in a single year.



From his berth in the Indian’s bones, X joined again in chase and flight, feast and famine, hope and fear. He felt these things as changes in the little chemical pushes and pulls that tug timelessly at every atom. When the Indian took his leave of the prairie, X moldered briefly underground, only to embark on a second trip through the bloodstream of the land.

This time it was a rootlet of bluestem that sucked him up and lodged him in a leaf that rode the green billows of the prairie June, sharing the common task of hoarding sunlight. To this leaf also fell an uncommon task: Flicking shadows across a plover’s eggs. The ecstatic plover, hovering overhead, poured praises on something perfect: Perhaps the eggs, perhaps the shadows, or perhaps the haze of pink phlox that lay on the prairie.

When the departing plovers set wing for the Argentine, all the bluestems waved farewell with tall new tassels. When the first geese came out of the north and all the bluestems glowed wine-red, a forehanded deer mouse cut the leaf in which X lay, and buried it in an underground nest, as if to hide a bit of Indian summer from the thieving frosts. But a fox detained the mouse, molds and fungi took the nest apart, and X lay in the soil again, foot-loose and fancy-free.

Next he entered a tuft of side-oats grama, a buffalo, a buffalo chip, and again the soil. Next a spiderwort, a rabbit, and an owl. Thence a tuft of sporobolus.

All routines come to an end. This one ended with a prairie fire, which reduced the prairie plants to smoke, gas and ashes. Phosphorus and potash atoms stayed in the ash, but the nitrogen atoms were gone with the wind. A spectator might, at this point, have predicted an early end of the biotic drama, for with fires exhausting the nitrogen, the soil might well have lost its plants and blown away.

But the prairie had two strings to its bow. Fires thinned its grasses, but they thickened its stand of leguminous herbs: prairie clover, bush clover, wild bean, vetch, lead-plant, trefoil and Baptisia, each carrying its own bacteria housed in nodules on its rootlets. Each nodule pumped nitrogen out of the air, and into the plant, and then ultimately into the soil. Thus the prairie savings bank took in more nitrogen from its legumes than it paid out to its fires. That the prairie is rich is known to the humblest deer mouse; why the prairie is rich is a question seldom asked in all the still lapse of ages.

Odyssey by Aldo Leopold will be continued in the December issue of “Tidings”

WHY PEOPLE COME TO LAKE MERRITT



PUBLIC WORKS AGENCY WINS AWARD: On August 15, 2006, the Public Works Agency of Oakland was awarded national accreditation by the American Public Works Association (APWA). The APWA Accreditation Program formally verifies and recognizes public works organizations throughout the nation for compliance with recommended management and operational practices established within the public works industry as set for in the *Public Works Management Practices Manual*.

The City of Oakland is the 35th organization nationally, only the 2nd municipality and the 3rd government organization in the state, to achieve this honor. Congratulations PWA!

CITY WINS GRANT: One million dollars has been awarded to the City of Oakland for renovation of Lake Merritt's wildlife islands. Diligence and hard work by Environmental Services staff prevailed in the very competitive selection process, from which our nesting waterfowl will be the beneficiaries.

Funds will be used to remove highly saline soil from beneath trees where generations of nesting birds have defecated. Inappropriate vegetation will be removed, clean soil & new plants brought in, and wood chips spread over the surface. A new sprinkler system will wash bird droppings from the plants

and provide irrigation. These and other recommendations were developed in conjunction with professional wildlife biologists hired to evaluate the islands. Thanks to the Coastal Conservancy for the grant and congratulations to ace gra

**COMING SOON TO A
STORM DRAIN NEAR YOU!**

**COLORFUL, LONG LASTING
REMINDEES FOR CLEAN WATER**

**A VARIATION OF THIS DESIGN
WILL BE USED ON MAJOR
STREETS.**



*Oakland is installing new storm drain markers!
The colorful, plastic discs are replacing paint stencils,
which really didn't last very long.*

MONTHLY BIRD REPORT – By Correspondent Hilary Powers:

Fall Flotillas on the Lake

The in-migration is well launched, with lots of Ruddy Ducks (the ones that look like floating teapots), a few Scaup (black head, gray wings, blue beak for the males; all brown with white around the beak for the females), and the first three pairs of Buffleheads (tiny males bright white with black backs and black and white heads; forget the females - you'll never find 'em without a guide, except that if a little brown duck is hanging out with the Buffleheads, that's probably what she is). Just four main species of ducks still to come....

But the Sight of the Day was the huge flock of Brown Pelicans (both the white-headed adults and the all-brown youngsters, maybe 30 or 40 all told) that were all fishing like mad down toward the end of the lake by Grand Avenue and Lakeside. And not far behind was a line of swimming Double-Crested Cormorants (looking like submarines with their periscopes up and practically beak to tail) that spanned most of the width of the lake near the 12th Street bridge; I don't know where they were all going, but it was a real parade—and a few of the big Western Gulls were mixed in and along for the ride.

Wherever you are, it's better by the Lake....

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To contribute to the Lake Merritt Institute, contact us at 510-238-2290 or 568 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610.*

