

THE TIDINGS



LAKE MERRITT INSTITUTE

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“**Atmospheric river**” and “**polar vortex**” became common conversational terms in Oakland this winter as we experienced a very cold and wet season due to both phenomena (CA Weather Blog). 2018 was a year of extreme weather-related events in California, a phenomenon predicted by climate models as a result of rising carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

The immediate impact on Lake Merritt has been the arrival of thousands of pounds of trash via storm drains primarily from humans. The Lake Merritt Institute (LMI) and citizen volunteers have worked overtime to keep trash from inundating the Wildlife Refuge and out of San Francisco Bay (see before and after clean-up photos taken at Glen Echo Creek inlet at right). The swift water laden with solid objects put the lake’s protective infrastructure to the test. During heavy flows trash overtopped the petro-barriers at the Embarcadero and at Glen Echo, but the re-installed connectors to the seawall held tight, unlike last winter. Public Works plans to install a new boom at this critical inlet this spring (thank you!). One bright note is that eScooter dumping is down dramatically, thanks to City and scooter company cooperation, and the leadership of the LMI’s Executive Director, James Robinson. The Alameda County Stormwater Division is auditing the kinds of trash passing through Glen Echo in a county-wide survey aimed at reducing it.



You can make a difference every day by joining the Lake Merritt Institute, making a donation, or volunteering to clean the lake. Go to our website at lakemerrittinstitute.org. **LOVE YOUR LAKE!** 

An Elegant Visitor! A Black-necked Stilt has been feeding at the Tidal Marsh on the Lake Merritt Channel since January, reports Friends of Sausal Creek’s Mark Rauzon. “Stilts are common in Alameda and at Arrowhead Marsh, but now there’s a new place for them, also spotted sandpipers.” The tidal marsh was restored by the City’s Measure DD program, with the help of local volunteers including high school students. Waste and debris from nearby homeless encampments stopped work in 2016 and will require Measure DD remediation in 2018-2019. LMI Board member, John Bowers notes, “Shorebird use/occupation of the shoreline of LM is a big deal, since it gives LM an attribute (shorebird habitat) that is has longed lacked.”



LMI in February: 2180 lbs. of trash were removed from the lake in February and 6,340 lbs. so far in 2019. 5.13" inches rain was recorded by LMI rain gauge. LMI Director James Robinson and Staff hosted 134 volunteers, made 2 educational presentations and attended 2 meetings.

The Rotary Nature Center Re-Opens!

Congratulations to Oakland Parks, Recreation, & Youth Development and the CORE Team! Please Google lakemerritt.org for not-to-be-missed photo-coverage by John Kirkmire of the gala re-opening event. See KTOP video coverage [HERE](#). The new full-time Naturalist, Angelina Manno, will begin her position in mid-March. Until then, the public should consult lakemerritt.org for operating hours.

And the bees,.... hands down, the demonstration honey-bee hive maintained by the Alameda County Beekeepers Association has been the most popular exhibit at the Rotary Nature Center since the 1950's. At the Re-Opening, Mayor Libby Schaaf recalled her delight as a child in finding the queen bee with the help of her mom and on-site naturalists. Honeybees delivered a message of social harmony and efficiency; they were the super-organism (E.O.Wilson) with the only known (then) symbolic communication in a nonhuman species (von Frisch), an inspiration from nature!

In 1975, when the mayor may have visited as a child, world human population was 4 billion and carbon dioxide in the air about 330 parts per million (ppm). Rachel Carson had already published her *Silent Spring*, and Roger Revelle and Hans Seuss (Scripps Institute of Oceanography) had shown that the Earth's atmosphere was filling with carbon dioxide, but nobody was paying much attention.

When the bees return to the Rotary Nature Center in a few weeks, it will be a different story. Honeybees and other native and non-native species that pollinate food crops are increasingly threatened by habitat loss and pesticides. World population will be 7.7 billion. Atmospheric carbon dioxide will reach an average 407 ppm this year (410 ppm measured by NOAA on the day of the RNC re-opening). There is growing scientific and political recognition that human activities are driving global warming.

We face an uncertain future with food insecurity and climate change. There's a lot to learn-- lot for our children to learn and deal with. Welcome back, bees! Here's to another 65 years of learning from you!

THANK YOU TO OUR FEBRUARY VOLUNTEERS!

Volunteer groups in February included Park Day Middle School, Oakland Tech, Piedmont High, Bird Scooter company employees, Laney College students, Park Day School students, Our U-Clean-It self-organized teams, and the LMI A-TEAM regulars. We appreciate your efforts and community spirit. Great Job! See photos in the email edition of *The Tidings*.



The Mayor speaks at the Re-Opening Ceremony;



Retired Naturalist Stephanie Benavidez receives a plaque for over thirty years of service at the Nature Center by OPR&YD Director Nicholas Williams.



Mutual Air Bell: Skyline High school student Brandon Gutierrez engages public in discussion of greenhouse gases and air pollution at the Grand Re-Opening on February 16th.

Lovely Weather for Ducks at Lake Merritt - by Hilary Powers – Golden Gate Audubon

Nine intrepid birders dared the trailing edge of the atmospheric river to visit the lake for the February 4th-Wednesday Golden Gate Audubon walk. The forecast 35% chance of showers was dead on: as memory pictures the trip, a third of the time it was raining, a third gray and windy but dry, and the rest sunny and pleasant... in roughly ten-minute segments all morning. Invigorating.

The ducks, of course, didn't care. Black and white Bufflehead drakes pursued the opening rounds of courtship, head-dancing and displaying for their tiny brown hens (which studiously ignored them while staying close by), and a party of five Common Mergansers – three russet-topped gray hens and two brilliant white and midnight-green drakes – swam lazily in front of the islands. The first of the season's would-be Double-crested Cormorant papas had staked out spots in the bare trees, either standing tall beside old nests or crouching head-and-tail-up in them in hopes that a passing female would reward their deftness in grabbing the coveted top spots and come settle down with them. Some were showing well-developed crests, but others were still smooth-headed, proving that fine feathers aren't all that makes a fine bird.

Bird of the day, not seen here before: a Common Yellowthroat – a yellow and gray wood-warbler about half the size of a robin, with a white-topped black bandit's mask from ear to ear – was fossicking along the rocks at the edge of the near island, where the Green Herons often hang out (but weren't at the moment). He stayed in the open long enough for really good looks, too. (He? Musta-been; the females lack the mask.)



Common Yellow Throat; Photo by Dan Pancamo, Wikipedia

A Spotted Sandpiper would have given the yellowthroat a run for the honors – we've seen them a few times over the years, though not since 2015 – but it was moving too fast. It flew up the lake and away so quickly (unmistakable but indescribable) that no one saw it who wasn't looking exactly at its path as it came through.

We also saw most of the usual suspects for the season – both species of scaup and four kinds of grebes, as well as Common Goldeneyes, Canvasbacks, and crowds of (not-ruddy) Ruddy Ducks. In addition, one Greater White-fronted Goose (an orange-legged brown bird; the white it's named for being a patch like a moustache over the orange bill) was hanging with a Canada Goose near El Embarcadero, and a perfect Glaucous-winged Gull was swimming near the globe cage. (Why "perfect"? Gulls mix so readily that it sometimes seems hard to find one that really looks like pictures of the species, but this guy – or gal – was a clear even light gray from shoulders to wing tips, except for the proper white spots between the tips of the primaries.)

In the garden, the Oak Titmice were out in force, especially near the concrete platform beside the Monkey-Puzzle tree, and we found two Fox Sparrows and a Hermit Thrush near the bonsai garden, where we also had beautiful views of a black-masked Townsend's Warbler – and we were saved from "warbler-neck" because the top of the tree he was working in (warblers tend to prefer tree tops) was only about eye level instead of the usual sky-scraping reach.

All told we encountered 45 species (one up on last year) and came away with a general sense of accomplishment sparked by the intermittently difficult conditions: yet another good day in Lake Merritt's unending stream....

*****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 a.m. for what are always fascinating introductions to lake birdlife.***

SHOULD A CARBON TAX BE PART OF THE GREEN NEW DEAL?

A Guest Editorial by Dr. Richard Bailey

By now you have probably heard a lot about the Green New Deal that would create new well-paying jobs, slow climate change, enhance education and health, and improve the imbalance in income equality. Great. We need all of these. But, how to do it has yet to be decided. How will we pay for it? What policies will make it happen? How fast must it happen? Shown below is a solution that would fill in those blanks. But first, a stark reminder of what is around the corner if we do not act now. If success seems prohibitively expensive, think of the costs of failure, as described by David Wallace-Wells in a Guardian article: [The Devastation of Human Life is in View](#) which is an edited extract from “The Uninhabitable Earth: A Story Of The Future.” To order a copy for £15, go to guardianbookshop.com or call 0330 333 6846.

“At 2C higher, the ice sheets will begin their collapse, bringing, over centuries, 50 metres of sea-level rise. An additional 400 million people will suffer from water scarcity, major cities in the equatorial band of the planet will become unlivable, and even in the northern latitudes heatwaves will kill thousands each summer. There would be 32 times as many extreme heatwaves in India, and each would last five times as long, exposing 93 times more people. This is our best-case scenario. At 3C, southern Europe would be in permanent drought, and the average drought in Central America would last 19 months longer. In northern Africa, the figure is 60 months longer: five years. At 4C, there would be 8m more cases of dengue fever each year in Latin America alone and close to annual global food crises. Damages from river flooding would grow thirtyfold in Bangladesh, twentyfold in India, and as much as sixtyfold in the UK. Globally, damages from climate-driven natural disasters could pass \$600tn – more than twice the wealth that exists in the world today. Conflict and warfare could double.”

Given those frightening predictions (*which are based on current trends*) the following Columbia University study [The Energy, Economic, and Emissions Impacts of a Federal US Carbon Tax](#) is a preferable choice:

- Apply a carbon tax to all CO₂ emissions from the combustion or consumption of fossil fuels and methane emissions from fossil fuel production (about 80 percent of US greenhouse gas emissions).
- The tax is applied at the point of production or importation (i.e., “upstream”), not at the cash register.
- The policy includes a border adjustment on imports and exports of energy-intensive products to shield domestic manufacturers from international competitors that do not face a similar policy.

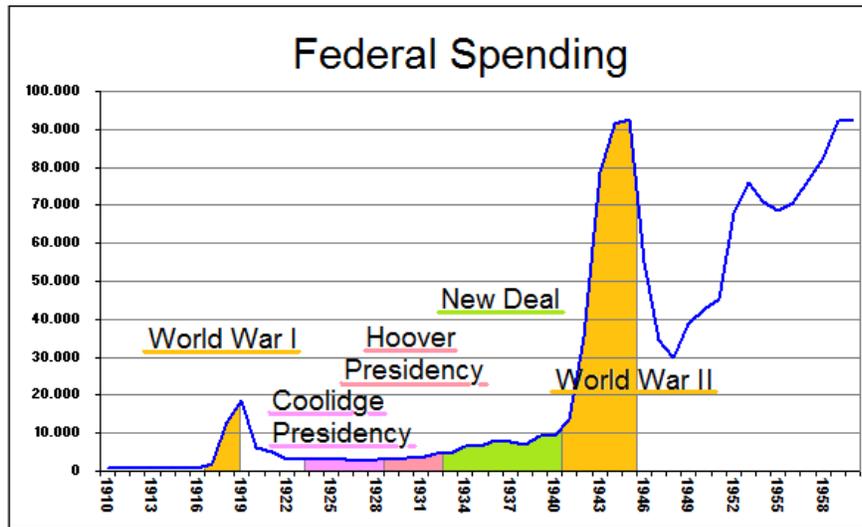
This Columbia study analyzed three tax scenarios (\$14, \$50 and \$73 per ton of carbon emissions) starting in 2020, but for the sake of brevity, only the \$14 scenario (rising about 3 percent annually) is shown here.

The result? By 2030, gasoline prices (currently at about \$3.00 per gallon) would be \$3.20. Natural gas costs (currently at \$7.60 per MMBtu – a unit to measure gas volume) would be \$8.90. Electricity prices (currently at about 10.6 cents per kWh) would be 11.40 cents.

The bottom line: Your energy bill would hardly change from what it is now, and generally within the price range of the last ten years. What about reduction in carbon emissions? Use of coal for electricity production would decline from 33 to 3 percent due to the tax on coal. What about jobs? They are in renewable energy, whose use would increase from 13 to 39 percent because renewables have no carbon emissions, and would not pay the tax.

As the carbon tax increased annually, total decarbonization would come into view. If that sounds impossible, think of the Apollo moon shot or the mobilization of World War II.

As shown here, war expenditures greatly exceeded the original New Deal. If we can afford a war, we can afford a New Green Deal, and it does not have to bankrupt us. We just need to place a small, annually increasing price on carbon pollution. Market and economic forces will do the rest, making renewable energy cheaper than fossil fuels, and creating new, well-paying jobs.



RETURNING A CARBON TAX TO THE PEOPLE ENHANCES THE NEW GREEN DEAL

To enhance social / environmental justice, funds from the carbon price should be given back to every taxpayer in a highly progressive and visible way. The money should be given in monthly checks from the Treasury Department to everyone in equal shares (children to receive half shares). The \$50/ton of carbon emission tax increasing at 2 percent a year would yield about \$1,000 per year to each individual in rebates by 2030.

Now that is a New Green Deal. If you agree, let your member of Congress know that you support H.R. 763, the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act of 2019, which would create a carbon pollution tax of \$15/ton, increase it annually, and help make the New Green Deal a reality.

Request for Support: Blanket Drive for Lake Merritt Community Cabins

Blanket Drive

Help Support our Neighbors in the Lake Merritt Community Cabins!

Drop Off: Lakeshore Ave. Baptist Church
3534 Lakeshore Ave. 94610
(When closed, drop off at the office next door)
For questions call: 510-238-7575; More Locations TBA

• Blankets	• Brooms,	• Regular
• Pillows	• Dust Pans,	Underwear
• Hygiene Kits	• Cleaning	• Thermal
• Handwarmers	Detergent	Underwear

From Justin Lee, Council Aide to Councilmember Lynette McElhaney

With the recent abatements in Lakeside Park near completion, our office is looking to collaborate with different groups to solicit donations to support our newly sheltered neighbors at the Lake Merritt Community Cabins! We are hoping to distribute these materials by the end of March.

THANK YOU TO OUR FEBRUARY VOLUNTEERS! We appreciate your efforts and community spirit. Great Job!

Laney College Students and Park Day School



Citizen Monitoring for bacteria (*E. coli*) in the surface waters of the lake has been completed for the wet season 2019. Results so far have been shared with the City Watershed and Stormwater Departments. Thank you to students and teachers from St. Paul Episcopal Middle School and to adult volunteers for help with sampling.



Teacher Anthony Bald and his 6th grade class collect a water sample.

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Grand Re-Opening of the Rotary Nature Center

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[lakemerritt.org](https://www.lakemerritt.org) <https://www.lakemerritt.org/rotary-nc.html>

Bees

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Forgotten Pollinators

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