

# THE TIDINGS



**LAKE MERRITT INSTITUTE**

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## **LAKE MERRITT RAVAGED BY PACIFIC SUPER TYPHOON “SONDGA”**

– Well, not quite! However, the mid-October unseasonable dustings of snow received by the Cascade and Sierra-Nevada mountain ranges, and California’s parallel high rainfall of between 2–3” were indeed the last vestiges of Typhoon Sondga. The typhoon’s remnant low-pressure troughs under-cut their way into America’s western shore of warmer air-masses (envision counter-clockwise rotation) triggering heavy precipitation. More dramatic was the elation felt by wildfire crews up and down the state as the rainfall was enough to pretty much douse what was feared to become a record fire season. Of course, for Lake Merritt, the first major rainfall gathers an entire summer’s worth of urban trash that has been collecting in storm drains, and delivers it right into the lake. This is a phenomena referred to by LMI volunteers as “The first

flush!”. No worries. The LMI “Tuesday Morning A-Team” (a fascinating and dedicated group of well-educated retirees) leapt with their usual determination to bring the lake back to the condition we all enjoy. 🌍

**KAISER FOUNDATION HEALTH PLAN LENDS A HAND** – October’s “First flush” of urban trash into the lake was even more than LMI’s “A-Team” of volunteers could handle. Thus, LMI was especially happy to have over 20 executives and staff from the Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, Program Office, Controller’s Department come help out as well. Kaiser group organizer Michelle Davis had seen the



high volume of debris in the lake earlier, including a hot-pink office chair. Kaiser volunteers donned their LMI volunteer vest and went to work, including removal of the offending chair. LMI managers immediately rewarded the Kaiser team by presenting the group with LMI’s coveted “Pink Office Chair Trophy” ...the pink chair itself! 🌍

(Photos: Michelle Davis, Kaiser Foundation)

## **KAPPA ALPHA THETA SORORITY PERFORMS CRITICAL MOP-UP -** Over 20



members of the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority from the University of California, Berkeley, came out to the lake in October to perform “First flush” mop-up. To LMI’s relief and great gratitude the volunteers removed over 15 trash bags of urban debris from the lake. Following the work of the LMI’s “A-Team” and the Kaiser Foundation volunteers, Kappa Alpha Theta’s work really did the trick, with the lake being considered reasonably restored. 🌍

(Photo: Carl Bailey, Co-Executive Director, LMI)

## **CLIMATE CORNER – A SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT POINTS – Editorial by Richard**

**Bailey, PhD., Founder, Board Member** - The following are quotes from the preface and first chapter of an excellent book on climate change. “Overheated - The Human Cost of Climate Change” written by UC Berkeley economist and lawyer, Andrew Guzman, in 2013. It is available from the Oxford University Press and elsewhere. I have listed a number of quotes below that I believe need to be understood and shared in the furtherance of climate education. If we are to truly confront the most important issue our children will face in future decades, these points are of critical significance:

“Unless and until regular people understand the seriousness of the threat, it is unlikely that our politicians will make serious efforts to respond.”

“I have yet to find a field of endeavor that will not be affected. Perhaps that is the most important message of the book.”

“... we should be worried that climate change may kill tens of millions or hundreds of millions, and severely disrupt the lives of perhaps billions.”

“... projections seem to grow more dire with each passing year. We know that the oceans are rising and will continue to do so for at least the next century, causing deadly flooding in many parts of the world.”

“We know that agriculture will be disrupted.”

“A focus on the human cost of climate change is critical, because that is what will persuade people to act.”

“... scientists have reached a broad consensus on climate change that is sufficient to let us make sensible decisions.”

“...the harm from climate change increases at an accelerating rate as temperature changes.”

“... it might happen faster than many people realize.”

(Continued)

(Dr. R. Bailey, Climate Corner, Continued)

If you disagree with any of these words, I challenge you to read Guzman's book. 🌍



## SCAUP AND SCOPE ADVENTURES AT LAKE MERRITT – Hilary Powers –



(Photos: Lesser Scaup drake and duck; Wikipedia)

The October 4<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday, Golden Gate Audubon walkers enjoyed the year's first pair of Lesser Scaup, both the black-headed, gray-backed drake and the white-mustached brown duck swimming in a pose that showed off the divot at the back of the head that distinguishes them from their Greater Scaup cousins. None of the latter appeared, but one was reported from a few days ago: the winter migration has clearly started. It has a long way to go, though, as the Ruddy Ducks (a.k.a. stiff-tails) were the only other traveling ducks seen on the lake

A big school of fish swam among and east of the islands - not that we actually saw fish, except for a few silver glimmers vanishing down the gullets of the dozens of Double-Crested Cormorants (mostly bronze juveniles hanging around after their parents departed for the Bay), American White Pelicans (and a couple of Brown Pelicans, unusually consenting to swim for fish instead of diving through the birdy throngs), Snowy Egrets (more than have gathered together at the lake since the rookery disappeared after 2005), and some Great Egrets as well to show off the size difference. Two Great Blue Herons - an adult and a streaky-breasted juvenile - joined the fun, too. The Black-crowned Night-Herons and the Green Heron stayed well clear of it, possibly to avoid getting stepped on.

Over in Lakeside Park we saw Yellow-rumped Warblers and White-crowned Sparrows in droves, and a late family of Oak Titmice with the juveniles still fluttering their wings and begging their tired parents for lunch. The Chestnut-backed Chickadees were out too, along with a fine male Nuttall's Woodpecker, his head looking redder and his ladder back blacker and whiter than any of his kind as he slipped among the leaves at

(Continued)

H. Powers; Scaup and Scope; Continued)



(Photo: Yellow-rumped Warbler; Wikipedia)



(Photo: Western Bluebird; Wikipedia)

the thin end of an oak branch. And near noon, a dead pine tree visible from the Scent Garden turned into a sort of slide show, with birds we hadn't seen yet chasing one another off the branches: Cedar Waxwings followed by House Finches and a Lesser Goldfinch followed by Western Bluebirds and back again.

That was amazing enough, but the big event of the day featured a featherless biped demonstrating the species at its best. One of the leaders' scopes took a dive into the lake - untouched by hand or foot; a tripod leg collapsed and the thing just toppled over and into shallow water about 6' below the rim. A first-time member of the party slipped off his shoes and socks, rolled up his pants legs, and lowered himself down to the narrow ledge at the foot of the wall, from which (with one foot ankle-deep in the water) he could pick up the scope and pass it dripping to its owner. Then he clambered back out, with some help and a lot of applause from the group. All told, we saw 36 species of birds, but that was the sight that made it an especially good day at Lake Merritt, where every day is a good day (but they don't all need to be as good as that!) . 🐼

## HAPPENINGS AROUND THE LAKE -

**AUDUBON BIRDWALKS AT THE LAKE:** Join bird expert Hilary Powers any fourth Wednesday of the month for a free "Birdwalk" at the lake. Muster at the geodesic bird cage near the Nature Center at 9:30 for what are always fascinating introductions to lake birdlife.

**CAMRON-STANFORD HOUSE:** "Slough, Cesspool, City Jewel" Exhibit. See: <http://www.cshouse.org/>

**OAKLAND HERITAGE ALLIANCE:** Lectures/Tours: See: [www.oaklandheritage.org/](http://www.oaklandheritage.org/)

**OMCA (Oakland Museum of California):** "Bees: Tiny Insect; Big Impact"; through June 2017. See: <http://museumca.org/>

**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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