

THE TIDINGS



LAKE MERRITT INSTITUTE

568 Bellevue Ave., Oakland, CA 94610-5026; (510) 238-2290; lmi@netwiz.net; www.lakemerrittinstitute.org
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“The Tidings” is an editorial newsletter. Posted opinions are not necessarily those of the City of Oakland

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

The Lake Merritt Institute looks forward to its 25th year working together with YOU to clean our amazing and beautiful LAKE MERRITT. We begin each new year with beautiful Measure DD improvements, an enthusiastic LMI staff and loyal team of volunteers who clean the Lake each Tuesday and Saturday morning and the partnership of the City of Oakland and many local businesses and civic organizations.



Please put volunteering to clean the Lake on your list of New Year’s Resolutions. And it’s always a great time to become a supporting member of LMI. You can join the Lake Merritt Institute, make a donation, or volunteer to clean the lake at our website lakemerrittinstitute.org.



A Great Egret surveys the calm of a freshly cleaned lake after December showers; Photo by LMI Director, James Robinson.

The LAKE MERRITT INSTITUTE invites you to join us for Oakland’s 17th Annual MARTIN LUTHER KING Jr. DAY of Service at Lake Merritt!

**Monday January 20th
9 am to 12 noon**



Meet up at the Lake Merritt Boating Center at 568 Bellevue Ave in Lakeshore Park. LMI’s Executive Director James Robinson, our staff and volunteers will provide instruction, protective gear and equipment for the public to clean the lake safely. Wear warm clothing in layers and bring a water bottle and sunscreen. Wear sturdy shoes.

“Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve.” – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

LMI in DECEMBER: 5,560 gallons* of trash were removed from the lake in December.

*The City will henceforth measure trash in gallons not pounds.

LMI Director James Robinson and Staff hosted **143 volunteers**, made 2 educational presentations and attended 1 meeting
1.93” inches rain were recorded by LMI rain gauge.

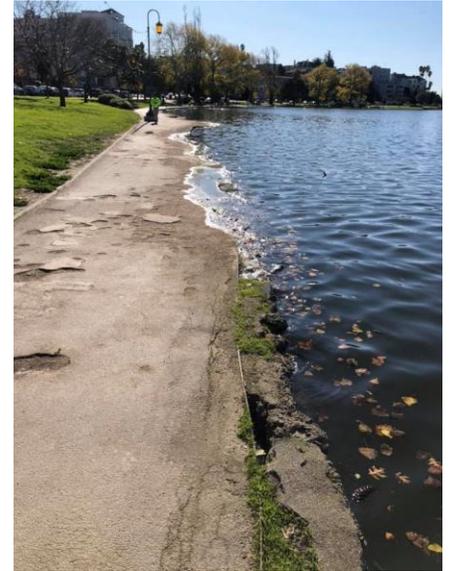
LMI A-TEAM regulars. We appreciate your efforts and community spirit. Great Job! See photos in the February email version of The Tidings.

YOU can support the Lake Merritt Institute's important work. Go to lakemerrittinstitute.org to find out how.

RISING WATERS AT LAKE MERRITT – Lake visitors were startled in early December by high-water levels after an atmospheric river drenched the Bay Area (see photos at right). Was it sea level rise or the result of the torrential rains that threatened to flood the shores of Lakeside Park?

The answer is a combination of factors.

- Sea level *is* rising faster than scientific models had predicted. It is a real financial and safety consideration in city planning in Oakland and other coastal cities. It can magnify storm surges and high tides. But it doesn't happen overnight.
- Extreme tides colloquially known as King Tides are characteristic of this time of year. According to William Sweet, an oceanographer with NOAA, "It's the period of the year with the most predictable astronomical high tides, which are controlled by the pull of the moon and the sun." The high tides cause more water to be pushed into the lake. But King tides like you see at the Embarcadero in San Francisco don't happen at Lake Merritt, because...
- The flow of Bay water in and out of the lake is regulated closely by Alameda County Flood Control District. When the predicted High-High Tide in San Francisco Bay tops 6 feet, the Alameda County Flood Control District closes the tide gates at 7th Street to incoming water to protect the community around the lake. The tide gates are also closed when the tide is at its lowest during a rain event so there will be room for that incoming rainwater from the watershed. If closed for longer than 2 days, this can cause stagnation and low oxygen in the lake.



The lake overflowed the pathways in mid-December. Photo by Peggy Rehm.

Both Alameda County and the City of Oakland Watershed have been studying ways to improve efficiency and functioning in the 7th Street tide gate and pump station for better water quality while protecting the urban area. The Tidings Editor interviewed the Watershed and Stormwater Division and DD Program Manager about the progress of Measure DD improvements and other issues related to water quality in Lake Merritt. A report will be made in the February issue of The Tidings.

CITIZEN SCIENCE WATER QUALITY REPORT

Citizen volunteers at "Critter Hunt at Lake Merritt" sponsored by Rotary Nature Center Friends took these readings on January 11th at the Lake Merritt Boating Center dock.

Dissolved Oxygen top 9 parts per million (ppm) / bottom 7ppm (high)

pH top 7.5 /bottom 7.5 (normal)

Salinity top 30 parts per thousand (ppt) /bottom 30 ppt (high).

Water Temperature top 13 degrees Celsius (55 degrees Fahrenheit) top/ bottom 12 deg Celsius (54 degrees Fahrenheit) (normal)

Water Clarity (Secchi) 1 meter (less than last month -probably due to lots of plankton)



UC Berkeley Biology student tested pH.

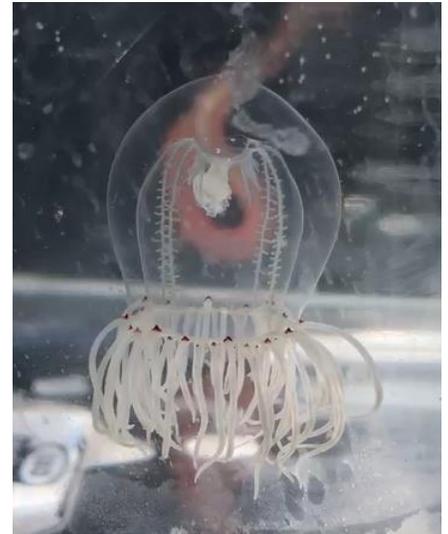
4th- Grader finds jellyfish not recorded in Lake Merritt since 1972 -- using an ROV!



Urban Montessori Charter School student Avi views underwater life with Trident ROV operator Adrian Cotter of Lake Merritt Observatory.

With the help of the public, over 25 estuary species were identified at a “critter hunt” sponsored by Rotary Nature Center Friends on January 11th.

Fourth-grader Avi and his dad, looking through the cockpit screen of an underwater remotely operated vehicle or ROV noticed a beautiful jellyfish bobbing in the water. Known as a Red-eyed Medusa, the species had not been recorded in Lake Merritt since Dr. Jim Carlton placed a specimen at the California Academy of Sciences in 1972!



Jellyfish found in the lake, *Polyorchis penicellatus*; Photo by Tamia Proctor on iNaturalist

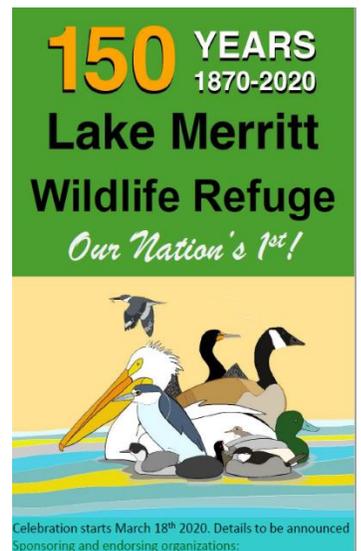
Avi: "During the amazing time there I saw stuff I never knew was in the lake. It was also cool to find the jellyfish. I never thought there would be one in the lake." And he told his dad, "Aba, thanks for making me come to this!". LMI: Thank *you*, Avi, for being a marine biologist for the day and **LOVING YOUR LAKE....** 🐠



Critter Hunt's featured naturalist Damon Tighe, of the California Center for Natural History.

The Lake Merritt Wildlife Refuge was the first wildlife refuge in the United States, created by the CA Wildlife Act on March 18th 1870. To commemorate this proud legacy, there will be a formal celebration on March 18th 2020. Details are being worked out.

A banner has been designed to place on light poles near the lake and along Bellevue Ave. If you would like to help spread the word or donate to the cost of making and installing the banners, please contact Tidings Editor Katie Noonan at ktnoon@aol.com. Posters announcing the event with logos of endorsing organization will be available also. Contact Katie if you or your organization wish to endorse or contribute to a banner.



The Lake Merritt Institute urges you to support Ballot Measure Q for parks maintenance, homeless services and water quality. Bottom line is it will help us do our job. Find out more and volunteer to canvas, phone bank or put a yard sign at your house at <http://www.yesforoakland.com>.



Please direct questions and comments to The Tidings Editor, Katie Noonan, at ktnoon@aol.com.

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Rewards for the Brave at Lake Merritt by Hilary Powers – Golden Gate Audubon

The December 4th-Wednesday Golden Gate Audubon walk had two strikes against it: it was on the 3rd Wednesday, the 4th being otherwise occupied, and the weather forecast promised rain. The hourly forecast was friendlier, with only a small chance of rain before noon, and the four intrepid birders who joined the two leaders actually found a gleam of sun.



Barrow's Goldeneye pair; Photo by Lee Aurich

We started with lovely looks at a Green Heron prospecting the rocks on the near island – these little jewels of the heron world are almost certainly always here, but they *hide*; we can go months without seeing one. Meanwhile, a flock of five American White Pelicans were performing their feeding dance, which looks for all the world like water ballet, right in front of the near island, and a pair of Barrow's Goldeneyes – the ones where the drake has a crescent moon on each cheek; the first since last January – patrolled the area between the islands and the shore, with an immature male not far away. We saw lots of Common Goldeneyes (round moon mark) too, but that was expected; they're always here from November through March, while the Barrow's make only occasional appearances.

The last few weeks had been full of reports of mergansers at the lake in unusual numbers – from 10 to 30-odd, and both of the big species with long thin red beaks (Common and Red-breasted) – raising high hopes. So it was almost (but not quite) a disappointment to pick up only a pair of Common Mergansers; an undeniable treat since we can go years without seeing them at all, but still...

The scaup population was up from November, with both Greater and Lesser Scaup in the flock, but still so far below what used to be normal that the Ruddy Ducks and Canvasbacks could compete with them for sheer numbers. A few of the big white-necked Western Grebes joined the float at the Embarcadero end of the lake, along with several tiny Pied-billed Grebes and one Horned Grebe looking for all the world like a miniature Western.



Townsend's Warbler; Wikipedia

By 11:30, having done the park segment of the trip in reverse since the gorgeous new gate on the back of the garden was still shut tight and we knew we couldn't get out that way, we reached the corner of Children's Fairyland dry and in good spirits despite missing several expected species, which were resolutely hiding instead of out stuffing their beaks as they should have been. We'd caught a couple of good views of burglar-masked Townsend's Warblers, a California Scrub Jay, some Dark-eyed Juncos, and lots of White-crowned Sparrows and a couple of Golden-crowned – but no Titmice, no Bushtits, no robins or finches either.

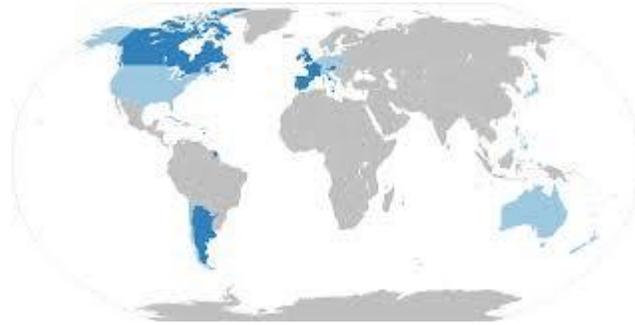
Two of the remaining three walkers departed at that point, and the rest of us went off around the back of Fairyland, ignoring the first few drops of rain. And the next few. And then it was coming down steadily and we were committed to the extra loop – not that any of us minded much, reveling in the childlike delight of walking in the rain – but all the birds that had been hiding kept on hiding. All told, we saw only 38 species: way down from the usual December total, which runs in the mid to high 40s, but it was still a day to be savored at Lake Merritt, where every day brings joys of its own.

*****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: -- A Short Summary of the Past Few Years

-- A Guest Editorial by Dr. Richard Bailey

As the climate crisis worsened sea levels threatened entire island nations and some of them had to move to another country and native Alaskans were driven from their homes as drought and famine did the same to north Africans who fled in rickety boats but some of them were drowned while others fled to a few European nations who would accept them but political push back from that put pressure on many to keep them in refugee camps while heat waves and fires devastated Australia as they continued to ship coal around the world and ignored pleas to reduce their carbon output that assisted continuing decade long, world-wide increases in atmospheric carbon levels which caused heat to be trapped, making permafrost melt and release methane, a potent greenhouse gas that exists in enormous quantities in the global tundra just as does natural gas which is leaking from fracking in the United States while our federal government changed regulations to make it easier to frack and pile up coal ash waste just as the climate lies continued to flow from the presidential sewer and other nations mocked us for putting up with such ignorance and some self-serving members of Congress actually impeded efforts to create new high paying jobs in the clean energy field but despite that, amounts of electricity captured from wind generators and solar panels increased and some enlightened people and auto companies began switching to electric cars that they could drive past flooded fields in Nebraska and Iowa where some farmers wanted more subsidies to grow corn to make alcohol and they got handouts from Trump because he cut their income with tariffs to punish the Chinese who are building many more coal fired power plants that will make their air quality very bad for decades and we breathe it too along with the ashes from fires that burn houses and forests and everything in their path and create barren landscapes which send mud slides down on roads and houses and into the oceans which are getting more and more acidic making it increasingly hard for oysters and clams etc. to create their calcium shells in seas that are now storing enough heat to continue warming our weather for decades after we stop increasing the carbon levels in the air which we don't seem to be able to do so the glaciers that supply water to billions of people will dry up and the melting water will cause floods on top of the floods from increased rainfall and sea level rise.



Countries where a climate emergency has been declared, either for the entire country or only some subdivisions.

Meanwhile, about ten years ago, the Citizens' Climate Lobby started a now world-wide campaign to charge the producers of fossil fuels a fee based on the carbon content of what comes out of oil wells, coal mines and ports of entry but because some conservatives considered this to be a tax and do not like big governments the policy included prohibitions on that money going to governments so it could be politically viable so instead the money would be given to everyone in equal amounts via a monthly check with half shares for children kinda like the money from oil revenues in Alaska now and this policy has been adopted in Canada and is being done various forms in dozens of other nations and although fossil fuel companies might pass the fee along to us in price increases the lower 60 percent of people based

on income would get a few hundred dollars a month which is socially just and they would be better off economically while the wealthier would not notice it as much because the carbon fee would start low at \$15 per ton which is like 15 cents a gallon of gasoline so as not to shock the economy but it would rapidly increase by \$10 a ton every year as long as needed until carbon emissions were low enough to slow the climate emergency and this policy would utilize the entire economy by making fossil fuels more and more expensive thus putting pressure on fossil fuel companies to invest in clean energy which would create new better paying jobs and make the air cleaner. This policy is now called House Resolution 763 in Congress and it is cosponsored by Barbara Lee and 74 other representatives because it would reduce carbon emissions 40% in 12 years and it is simple, comprehensive and effective so you should join CCL and help them pass it.