



# THE LAKE MERRITT

**INSTITUTE** AN URBAN RUNOFF AND  
WATERSHED RESEARCH CENTER

**TIDINGS**  
DECEMBER 2007

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## Effects of Oil Spill on Lake Merritt

By Kaletha Patterson

### Lake Merritt Safe from Oil

Lake Merritt was protected last month from what could have been a potentially detrimental oil spill after 58,000 gallons of bunker oil spewed into the waters of San Francisco Bay. The incident occurred the morning of November 7 when a South Korean container ship hit one of the Bay Bridge towers.

The County of Alameda and the City of Oakland worked together to ensure that oil did not enter Lake Merritt and the Channel. Tide gates located at the flood control station were kept closed during incoming tides, both as a flood control measure during rains and to keep oil from reaching Lake Merritt and the Channel. The City of Oakland and Alameda County placed two booms across the channel in front of the tide gates on November 9 as an added precaution.

The Oakland shoreline was protected by booms installed by the Port of Oakland at Arrowhead Marsh and Mid-Harbor. No oil was found at Arrowhead Marsh or inward of Berth 55 at the mouth of the Oakland Estuary. Oil did reach Radio beach north of the bridge before protective measures were in place.

Some residents did report oil residues in Lake Merritt. This oil was not associated with the spill but was a result of stormwater runoff that carried oils from roadways through the stormwater system and into the Lake. This is a common occurrence

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during storm events. Oakland citizens and citizens can reduce the amount of oil in the stormwater by changing their oil properly and getting regular maintenance on their vehicles.

The U.S. Coast Guard had approximately 100 people out doing cleanup. Oakland Parks and Recreation staff are continuing to monitor Oakland's waterways for any signs of oil.

U.S. Coast Guard reports in the middle of November indicated that 12,745 gallons of the 58,000 gallons of oil had been collected. It was estimated that an additional 4,060 gallons of oil have evaporated and 580 gallons have been dispersed naturally.

In addition to protecting the Lake, the City of Oakland Rotary Nature Center rescued 11 oiled birds, mostly diving birds. Rotary Nature Center Staff members attended oil spill training classes for Hazmat purposes, and the public assumed a watchdog role by spotting and identifying birds affected by the oil spill.



San Francisco Bay spill takes toll on diving ducks

*Fun Facts continued...*

Merritt are the Embarcadero Fountain, the Bandstand Beach Fountain, and the Glen Echo Fountain.

8. Lake Merritt has been a fresh water lagoon with natural tidal flows since the last ice age.
9. San Francisco Bay rises and falls six feet daily.
10. In Oakland, storm drains lead to streams, lakes and the Bay, not to a treatment plant.

Source: [www.lakemerrittinstitute.org](http://www.lakemerrittinstitute.org)

*Answers to questions in Fun Facts about Our Lake*

- 1) 1869; 2) 600 feet wide; 3) 7 square miles; 4) Plankton, algae and widgeon grass; 5) True; 6) False, A wooden floodgate was installed to provide flood protection; 7) True; 8) False, Lake Merritt is a salt water lagoon; 9) True; 10) True.

### Tidings

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**Volunteer Name**

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## Holiday Activities Around the Lake

By Lakshmi Rajagopalan



*Christmas Revels, a theatrical celebration of the holidays*

The holiday season is upon us and there are activities aplenty around Lake Merritt to get you in the mood that caters to a variety of individual interests.

If all the Thanksgiving food and upcoming holiday treats make you feel guilty and you want to work it off, start by registering to get in shape this holiday season for the *Lake Merritt Joggers and Striders (LMJS) Fourth Sunday Race* on December 23 at 9.00 A.M. at the Sailboat House, 568 Bellevue Avenue. All finishers receive ribbons. The fee is \$3 for members and \$5 for non-members. The course distances are certified and the course is flat. Lake Merritt Joggers & Striders (LMJS) is an Oakland-based running club and has the distinction of being the East Bay's oldest running club.

For all those theatre lovers, Oakland has a spirited performance series of *Christmas Revels* produced by California Revels for the holiday season.

California Revels are a form of participatory arts that blends traditional music, dance, ritual and folk plays, presented by a large volunteer chorus of children and adults drawn from the community, and a number of highly talented professional actors, musicians, artists, directors, and "bearers of tradition" from many cultures. The 2007 Christmas Revels follows the theme of a 19th century "Songcatcher" as he wanders the English countryside, seeking to collect the songs, dances and village traditions that mark the turning of the year. Oakland's event takes place in the Scottish Rite Theater, in the Masonic Temple on Lake Merritt from December 7 to December 17, 2007.

Amid all the holiday hoopla, the *Christmas Bird*

*Count* captures the attention of nature lovers. Every December, *Golden Gate Audubon's Christmas Bird Counts (CBC)* attracts hundreds of Bay Area birdlovers to record every bird seen within a 15-mile diameter area on Wednesday, December 26, 2007.

From dawn until dusk, the volunteers walk through parks, neighborhoods, and wetlands, venture out in boats on the Bay, and skirt reservoirs and bayside mudflats to identify the species and count the numbers of birds at every site.

Finally, for the child in us, Children's Fairyland will transform into the *Fairy Winterland* featuring live performances highlighting many cultures, daily appearances by Santa, special decorations, thousands

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## The Monthly Bird Report

By Hilary Powers

### Busy Times at Lake Merritt

The 18 humans on the November Golden Gate Audubon Society's fourth-Wednesday trip saw 45 species of birds, a big jump from October, revealing the winter season is in full swing. All the regular visitors are here now and, for an added touch, a couple of photographers from Channel 2 came along for the walk, snapping pictures of people and birds alike.

We were treated to another feeding frenzy among the cormorants, terns, and brown pelicans, all chasing fish up the Lakeshore side of the Lake near 18th Street. A bunch of scaup drakes (the little black and white ducks; their hens are all brown and relatively rare near shore) were waiting between the island and the Nature Center for a feeding frenzy of their own, seeming very disappointed when all those humans looking at them didn't fork over any breadcrumbs. (They're better off without; bread really isn't good for

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*Palm Warbler, bird identified in CBC 2006*

*Monthly Bird Report continued....*

them.. Grain and birdseed are better for their digestions.) Around the islands, the scaup, ruddy ducks, and goldeneyes were out in force, with a few long-necked Western and Clark's grebes snaking around among them.

The main curiosity was something we didn't see; a mystery duck has been hanging out by the Nature Center. It is all brown, but a different shape from a female Scaup and without the heavy white skin around the beak. And we looked - there's been a lot of discussion of this duck on the local bird sightings internet list at <http://www.diabloaudubon.com/mailman2/listinfo/sightings> and we have high hopes of figuring out whether she's a Ring-necked Duck, a Redhead, or even (probably wishful thinking) a Common Pochard - which, contrary to its name, is virtually

never seen in North America. (Most birds called "common" this or that are relatively rare on this side of the world; they earned their names in England, a long way from here).

Across Bellevue in the park, we had good looks at a couple of female Nuttall's woodpeckers (all black and white; no red) and at a Townsend's Warbler (the one with the black burglar mask). The rest of the usual suspects were there too - bushtits and chickadees and even an Oak Titmouse, flitting around the upper branches and giving us all a case of warbler neck (from looking up too far, too long).

Lots to see, lots of fun, and all in all yet another good day at the lake. . . .

*Holiday Activities continued....*

of twinkling lights, rides, puppet shows, arts and crafts, and free cider and cocoa. Throughout the holiday season, Children's Fairyland will host Fairyland's annual Children's Theater Holiday Program, special puppet performances of "The Nutcracker," the popular puppet show "Hansel & Gretel," and much more. The Fairyland Tree Lighting Ceremony is on Friday, December 14 at 6.30 P.M.

Ah, the holiday spirit.....



*Santa is a regular visitor during the holidays in Fairy Winterland*

## Fun Facts About Our Lake

By Kaletha Patterson

1. In what year was the 12th Street Dam completed?
2. Before the dam was built, how large was the opening to the Bay? 400 ft wide, 170 ft wide, 600 ft wide, 90 ft wide.
3. Lake Merritt has a watershed of how many square miles? 3 square miles, 15 square miles, 7 square miles, 21 square miles.
4. In Lake Merritt, oxygen comes from contact with the air and from the vast populations of which three forms of plant life (plankton, dandelion, moss, algae, fern, widgeon grass).

*Answer True or False to the following questions:*

5. The fountains found within Lake Merritt are not only pleasant to the eye, they aerate the water. Aerating the water oxygenates the Lake, decreasing the build-up of unwanted odors.
6. A stainless steel floodgate was installed to maintain the Lake at a higher level, thus eliminating many of the mud flats and marshes.
7. The names of the three fountains located in Lake

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