

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.



“Come on out & celebrate Earth Day with us at Lake Merritt!”

The Lake Merritt Institute will host its annual lake clean-up on Earth Day April 22nd under the direction of Director James Robinson, Clean Lake Supervisor Emmanuel, LMI staff and Volunteers.

9:00 a.m. Sign in at the Lake Merritt Boating Center at 658 Bellevue Ave in Lakeshore Park
Review safety rules.

Enjoy coffee and breakfast snacks.

Join a work part and get the right tools - ****RETURN WHEN YOU'RE DONE!**

9:00-12:00 Pile trash in plastic bags and leave by path so it can be picked up by LMI and counted.

12:00 noon Wrap Up and help LMI put things away.
****RETURN GLOVES, TOOLS AND NETS!**
Send a photo of your group to LMI (lmi@wiznet.net)

And Don't Forget to visit LMI's table at → →



Environmental Fair - Thursday, April 6, 2017
10am-2pm
Frank H. Ogawa Plaza - 14th & Broadway, downtown Oakland

TRASH REMOVED BY LMI VOLUNTEERS: Jan - Mar 2017 = 8,840 pounds!!

HISTORIC 2017 JAN- FEB RAINFALL: 16.48" 1998-2001 JAN-FEB: 16.19" (LMI rain gauge)

INSTITUTE CONTRACT EXTENDED TO 2019 – A big **THANK YOU** to City staff at **Oakland Public Works Department** and to the **Oakland City Council** for extending LMI's Clean Lake Contract through fiscal year 2019. Kudos to our Executive Director, James, for jumping in to complete the documentation and paperwork for the application in the first month of his new job, and to Dr. Bailey and others who helped him through it.

The Clean Lake Contract is for professional services to provide clean-up, maintenance, monitoring, volunteer coordination, technical assistance and public outreach related to Lake Merritt. It will further the city's efforts to increase community involvement, improve the condition of wildlife habitat, and enhance the lake's aesthetic (including olfactory!) value.

Well done! – 

FOLLOWING UP:



Bat Ray CSI: Verdict is not in!

Sean from the Pelagic Shark Research Foundation (PSRF) in Santa Cruz, told us that he mass strandings and die-offs of bat rays have occurred up and down the CA coast since the 1990's. He says they usually happen when sharks are trapped behind closed tide gates in residential embayments or human restricted lagoons like Lake Merritt or Aquatic Park. The sharks weaken and succumb directly or indirectly to bad water quality -- low dissolved oxygen, low or high salinity or toxic runoff. Sean says leopard sharks and bat rays and other species are well known to be carrying toxic levels of pcbs, organochlorines, various pesticides, rodenticides and even trace radioactives from San Francisco Bay.



Photo: iNaturalist

If you see a bat ray in trouble or a dead bat ray, call Pelagic Shark Research Foundation:

831-459-9346 (Office) or 831-600-5215 (Cell); or email psrf@pelagic.org. Sean will try to rescue the ray if it is alive, or send tissue samples to the State Fish & Wildlife fish pathologist. He calls these big rays the "motherships" of the species. Although not endangered, they take a long time to reach maturity and have very low to fertility.

Alert the Rotary Nature Center at 510-238-3738 or the Lake Merritt Institute at 510-239-2290 so that records can be kept and State Fish and Wildlife Department can be notified and proper procedures followed.

Take a photo with your cell and upload to iNaturalist at <http://www.inaturalist.org/>

Your photo will be identified to species and will become a part of a valuable record of Lake Merritt life.

THANKS ARE DUE: The **City of Oakland Public Works Department** responded to our request for tide charts for the weeks in which the rays turned up dead. The tide gates were closed 9/21 days from February 13th – March 5th.

Field DO measurements indicated dissolved oxygen was high and salinity extremely low throughout the water column. We do not know the conditions that occurred earlier in January and February that might have weakened the rays.

Local citizens who were concerned about the bat ray die-off and sought explanations.

CLIMATE CORNER¹ – “OUR CURRENT SOCIALIST ENERGY ECONOMY”

A Guest Editorial by Dr. Richard Bailey

Our energy costs, for transportation, heat, and electricity, are socialized, meaning that they are paid for by society as a whole, as well as by individual users such as you and I. What? Socialized energy – in America? Yes. These costs include:

1. Direct subsidies and tax write-offs for fossil fuel companies (e.g. tax write offs for exploration and production).
2. Health costs associated with pollution from fossil fuels (coronary artery disease, congestive heart failure, asthma, emphysema, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, etc.).
3. Military costs to protect the fossil fuel supply (e.g. wars in oil rich regions and fighting enemies that use oil revenues to force their ideologies on others).

These costs are NOT trivial. Studies of their magnitude have estimated their dollar values as:

1. Direct Subsidies: From U.S. taxpayers (like you and me) - \$20 billion per year, to companies such as Exxon, Peabody Coal etc.
2. Health: In the United States, \$120 billion per year, for medical bills and loss of life, including medical insurance premiums, but not lost worker productivity. Thank goodness the air around Lake Merritt is not as bad as in China, where the air is so polluted that there is a severe risk from just breathing.
3. Military: \$100 billion per year, for protecting shipping lanes only.

Reports says pollution slashes life expectancy in north China by 5.5 years. USA Today, July 9, 2013.

We all subsidize fossil fuels by sacrificing our health.



Additional Socialized Costs: How can you leave out environmental damages, such as oil spills, strip mines, and water pollution? Although hard to quantify, they total at least tens to hundreds of billion dollars per year. If you don't believe it, research the damage from recent natural gas disasters, dam breaks at coal mines, Canadian tar fields, etc. And how about the costs we all pay for imported energy, which are estimated at \$250 billion per year? In addition, the costs of wars to fight terrorists funded by oil revenues, and the damage they have inflicted are hard to even imagine. Finally, the costs of global warming (sea level rise, flooding, heat waves, loss of crops, ocean acidification, etc.) which are just beginning, could easily become higher than all of the above combined.

“No matter how you look at it, the full costs of fossil fuels are not incorporated in their market prices”. The solution to our socialist energy economy is to place an annually rising fee on carbon emissions, levied at the mine, well or port of entry, and to return this money to citizens in the form of monthly dividends. This fee will transfer socialized costs to their source, create a free market environment that favors renewable energy, lower carbon emissions, reduce the impacts of climate change, and stimulate the economy to create jobs. If you agree that a carbon fee and dividend is better than paying the socialized costs of energy, contact your representative in Congress, join a group, and get involved.

¹This article is based on, and includes quotes from: *A Global Warming Primer; Answering Your Questions about The Science, the Consequences, and the Solutions.* 2016. Jeffrey Bennett.

Uncommon Common Birds at Lake Merritt – Hilary Powers –



Standouts at the March 4th-Wednesday Golden Gate Audubon bird walk included a couple of European Starlings in their fine spotted breeding plumage, as well as a Mourning Dove — two species often seen in the Bay Area but very rarely at Lake Merritt. We also saw three California Scrub Jays (new name for the blue-and-beige clown formerly known as the Western Scrub Jay), even though months can go by without a glimpse of even one. We heard House Sparrows for the first time this year, and saw three House Finches (the two males looking uncommonly orange instead of rose red) also for the first time in months. Violet-green Swallows were hawking for insects over the water, and we saw one brown Northern

Rough-winged Swallow near the stretch of embankment where they've nested for the past few years.

On the islands, a Green Heron posed as for a portrait in a densely pink-flowering shrub, and a Great Blue Heron silhouetted itself against the sky. The Double-crested Cormorants — still showing crests — filled the newly bare trees with nests, and this was one of the few days of the year when it was easy to spot the male birds: they're the ones carrying sticks through the air. Normally we can't tell the difference (though they can), but while the nests are under construction it's the males carrying supplies and the females doing the building.

The winter migrants have begun to leave, but we saw a lot of Ruddy Ducks — many living up to their name for a change. (The females stay all brown, but this time of year the males keep their white cheeks and black caps, while their backs become red-headed-human auburn and their beaks turn robin's-egg blue.) A few Common Goldeneyes showed off their full-moon cheek patches, and both Greater and Lesser Scaup were still here in substantial numbers, the males shining black and brindled gray and bright white as they prepare for the flight north.

Hank-the-rescue-pelican was on his own in the bird paddock, gloomily eyeing a smallish Cocker Spaniel that cowered by its person's leg, both perhaps thinking of the possibility of doing lunch. Hank has his breeding bump prominent on his bill, but no one to show off for — the last of his companions left in November or early December, and he probably won't see another of his kind till May or even June: they're all down in San Diego and environs raising the next crop of chicks in a crowded nest neighborhood, and none of them have time for our solitary.

Best land sighting: Along the path to Children's Fairyland, two Oak Titmice dashed back and forth from branch to branch and tree to tree, the one in the lead never getting too far ahead, and the one in the rear hopefully carrying a big black bug. Ah, love...

All told, we encountered 41 species — including a few of the big Western Grebes so notably missing earlier in the season — and a good deal of sunshine and no rain whatsoever despite the morning's storm, and it was yet another genuinely good day at Lake Merritt. 🐦

HAPPENINGS AROUND THE LAKE -

ROTARY NATURE CENTER: The Nature Center was closed briefly in March for spring cleaning. It's exhibits and naturalist programs will be available soon.

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.

MARCH FOR SCIENCE IN SAN FRANCISCO: SAT APRIL 22nd
A Rally with invited speakers will start the event at **11:00AM** in **Justin Herman Plaza**. After the rally at approximately **12:30PM**, we will march down **Market Street to Civic Center Plaza**, ending with a Fair to celebrate science.



PEOPLE'S CLIMATE MOBILIZATION IN OAKLAND: SAT APRIL 29th
LAKE MERRITT AMPHITHEATRE, NOON to 5 PM.
"Sister march" to Washington D.C. PEOPLE'S CLIMATE MOBILIZATION MARCH



SALUTE TO MARCH VOLUNTEERS!




The Weed Warriors, founded by Jennie Gerard and Joel Peter, hold monthly work days to take care of shoreline landscaping. In this project that took several months, they

- removed the *Rosa californica* and weed barrier that had gotten clogged by dirt.
- prepared the soil for planting ornamentals that can tolerate the brackish spray
- planted 50 or more salvia and lamonda plants

Contact: info@lakemerrittweedwarriors.org.



EDITOR: Katie Noonan - "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: "ktnoon@gmail.com" 

Further, this edition of "The 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 94610-5026. LMI is a California State non-profit corporation; IRS Code 501(c)(3); EIN 94-3214160