



The fifteen participants in the walk headed for the Glen Echo arm of the lake almost at once in hopes of seeing the goldeneyes (and to get away from the painful sun reflecting off the main body of the lake), pausing only to enjoy the American White Pelicans, the Greater and Lesser Scaup, the Canvasbacks, and the other regulars between the nature center and the boathouse, and to visit the Green Heron that ducked around the left-hand end of the near island. A Red-shouldered Hawk flew overhead as we left the lake, stirring the pigeons. The trees of Lakeside Park produced the usual-for-the-season round of Yellow-rumped Warblers (aka: Butter-butts. Photo at left), Ruby-crowned Kinglets (crowns entirely hidden under olive-green head feathers), robins, and whatnot.



Heading back from the lake, still a little dizzy from the goldeneye overdose, we encountered the second great sight of the day: in one of the catalpa trees bordering the path where it meets Bellevue, as we paused to look at the rows of holes made by sapsuckers in years past, we saw a new hole in progress - a Red-breasted Sapsucker (a woodpecker with an entirely rust-red head and neck, a white mustache, and black and white sides. Photo at left) was working diligently along the trunk. That's a bird that shows up only once in a year, if we see it at all.

Then, leaving the garden (as always a great place for birders), we ran into a third rarity: another woodpecker landed in a tree in front of us and revealed itself as a Downy - unseen on any trip since 2013, and not in December since 2009 - instead of the much more common Nuttall's we'd been hearing. The expectation was so strong that it took a moment to register the difference, even though the wide white patch on the bird's back was utterly different from the dense black and white ladder we thought we'd find.

Forty-seven species all told, and we enjoyed every one of them (except maybe the Rock Pigeons) amid the bright sunshine of yet another great day at Lake Merritt...

EDITOR'S NOTE: Join Hilary Powers at Lake Merritt for an Audubon Society guided "Bird Walk" on any fourth Wednesday of the month. Meet at the Wildlife Preserve near the large geodesic cage at 9:15 AM. Ms. Powers is a delightful bird spotter and guide.

LOVE YOUR LAKE

EDITOR: Ray Perman - The "Tidings" is published by the Lake Merritt Institute (LMI) for the purpose of publicizing the work of the organization, as well as providing articles of interest regarding the environment, and natural and anthropological history of Lake Merritt, and its surroundings. Comments and contributed articles are welcome. Please feel free to contact me directly: Ray Perman: rgperman@gmail.com

Further, this edition of "Tidings" was published entirely with private funding donated to LMI, and not with funds from the City of Oakland. To contribute to LMI, use PayPal at the LMI website or send a check to: Lake Merritt Institute, 568 Bellevue Ave., Oakland, CA 94610-5026. LMI is a California State non-profit corporation; IRS Code 501(c)(3): EIN 94-3214160.



THE TIDINGS

THE LAKE MERRITT INSTITUTE

A COMMUNITY BASED, NON-PROFIT CORPORATION, ESTABLISHED 1995

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VOLUME XXI

JANUARY 2016

ISSUE I

"The Tidings" is an editorial newsletter. Posted opinions are not necessarily those of the City of Oakland.

FROM THE EDITOR – What is Ahead in 2016? - Ray G. Perman - Welcome to 2016, and to what is already shaping up as a formative year for LMI. Some up-coming highlights:

REVISED GRAPHICS: Good news / bad news: "Clothing makes the man / woman". Still does.

Graphical clarity and continuity makes an organization. Thus, LMI graphics will be "gently" revised.

NEW SLOGAN: **LOVE YOUR LAKE!** Love of place, ownership, short, and easy. Rolls nicely!

WEBSITE REVISIONS: The website will show the updated graphics as well as more information on what to do if you spot an: unusual bird, strange fish, abandoned turtle, threatening oil-spill, bad behavior, etc. Have further suggestions? Please send them in.

"GET OUT OF THE SILO": LMI has a marvelous reputation among area professionals. But still, too many local citizens don't seem to know much about LMI's great work and the important ongoing services it is providing. What to do? In the non-profit world you perform what is known as a series of "Get out of the silo" activities. Keep your eye on LMI!

LMI BULLETIN BOARDS: LMI will be renovating its 4 bulletin boards around the lake as well as installing distribution points for "The Tidings".

DEALING WITH SPILLED OIL: Underway: new tools and new procedures.

REGIONAL HISTORIES: So what did Lake Merritt look like during the first great glacial periods? How tame were the mega fauna of the Pleistocene: giant bison, giant ground sloths, large flat-faced bears, saber tooth tigers, woolly mammoth, etc? Where did woolly mammoths in the East Bay go to meet friends, hang-out, and scratch themselves on rubbing-rocks (recently discovered!)?

CALIFORNIA GRIZZLIES: 7 species for 7 regions!

THE FIRST CALIFORNIA CUISINE: Read the first reviews of Ohlone Huchiun cuisine, written by California's first reviewer; an officer travelling with one of Spain's first missions of discovery.

LOCAL HISTORIES: Where was "Alameda Peninsula"?!?

LOCAL PLACE NAMES: The name "Grizzly Peak" was indeed meant to warn you!

ANIMAL "WHISPERING": The geometry of how lake wildlife define their spaces, body language, and more. In other words, social tips for humans on how to get invited to the best animal parties!

OTHER STORIES / CONTRIBUTIONS: Please feel free to write and submit, or just coach and provide feed-back. Ray Perman rgperman@gmail.com

Yes, it certainly looks like it is going to be a great and exciting year for the LMI, so everyone, please get ready, fasten your seat belts, and always remember to ...

LOVE YOUR LAKE

LAKE MERRITT INSTITUTE RECIEVES MAJOR DONATION – In December the Lake Merritt Institute was the grateful beneficiary of a significant donation from the Anne Thorne Trust. The donation was left by Brian Thorne who was a long-time resident of Oakland, loved Lake Merritt, and spent much time hiking around the lake and enjoying the grounds. He was also aware of the many dedicated LMI volunteers in their yellow safety vests and the significant work they were doing to maintain the natural beauty of the place. This donation comes as very good news, as LMI now needs to replace two aeration fountains and their aging service vehicle. Hopefully this donation will prompt other donations – all much needed. 🍷

WESTERN RED-EARED SLIDERS – Unfortunately, Western Red-eared Sliders are not a spicy, new appetizer item on the menu at the Lake Chalet restaurant, but an invasive turtle species often found in Lake Merritt. The Red-eared Slider (*Chrysemys scripta elegans*) is a member of the Emydidae family, and as it is both a rugged animal and rapid breeder, it has been a favorite of the US pet industry for generations.



The normal range for the Red-eared Slider is in the warmer regions of the United States, from Illinois to the Gulf of Mexico, and the lower East Coast to western Texas. Although it can be found in lakes and rivers, the Red-eared Slider prefers warm water marshes, ponds, and slow-moving waters (75-86°F) that supply food and basking areas.

Sliders are now found in many other regions in California, Oregon, Washington, and many other states, presumably because people release their pet turtles into those areas. In colder regions they survive by hibernating. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW's) *Outdoor California*

magazine reports that non-native pet turtles, especially the Red-eared Slider, are more aggressive and thus a threat to California's only native freshwater turtle, the Western Pond Turtle (*Emys marmorata*).

Red-eared Sliders can live up to 50-70 years, so it is not surprising that many of their owners eventually choose to “liberate themselves” by returning their turtles to the wild. Further, it is also not surprising that many owners would think that Lake Merritt is the perfect place for a turtle to live out its golden years. However, sadly, “Lake” Merritt is of course “Estuary” Merritt, with cold, brackish water, almost no places to pull-out to warm in the sun, and surrounded by steep walls at the lake's edge that block escape. Thus the turtle “retirement” is really a very cruel form of slow death.

Volunteers of the Lake Merritt Institute are instructed to capture and remove all turtles from the lake. Sadly, these turtles are quite often found with open wounds, lesions, in varying states of stupor, or near death. Removed turtles are taken to a turtle rescue center in Castro Valley:

TURTLE AND TORTOISE RESCUE CENTER; Operated by: Ginger and Gary Wildfong
20038 Butterfield Dr., Castro Valley, CA 94546; (510) 886-2946
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-qTsqOQTKs>

So help “LOVE YOUR LAKE”, by “SAVING THE TURTLES”! Should you ever witness a person approaching Lake Merritt with the intent of releasing a turtle, remind them that the lake is simply too cold and too salty for the turtle to survive. Hopefully the owner will consider other options, such as delivering the turtle to the rescue center listed above. And thanks from the folks at LMI! 🍷

CLIMATE CORNER: An Open Letter to Donald Trump, Ben Carson, Ted Cruz, Bob Inhofe et.al.

Dear Sirs,

The Paris Climate Conference is over. More than 190 nations, including Venezuela, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, came together to agree that climate change is real and dangerous, and to put forth their plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. When has an agreement like this ever happened before? Although many details are yet to be worked out, the world is now united on the scientific reality that this is the most serious challenge our civilization has ever faced.

Meanwhile, back in the United States, many of you still cling to the preposterous notion that climate change is not manmade, and we cannot do anything about it. Nothing could be further from the truth.



Al Gore greets Citizens' Climate Lobby leader Peter Joseph at the Paris Climate Conference

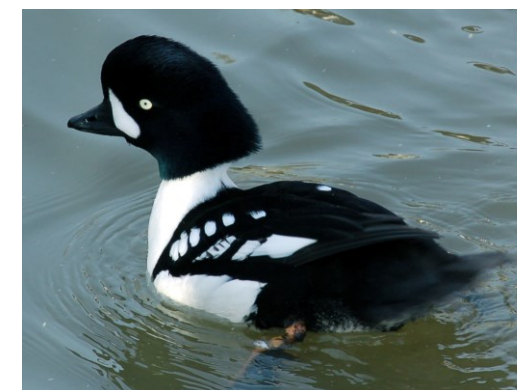
This is not written to cast disrespect on our political leaders who are climate deniers, because your public pronouncements are typically geared toward what you think your constituents want to hear, rather than what you may privately believe. It is written in the hope that you will lead, rather than be led by those that would sacrifice our children's future for the sake of short term gain or because they fear the expansion of government programs. It is written in the hope that you will realize that we are on the brink of both climate tipping points beyond which we may not recover, and a global movement that will transition us to clean energy, while leaving most fossil fuels in the ground, and avoiding the worst of what will come if we continue on the “business as usual” path.

Your efforts to forestall an American response to climate disruption will fail. Not only the other nations of the world are working against you, but so are hundreds of cities, fortune 500 businesses, billions of world citizens, scientists, clergy, and military experts. A wise man recently said there are only two groups of people on the planet who do not understand climate science; primitive cultures far from civilization and (some) members of Congress. So please, admit that you know we need a national policy to slow climate change, and join us.

Sincerely,

LMI 🍷

BIRD COLUMN: Gift of Birds at Lake Merritt – By Hilary Powers - The Glen Echo arm of the lake behind Children's Fairyland was full of goldeneyes in December - a couple of dozen; more than I'd ever seen together (except for the Sunday before the 4th-Wednesday walk, when the Christmas Bird Count crew



found twice as many in the same spot). Not just Common Goldeneyes, either, but the much rarer Barrow's Goldeneyes as well (photo at left), distinguished by crescent-moon face marks and larger black areas on their wings. The black and white drakes were accompanied by their brown and gray ducks, recognizable by black bills with orange tips for the Common and orange bills with black tips for the Barrow's.

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