

# THE TIDINGS



## LAKE MERRITT INSTITUTE

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## LAKE MERRITT INSTITUTE CONTRACT EXTENDED TO 2021!

A big THANK YOU to the City of Oakland, staff at Oakland Public Works Department, and to the City Council for extending the Lake Merritt Institute (LMI)’s Clean Lake Contract through fiscal year 2021. The Clean Lake Contract is for professional services that provide clean-up of the shoreline, maintenance of aeration fountains, storm drain barriers, monitoring of trash, volunteer coordination, technical assistance and public outreach related to Lake Merritt. The new contract acknowledges the many ways LMI Executive Director James Robinson and his staff have engaged with the City to address the increasing impact of dumping in the lake, eScooter use and abuse, used hypodermic needles entering the lake through storm drains, water quality issues and everyday littering.



Photo by Aurelia Scheppers/UC Berkeley

Our deepest thanks to James for assembling the application and working with the City to meet new and additional requirements. We are delighted that as a result LMI can continue to reach out to all ages of Oaklanders -- and to businesses working in Oakland -- to become better stewards of the beautiful waterway we enjoy in the center of our City. Well done!

## DINOSAURS AT LAKE MERRITT?



Most of California was under water during the Mesozoic Era 252 million to 65 million years ago during the Age of Dinosaurs. But in July, the **Billion Year Walk** transformed the footpath around Lake Merritt into a journey through deep time. Lake walkers taking part in the event or just getting their exercise met up with *T. rex* and many less well known representatives of the history of life on our planet.

Participants passed through a time portal at the Rotary Nature Center and were treated to 42 signposts and many interactive displays featuring real fossils, models, live organisms and docents ready to answer questions!

**LMI in JULY:** 1240 lbs. of trash were removed from the lake in July and **15,100 lbs.** so far in 2019. LMI Director James Robinson and Staff hosted 85 **volunteers**, made 2 educational presentations and attended 1 meeting. **0.00”** inches rain was recorded by LMI rain gauge.

**THANK YOU TO OUR JULY VOLUNTEERS!** We appreciate your efforts and community spirit. Great Job! Volunteer groups: YouthWorks, Alameda County IT, Head-Royce students, our U-Clean-It self-organized teams, and the LMI A-TEAM regulars. See photos in the email version of The Tidings. YOU can support the Lake Merritt Institute's important work. Go to our [website](#) to find out how. **LOVE YOUR LAKE!** .....

*Billion Year Walk (continued):* **The Billion Year Walk** is sponsored by the National Center for Science Education, UC Berkeley Museum of Paleontology, the Bay Area Skeptics, and The Hart Foundation.

Participants filled their time-travel passports with stamps as they visited signposts and docent tables. One hundred eighty-five people completed the Walk by 5 p.m. They were treated to a very hard Quiz and a toy dinosaur at the Rotary Nature Center finish line. The event reached more than 300 people.



David Almandsmith, Organizer of the Billion Year Walk, conducts orientation for the many volunteers and docents.



The newly reopened Rotary Nature Center hosted the event. Wonderful to see science events return to the nature center!



Anthropology Professor Jonathan Karpf of San Jose State University enthralled visitors to the Australopithecine table at 4,400,000 year ago mark.



Lake Merritt's BYW is one of only three taking place in the world this year. The others are held in England and Canada and are much longer treks through wilderness -- for adults. The Billion Year Walk is based on evolutionary

biologist Richard Dawkin's book The Ancestor's Tale, which in turn is based on Geoffrey Chaucer's 14<sup>th</sup> century Canterbury Tales. In Dawkins book, we travel *back* in time to find the Universal Common Ancestor of all life. Lake Merritt has held BYW's in 2014 and 2016. Judging by the enthusiastic response of the participants and public, Lake Merritt's Billion Year Walk will be back again next year!

## Summer Surprises and Welcome Returns at Lake Merritt

-by Hilary Powers – Golden Gate Audubon



Belted Kingfishers described in this article; Photo by Lyla Arum July 2019

I strolled up to the globe cage (meeting spot for the 4th-Wednesday Golden Gate Audubon bird walk) about 15 minutes before the 9:30 start time to be greeted by the rattling flight calls of Belted Kingfishers. Kingfishers plural. We haven't seen a kingfisher on the walk at all since last November, and had a pair only once before, then as now a female and a juvenile (recognizable by solid and broken rusty cummerbunds respectively) flying around and chattering to each other in glorious stereo. They soon vanished from sight – but reappeared to pose for everyone who attended the walk.

The floats carried several Brown Pelicans, one lounging in an almost unrecognizable heap, a few Double-crested Cormorants (ignoring the now-empty nests in the island trees), some assorted gulls, and some terns – mostly Forster's Terns, though we made a spirited effort to turn one of them into a similar but oddly enough much rarer Common Tern, which flew off leaving the question undecided. (Bird names are often peculiar, and one of their most peculiar aspects is the way the word "common" tends to designate a creature that isn't common around here at all; it got named elsewhere and rarely visits this area.)

Several Least Terns – one of the clearest and most relevant names; they're tiny yellow-legged creatures that make the already small Forster's Terns look bulky by comparison – also visited the floats. They've bred in Alameda for years, and we saw them last year in May, but that was the first recorded instance since I started keeping track back in 2009.



Least Tern; Bay Nature

Then a Green Heron – the first noted on one of these walks since last September – flew in and prowled along the rocks on the near island. "Why do they call it green?" a new birder asked, observing its elegant cinnamon-and-cream breast, dark slaty back, black head, and brilliant orange legs. "It does sound like one of *those* names," sez I. "And it's not green the way a Great Blue Heron is blue – but if the sun hits it just right, you'll see a sort of green sheen across the back. I've spotted that maybe twice in my life." Bird names; expect logic and you'll go mad.

Over in the park across Bellevue, I got my scope on a young Cooper's Hawk sitting erect high in a pine tree – a wonderful view of the weird teardrops that marked its breast. When I turned to see where everyone was and wave them forward, they were all in a bunch half a block back, looking assiduously away from me. Eventually they straggled reluctantly up with an air of oh-yeah-a-coop-that's-nice; they'd just been looking at a Western Tanager – a spectacular orange-headed gold bird recorded only twice before, on the May 2010 and September 2016 walks – and the normally exciting hawk just couldn't compare. Gnrrrr; if I'd stayed back, I coulda seen the tanager too and still picked up the coop.

All told and despite clinging to patches of shade instead of traipsing down the lake toward El Embarcadero, we (collectively, drat it) observed 32 species of birds – about right for the time of year – without counting the possible Common Tern or the maybe-a-Gadwall that retreated back up one of the big pipes that open near the nature center. And the birder who fell hip-deep into a hole in front of the dome cage emerged unscathed, making it absolutely yet another good day at Lake Merritt, where every day is a good day even if some have scarier moments than others....

\*\*\***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. \*\*\*



## **CLIMATE CORNER: IMMIGRATION, DUMB BUNNIES, AND GRETA**

- A Guest Editorial by Dr. Richard Bailey

The Worst Impact of Climate Disruption is ...? Immigration has many causes, including war, poverty, gang violence, religion, famine and drought. Behind the scenes of these terrors lurks climate change, exemplified by the growing shortage of water, crops that do not grow, massive flooding, and sea level rise, all of which can lead people to give up and move. But what is perhaps worse than all of these is the response to this immigration, which is a growing shift toward right wing demagogues in nations such as Brazil, the U.S. and several European countries. Rather than enact policies to lessen the impact of climate change, some political leaders choose to deny it, and then politically profit from the fear they incite about people who are different from us. Just as Californians tried to keep out the Okies (refugee farm families from the Southern Plains - people from their own country) during the dust bowl, many are now trying to keep impoverished climate refugees from entering Europe and the U.S. Along with this global right wing shift we are seeing the destruction of the Amazon rain forest, the repeal of pollution standards, the promotion of fossil fuels, the erosion of minority rights, and racism. Sadly, everyone cannot survive in their own country in our climate challenged world. As the link between climate disruption, immigration, and neo-nationalism grows stronger, it is up to us to do more to reduce the use of fossil fuels, reform agriculture and forestry, and find politically acceptable ways to remove carbon from the atmosphere. <https://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/blog/right-wing-populism-and-climate-change-policy>



*Climate induced immigration is shifting world politics to the right*

Dumb Reasons to Oppose a Carbon Pollution Fee: Recently, several prominent environmental organizations agreed to oppose HR 763 (the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act) which is now being debated in House of Representatives. Opposition is partly based on the 6-10 year “regulatory pause” and elimination of the “Clean Power Plan” (which never went into effect because of lawsuits by 26 states, only covered power plants, and would not have lowered carbons levels all that much anyway). The temporary regulatory pause would also prevent EPA from enacting new regulations that would restrict carbon emissions already covered by the bill, unless the legislative targets were not met.

But wait! What are the chances of EPA enacting ANY new restrictions on carbon pollution? This is not the EPA that we grew up with. Today’s EPA is actively working to eliminate pollution controls, not create them. An example of this is their current effort to limit states’ ability to enact stricter rules to curb pollution, particularly planet-heating emissions. In order for EPA to even propose any of the regulations that the Sierra Club and others are using as an excuse to oppose this climate legislation, we would need a different president. Without that, you can forget any EPA actions to fight climate change. Such green opposition to the bill is a knee-jerk reaction, and not based on the political realities of today.

Once again, we are seeing Don Quixote like quests for perfection become the enemy of the good. Promotion of wishy-washy climate solutions without a price of carbon by green advocates can doom us to failure in the fight for a livable planet. Organizations such as the Sierra Club need to join the real world, and start promoting politically real solutions that will work. To do otherwise is like shooting yourself in the foot.

To quote John Englander:

“To truly solve climate change, we need to set aside the naivete, the “Pollyanna” optimism that the solutions can come easily and without disruption to our current way of life.”

Greta Thunberg - The Antidote: Just when you were thinking that all is lost, along comes a sixteen-year-old young lady from Sweden who has created a new youth climate movement. More than a million of her peers have joined her Friday school strikes for climate in protest of world leaders who admit that they are screwing up the climate, that her generation will be the ones to suffer the most, and have been unable or unwilling to do much about it other than business as usual. She has spoken truth to power before the World Economic Forum, the United Nations, and the European Parliament. She has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, and been on the cover of Time Magazine. Her calm, candid criticism of how fossil fuels are driving planetary wide disruption at a pace unprecedented in millions of years has caused OPEC (the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) to call her “the greatest threat to the fossil fuel industry.” Now THAT is truly a compliment.



<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2019/jul/21/great-thunberg-you-ask-the-questions-see-us-as-a-threat>

**YOUTH WATER QUALITY REPORT**- July 28<sup>th</sup> 2019 at the Lake Merritt Boating Center dock at the Great Secchi DipIN with St. Paul’s Episcopal Middle School volunteers with LAKE MERRITT OBSERVATORY.

Dissolved Oxygen 7 ppm (normal),  
pH 7  
Salinity 28 ppt (NORMAL)  
Water Temperature 23.5 degrees Celsius  
Water Clarity (Secchi) 1.60 meters (CLEAR!)

At right, St. Paul’s student takes a Secchi Disk reading from the pontoon boat.



**E.P.A. Citizen Monitoring for Bacteria** in Lake Merritt will take place from August 12<sup>th</sup>- September 9<sup>th</sup>. Email Katie Noonan at [ktnoon@aol.com](mailto:ktnoon@aol.com) if you would like to help collect samples on August 26<sup>th</sup>, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, or



At left, A-Team members Miriam Valesco and Myra Redman collect water samples for the E.P.A. Citizen Monitoring project.



**THANK YOU TO OUR JULY VOLUNTEERS!** We appreciate your efforts and community spirit. Great Job! Volunteer groups: YouthWorks, Alameda County IT, Head-Royce students, our U-Clean-It self-organized teams, and the LMI A-TEAM regulars. See photos BELOW.

### ALAMEDA COUNTY I.T.



### YOUTHWORKS





# BILLION YEAR WALK AT LAKE MERRITT

Thank you to the presenters, docents and the public who made this community science education event a success.



Rotary Nature Center Time Portal!



Community for Lake Merritt's Terry Smith greets participants.



Rotary Nature Center Program Staff Joe Moore (left) and CFLM's Adrian Cotter (right).



Orientation by BYW organizer David Almandsmith of the Bay Area Skeptics.



Billion Year Walk participants gather stamps on their time-traveler passports as they make the 3.1-mile circuit around the lake.



Sponge Docent, The Tidings editor, Katie Noonan



Ammonite Docent Raleigh Mclemore



An enjoyable educational activity for all – THANK YOU Everyone!



Glen Echo Aeration Fountain August 19, 2019

### REFERENCES - August 2019 Tidings:

City Council - [Lake Merritt Institute Contract Approval](#)

Billion Year Walk:

Bay Area Skeptic: <http://baskeptics.org/>

National Center for Science Education: <https://ncse.com/>

University of California Museum of Paleontology: <https://ucmp.berkeley.edu/>

Frederick E. Hart Foundation for Educational Opportunity:

<http://educationalopportunity.org/index.html#connect>

SFGate- “Families Journey Through Time”

<https://www.sfgate.com/news/bayarea/article/Families-Journey-Through-Time-In-Evolution-Walk-14190578.php>

<https://www.sfgate.com/news/bayarea/article/Billion-Year-Walk-Will-Let-Residents-Travel-14189914.php>

### Dinosaurs in California

Very few [dinosaur](#) fossils have been found in California. Why? Because during the time when dinosaurs lived, most of California was covered by the ocean, and any sediments that accumulated in the areas that were dry land have since eroded away. Why do we find dinosaur fossils in areas that were ocean? They may have drowned in a river and been carried out to sea by currents, as happens sometimes to large mammals today. We know that the dinosaur skeletons were deposited in the ocean because we find shells of marine animals where they grew on the dinosaur bones as well as in the surrounding sediments.

While some **dinosaurs** might have been able to wade or paddle through water, they did not live in oceans,

lakes, or rivers. Mosasaurs and Plesiosaurs, the giant swimming reptiles that also lived during the Mesozoic Era, **were not dinosaurs**. Nor **were** the ancient flying reptiles, known as pterosaurs.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paleontology\\_in\\_California](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paleontology_in_California)

A CA State Dinosaur? Of the few largely intact dinosaur skeletons found in the state, one belonged to a duck-billed plant eater known as *Augustynolophus morrisoni*. State lawmakers are considering a bill this year to make it California's state dinosaur.

The duck-billed plant-eater *Augustynolophus* could soon be named California's state dinosaur.

<https://www.kqed.org/news/11487363/what-dinosaurs-roamed-the-bay-area>

**Please direct questions and comments to The Tidings Editor, Katie Noonan, at [ktnoon@aol.com](mailto:ktnoon@aol.com).**

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