

# The Lake Merritt Institute

*A COMMUNITY BASED, NON-PROFIT CORPORATION*

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**HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL:** The Lake Merritt Institute wishes all of our members a joyous Christmas season and happiness in the coming new year.

**1800?** Joel Peter of the City of Oakland informs us that the number 1800 now seen on numerous, brick pylons around at Lake depict where the original Lake shoreline was located in the year 1800. Hmmmm. Things seemed to have changed somewhat.

**TRASH?** Our first edition, collectible trash photo was such a hit that we gathered a second batch of items found along the shoreline of Lake Merritt. Yes, that is a Texas Rangers plastic plate and no, we don't know what kind of animal donated its skull. The red object is (gasp) a hot water bottle and above it to the right is a 1966 Raiders football schedule as printed on a litter container designed to fit on an automobile window crank. Every Raiders fan needs one, but this is probably the only one left;



definitely a collector's item. It was so much fun assembling these items that we decided to make a partial list of some of the more memorable objects found since 1997:

## CATCH OF THE DAY

Two sofa chairs, a full size television cabinet, a gerbil in a tiny casket, an Arizona state flag and several boomerangs (they don't always come back).

A burned American flag, a sawed off shotgun (16 gauge), an assault rifle, a clay mask, a Laney College football trophy and lots of car keys.

A diamond or cubic zirconium (value unknown), 2 security officer badges, and many CD's.

Clothing (various sizes and components), including lots of hats (including one from the Ladies of the Lake) gloves, pants, shirts etc.

A hot water bottle, medicine bottles (with pills), a crutch, a cooking pot, a tide gauge float, a circuit board, a life ring float from the old City Recreation Office and several I-Pods.

A XXX collection (censored), a floating, pumice candle holder with carved steps, an orange lens from the necklace of lights, dozens of traffic cones and several city traffic control signs.

Baby pacifiers, bottles and toys (littering starts at a very early age!).

Two kilograms of drugs (donated to the police department) and a stolen briefcase containing a passport, credit cards and company security codes on a CD.

A bowling ball (badly chipped), a lawn bowling ball, hundreds of tennis, baseball and bouncy balls, a few basketballs and soccer balls, frisbees and a 1966 Raiders football schedule.

A bottle of perfume (very strong) a 20 foot long piece of rebar, wallet cards, numerous sleeping bags, many rubber duckies, a mannequin arm, various masks, and a duck decoy made from a tire tube and plywood.

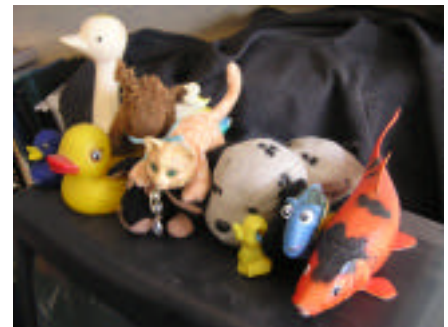
A bicycle wheel, automobile headlight, several 18 foot long 2x4's, raccoons, a leather jacket, a down jacket, a plastic orange, a plastic piece of bacon and the top to the Boating Center flagpole.

A bag of carrots, a duck decoy, 34 tennis balls in one day, a scooter, parts of a park bench, a city trash can concrete base, one full size box spring, a plastic horse shoe, backpacks with homework.

A hose reel box, a cash drawer, parking meter cash boxes, a baseball bat, a doll, numerous birds, eight candle bottles, a bag of ashes, a car seat cover and a baby stroller.

A home made crucifix, a lamp shade shaped vase made from Styrofoam cups, lace and beads that held a long stem rose, many water bottles and a Mahjong game.

A safe (our second), buckets, various size tires, a whole lot of turtles, auto trim, thousands of bottles, homeless cardboard, wrist watches, a cooking pot and dozens of toys.



Messages in a bottle: From Starbucks; a letter to God; a recipe; and a cartoon.

A kite, bicycles, an empty container that formerly held human ashes (no name remaining) an auto starter motor, a Houston Astros plastic plate and lots of homeless trash.

A hockey puck, golf balls, skateboard wheels, Christmas ornaments, various animals, fishing tackle, love letters, a barnacle encrusted camera, a \$1,000 dollar Hell Bank Note and rosary beads.

Books: How To Find Happiness; A Date With Danger (open to "My Shoreline Adventure"); Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life (but the pages were missing); The Wit and Wisdom of Sarah Palin (the pages are blank) and a telephone address book with lots of phone numbers.

Dozens of pens and pencils, an ash tray, purses, wallets, a contact lens holder (with slightly shriveled lenses) and a bottle of water imported all the way from Fiji.

Items formerly found but not common any more: MP3 players, pagers, cassette tape players.

**But sadly, most of what we find is trash. Litterbugs, please stop.**

**CLIMATE CORNER:** Computer models provide insight to our past, present and future climate. There are several climate models in the world, and they are enormous in size, covering many square feet. New versions use daily satellite input and data from thousands of weather stations that cover the entire Earth's surface in about 30 x 60 square mile cells, and 30 vertical, atmospheric layers above each cell. Model simulations often take several days (or even weeks) to run, even with lightning fast computers.

Developed and improved over the last several decades, they can reproduce known past climate changes that have occurred on Earth going back millions of years. They have also been used to predict what our climate is going to be, but only for very large areas. For example, when Mount Pinatubo erupted in the Philippines in 1991, a model predicted that sulfate aerosols injected into the atmosphere would cool the planet. The actual cooling measured was 0.8 degrees C. in 1992, and the model was only off by about 0.1 degree C.

Some projections are downright scary. Remember the 2003 European heat wave that killed 35,000 people? According to some model runs, such a heat wave could occur every other year in the future. The model may be wrong, which would be good for us. But if it is right....

**NEED A TAX BREAK?** Remember, your favorite Lake organization is a 501-C-3 non-profit. As such, donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent that the IRS allows.



To contribute, go to our website:

[www.lakemerrittinstitute.org](http://www.lakemerrittinstitute.org), click on the Paypal button and follow directions there. Or, just send a check to the Institute at the address shown above.

Funds will be used to help the Institute promote, maintain, clean, oxygenate and educate about Lake Merritt.

**BIRD COLUMN:** Thanksgiving Jewel at Lake Merritt.

November's 4th Wednesday was a cut-crystal day, cold but brilliantly clear, and absolutely fluttering and jumping with birds for the regular Golden Gate Audubon walk. The biggest hit was a returning unique: a hybrid drake whose parents were a Hooded Merganser and a Barrow's Goldeneye. I know I've tried to describe him before (this is probably his fifth year here, and he's always top of the list when he shows up), but he's almost indescribable, so this time, I'll send you to pictures: feed 'hybrid goldeneye merganser "Lake Merritt"' to your favorite image search engine, and you should get a lot of lovely views.

It's probable that his daddy was the merganser, because he was clearly raised among goldeneyes - he shows up with a big flock of mixed Barrow's and Common Goldeneyes (black and white ducks you can tell apart because the males have crescent moons or full moons on their cheeks,

respectively), and he eats shellfish like a goldeneye even though he's got a merganser's needly fish-eater's beak. He seems to be getting plenty to eat despite the disadvantage - a beautiful bird, apparently in the peak of health.

The lake had all the regular winter migrants, plus a young Red-tailed Hawk surveying the scene from one of the bare trees on the islands and a male Belted Kingfisher from another. (The hawk was identifiable despite not having a red tail because it wore a brown cummerbund across its mid-section; the kingfisher identifiable as male because it wasn't wearing one.)

Over in the woods towards Children's Fairyland and along Grand Avenue between Bellevue and Perkins, we usually count on a lot of frustrated neck-craning in search of the one tree with The Flock in it - a mixed group of chickadees and titmice, with a few warblers and maybe a woodpecker at this time of year. This time there must have been six great trees and a lot of singletons; more Oak Titmice (all gray with a little crest and a big bright eye) than I've seen in years, and a whole flock of Nuttall's Woodpeckers - well, three males and a female - chasing each other from tree to tree and back and giving splendid views of their black and white ladder backs and the males' shining red caps. We had a Downy Woodpecker too, with a clear white back, and a Brown Creeper (brindled brown and, well, creeping - up an oak tree, in this case), which I don't recall ever seeing in the park. And some Townsend's Warblers with their yellow-gold faces and black burglar's masks, and some Yellow-rumped Warblers (the name says it all), and a singing Bewick's Wren (rusty brown with a bright white eye line), and, and, and.

All told, the group saw 49 species for sure, plus a couple we couldn't quite convince ourselves of. Among a string of great days, it was a truly great day at Lake Merritt, where every day....

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



*Construction to improve bird island habitat may finally begin, and will continue until about February.*

*This edition of "Tidings" was published entirely with private funding donated to the Lake Merritt Institute. To contribute to the Institute, use our website or send a check to 568 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610.*