

THE TIDINGS



LAKE MERRITT INSTITUTE

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



SPRING TIME AT THE LAKE – Its spring and the lake is filled with hundreds of thousands of tiny minnows; top-smelt, sticklebacks, gobies, and others; doing their best to feed and grow, without themselves becoming part of the food chain. During high tide they conceal themselves in marine vegetation. During low tide they dwell in the resulting shallows. LMI volunteers moving close to the shallows are often treated to blasts of minnows as they bolt away in fear. Captured at left is the lake on a calm evening with a gondola underway. Photo by Richard Bailey, PhD., Founder. 


MEASURE DD AND THE RECONSTRUCTION ON LAKE MERRITT - In November 2002, over 80% of Oakland voters passed Measure DD, a \$198.25 million bond measure focused on waterfront improvements at Lake Merritt and the Estuary. Funded projects include parks, trails, bridges, a recreation center and an arts center, land acquisition, and creek restoration. These projects are being phased in over a number of years, and many along the eastern and southern shore of the Lake were completed about 2 years ago.

What many citizens took to be a cessation of the project work was really a result of reconstruction moving southward and rather out of view into the Lake Merritt Channel (connects with the Oakland Estuary). For about 2 years cranes and earthmovers have been working to reestablish connection, by foot and boat, between Lake Merritt and the Estuary. Three sub-parts of this project are:

- 1) Install a by-pass channel to allow boats and large fish around the 7th Street Flood Control pump station, and to improve pedestrian/bike access.
- 2) Provide pedestrian and bicycle trails to pass beneath new 10th Street Bridge, smoothly connecting the 12th Street area with the Channel Park to the west.
- 3) Improve the park along the Lake Merritt Channel, particularly the area closer to the Estuary. Goals include improvement of existing deteriorated paths, creating new path connections where possible, restoring wetland areas, and other park improvements.

Follow this link to the Waterfront Action website. <http://www.waterfrontaction.org/dd/>; Others are: [Lake Merritt Master Plan](#); and <http://www.spur.org/news/2015-01-22/lake-merritt-revival-oakland-s-jewel>

(Continued)



CITY OF OAKLAND

Bellevue Avenue and Pathway Improvements Project
Project No. C393811

START DATE: 04/26/2016 ANTICIPATED COMPLETION DATE: 09/30/2016


MORE INFORMATION
Please visit us at:
www.Oaklandnet.com/Measure DD

CITY CONTACT INFO:
Resident Engineer: 510-238-2927
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CONTRACTOR:
Bellevue Engineering Contractors, Inc.
510-595-1905

This Project is brought to you by:

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNITY **OAKLAND PUBLIC WORKS**
www.oaklandpw.com

Oakland Trust for Clean Water and Clean Parks
Measure DD 

Work is now moving to Lakeshore Park with Bellevue Avenue slated to be widened and improved, additional parking will be added adjacent to the boating center, improvements will be made to the entryway to the Garden Center, and adjoining walkways will be renovated. Lake Merritt is slowly becoming a world class park.

LOVE YOUR LAKE 

CLIMATE CORNER – HOW LONG BEFORE SEA LEVEL OVERTOPS LAKE MERRITT? **Richard Bailey, PhD., Founding Board Member** - Thanks to John Englander for showing us a recent study by the U.S. Department of Defense, Army Corps of Engineers, National Oceanographic & Atmospheric Administration, and the U.S. Navy. The report is: “Regional Sea Level Scenarios for Coastal Risk Management” and the key message is:

“The decision-making paradigm must shift from a predict-then-act approach to a scenario-based approach. As a decision-maker, the fallacy and danger of accepting a single answer to the question “What future scenario should I use to plan for sea-level change?” cannot be stressed enough. Those used to making decisions based on a “most likely” future may have trouble relating to this reality; however, a variety of uncertainties, including the uncertainties associated with human behaviors (i.e., emissions futures), limit the predictive capabilities of climate-related sciences. Therefore, although climate change is inevitable and in some instances highly directional, no single answer regarding the magnitude of future change predominates. Traditional “predict then act” approaches are inadequate to meet this challenge.”


For the full report, paste this in your browser: <https://www.serdp-estcp.org/News-and-Events/News-Announcements/Program-News/DoD-Report-on-Regional-Sea-Level-Scenarios>

Regarding climate change and sea level rise, always remember:

- The future is not linear
- Past results are no guarantee of future performance
- Previous estimates have been much too conservative.
- Only REDUCTIONS in atmospheric carbon content, coupled with reduced emissions, will lead to a slowdown of sea level rise.

Until then, plan for a variety of outcomes. 



JAWS !!! - LMI Co-Director Carl Bailey spotted this rather large striped bass entering the southern side of the lake. The ever more frequent presence of large predator fish shows that our lake is indeed becoming healthier. However, several have noticed a drop in gosling and duckling populations. Perhaps this fish should be brought in for interrogation! 



YES WE HAVE BIRDS AT LAKE MERRITT –

Hilary Powers - Best sight of a chilly May morning: the 4th Wednesday Golden Gate Audubon party enjoyed a good view of a newly fledged Western Bluebird - beige and streaky, with just a touch of blue in the primary feathers - assuring us that they've been here all spring, even though they've escaped unseen until now. Later, a glorious adult male, taking the light as though he was wearing blue LEDs instead of feathers, came and perched within a few feet of the group. Image at left.

On the lake, the variety was very low, as expected. All the winter migrants were gone from the water, leaving us with Canada Geese (beginning to stream in for the molt migration) and Mallards. No grebes at all, and almost no coots. We did see both kinds of egrets and some Black-crowned Night-Herons, plus *two* Green Herons. In the paddock, some unusual Rock Pigeons have joined the lake flock, including a brilliant black-and-white and a handsome auburn chestnut with a white face and feathered snowshoe feet. (We look at *all* the birds!)



The island trees were full of Double-crested Cormorants, a few retaining their crests unusually late in the year, several feeding babies in the nests and one industriously clipping branches off a young eucalyptus tree. The babies were hard to spot, being almost as large as their parents and startlingly black. (They're a sort of bronze brown with cream-colored breasts when they fledge, so it was a surprise to see they don't start out with those colors. But a big black bird with its head buried inside the throat of a slightly bigger black bird just has to be a baby!). Image at left.



The Lakeshore Park trees and the garden delivered most of the expected birds - the Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Oak Titmice, American Robins, Bewick's Wrens, and Lesser Goldfinches - plus a pair of Brown-headed Cowbirds (hiss) and a Western Scrub Jay. Both Violet-green and Northern Rough-winged Swallows were zooming over the open areas (images below), and the park was full of Black Phoebes snarfing gnats (Image at left). The phoebes were on the lake, too, skimming over the pond scum with great enthusiasm and perching on floating twigs between expeditions.

Thirty-six species all told, and despite the unbroken gloom of the weather, yet another good day at Lake Merritt, where every single day is a good, good day. 🌍



ALGAE HARVEST BEGINS AT THE LAKE - Algal growth is a result of excess nitrate runoff from landscapes within the Lake Merritt watershed. This excess nitrate winds up in various creeks and eventually drains into the Lake, because the Lake is part of Oakland's flood control system and all the freshwater runoff in the 4,650 acre Lake Merritt watershed drains into it. Although living algae is a harmless, natural phenomenon, the problem is that algae has a relatively short life cycle, and when it dies it sinks to the bottom of the lake where it decays, consuming precious dissolved oxygen. Further, the decaying algae releases more nitrogen which then fertilizes the growth of more algae, plankton, widgeon grass, and wire weed. Thus, algae blooms and the low-oxygen conditions they create are detrimental to other aquatic organisms.



The City of Oakland has contracted with a private company to operate a marine harvester that collects algae and widgeon grass during their growing seasons. The harvesting season is from April through August, and is now in full swing. The harvester is removing dumpster load after dumpster load of algae which are then transported to a green waste facility. Perhaps at sometime in the future a few companies in Oakland's growing beer brewing industry might be able to use some of the removed algae. Care to sample some of our "Lake Merritt Gnarly Hops Pale Algae"? 🍷

HAPPENINGS AROUND THE LAKE:

Cameron-Stanford House: See their website: <http://cshouse.org>

Exhibit: "Slough, Cesspool, City Jewel: The Evolution of Lake Merritt"

Grand Avenue: "First Thursday" May 5th. <http://www.grandavenuefirstthursdays.com/>

Lake Merritt Bird Walks: Join avian expert Hilary Powers at Lake Merritt for Audubon Society guided "Bird Walks" 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. This is a "must do" for every Oaklander.

Oakland Heritage Alliance: See the OHA website to confirm: <http://www.oaklandheritage.org/>

Oakland Museum of California (OMCA): See their website: <http://museumca.org>

Altered State: Marijuana in California: April 16–Sept. 25, 2016.

Bees: Tiny insect; Big Impact: Jan. 31, 2015 through Jan. 15, 2017.

Friday Nights @ OMCA The new season is on:

<http://museumca.org/friday-nights-omca>

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) 📧

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