

# The Lake Merritt Institute

A COMMUNITY BASED, NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

568 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610; 510/238-2290; [lmi@netwiz.net](mailto:lmi@netwiz.net); [lakemerrittinstitute.org](http://lakemerrittinstitute.org)

VOLUME XVII

"TIDINGS" - JANUARY, 2012

ISSUE I

## WANT A RAIN BARREL? READ ON:

Detain the Rain - Help Protect Oakland's watersheds. You can play a key role in preventing creek erosion and flooding while conserving water & harvesting rain that can be used for landscape irrigation! The city of Oakland is offering discounted rain barrels and tanks for residents. Take advantage of this exclusive offer while supplies last. Purchase a barrel or tank in advance, online, at a discount of 50-75%. Then come to the next scheduled Oakland delivery event to pick it up. Tanks can also be picked up at the Urban Farmer Store in Richmond, or delivered for a small fee.



This program offers high-end rainwater tanks at a 50-75% discount, as well as periodic workshops and presentations. It is being managed by a collaboration of local organizations - The Watershed Project, Merritt College, The Urban Farmer Store and DIG Cooperative. Residents can choose the tank of their choice through the city web-page, place an order online ([www.oaklandpw.com/rainbarrel](http://www.oaklandpw.com/rainbarrel)) then get their tank at a pickup event or at The Urban Farmer Store. Operating under a challenging grant, the goal is to encourage Oakland



Residents to buy and install 4,000 tanks (or an equivalent of 250,000 gallons of rainwater catchment systems) by December 2012. (Note: Painted barrels shown here are from Kentucky, not from the City program).

The Oakland Rain Barrel Program, is funded by the Federal Recovery & Reinvestment Act and the State Water Resources Control Board to mitigate urban flooding and improve Oakland watersheds through rainwater harvesting and residential stormwater retention. It is a three-year initiative to build healthier urban communities by providing reduced cost rain barrels to Oakland residents (as per city grant requirements, purchasers of rain barrels must be Oakland residents). Get yours today!

## OCCUPIERS MAKE HISTORY

On Sunday, December 11<sup>th</sup>, it appeared on the Lake, floating across from the Cathedral. There were people, decorations, a roof, curtains, lights and signs on board. As a protest against the wealth of the one percent, Lake Merritt had been occupied. Day and night, throughout the week they stayed, rowing to shore in shifts while the boat drifted but remained in the center of the Lake. Warned, rowers went around them.

But on Friday the 16<sup>th</sup>, under the watchful eye of police, city personnel towed the craft away, pulled it up on the boat ramp, chopped it up with a chain saw and hauled it away. Closer inspection revealed a well built craft with numerous new barrels for floatation,





*Detail of barrels and decorations*



*Demolition in progress*

artwork, an ample structure, bedding, food etc. But, apparently, if any single item was worth less than \$100, it could (and most items did) become junk in the landfill. Within minutes it was cut to pieces and gone.

It appears that history has been made: Was this the first time anyone has slept out overnight on the Lake?

**CLIMATE CORNER - The Debates of Joe and Schmoe:**

“This climate change malarkey is malarkey” said Schmoe. The whole world isn’t getting warmer, it’s just the natural changes in the weather.”

“Oh?” said Joe. “Then why is the entire Arctic ice cap shrinking? It’s not only getting smaller, it’s getting thinner. People who monitor satellite photos say that during the summer months it will be entirely gone in 5 – 10 years: No ice; just a vast Arctic ocean the size of the United States. That has never happened in all of human history.”

“Well, maybe it’s getting a little warmer up there, but New York had more snow than usual last year, I saw it. If the world is getting warmer, how do you explain that” replied Schmoe?

“Just because the world has warmed up a degree or two doesn’t mean it can’t snow. Why would you think that? New York winters can warm from 24 to 28 degrees and it is still below freezing; right?”

“OK, maybe it is getting warmer, but that has happened before. Next year it could be cooler.”

“Right. One year may be cooler than the last one. But last year was the 34th consecutive year the temperature was above the 20th century average. That’s thirty four years of warming.”

“Thirty four years, that’s no big deal. The next ten years could be colder.”

It IS a big deal. Thirty five thousand people died in a European heat wave in 2003, twenty percent of Pakistan flooded in 2010, one fourth of the Russian wheat crop burned in 2010 and now the whole state of Texas has dried up. And Schmoe, you know what? It isn’t going to stay cooler, the world is going to continue getting warmer.”

“And just how do you know that?” said a smirky Schmoe.

“Because we keep putting more and more greenhouse gases into the air, that’s why. When sunlight bounces off the earth and through these gases, they trap the heat.”

“I don’t believe that.”

Well, you must be a god then, because it’s a law of physics.”

“Yeah, these scientists, they can’t know stuff like that; it’s too complicated.”

“Do you believe scientists sent a spacecraft that landed on Mars?”

“Well, yeah, but....”

“Do you trust the Bay Bridge they built not to fall down when you drive on it?”

“Well, yeah, but....”

“You know, if people who study it all their lives can land a man on the moon, I think they can figure out a simple physics equation.”

“I still don’t believe it. Al Gore is a jerk.”

“I guess Simon and Garfunkle were right when they said “A man hears what he wants to hear, and disregards the rest.” But since you obviously have not studied it Schmoe, I don’t believe you. And nobody else should either.”



*Christmas at Lake Merritt, 2011*

## BIRD COLUMN

Summery Winter Wonderland: Cloudy weather was predicted for the 4th Wednesday in December, but the sky stayed clear till after the end of the Golden Gate Audubon walk. The bright light and blue skies made birding in the trees across Perkins unusually cheery and satisfying, with good looks at both male and female Townsend's Warblers (yellow face with burglar's mask; his black and hers brown) as well as Ruby-crowned Kinglets (all olive green with strong eye ring and wing bars; forget the ruby crown, it's probably hidden), Oak Titmice (all gray with high crests) and Chestnut-backed Chickadees (the name says it).

On the lake, all six U.S. ducks of the genus *Aythya* happily crowded around snarfing grain: both Greater and Lesser Scaup (black heads, gray brindled backs) close enough to tell them apart even if you aren't a scaup yourself, the Ring-necked Duck with his white shoulder flashes and white bill ring (forget the neck ring; it's dark burgundy and you won't see it unless you're getting ready to pluck and roast him), the Tufted Duck (without tuft for the moment, but easily recognized by black back and bright white wings), the Canvasbacks with their coppery heads and ski-jump bills, and both female and male Redheads (the female apparently our regular all-brown visitor, notable for a white band around the end of her bill, and the male only the second seen in all my time at the lake - not last season's late-appearing boyfriend but an immature, with the rust-red head and bluish beak, but all dark murky gray on the back).

We also had all five of the regular herons, four of the five grebes we hope to see, and most of the winter gulls - plus a handsome male Red-breasted Merganser (a duck with a flaring double crest and the thinnest imaginable weaselly beak) and a female Belted Kingfisher (blue and white, with both blue and orange belly bands), and flights of other birds - forty-nine species in all. That made it a very good day at Lake Merritt, where every day is a good day....

**A NEW GONDOLIER:** Congratulations to April and Angelino on the birth of their son, an eight pound boy born just before Christmas. Angelino is a member of the Institute Board of Directors and owner of Gondola Servizio. Daughter Bea is ecstatic, as are mom and dad. The gondola boutique at the Lake Chalet remain open where both establishments invite you to enjoy a grand view of our unique, little old Lake Merritt.

## RECENT SCENES FROM THE LAKE



*Red & green lights adorn the Bandstand fountain.*



*Christmas over, winter lingers on.*

*This edition of "Tidings" was published entirely with private funding donated to the Lake Merritt Institute, and not with funds from the City of Oakland. To contribute to the Institute, use PayPal at our website or send a check to: The Lake Merritt Institute, 568 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610.*