

The Lake Merritt Institute

A COMMUNITY BASED, NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

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"Tidings" is an editorial newsletter. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the City of Oakland.

RAINS BRING TRASH TO LAKE: Right on schedule, to the extent that it can be scheduled, the welcoming rains have come to Lake Merritt. Unfortunately, they have also brought unwelcome litterbug leavings, as shown below.



*Seven square miles of urbanized area drain directly to Lake Merritt. Trash on the ground = trash in the Lake.**

** Except where captured by the seven large and several small storm drain filters.*

It was a moderate first flush of the new rainy season. Just over an inch of rain fell in three days during mid-October but it was enough to make our daily total of trash bags jump from 2, 5, 1, 3, 1 to 15, 20, 15, 10 and 10. Most of was plastic of course, and much of it was related to things we put into our mouths; water bottles, candy wrappers, cigarette butts, coffee cups, beverage cans etc. Plastic bags were quite common, as were Styrofoam packing peanuts. Weights of trash unloaded at the Davis Street Transfer station were: October 22nd - 640 pounds; October 26th - 880 pounds; October 31st - 500 pounds.

YOU CAN HELP: If the sight of this junk in the water disturbs you, come on out to one of our clean up events, every Tuesday at 10:30 and every Saturday at 10 am. Check out the video “A Guide to Cleaning the Lake” at our website, put on some old clothes and join the dedicated corps of volunteers. Our Tuesday group is very compatible and chats a lot as they clean up. Students and those in need of community service often come on Saturdays. As for the trash, you never know what you will find in Lake Merritt.

For more details, search our website under: About Lake Merritt; Our Watershed; Trash and Bacteria Totals, as well as: How You Can Help; Volunteer Schedule. Have fun; we do.

Mr. P. OLLEN was at it again, coloring the Lake bright yellow and instigating the annual rookie comments of “is it paint?” Well, it does *look* like paint. But it isn’t. Every fall when the first rains of the season wash the watershed, months of accumulated, tiny grains flow down to us. Actually, as it drifts with the currents, it can be rather pretty. In a few weeks they are gone, embedded in sediments that some future geologist may someday examine to determine what kinds of plants were growing here before the great warming.



Pollen washed into the Lake from the first flush

CLIMATE CORNER: As reported by the Environmental Defense Fund: Here are the facts:

- ^ Sandy was the **largest hurricane** ever to have formed in the **Atlantic** basin.
- ^ A nationwide June heat wave broke **3,215 high temperature daily records** across the U.S.
- ^ The Midwest saw its **most extreme drought conditions in 50 years** along with extensive damage from thunderstorms and tornadoes.
- ^ In June, Duluth, Minnesota, suffered devastating flash floods **after century old record-breaking rainfall.**
- ^ Colorado saw the most destructive wildfires in its history — burning more than **244,000 acres**, destroying more than **653 homes** and taking 6 lives this year, costing a total of **\$449.7 million.**



And this is not just a one-year aberration. The world's biggest reinsurance firm, Munich Re, reported that North America is experiencing a nearly FIVE-FOLD increase in extreme weather disasters over the past three decades. And they warn that this trend will continue because of climate change.

These impacts may not strike directly at Lake Merritt, but climate refugees, such as this one shown here, will be on the move everywhere. The International Organization for Migration has estimated that hundreds of millions of people, *perhaps as high as one in twenty on the planet*, could become climate refugees by 2050.

BIRD COLUMN: JUST BIRDIN' IN THE RAIN

Two intrepid birders joined one of the regular leaders for the 4th-Wednesday Golden Gate Audubon walk at the lake on a blustery morning. We stuck to the lakeshore as none of us wanted to stand under trees peering upward while water dripped into our nostrils, but it really was, as they say, wonderful weather for ducks.

We saw most of the winter regulars — Canvasbacks, Ruddy Ducks, and Bufflehead, both kinds of scaup, both kinds of goldeneye, four of the five common grebes, and four of the five expected herons. The floats were full of young Double-crested Cormorants and a few Forster's Terns, and assorted gulls were gliding about — including one that might be a cross between a California Gull (red and black spots on the bill) and a Glaucous-winged Gull (wingtips match the gray back instead of black). A female Belted Kingfisher (blue, with both orange and blue belts) hunched on one of the trees, and another tree sported what looked even in rain-spotted binoculars like a hawk of some kind, but the scope revealed to be a tangle of branches. Only 27 species all told, but only half the distance walked in less than half the time, so it seemed worthwhile.

When the sun tried to peer out and it was *_still_* raining sideways and blowing hard enough to threaten to tip the tripod, we headed home, full of the warm sense of having done something difficult with brave companions and of pleasant recollections of yet another good day at Lake Merritt, where every day....

HOLIDAY GREETINGS TO ALL: The Lake Merritt Institute wishes a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to each and every one of you.

With all the holiday time off, gather the family, come on down to the lagoon, and marvel at the soon to be completed south end (the new 12th Street dam) where new landscaping is now being planted, where tidal waters are flowing and waterfowl are flocking.

And, for those of you needing end of the year tax breaks, remember that donations to the Institute are tax deductible to the fullest extent provided by law.

TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY: Festivities are scheduled for 4 – 8 pm on Friday, December 7th by the Lake Chalet dock when the lights of Lake Merritt's very own Christmas tree will be turned on. We heard there may be Santa Claus, group gondola rides at \$5 each and hot, spiced cider, as well as the great libations and food from the Chalet. The lighted lake animals will be there; how about you? For details and gondola reservations, contact the gondola boutique; Aprilquinn@hotmail.com.

LAKE MERRITT CALENDARS: A few of our new membership calendars, featuring 13 beautiful photos of Lake Merritt and even Sam Merritt's birthday will be for sale at the Gondola boutique. Designed to stand up on your desk, these masterpieces are 8.25 by 4.25 inches in size and include monthly tidbits about the Lake. Featured photos include the Ladies of the Lake (Women's Rowing Club) wildlife, dragon boaters, bandstand fans, urban runoff, our lighted fountain at night and even the Oak Ness Monster!

HOLIDAY CAROLING ON LAKE MERRITT: Bring Your Holiday Party to Lake Merritt!

The City of Oakland Boating Center invites you to join them on the Lake for Holiday Caroling. You enjoy some time in the Holiday room with hot cider and cookies before beginning your voyage around Lake Merritt. Experience a unique view of Oakland as your Water Sleigh glides past the 18th Street Fountain & Holiday Cove before returning to the Boating Center.

Please bring your caroling voice and enjoy our diverse song sheets or bring your own. Tours are \$100 for the whole boat (up to 19 people) or \$6 per person for the 6pm tours. Call 510-238-2196 for reservations.

Tour Dates:

Thursday December 20th from 4pm to 8pm*

Friday December 7th, 14th, 21st from 4pm to 8pm*

Saturday & Sunday December 8th, 9th, 15th, 16th, 22nd, & 23rd from 3pm to 8pm*

*6pm tours are available for individual participants. All other tours are whole boat group charter only. Tour holds 19 people.



The 2012 display will be at the Lake Chalet

At the Lake Merritt Boating Center- the big, blue building inside Lakeside Park at 568 Bellevue Ave, Oakland, CA 94610. Call 510-238-2196 for more information or e-mail to mseccombe@oaklandnet.com

RECENT SCENES FROM THE LAKE



Middle and upper levels of the food chain



*A great idea for the Holidays
Photo by John Kirkmire*

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SANTA TO MOVE FROM NORTH POLE

Remember, you read it here first, because it will become big news as the years go by.

Widespread knowledge that the North Pole is melting has forced Santa Claus to begin planning to move from his ancient Arctic home. In mid summer, half the ice already melts in most years and Soviet tourism ships had to cancel their picnic on the ice at zero degrees north when they found open water surrounded by floating ice. By 2030 it will all be gone, and Santa is not waiting around.

Christmas deliveries will proceed as planned this year, but elves have been instructed to begin establishing new facilities at Barrow, Alaska, where they hoped to be welcomed by native Inupiat and former mayor Edward Itta. Revenue has declined as oil production dramatically dropped off, Itta is said to have said, and Barrow could certainly use the money from Santa's manufacturing, as well as the tourism he would bring.

In the spirit of international cooperation and to make deliveries easier, satellite Christmas facilities may also be established at Thule (Greenland) Resolute (Nunavut, Canada) Tromso (Norway) and Tikso (Russia). Negotiations with those nations will begin soon.

“It is a sad to lose our North Pole home” said Santa. “But this move will insure that the elves, reindeer and I do not drown. We look forward to working with the people of the Arctic in our new home.



Left: Santa at the warming arctic ocean.

Above: Extent of ice in 2012 (green) and former boundary (yellow line).