

THE TIDINGS



LAKE MERRITT INSTITUTE

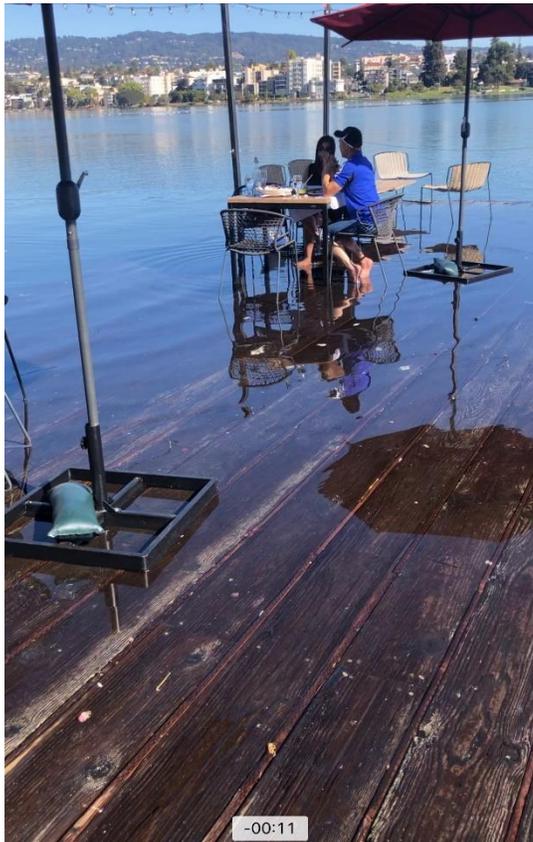
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A Glimpse of Sea Level Rise to Come

Global warming is predicted to raise sea level by 6-7 feet by the year 2100. And because Lake Merritt is a tidal body of water connected to the Bay and the Pacific Ocean, water levels will inevitably rise here too, especially at high tide. On October 17th-18th, lake walkers were surprised to find flooded walkways all around the lake. Diners at the Lake Chalet found themselves ankle-deep in water on the outdoor deck, the only space open because of Covid-19 restrictions. Was the sudden flood caused by sea level rise?

Not directly. The immediate cause was a high tide* of 7.17 feet in the Oakland Inner Harbor whipped up by weather conditions pushing water into the bay. The Alameda County Flood Control Station at 7th St. usually protects against flooding by closing the two tide gates when high tide at the Golden Gate tops 6.5 feet (it was predicted to be 6.48 ft.). Since completion of Measure DD improvements to the channel, the east tide gate has been kept permanently shut. However, on the October 17th-18th weekend, both tide gates at the flood control station were wide open. Once alerted, the Alameda County Flood Control District fixed the problem.

The incident points out the need for a more nuanced protocol for operating the tide gates that takes into account local and global

conditions using modern remote-sensing technology. The flood control station at 7th Street is built to protect against a 25-year flood event but not 50- and 100-year events.

A Toast to the Lake Merritt Wildlife Refuge! The 150th Anniversary of the Lake Merritt Wildlife Refuge was celebrated ONLINE on Friday October 23rd in a 90-minute program hosted by Rotary Nature Center Friends. It was broadcast on Oakland’s KTOP TV 10 and via Zoom. In the house were Mayor Libby Schaaf and Councilmembers McElhaney, Kalb and Fortunato-Bas. [Fifteen eminent speakers](#) (Dr. Bailey of LMI among them) addressed the Lake’s history, science and future commitment to sustainability and equity. The recorded program can be viewed [HERE](#) and will be rebroadcast by KTOP. An 80-minute [documentary tribute](#) can be seen on lakemerritt.org.



LMI in SEPTEMBER: 4,140 gallons of trash were removed from the lake by staff and volunteers in SEPTEMBER. Total gallons collected in 2020 is **20,670 gallons**.

LMI Director James Robinson and Staff hosted **59 volunteers**; 1 presentation and 2 meetings

0.00 inches rain were recorded by LMI rain gauge gauge.

TWO FOUNTAINS UP! And a peek below the splendid cascades...



Embarcadero Fountain in October; LMI photo

After some electrical work and high-power cleaning, the aeration fountains at the Embarcadero and Glen Echo are both back in action again.

Maintaining the fountains is expensive and time-consuming. The pumps break down frequently in the corrosive salt water environment and not every electrician is experienced with or even available to work with such fountains.



James removes the fountain for cleaning; LMI photo

The fountains pump oxygen-depleted water from the lower water column to spray over the surface. In the air, the water gets re-oxygenated so that marine life in the lake can thrive.



The fountain itself becomes a good habitat for sessile (non-moving) marine life: mussels, tunicates, tube worms and barnacles. The encrustation clogs the pumps and can cause failure. James and the LMI staff must clean the fountains frequently. The bushy calcareous “skirt” of Australian tube worms on the fountain at left grew in only 6 weeks! The speed of encrustation depends on the time of year (winter and fall are the fastest) and on the salinity and temperature of the water. Fountain repair and maintenance is funded by subscriptions and donations from our LMI members.

CITIZEN WATER QUALITY REPORT

Measured on October 11, 2020

Dissolved Oxygen 4 parts per million (ppm) top/5 ppm bottom (low)

pH 8.0 top/6.5 bottom (normal)

Salinity 35 parts per thousand (ppt) top/37 ppt bottom (normal)

Water Temperature 20.5 degrees Celsius top (69 degrees Fahrenheit) top/20 deg Celsius bottom (68.5 degrees Fahrenheit) (normal)

Water Clarity (Secchi) >1.95 meters CLEAR!



Rotary Nature Center Friends volunteer Jordan Chestnut measures salinity

Day of Firsts at Lake Merritt - by Hilary Powers – Golden Gate Audubon Society

The September not-quite-Golden-Gate-Audubon walk attracted eight masked birders – a record for the pandemic – for a round of amazing delights in perfect air. (Really perfect. For a change, the particulate-meter at the nature center didn't tinkle even once when we were near enough to hear its penetrating chime.) At various points we encountered three species never recorded on earlier walks:

- First, a female Yellow Warbler prospected through one of the oaks along Bellevue: yellow-green above, brilliant yellow below, with just a faint grayish streaking along the breast. With the natural human response to a treat – “what have you done for us lately” – we looked hard for a red-streaked male, but we couldn't find one.
- Second, a Willow Flycatcher (and we were fortunate enough to have a participant savvy enough to identify it by its overall brownish tinge and lack of eye-ring, rather than writing it off as one of the near-dozen near-identical “tyrant flycatchers” that frequent wilder parks but almost never appear here. We've recorded them on only six occasions over the years, and only named one other (a Pacific-slope Flycatcher in 2018).

And third and most astonishing, a series of fluting honks along the lake shore alerted us to a pair of Greater Yellowlegs (Yellowlegses?) flying beak to tail westward right at the level of the path and a few inches out from the wall. A yellowlegs is a biggish shorebird, twice the size of a sandpiper and well-named for its shockingly brilliant yellow legs, and we just don't see them at Lake Merritt – not the Greater like these and not the Lesser Yellowlegs either, species distinguishable mainly by voice rather than appearance. Photo credits in References.



Yellow Warbler



Willow Flycatcher



Lesser Yellowlegs

We also picked up two new-for-September birds – one Golden-crowned Sparrow (common visitors later in the year) and a whole flock of Steller's Jays (rare in the park and mostly as singles rather than half a dozen at once). This time, they showed their crested black heads and their natty navy-blue jackets twice, one pair and later five or six birds together, much to the outrage of the smooth-crowned California Scrub Jays that regard the park as their own territory.

Despite all these wonders, my personal favorite of the day was an old friend in a new place. “There's a Bewick's Wren right over your head!” someone called, and I looked up to find it true: About three feet up, a wren was picking its way along a narrow branch, dipping its beak into cracks in the bark and showing off its striped undertail coverts and pearly gray breast, features I'd never noticed before. (With this species, sight ID is mostly a matter of “Brown with a perky tail and a curving beak; it's a wren; it has a big white eyebrow; Bewick's.” It takes a surprise view to make the rest of the bird visible.)

The Western Pond Turtle – not a bird, but we're not snobs – lounged on the shore of the garden pond, always a cheery sight. It's the only native turtle I've seen in the park; the rest are one and all Red-eared Sliders, invasive refugees from the pet trade and instantly recognizable by you-know-what. If you're looking at a turtle that doesn't have red patches on the sides of its head, chances are it's our native.

Overall we counted forty species of birds on the lake and in the surrounding area – more than in any of the three preceding years, though a couple were reported by members of the group as they walked home, which feels a

little like cheating (but not enough to keep them out of the total). They were there, after all, even though the relatively few eyes on the job missed them the first time through, and all part of yet another good day at Lake Merritt, where every day....

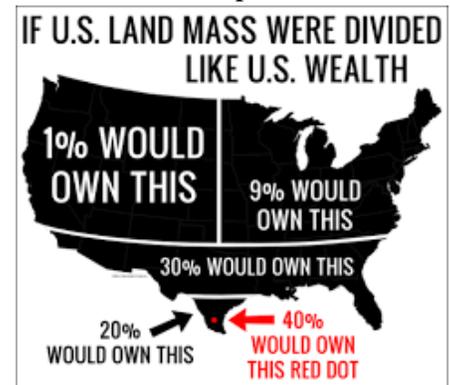
*******AUDUBON BIRDWALKS AT THE LAKE:** Join bird expert Hilary Powers any fourth Wednesday of the month for a free “Birdwalk” at the lake. Muster at the geodesic bird cage near the Nature Center at 9:30 a.m. for what are always fascinating introductions to lake birdlife. ***

CLIMATE CORNER: BEHIND THE CURTAIN - A Guest Editorial by Dr. Richard Bailey

Like Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz, we need to look behind the curtain. Like Dorothy, many things are threatening us. They include a pandemic being fought with a health care system tilted toward the wealthy, educational opportunities that end for those unable to afford college or specialized training, jobs that don't pay enough to pay for the basic necessities of food and housing, an economic system where wealth trickles up, not down, and the many facets of climate disruption that rob all levels of society of infrastructure, security, and a healthy environment.

What is pulling these levers behind the curtain? It is not the wizard; it is systemic economic injustice. It is the way our governments, health care, jobs, and ability to accumulate wealth are structured in favor of those that already have wealth. It is the fact that many people have way too much, and way too many people don't have enough. Is this a system that can solve the climate emergency?

Underlying racial injustice, climate injustice, and pandemic injustice, is a system that has been increasingly built into our governments, careers, real estate transactions, and indeed, our daily lives. Governments provide services, but do not have enough money to solve the homeless problem. Huge corporations become richer while the poor grow in number. The minimum wage (for the 42 % that earn less than \$15 an hour *) is just that, a minimum wage, while CEO's bring home salaries and benefits that are 287 times that of their workers.** Workers are denied paid health care because huge corporations consider them contractors, not employees (kind of like office furniture; and office furniture doesn't need health care). Worldwide, only eight people, six of them Americans, own as much combined wealth as half the human race. In America, 10 percent of the richest people own almost 70 percent of the country's total wealth.*** For those in the lower brackets, it is everyone for himself. No wonder hardly anyone can afford solar panels.



Wikipedia Commons



It wasn't always this way. As a prominent Berkeley economist points out, **** things were different in the '50s and '60s. But we don't live in the '50s and '60s any more, and they aren't coming back. Current government tax structure, powerful corporations, and a changed climate won't let that happen.

How can the tax structure and systemic economic injustice be corrected? One way is to shift money from the most wealthy to the least. That is more easily accomplished by shifting funds from those whose wealth is based on climate pollution, keeping the money out of the hands of governments, and providing most of it to those most in need. Such a solution is enshrined in H.B.

763, the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act. Because an annually increasing carbon fee levied on Exxon would almost equal their profits in about five years, this solution would rapidly reduce fossil fuel pollution, especially in poor neighborhoods: THAT is environmental justice.

Everyone would receive the dividend: THAT is racial justice. A family of four would soon receive an annual dividend of \$3,456 from the carbon fee: THAT, is economic justice.

We know we need to get off of fossil fuels: HB 763 does that. We know we need to improve the financial lives of the poor: HR 763 does that. We know that such improvements need to go to everyone equally: HB 763 does that.

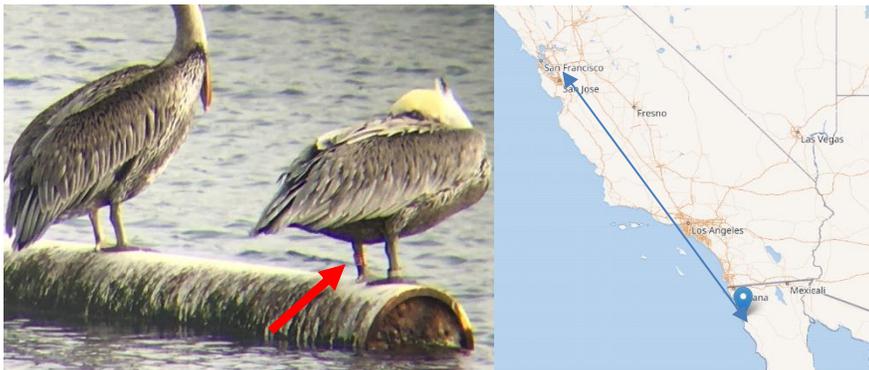
For details on how you can help this solution become a reality, visit www.citizensclimatelobby.org.

Brown Pelican from Mexico Stops by Lake Merritt

Squadrons of brown pelicans have thrilled visitors to the bird sanctuary this month. Birding regular Lyla Arum spotted a band on a pelican hanging out on the floating docks at the Lake Merritt Boating Center. On September 15th She contacted the banding organization in Ensenada, Mexico, which was delighted that their bird had been spotted alive and happy 800+ miles from where it had been banded on July 12, 2017. It was 3 months old when banded in Isla Todos Santos Sur outside of the city of Ensenada in Baja California Sur, Mexico.



Brown Pelicans make their spectacular dives into the water from as high as 65 feet. The oldest known Brown Pelican lived 43 years. The Brown Pelican nearly disappeared from North America in the 1960s and 1970s due to the pesticide DDT, but has made an impressive comeback in recent years (<https://ca.audubon.org/news/15-cool-and-interesting-things-about-brown-pelicans>). It was listed under the [United States Endangered Species Act](#) from 1970 to 2009 but is now a Species of Least Concern thanks to federal and state laws banning DDT. Lake Merritt provides sanctuary for these birds in late summer and winter months ([iNaturalist](#)).



Above: the same pelican was seen hanging out on boom on 10/8/2020; photo by Lyla Arum. Map shows migration distance.

The first National Wildlife Sanctuary (Pelican Bay) was established in Florida in 1903 to protect the pelicans from hunters. Note that this was 33 years after the Lake Merritt Wildlife Refuge was established in 1870 by the CA State legislature, the first government-established wildlife refuge in the country

Corona Clouds –A Poem for Our Times

Peering out the window into the blanket of gray
looking for a break in the foul haze
I imagine a shred of blue
a possible opening in the choking smoke
and the lies.

Suddenly a red-breasted nuthatch
creeps along the trunk of a nearby tea tree.
Ignoring the smoke and haze
he persistently pecks at insects, one by one,
ignoring my presence.

Was this a visit from a friend I recently lost?
A warning from nature of impending loss?
A sign of a new awakening?

What does persistence look like in troubled times?
Waiting and watching for any sliver of moonlight,
of Orion rising, of a shred of BLUE.

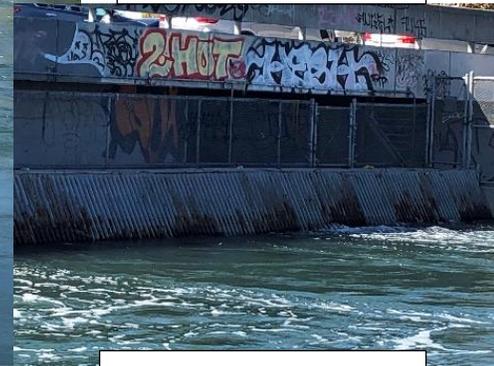
VOTE!

Miriam Valesco
September 26, 2020

More FLOODING VIEWS AROUND THE LAKE – October 17th and 18th



On October 17th and 18th, both East and West tide gates were open at the flood control station. This was unusual. The east gate has been kept closed most of the time since completion of Measure DD channel improvements.



At the same time, most of the Bay was experiencing higher water levels because of weather conditions. On top of that, the predicted high tide, which varies, was on the high side.



The main dock is here
under water!



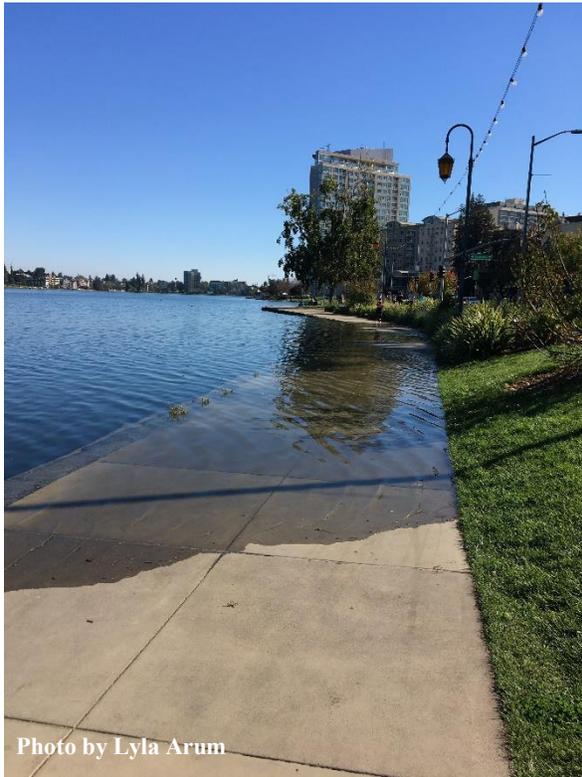


Photo by Lyla Arum



Photo by Peggy Rehm



Photo by Peggy Rehm



Photo by Peggy Rehm



Photo by Peggy Rehm



REFERENCES:

1) Toast to the Lake Merritt Wildlife Refuge:

Recorded Virtual Celebration Oct. 23rd – <https://youtu.be/nXVPkhsq5yg>
[Speaker Bios](#)

Documentary tribute (80 min): <https://youtu.be/c8sYscREWws>

Oaklandside coverage: <https://oaklandside.org/2020/10/21/a-new-film-celebrates-lake-merritts-150th-anniversary-as-the-nations-first-wildlife/>

1) Behind the Curtain by Dr. Richard Bailey

* <https://tcf.org/content/commentary/making-economic-case-15-minimum-wage/>

** <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/6/26/18744304/ceo-pay-ratio-disclosure-2018>

*** <https://www.statista.com/chart/19635/wealth-distribution-percentiles-in-the-us/>

**** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inequality_for_All

2) Day of Firsts at Lake Merritt-photo credits

Lesser Yellowlegs Wikimedia Commons <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3946313>

Yellow Warbler Wikimedia Commons; Copyright: Alan Vernon 2011

Willow Flycatcher Teale Fristoe. iNaturalist: <https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/32396074>

3) Pelican story

Brown Pelican seasonality at Lake Merritt <https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/4328-Pelecanus-occidentalis>

Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown_pelican

The brown pelican is the [national bird](#) of [Saint Martin](#), [Barbados](#), [Saint Kitts and Nevis](#), and the [Turks and Caicos Islands](#), and the official [state bird](#) of Louisiana, appearing on the flag, seal, or coat of arms of each. It has been rated as a [species of least concern](#) by the [International Union for Conservation of Nature](#). It was listed under the [United States Endangered Species Act](#) from 1970 to 2009, as pesticides such as [dieldrin](#) and [DDT](#) threatened its future in the [Southeastern United States](#) and [California](#). In 1972, the use of DDT was banned in [Florida](#), followed by the rest of the United States. Since then, the brown pelican's population has increased. In 1903, [Theodore Roosevelt](#) set aside the first [National Wildlife Refuge](#), Florida's [Pelican Island](#), to protect the species from hunters.

DDT - A Brief History and Status

<https://www.epa.gov/ingredients-used-pesticide-products/ddt-brief-history-and-status>

4) Sea Level Rise

*Lake Merritt has 2 unequal high tides each day, referred to as the High High (HH) and the Lower High (LH).

Tide gates - <https://lakemerrittinstitute.org/about-lake-merritt/>

Oakland Inner Harbor - [NOAA Tide predictions Oct 17-19 Oakland Inner Harbor](#)

Golden Gate - [NOAA Tide predictions Oct 17-19 Golden Gate](#)

<https://tides4fishing.com/us/california/oakland-inner-harbor>

<https://www.adaptingtorisingtides.org/>

<https://www.coastal.ca.gov/kingtides/>

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

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The A-TEAM at 18th St. at U-CLEAN-IT box

Thank You for Your Service!

Contact James at lmi@netwiz.net to arrange training in how to clean the lake!