

The Lake Merritt Institute

A COMMUNITY BASED, NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

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THE TRASH IS COMING, THE TRASH IS COMING: Now, we are not parroting Chicken Little (who said the sky is falling); we are only stating an irrefutable fact: When the rains return to Lake Merritt, so will the trash.



Lake Merritt: October, 2009

Our seven square mile watershed has not been completely flushed since the last rain-storm (0.39 inches in late May) and what has not been swept from streets, parking lots, sidewalks etc. and removed from creeks in the last five+ months will flow down into the Lake. People will complain. Fountains will clog up.

Bags, bottles, butts and balls will be here. Most of it will be plastic.

The more the rain we get; the more the trash will flow in. Five big storm drain filters will help, as will several inlet filters but the main burden will be on volunteers and Institute workers who will be out there five days a week. We have bought new gloves, repaired nets, started production of a training video and painted "U-Clean-It" boxes. The season of clean water is coming to an end.

NATURE ISLAND RESTORATION TO BEGIN: By the time you read this, a long awaited restoration of habitat on five islands behind the Rotary Nature Center should have begun. Contaminated (with decades of bird droppings) soil will be removed, an irrigation system will be installed, native vegetation will be enhanced and birds returning for spring nesting should be happier. We suspect that naturalist Stephanie Benevidez will also be happy. Stop by sometime and cheer the construction workers onward.

A LITTLE BIT OF VENICE AT LAKE MERRITT: Not only do we have authentic gondolas from Venice, Lake Merritt now offers beautiful Venetian imports in the form of masks, jewelry, plates and more. If you haven't visited the new *Gondola Servizio* office and store at the Lake Chalet, now is the time. This charming new space opens out onto a floating dock where you can await your gondolier, sip wine and people watch the restaurant patrons. For that special occasion, there is nothing else like it on the entire west coast. So stop by and say hello to April and Angelino. If parking is a problem at the Chalet, ask if the gondola can meet you at the Boating Center dock where there is ample



CLIMATE CORNER: Our New Normal on a Warming Planet?

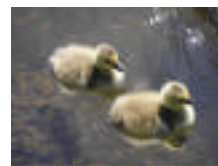
- 10 U.S. states had their hottest summer on record and all but 7 states were above normal. Nighttime heat records were set in 37 states.
- June-August global land surface temperature was the warmest on record, 1.80 F (1.00 C) above the 20th century average of 56.9 F.
- For only the third time in the satellite record and the third time in the last four years, the Arctic sea ice extent fell below 5 million square kilometers (1.93 million square miles). This summer's Arctic sea ice extent fell more than 25% below the 1979-2009 average.
- Arctic sea ice volume (extent and thickness) reached the lowest level ever recorded, prompting Mark Serreze, director of the National Snow and Ice Data Center to predict, "The Arctic summer sea ice cover is in a death spiral. It's not going to recover."

- A record Russian heat wave caused massive wildfires and drought and may have killed up to 15,000 people, cost the Russian economy \$15 billion, and destroyed a third of the Russian grain crop, causing global wheat prices to nearly double. Peat bog and forest fires filled Moscow's air with carbon monoxide levels reaching 6.5 times more than the maximum allowable levels.
- Devastating floods inundated 20% of Pakistan, drove millions from their homes, and led to the deaths of more than 1,600 people. Up to a foot of rain fell in a 36-hour period.
- Hundreds of walrus on Alaska's North Slope were stampeded to death when they beached themselves on land because there were no sea ice floes available.
- This year's extreme heat is causing only the second known global bleaching of coral reefs. In oceans from Thailand to Texas, scientists fear this year's die-off may be as bad as or worse than in 1998 when an estimated 16% of the world's shallow water reefs were severely damaged. In the waters off the Philippines, 95% of the corals have died this year.

(reprinted from Environmental Defense Action Fund, Sept. 27, 2010).



PRESENTING THE ALL NEW LAKE MERRITT INSTITUTE WEBSITE !!!



Months in preparation, more informative, easier to maintain and fun to use, the new Institute website (www.lakemerrittinstitute.org) is now available for your perusal. New features include Paypal - you can now renew your membership or contribute online; several vintage Montclarion articles; more photos; new sections on wildlife, Lake history & Lake people; and more information about the Lake. Check it out!

BIRD COLUMN: LIVELY TIMES STARTING AT LAKE MERRITT

The ducks are coming in! By the time you read this, they should all be here, but the October 4th-Wednesday Golden Gate Audubon walk saw most of them. In particular, three of the rarities that bring people to the lake were here already: a male Ring-necked Duck (black head and back, gray sides with a white flash at the shoulder, white ring around the... bill), a male Tufted Duck (black head and neck, gray sides that should have been white, handsome pony-tail tuft on his head), and not one but two female Redheads (all-brown ducks with round heads, no white at the base of the bill, and a thin white line around the end of the bill). Perhaps we'll get a male this year! (Red head, gray sides, blue bill... sigh.) A Belted Kingfisher was back in the dead trees on the islands, and once again we were treated to a pair of Snowy Egrets (the smaller of the white herons, with black beaks and yellow feet), crests up and harassing one another along the side of the lake.

We also had a small party of Greater Scaup (yet more black and white and gray drakes; brown ducks with white patches around the base of the bill), a bunch of Ruddy Ducks (like little stiff-tailed brown teapots), four kinds of grebes (Clark's, Western, Pied-billed, and Eared), and a couple of Brown Pelicans. The Double-crested Cormorants were (finally!) done nesting, but the floats were still crowded with them, mostly bronzy youngsters drying their wings.

The lawns were unusually full of Canada Geese for the season; probably a bunch of migrants coming through. At any rate, the flock included six Cackling Geese (like Canada Geese, but much smaller - almost duck-sized - and glossy chestnut where the others are gray-brown), and those never stay at the lake. Many years we see none at all.

Over in the trees between Children's Fairyland and Perkins, the butter butts (aka Yellow-rumped Warblers, gold and gray and brown in various patterns, all with the signature patch above the tail) were out in force, sampling every kind of calorie the park had to offer. They're always the most widespread and numerous of our warblers for good reason; they can browse and graze and catch flies and generally exploit any environment going. A trio of Northern Flickers passed overhead, their red underwings luminous against the sky. And besides the usual Chestnut-backed Chickadees and mouse-gray Bushtits, we enjoyed the sight of a Red-breasted Nuthatch feasting on pine cones, and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet doing its move-too-fast-to-see maneuvers, clattering like a typewriter as it went.

And the weather was sunny and in the mid-sixties, with a light breeze and the long curved cloud of a front overhead to remind us to enjoy it while it lasted, because it wasn't likely to last long. While every day is a great day at the lake, a clear day promising rain tomorrow is greater than most....

RECENT SCENES FROM THE LAKE:



Left: A nudibranch, probably Polycera hedgpethi according to Andrew Cohen, Director: Center for Research on Aquatic Bioinvasions. Yes, it lives in the Lake.

Right: The Oakland HS Environmental Academy searches the shoreline.



Photos by Andrew Saephan

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