It’s EARTH Month at Lake Merritt!

For almost fifty years now, April is the month when we celebrate the beauty of the natural world and pledge support to sustainable living on our increasingly populated and human-impacted planet. The Lake Merritt Institute is doing its part.

Photo at left: By John McConnell (flag designer) NASA: The Earth seen from Apollo 17, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/

The Lake Merritt Institute will host its annual lake clean-up on EARTH DAY April 20th under the direction of Director James Robinson, LMI staff and Volunteers. Note rallying place and times. Dress to work and have fun.

- 9:00 a.m. Sign in at the Lake Merritt Boating Center at 568 Bellevue Ave in Lakeshore Park
- 9:00-12:00 Pile trash in plastic bags provided so it can be counted!
- 12:00 noon Wrap Up and help LMI put things away.
- **RETURN GLOVES, TOOLS AND NETS!** Send a clearly labeled photo of your group to The Tidings Editor (ktnoon@aol.com)

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!

The California Academy of Sciences’ City Nature Challenge BioBlitz

-Saturday April 27*, 10:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Rotary Nature Center at 600 Bellevue Ave. LakesidePark

You are invited to join the Lake Merritt BioBlitz, an all-day citizen science smorgasbord that aims to find as many species of living things as possible in and near Lake Merritt. Photos of organisms found will be uploaded to the iNaturalist website. The newly reopened Rotary Nature Center will be the home base and wrap-up center for the day.

This is an international competition among cities. The S.F. Bay Area won in 2018 with help from Lake Merritt citizen scientists like you! Come learn about the thousands of organisms that call this place home.


LMI in March: 2,280 lbs. of trash were removed from the lake in March and 8,620 lbs. so far in 2019. 3.52” inches rain was recorded by LMI rain gauge. LMI Director James Robinson and Staff hosted 171 volunteers, made 3 educational presentations and attended 1 meeting.
THANK YOU TO OUR MARCH VOLUNTEERS!

Volunteer groups in March included Piedmont Middle School, Leadership Public School, Montclair Elementary School, St. Paul’s Episcopal Middle School, 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 at lakemerritt.org.

EPA Monitoring of *E. coli* Results for Wet Season 2019 Are In

Here are the final results for the 2019 EPA wet season monitoring for *E. coli*. A quick compare with wet season 2018 suggests levels are lower in 2019 in the places flagged for high *E. coli* levels last year. The improvement might be related to work done by the City Watershed Division, but a lot of variables can affect observed results. The monitoring project samples surface water from 10 different spots around the lake. Outcomes are affected by tides, weather and other local conditions. The results are similar to findings in previous studies going back to the early 2000’s.

The samples were processed by the EPA Region 9 Lab in Richmond. Thank you to the students and adult volunteers who participated in the project including Miriam Valesco of LMI, students and teachers of St. Paul’s Episcopal Middle School, and Rose Foundation New Voices Are Rising interns.

![Sampling surface water](image)

### Most Probable Number of *E. coli* /100mL in WET Seasons in 2018 and 2019

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<th>Location</th>
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MPN *E. coli*/100mL

- **WET Season 2018**
- **Wet Season 2019**
- **Standard Contact Recreation**
- **Standard Noncontact Recreation**
e-Scooter Update

In past months progress has been made in reducing e-Scooter dumping in the lake. LMI Executive director James Robinson has attended multiple meetings sponsored by the City with the e-Scooter companies. He has initiated productive conversations with the Bird and Lime Companies, brainstorming ways to discourage their customers from abandoning their scooters in the lake. Measures have included no parking zones near the shoreline and stepped retrieval of scooters by company employees (see The Tidings Nov 2018).

Bird e-Scooters made a generous donation to LMI to help in our efforts to keep Lake Merritt clean. They also send employees to work alongside A Team volunteers to retrieve their scooters. Their efforts and assistance are greatly appreciated.

As the weather warms up, however, the number of e-Scooters found in Lake Merritt has increased. Clean Lake Program workers will need to resume counting the numbers retrieved each month (60 scooters were pulled out in October). There are now three e-Scooter companies operating in Oakland (Bird, Lime and, recently, Spin). More scooters are turning up in the water. LMI looks forward to including all of the scooter companies in continuing discussions of preventative measures that need to be taken.

Fining companies for the bad behavior of their customers may seem logical, but is legally problematic, according to one LMI Board member. “It would be difficult to hold scooter companies directly liable for improper use and disposal of scooters by persons who violate the company's requirements for proper use and handling of the scooters. A better approach would be to incorporate responsibility for the end use/abuse of scooters in City-enacted legislation licensing the business of renting scooters. These licenses could be written in such a manner as to hold the scooter companies responsible for the ultimate improper use/disposal of the company's product. The remedy for violation of such a license requirement would be license revocation.”

A recent study delved into the economics of the rapidly expanding e-Scooter industry. The analysis of scooter businesses in St. Louis MO and Louisville KY suggested that e-Scooters, which cost approximately $551/unit, do not last long enough or make enough trips in their lifespans to break even on investment. Certainly the loss due to dumping in the lake would make things worse. It remains to be seen whether Oakland’s e-Scooters, with their promise of equitable, affordable transportation for all will be sustainable financially and ecologically.

OUSD School Board Passes Climate Literacy Resolution

On Wednesday February 14th, the Oakland Unified School District’s Board of Education passed two environmental education policies: 1) a commitment to developing climate literacy across grades and subjects, and 2) plans to partner with The Trust For Public Land, Green Schoolyards America and the Sierra Club to create greener interactive learning environments in Oakland schools. The Living Schoolyards Initiative brings together teachers, staff, parents, students and the community in designing the environment they’d like to see.

“These schoolyard transformations have been successful in attracting funding from State and philanthropic grants. The Trust for Public Land has recently secured close to $2.3 million dollars in state grants and additional funding in private philanthropy from the Hellman Foundation and Kaiser Permanente Northern California,” the Board noted.
What?! Where Did the Lake Merritt Cormorants Go? - by Hilary Powers – Golden Gate Audubon Society

As people gathered for the March 4th-Wednesday Golden Gate Audubon walk, that was the question everyone raised. The trees had fewer nests than usual for this time of year, and all of them – no, all but one – looked empty. But then a cormorant flew in and disappeared, and the bird that had been standing up vanished too without flying away. That made it seem likely that many of the nests were occupied by birds hunkered down against the chilly wind, protecting eggs that should be nearly ready to hatch. No way to tell for sure, though activity did pick up during a break in the weather around 11 am and we were even treated to a mating session in one of the nests. None of which explains why the nest count is down, of course – perhaps the rookery carefully constructed under the new Bay Bridge is finally luring the birds away.

The weather was the worst for the walk in several years, with steady rain interspersed with lighter periods and one burst of sun, but more often with near-tropical cells. Staff at the Rotary Nature Center let the group shelter inside for the heaviest downpour, but people began to drift away. When we finally called it a bit after 11, the initial group of 20 daring birders had dwindled to 5 truly intrepid souls, plus the leaders (who dithered back and forth about crossing the lawn to the garden before deciding that the slog had been long enough already).

No one regretted attending, however. Jewels included a pair of Oak Titmice outside the nature center – few creatures climb as high on the cuteness meter as a titmouse carrying a fluffy white feather a third his (her?) own size – and several Eared Grebes and Ruddy Ducks in their blazingly lovely party clothes. The flock of Muscovy Ducks in the bird paddock seemed larger than ever, with at least two individuals (a tan and a gray) never seen before. (Another question: Where can these weird domestic ducks – recognizable by their near-goose size and various amounts of knurled red tissue around the eyes and bill – be coming from?)

Though we didn’t get into the garden, the area near the playground provided most of the expected birds: Dark-eyed Juncos, White-crowned, Golden-crowned, and Song Sparrows, and American Robins were working the duff under the redwoods, and Black Phoebes chased flies from the railings. A flock of Chestnut-backed Chickadees swarmed into one of the trees near the path, just after a query to the group indicated that no one had seen any with the titmice observed earlier. (Chickadees and titmice often hang out together, so it was worth asking.)

All told, we saw 32 species – only 8 down from last year, despite the weather and the shortened walk – so, in its own peculiarly adventurous fashion, it was yet another good day at Lake Merritt.

***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.***

Note: Spring 2019 has seemed unusually cold and wet! However, Bay Nature reporter Daniel Alrick explains in his article, “Was That A Cold Winter? Not Entirely,” that rainfall was actually less than in 2017, and that the 2018-2019 continues the warming trend in our climate overall.
CLIMATE CORNER: THE NEXT SOCIAL REVOLUTION - A Guest Editorial by Dr. Richard Bailey

Every so many years, much of the world experiences a social revolution.

A little over a century ago, it was the Gay Nineties, part of the Progressive Era, which sought to eliminate problems caused by industrialization, urbanization, immigration, and political corruption, and which gave us gaslights, early bicycles and cars, and the beginning of the women’s right to vote movement.

In the Roaring Twenties, our forefathers, and foremothers, saw the large-scale development and use of automobiles, telephones, motion pictures, radio, and electrical appliances. Aviation became a business. Nations saw rapid industrial and economic growth, accelerated consumer demand, and significant changes in lifestyle and culture, including Jazz.

Many of us remember the Sixties and early Seventies, which brought us the environmental movement, the civil rights movement, anti-war demonstrations, landing on the moon, birth control, John F. Kennedy, the Beatles, Bob Dylan, and in general a break with dying traditions.

Thirty to forty years separated these periods of change, but it has been almost fifty years since the last one. Why the wait? Perhaps it is related to the efforts of some to cast doubt on why our planet has been changing, and to forestall change in our addiction to fossil fuels (see Big Oil Knew).

Regardless of the timing or the delay, we have now begun the next period of cultural change. Call it the New Green Deal, or what you may (history will decide) people around the world are beginning to demand more equity, and a better chance for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Be it by migration (e.g. from Central America to the U.S., or Africa to Europe); by political involvement (e.g. the Sunrise Movement, the student strike for climate, Citizens’ Climate Lobby); by technological change (cell phones and the internet); by replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy (the decline of coal, the rise of solar cells, wind power, the emergence of electric transportation); or the many other ways we are experiencing change, a period of social revolution is now happening once again.

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The goals are truly laudable: Affordable health care; better income equality; free tuition; stopping the use of fossil fuels, and more. But one overarching problem threatens to overcome any progress that we might make in these areas. That problem is climate disruption. It is hard to find funds for health care when catastrophic fires, floods, hurricanes, drought and sea level rise demand money. It is hard to preserve wildlife when their environments are changing faster than critters can evolve. It is hard to provide enough housing when coastlines are flooding.

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If the climate is not healthy, we cannot be healthy. As long as climate disasters unequally impact the poor, we will have an unjust society. If we cannot afford a healthy climate, we will
not be able to afford income equality. If you lose your home, job or loved ones to fire, flood, or other climate disaster, you will be poor regardless of a minimum wage, free education, or any kind of health care. In short, we must solve the climate crisis if we are to be successful in these other endeavors. Solving the climate problem is not going to solve every problem, but no problem is truly solvable without it.

Four approaches are emerging regarding climate pollution: 1) Denial (we still hear it from our president); 2) regulations (thou shalt not emit…); 3) cap and trade (polluters trade with non-polluters, buy credits, and a cap on emissions is set); 4) and a carbon fee and dividend (fossil fuel companies pay a fee on carbon emissions and the money is returned in equal shares to every taxpayer).

Of these approaches, a current carbon fee and dividend bill (HR 763) is the best, but is not a silver bullet, and needs to be complemented by filling in the gaps with regulations (e.g. on methane leaks and emissions, building efficiency, and other areas not currently addressed in the legislation). This is sort of the multiple bullet approach.

Climate is already a growing issue in the upcoming elections, and these four approaches will be wildly debated. Except for denial, some components of them may be mixed and matched. It is our job to guide our legislators in the best way to use them.

Solving the climate crisis via democracy is the best way to guide us through the social revolution that is now knocking at (and knocking down) the doors of our houses. But if we cannot solve the climate challenge, there will be a lot fewer houses.

https://www.pinterest.com/pin/381680137153013175/

**NEWS UPDATE:** Park Day School Students Lobby City Hall to make the Black-crowned Night Heron Oakland’s Official Bird”
Park Day students were back at City Hall last week advocating for the Black-Crowned Night Heron to become the Official Bird of Oakland. Four of our students spoke at a Rules Committee. They've done research, they made a petition, they've collected signatures (over 2000!), they met with Councilman Dan Kalb, they made a video, and they've been interviewed and featured in the news.

Next up in our campaign: School-Made Arcade! Come join us on April 16th in the Temescal Alley from 1:00-2:30. Students have designed and built BCNH-themed arcade games for you to play. Come out and play with us! We are looking forward to our trip back to City Hall on May 14th when this resolution is reviewed by the Public Works Committee. In the meantime, our campaign continues, so please keep spreading the word! Post and use our hashtags #oaklandheron and #officialbirdoakland! And of course, keep sharing this petition!

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

Montclair Elementary School

Leadership Public School
High school students study the design of the nature center area as an example of urban landscape architecture in this year’s ACE Mentoring Program. ACE Mentoring involves local professionals in mentoring young people in a 14-week afterschool program. The team of professionals this year includes Leslie Golden, Landscape Architect, Anthony Bell, Construction Quality Assurance Director for Turner Construction, Sam Penny, Project Engineer and Michelle Pena, Architect. Students who complete the program receive scholarships for college.

As a final project this year, the students are making a design for the nature center and grounds.
More Details about the Lake Merritt BioBlitz – April 27th


Description

From the California Center for Natural History: Lake Merritt in the heart of Oakland is the jewel of the city and teeming with life. During this event come learn about the thousands of organisms that call this place home and help document them as part of the City Nature Challenge. Local naturalists will be on hand to help you find and identify organisms. Bring your smart phone pre-loaded with the iNaturalist app, food for lunch, and any tools that you think will help you find organisms. There will be stations around the lake focusing on different habitats, organisms and some short guided walks with experts.

You can drop in at any point of the BioBlitz and find a marked area leader to learn from. Please RSVP even if you will be dropping in for just a little bit of the Bioblitz.

Schedule of events

9:00 - 10:00 am - Birding walk leaving from RNC - could be earlier, completely up to discretion of bird walk leader
10:15 - 10:45 am - Opening Session - basics of iNaturalist and BioBlitzs @ RNC
10:45 - 2:00 pm Microscopy @ RNC Library
10:45 - 11:20 pm - Invertebrate Station @ Lake Merritt Boat Docks
11:30 - 12:15 pm - Insect walk @ Lake Merritt Gardens
12:30 - 1:30 pm - Plant walk @ Lake Merritt Gardens
1:30 - 3:30 pm - Identification Party @ RNC

Map of where activities will be around Lake Merritt

REFERENCES:

Earth Month at Lake Merritt
BioBlitz at Lake Merritt:

There are several iNaturalist Projects based at Lake Merritt:
California Center for Natural History - https://calnature.org/

e-Scooters
https://oversharing.substack.com/p/shared-scooters-dont-last-long

Oakland School Board Climate Literacy Policy
https://www.ousd.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=4875&ModuleInstanceID=26088&ViewID=
6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874B3E108&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=26704&PageID=13526

Note about cold spring weather:
https://baynature.org/2019/03/05/was-that-a-cold-winter-not-entirely/
https://www.carbonbrief.org/mapped-how-climate-change-affects-extreme-weather-around-the-world

Architecture, Construction, and Engineering Mentoring Program San Francisco Bay Area

Black Crowned Night Heron
https://www.change.org/p/black-crowned-night-heron-for-the-official-bird-of-oakland/u/24404932?cs_tk=Amug6XO_h7ErAF0GsVwAAxicyyvNyQEABF8BvMMzLA22jH39uo
xaoCQj6QE%3D&utm_campaign=56b2b8f643ad47b280e7b032a350af0&utm_medium=email&utm_source=petition_update&utm_term=csCalifornia Weather Blog