A NEW BOAT FOR THE LADIES OF THE LAKE: Siren Song has arrived, and she did not come quietly. Celebrated with bright flowers, bagpiper tunes and a feast, she has now taken her place at the dock and on the waters of Lake Merritt. Long awaited, she does not disappoint, and no longer will there be not enough seats for these venerable rowers who have donned their white uniforms every Wednesday since about 1916.

Who better to celebrate a new boat than a piper? Siren Song: Oakland Women’s Rowing Club

These venerable rowers are one of our Lakes finest and oldest traditions, so if you see them out there next Wednesday, be sure to wave.

MIRACLE ON LAKESIDE DRIVE (They don’t always fight back): He was riding a bike going by the Lake Chalet when his hand flipped out and casually tossed litter between two parked cars. We had just cleaned the beach and were in our truck just behind him when it happened. I tapped the horn twice and as he turned to look, signaled a thumbs down as we drove by.

Ahead, a signal light turned and as we slowed, I knew he would catch up to us. Expecting a verbal comment, or worse, we agreed to frown as the bike passed us. He changed lanes and pulled up alongside the open truck window. Here it comes I thought. But instead, he slowly rode by and said “You’re Right.” Wow, that was nice. We appealed to his better side, and it won out over the litterbug. So if you see littering in the act, don’t be afraid to gently comment on it. They know its wrong.
As I looked once more on the sky the number read Oakland 1925.

Closer and closer came the vision until I saw a large and Wonderful City and the heart of the city was a beautiful lake.

I thought as I gazed on that wonderful lake, Oh, what has God done for man! Here in the very heart of this wonderful city is a spot where the weary can rest, the children can play and the poet can dream.

My thoughts traveled on and I thought truly this can be called a smile of God. Just then the Guide said to me, “See what man had added to God’s gift,” and lo, a diamond necklace six miles long and reaching around the entire lake, glittering and gleaming like the stars in the heavens. The necklace was draped on wonderful posts much like monuments, and on each monument or post a name was engraved in gold, and as I gazed at the name on the monument I asked the Guide why the monuments of the dead here in this beautiful spot. “Oh,” answered the Guide, “They are not the monuments of the dead. They are monuments of the living heroes of our city, who have made it possible to decorate the lake with this wonderful necklace of lights.

CLIMATE COLUMN: -“Defeat of the Dragons” Part Two: “Finally, the islanders come to believe it’s no use trying to convince or bargain with the dragons. The only hope is to defeat them: To force them to stop emitting the gases endangering their island or to die trying.

At this point in a classic fairy tale, a hero would emerge to lead the battle against the dragons. In Defeat of the Dragons, however, there would be not just one hero but thousands. Each would work in his or her own way while collaborating with comrades to advance the cause. Many of the heroes would be children, and they would devise the masterstroke that saves the day. Maybe they would borrow a trick from The Emperor’s...
New Clothes and deflate their foes with embarrassing wit. The children could shout what everyone else knows but has been afraid to say: “Dragons, we have shared this island with you for a very long time, but the time has come to tell the truth: You have really bad breath and very stinky farts. Your behavior is making the rest of us sick, and if you don’t change your diets, we will have to take your food away.”

A battle ensues, and after some fierce clashes the dragons, amazingly, go down to defeat. The dragons that are captured are given a chance to adopt a new diet, heavy on vegetables and fruits, which to their surprise they find they prefer. The weather, alas, stays weird for a long time. But the islanders get better at coping with it, and by the time their children are old enough to become grandparents, the climate has found a fresh equilibrium, a new normal. Though quite different from its original state, the island is still beautiful in its way; it is after all, home.

Well, Defeat of the Dragons needs some work, but you get the idea. That’s the fairy tale I’d like to read to Chiara someday soon. In fact, it’s the fairy tale I’d like to see her help bring about when she gets a little older. Until then, it’s up to the rest of us.

"Reprinted by permission of the author from Mark Hertsgaard's new book, HOT: Living Through the Next Fifty Years on Earth."

**Found in the Lake: One Rowing Club light marker.**

**They didn't steal anything; just plain vandalism**

**BIRD COLUMN: Summer Friendship at Lake Merritt**

Hank, our rescued American White Pelican, has been on his own all winter. Lake Merritt isn't your usual white pelican habitat - but it's a good place for one to live if it can't fly, and Hank was brought down here from Oregon several years ago when it became clear that his injured left wing was never going to straighten itself out. Unlike Helen (his predecessor in the rescued-pelican business), who as far as I know lived for decades at the lake and never
saw another of her kind, Hank has been luring in company since his second or third year here. Last summer I saw as many as eleven other pelicans with him - but it's still a treat to see the first one arrive. He and a bud were hanging out on one of the outer islands, where only the last couple of hold-outs at the end of the Golden Gate Audubon fourth-Wednesday bird walk got a glimpse of them. The newcomer flew up and circled - lovely!

And that was the second-most-amazing thing we saw. In the garden - the redwoods by the monkey-puzzle tree - was a bird we thought must be a Scrub Jay... but instead of buff and blue, it was all solid pearly gray, with no feather darker than any other. Not an albino; it had dark eyes and a dark beak instead of pink and pale, but it was like a pencil sketch - a jay-shaped gray patch in the tree. Weird off-coloration is actually fairly common in birds, but the individuals (called _leucistic_) rarely live long; a species' normal color has both survival value and mate-selection pressure behind it, and it's not easy being different from the rest of your kind. But this may be an exception - it looked like a full adult, with no juvenile downy fuzz left, and it was hanging out near a normal-colored jay... which, since we can go months in the park and not see a jay at all, was a good sign.

Other than that, it was a quiet though satisfying day. The Double-crested Cormorants are still going at it in the trees, and although most of the winter migrants have left, the ones that are left - including some splendid Eared Grebes (looking like beaten steel and copper, with gold fans beside each eye) - are truly worth watching.

Only 33 species all told, but no one on the walk felt they hadn't had a good day at Lake Merritt... where every day is a good day....

**RECENT SCENES FROM THE LAKE**

*Oh what fun it is to clean an aeration fountain!*  
*Dragon boats, rowboats and gondolas. Where else?*

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