

THE TIDINGS



LAKE MERRITT INSTITUTE

568 Bellevue Ave., Oakland, CA 94610-5026; (510) 238-2290; lmi@netwiz.net; www.lakemerrittinstitute.org
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HIGH SUMMER AT THE LAKE AND THE LIVIN’ IS EASY – It is high summer at Lake



Merritt and our native wildlife is enjoying the warm weather. There are still a few Mallard hens leading cute clutches of ducklings. Visiting Brown Pelicans seem to be enjoying their time at the lake with our resident birdlife. A visiting group of seven White Pelicans continue to thrill onlookers with their graceful formation flights, as well as with their relaxed paddling and feeding around the lake’s shallows. The lake is surrounded by birds of all feathers preening and splaying out in the warm sun. Institute volunteers often regret having to disturb the birds from their blissful relaxation.



In the water, as expected, the minnow count along the shore has plunged rapidly as the fish either become prey or mature and move to deeper water. Bat Ray sightings are becoming ever more common. Lake Merritt is full of mollusks, crustaceans, and small fish, their preferred prey, which makes the lake a very attractive hunting ground. Further, Striped Bass sightings in the lake continue to increase. All is comforting evidence of continued improvements in lake health.

On land, the volume of visitors picnicking on weekends as well as those hiking around the lake seems to be on the increase. Both comforting signs that measure DD improvements are being well received. Perhaps it is time for the Oakland Parks Department to conduct a count of baby strollers. 🐾

(Photo: Mallard family: Co-Exec. Dir. Carl Bailey)



Bat Rays



Striped Bass



CLIMATE CORNER –If Babe Ruth Had Been a Citizens’ Climate Lobby Member –

Richard Bailey, PhD., Founding Board Member - Most of us know the true story about how Babe Ruth would point his baseball bat toward the right field bleachers, confidently predicting he would hit a home run, and then doing it. But if the Babe had been a Citizens’ Climate Lobby (CCL) member, he would have pointed to center field, not left or right. Why? Because as a CCL climate hero, he would have wanted to appeal to both the left, and the right, to both Republicans and Democrats.

A New Prediction: CCL, whose membership among both progressives and conservatives is increasing at a dramatic rate, recently pointed to America’s congressional center field by promising:

We will pass a carbon fee bill by the end of 2017



Is this brash?

- Not when you consider the growing bipartisan climate coalition in congress
- Not when you consider the Gibson climate change resolution sponsored by a Republican in Congress
- Not when you consider that the California State Assembly passed a resolution urging Congress to enact federal policies to further the effort to combat climate change throughout the United States
- Not when you consider the continuing, irreversible increase in sea level that is threatening cities from Miami to New York and San Francisco to New Orleans
- Not when you consider that CCL has 11,700 members in 350 national and international chapters, and conducted 1,245 lobbying meetings with Congress in 2015.
- Not when you consider the potential for a sea change in Congress after the elections this year.

The list of reasons why a carbon fee bill is all but inevitable could go on and on, but just as the carbon is in the air, the writing is on the wall. The only question is, will it be soon enough? Every year of delay drastically increases the cost to reverse the growth of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. So regardless which side of the field you reside in, join the center, and help CCL pass a carbon fee and dividend. For details, go to: <http://citizensclimatelobby.org/carbon-fee-and-dividend/> 



LAKE MERRITT DISTURBED - While most people enjoy fireworks, our feathered friends at Lake Merritt do not. The photo at left captured what was a rather lengthy, unauthorized display of Fourth of July pyrotechnics. The show was remarkably large and elaborate for a private celebration. Witnesses reported that with every blast one could hear a cacophony of distress birdcalls.

One wonders where local enforcement was hiding!

FIVE-HERON DAY AT LAKE MERRITT – By Hillary Powers - It's the summer doldrums, but



Photo: Snowy Egret; Lee Aurich, aurich.com

all five of the probable herons put in appearances for the 4th-Wednesday birders (who numbered 27, probably a record for the date). A young Great Blue Heron (recognizable by the streaky breast and lack of chest beard) perched between a juvenile Black-crowned Night-Heron and an adult (variously streaky brown and cream and sleek gray, black, and white), and two Great Egrets perched against the sky on top of the near island's tallest tree. Lots of Snowy Egrets (half the size of the Greats, and with black beaks and yellow feet instead of vice versa) prowled about, and one copper-breasted Green Heron (not visibly green) turned up in plain sight after 10 minutes or so of searching the rocks and bushes of the island shores.



On the water, it was almost all Canada Geese and Mallards (the latter still in eclipse plumage, with only the barest glimmer of green visible on their heads), but we did see half a dozen Pied-billed Grebes, plus one lone lorn American Coot. One mama Mallard had eight teacup-sized ducklings, likely no more than a day or two old. Hope she keeps them up in the bird paddock - well away from the big fat raccoon we saw fossicking (of Australian and New Zealand origin meaning sifting through a prospective area) along the edge of an island.



The Double-crested Cormorants (all quite smooth-headed now) seemed about to fledge the current crop of youngsters, who were still being fed on the nests but were showing bronze juvenile plumage over their black down. Probably the second group of the summer, judging by the number of fledged birds on the floats, with a third yet to come - at any rate, we'll probably have cormorants on nests into September, and they can't all be the same cormorants!

Despite all the cormorant activity, we also had three Belted Kingfishers (more than ever before): a female being chased around the islands by two juveniles issuing a near-constant "Feed me! Feed me! Feed me! Feed me!" rattle, like the adults' flight call but higher in pitch. Much speculation as to where they were born; kingfishers want a steep earthen bank to dig into, and the lake has few areas that would qualify. Now that the youngsters can fly, of course, they could follow their ma anywhere, whether she wanted them to or not.



Over in the park, we had fair numbers of Chestnut-backed Chickadees and Oak Titmice, and one ladder-backed Nuttall's Woodpecker. Anna's Hummingbirds were out in force, especially in the garden, where one purple-flowered bush had so many it looked at first glance like a flock of Bushtits in residence.

Thirty-two species in all, on a lovely warm sunny summer day, yet another variety of the best Lake Merritt always has on offer.... 🐦

THANKS TO OUR JULY VOLUNTEERS – Special thanks to the many volunteers who helped during the month of July to keep Lake Merritt healthy and clean:



Big Fish Oakland (computer games) Pandora (internet radio)
Sephora (beauty products/services) Temple Sinai (photo at left)

So what do LMI volunteers pull from the lake? A *short* list: Clothing, including coats, hoodies, socks, shoes, underwear, caps, wool hats, ski boots. Children's toys, including balls large and small, Frisbees, plastic cars, binkies, hair barrettes (well, those aren't toys), dolls, a ceramic piggy bank, rubber toys. Drug paraphernalia (adult volunteers only!) including syringes, tiny plastic bags, rubber gloves, pill bottles. Office supplies and furniture, including chairs, plastic storage bins, pens. Food debris including wrappers of all kinds, Styrofoam containers, plastic bags, straws, cups and cup lids, all sorts of bottles and cans and re-usable water bottles, and bags of actual food remains. Paper goods including napkins, newspaper, books, BART tickets, paper bags, cardboard. Electronics including cell phones, beepers, an ankle monitor (as in someone who has been in prison would have to wear). Blankets, sleeping bags, cushions, pillows, back packs, purses, wallets, DVD's. Ceramic figurines, balloons, ribbons, keys. Construction lumber, traffic cones, cardboard trash bins. ...And cigarette filters and butts galore, and lighters. 🗑️

Cameron-Stanford House: See their website: <http://cshouse.org>
Exhibit: “Slough, Cesspool, City Jewel: The Evolution of Lake Merritt”

Grand Avenue: “First Thursday” August 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 for info. on numerous tours scheduled for August:
<http://www.oaklandheritage.org/events.html>

Oakland Museum of California (OMCA): See their website: <http://museumca.org>
Special exhibit: “Altered State: Marijuana in California”: through September 25, 2016.
New Exhibit: “Oakland, I Want You to Know...”: through October 30, 2016.
Friday Nights @ OMCA Follow the summer season of programs:
<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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