HAVE YOU SEEN THIS BIRD? A marked white pelican was seen at the Lake on about January 12th. Where did it come from? Who wants to know about it? The answers are at:

<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/>

and

<http://ebird.org/content/tx/news/request-to-report-marked-american-white-pelicans/>

No doubt the bird was drawn in by the siren call of Peter the Pelican, featured in the book “A Bird’s Tale” about our very own white pelican. This is the season for them to move around, lazily drifting high in the sky until they spot a good place to set down and eat fish. If you see it, be sure to notify the folks in Idaho. Judging from the map, these birds really get around.

CLIMATE CORNER: Is This Any Way to Save a Planet?
The New York Climate March was a big success. Or was it? Carbon emissions are still rising, carbon levels in the air are still rising, and there is still no national policy on climate change. The March featured a broad based coalition with many voices. Stop the pollution, go vegan, support environmental justice, switch to sustainable energy, stop fracking, reduce power plant emissions, stop mountain top coal removal, save the arctic, and so on and so forth. But was there any unity on a plan that would effectively limit carbon emissions enough to reduce the increasing damages from a climate on steroids? No.

Pity the poor politician. Everybody is shouting “do something.” But no one is saying what to do, and each environmental group has staked out their own territory. No wonder there is no national policy.

Perhaps we could learn something from the movie “Selma” which gives insights into how the civil rights movement managed to achieve some of its success. There were divergent groups in the movement, but they worked together to create a plan, sometimes with friction, but they created and carried out a plan to reach their common goals, such as the Voting Rights Act.

What would a plan for the climate movement look like? What should they be telling politicians, in a unified voice, to do? The answer is to follow the advice of economists, scientists like James Hansen and politicians like George Schultz. All of them say the most effective way to reduce carbon emissions is to put a price on them. Given the potential for climate change to undermine our way of life, one can easily see that the price of carbon, is the price of saving civilization.
The way to price carbon is via the Citizens’ Climate Lobby plan for a Carbon Fee and Dividend, for which a bill has been written in Congress. Imagine how much more successful the movement would be if every green group pushed for this plan. This is not to say that they would give up their own turf (stop fracking, drive less, vote green, etc.). But why can’t they get behind a single way to reach their goals? Why can’t their emails, letters, and newsletters include support for a price on carbon as well as their other agendas?

It is time, the walrus (and the narwal, and the seal, and the polar bear) said, to speak of a price on carbon, and speak it in a unified voice. If you belong to The Sierra Club, 350, Audubon or any of the other myriad of environmental organizations, please ask them to get together, agree, and work together for this common cause. Because if we don’t, we may never have a national climate policy, and the climate will continue to go berserk.

ST. PAUL’S STUDENTS BATTLE LOG: It must have drifted down Glen Echo Creek: A pine tree of sorts, trimmed of branches but sporting lots of stubs. Twenty feet long it was, and heavy, very heavy. There it lay within the outfall barrier at Grand & Harrison until the brave 6th grade students of St. Paul’s School decided to take it out, literally.

Ignoring king tides and leaky boots, they attached ropes to it, positioned themselves above and below, and heaved. Up it came until the stubs caught on the concrete wall lip. Stuck. Heave. Stuck. A week later they returned after the Institute opened the barrier to let the beastly log out. After dragging it to the dock, more ropes were attached and four lines of student power pulled, and pulled, and pulled. But when the wood lost buoyancy from the water, the weight became too much. Defeat. This thing was water logged.

But such hindrances to navigation cannot remain in the lake, so a service request was put in to the Oakland Public Works Call Center, who called in the City tree people, who have a crane. By now, it is likely chips. As to whoever loosed the thing from the watershed, you are a blight on the land; blah to you.
WHO IS DUMPING SOAP? For days, weeks actually, bubbles kept popping up around the Glen Echo fountain. Not just a few, but foam; real sudsy foam (just like on the television commercials). But TV commercials about soap should not be shot at the lake and soap should not be here (fish don’t take baths).

In reality this stuff is harmful to the lake, robbing it of oxygen and changing the chemistry of natural processes. During one oxygen sampling mission by Oakland High School students, this area had the lowest reading of anywhere in the lake.

The volume was such that it may be from a commercial operation (car washing, restaurant etc.). So if you see such illegal dumping into a storm drain or upstream of one, call the city inspector at 510-238-6544.

BIRD COLUMN: Lots of Species; Not Enough Birds at Lake Merritt
Twenty-eight birders were treated to some wonderful sights on the Golden Gate Audubon 4th-Wednesday walk: 53 species all told, including the first-ever Varied Thrush – like a robin with a black collar and an orange face and assorted orange stripes here and there – and one of the handful of Spotted Sandpipers seen here in the last decade. No spots at this season; look for a bird q bit larger than a sparrow and with much longer legs, all brown above and all white below, pumping its tail up and down almost constantly.
People kept saying, "Find me a --" - and we did: a Mew Gull (tiny for a gull, and with the smallest beak in proportion to its head); a Green Heron (marbled gray on the back and cinnamon and cream on the front - whaddaya mean, green?); the aforementioned Varied Thrush; a gorgeous male Townsend's Warbler complete with bright black burglar's mask on his bright yellow face. Beautiful birds, brilliantly lit.

But the surface of the lake was almost empty.... Well, empty for Lake Merritt - a couple of hundred Greater and Lesser Scaup (the black and white ducks) instead of several thousand; a few dozen Canvasbacks (white backs; rust-colored heads) instead of a few hundred. Even the Ruddy Ducks (a.k.a. Stiff-tailed Ducks, brown and not ruddy at this season) seemed thin on the water. The solid half-dozen female Common Mergansers (gray with auburn heads and long thin red beaks; normally a rare sight here) didn't make up for it.

What's happening at the lake? It's sort of scary, even on a truly lovely day....

**RECENT SCENES FROM THE LAKE**

I'll just wait here until those birds lay an egg, and then...  
A clam for a female scaup's dinner  
*Photos by Lee Aurich*

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