



# ***THE TIDINGS***

## **THE LAKE MERRITT INSTITUTE**

*A COMMUNITY BASED, NON-PROFIT CORPORATION, ESTABLISHED 1995*

568 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610-5026; (510) 238-2290; [lmi@netwiz.net](mailto:lmi@netwiz.net); [lakemerrittinstitute.org](http://lakemerrittinstitute.org)

**VOLUME XXI**

**FEBRUARY 2016**

**ISSUE II**

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



**THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY** – January was a rather dynamic month for Lake Merritt. Long awaited rains finally arrived and were, with great relief, significant. By mid-January Oakland had already received 1.8”. The storms that blew through the weekend of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> brought even more heavy rain, washing all of the park’s roads and walkways, making them clean and fresh; and returning the lake’s trees and vegetation back to well moistened health. The grand finale was a glorious rainbow spanning the lake, captured in the wonderful photo above by professional photographer Lee Aurich (“aurich.com”).

Unfortunately, with heavy rains comes storm drain outfall in full furry, carrying heavy loads of accumulated urban trash, leaf matter, and sediments. Lake catch basins were filled to their brims with depressing loads of urban trash and miscellaneous debris. Further, the main catch basin at the Glen Echo Arm (near Harrison and Grand Ave.) failed under strong out-fall currents, allowing massive amounts of debris to flow across the lake’s surface. Heavy loads of suspended sediments and rafts of duck weed (resembling green confetti) added to the effect by bringing lake water clarity down to near zero. In all, quite a bad sight.

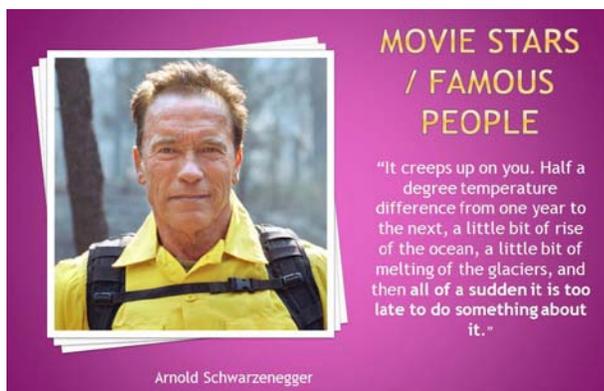
Fortunately, a large group of energetic student and faculty volunteers from St. Paul’s Episcopal School came to the rescue and removed many garbage bags worth of trash. Remarkable was that one item of trash was a bag of pig intestines! Thus, the students were provided with a vivid, late 1800’s Lake Merritt experience.

(Continued next page)

By the last week of January, following repeated sweeps by LMI Tuesday regular volunteers, Saturday visiting volunteers, and independent action by others, most all storm related trash had been collected, and lake cleanliness and normal water clarity fully restored. A big thanks to the students of St. Paul's, and LMI Tuesday and Saturday volunteers - and special thanks to Lee Aurich for sharing his marvelous photo! 📷

### CLIMATE CORNER – POTPOURRI:

1. **Effective, Efficient, and Equitable Carbon Pricing in 2016!!** Mark your Calendars - The Northern California Citizen's Climate Lobby 2016 Regional Conference will take place on Saturday, February 20<sup>th</sup>, from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, and on Sunday, the 21<sup>st</sup>, from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, in Berkeley at the Ed Roberts Campus, 3075 Adeline Street. For details and to register, contact [haroldhedelman@gmail.com](mailto:haroldhedelman@gmail.com).
2. **Support the Crowd Funding Campaign:** Climate disruption can be slowed, and we can adjust, but only if everyone is educated about the magnitude of what we face, and the degree of change that is needed. Is this education happening? *Challenge: Prove it.* To help create future generations that are realistic about climate disruption, go to: [www.indiegogo.com](http://www.indiegogo.com), search for “Establish a Climate Museum” and donate to the cause.
3. **“Stormy – A Novel of Climate Change”:** This novel was published in 2013. Since then, many of the predictions made about our future have begun to come true. To find out what they are and what may be ahead: visit <http://www.thelastcenturybook.com/index.html>. Blending science with prose, this paperback describes what is happening now, and possible events in the lives of your children, grandchildren, and future generations.
4. **Climate Corners:** “Climate Corners” are being established in nearby restaurants, waiting rooms, pubs, and bars, and consist of educational displays programmed onto big screen TVs or digital photo screens. The closest one to Lake Merritt is located in Bacheesos Mediterranean Restaurant ([bacheesos.net](http://bacheesos.net)), at 246 Grand Ave., across from Lakeside Park. Here is an example of what you may see on a visit to a Climate Corner: Famous People (example at right), Deniers and Liars, Reasons for Hope, Tech Solutions, How to Solve the Climate Crisis, as well as 15 climate videos. Take the time to visit and view the presentations.



**BIRD COLUMN: – By Hillary Powers -** Sight of the Day: Juvenile Cooper's Hawk (less than a year old, by the vertical striping on its breast) chasing a squirrel around and around the trunk of a tree. I was going to add that it was surely old enough to know better, but a quick online search reveals that these birds do eat squirrels and not just birds. I'da thought a full-grown fox squirrel was too big, but the hawk didn't agree. Didn't catch the squirrel either, though, at least while we were watching.

(Continued opposite page)

Out on the lake, the regular winter immigrant crew was joined by two splendid ducks that rarely share a habitat. We had both Common and Red-breasted Mergansers, even though the former generally prefer less salt than Lake Merritt has to offer and the latter want more - a male and several females of each. (The females of both species are gray with auburn heads, distinguished from each other by details of conformation; males of the former are mostly bright white with a green head and brilliant red beak, while the latter are gray with reddish breast, white collar, and dark green head with two punk-style crests one above the other.) A dozen American White Pelicans were keeping Hank-the-Rescue-Bird company, and three Graylag Geese provided a fine opportunity to discuss the differences between domestic and wild waterfowl: If the butt floats high above the shoulders, that's a sure sign of old-style genetic manipulation - all that fat was one of the main value-added features the breeders were after.



The resident queenfisher - female Belted Kingfisher, identifiable by the orange cummerbund below the blue breast band - kept flying from island to island, chortling loudly whenever she left a perch and occasionally hovering in midair like a kite while scanning the water for fish. Two Green Herons (grayish with cinnamon breasts and bright yellow feet) played "that's MY rock!" along one of the islands, boosting the chances that we'll see baby Green Herons this year. And two raccoons on another island were joined by a third that swam the gap, possibly reducing the chances that the babies will survive.

We had almost twenty people along for the January 4th-Wednesday Golden Gate Audubon walk, and the lovely day was a rare enough experience this year to be a real pleasure. A total of 47 species and good looks at most of them made this a truly good day among all the truly good days at Lake Merritt....

**OIL SPILL KITS NOW AVAILABLE TO VOLUNTEER CREWS** – Sadly, oil spills in Lake Merritt are still an occasional problem. Oil that reaches storm sewers draining to Lake Merritt may have seeped from old gas station waste-oil tanks or underground fuel-oil tanks (once used to power old-style household furnaces which were in common use in the early 1900's), leaked from motor vehicles, or come from various other urban sources. However, the leadership of LMI suspects that many of the largest spills still come from either unknowing or uncaring vehicle owners simply disposing of used motor oil down local storm drains.





The sight of an oil spill near our bird and marine life, either close to the lake or as an oil slick on the water, is saddening. Now LMI has three new tools for response. 1) For small to medium spills, volunteers will have the use of large “oil only” absorbent pads. The pads may be placed on the ground for spills, or right on the surface of the water directly over oil slicks. Over time, the pads will absorb the oil only. Further, any pads placed on the lake surface will remain floating so as to allow for later retrieval and proper disposal. A package of these pads will be kept in each of the four U-clean-it storage lockers around

the lake. 2) For larger spills, LMI has a reserve of 10-foot long, flexible booms made of the same oil-only absorbent material (white in color). Of course, the booms may be strung with as many in series as needed to contain a spill. These booms will be kept on the ready at the LMI office. 3) For the proactive interception of any spilled oil that may be washed from surrounding storm sewers and into the lake during winter rains, LMI will install “rainy season” booms (dark in color) across all major storm sewer outfalls. Thanks to LMI Lake Merritt is now even better defended. 🌊

**“SLOUGH, CESSPOOL, CITY JEWEL: THE EVOLUTION OF LAKE MERRITT”** – Whether you know nothing or a lot about the early history of City of Oakland, and the beautiful Lake Merritt at its center, you will know more after a visit to the Cameron-Stanford House’s new exhibit, “Slough, Cesspool, City Jewel: The Evolution of Lake Merritt” which opens Sunday, January 31st, and runs until May 29, 2016.



The evolution of Lake Merritt is central to Oakland’s early history. This exhibit, presented as a Victorian picture album, uses archival photos, newspaper clippings and maps to recall people and events from long ago. Interested in flamboyant politicians? Want to hear the story of the “fowl” shot? Wondering what the wealthy and the working class did for fun? Just want to look at the gilded palaces that used to line the lake? Come find the answers in “Slough, Cesspool, City Jewel...” The exhibit is designed and researched by dedicated group of Cameron-Stanford House volunteers.

Cameron-Stanford House (Victorian home on Lake Merritt)  
1418 Lakeside Drive  
Oakland.  
(510) 874-7802.  
“www.cshouse.org”

**Visit any Sunday** for a house and exhibit tour at 1:00, 2:00, or 3:00 PM.  
Admission: Adults: \$5.00  
Seniors: \$4.00  
Children: Free

**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: [“rgperman@gmail.com”](mailto: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 (“lakemerrittinstitute.org”) or send a check to: Lake Merritt Institute, 568 Bellevue Ave., Oakland, CA 94610. LMI is a California State non-profit corporation; IRS Code 501(c)(3): EIN 94-3214160.*