

THE TIDINGS



LAKE MERRITT INSTITUTE

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A community based, non-profit corporation, established 1995; IRS Code 501(c)(3); EIN 94-3214160

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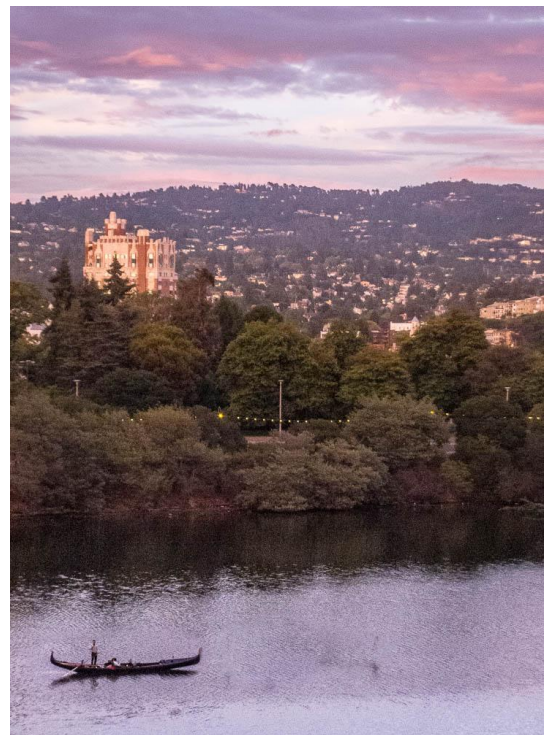
ISSUE XI

“The Tidings” is an editorial newsletter. Posted opinions are not necessarily those of the City of Oakland

THANK YOU, LAKE MERRITT!

At the end of a month dedicated to giving thanks, we would be remiss to leave out a heartfelt thank you to our beloved Lake Merritt. True, it has taken a beating during the pandemic from over-use, wanton littering to outright vandalism and the effects of back-and-forth homeless encampments and vendors. It witnessed our most trying times. The lake points to problems not yet solved – homelessness, equity, climate change, etc. but it continues to inspire us with beauty and hope for better days.

And it does more. Lake Merritt is a wetland, a habitat that has biodiversity equal to the tropical rainforests and coral reefs. It buffers our shoreline against storms. It stores carbon and keeps it out of the atmosphere where it fuels global warming. Some wetland plants can remove and store toxins that arrive via urban runoff. It is a nursery for fish that we eat and for the fish and invertebrates that game fish feed on. That said, eating fish caught here is unhealthy because of contamination concentrating in the food chain. <https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/why-are-wetlands-important>. Photos by Lee Aurich,



LOVE YOUR LAKE!!

The Lake Merritt Institute is a 501(c)3 non-profit charity, founded in 1992. We educate the public about urban runoff and involve them in solving the problem. Result: Volunteers remove [thousands of pounds](#) of lake trash are removed each year that would otherwise increase the world ocean’s plastics crisis *and* Oakland’s regulatory liability for water quality. LMI is funded by the City of Oakland and by donations from caring people like you. For 2020, the IRS temporarily removed [limits on charitable donations](#), and you don’t have to itemize. Please make a donation to The Lake Merritt Institute. Help us preserve our beautiful and hard-working lake in the heart of downtown Oakland. A membership application is at end of this issue.

LMI in OCTOBER: 4,260 gallons of trash were removed from the lake by staff and volunteers in OCTOBER. Total gallons collected in 2020 is **24,930 gallons**.

LMI Director James Robinson and Staff hosted **130 volunteers**; made 1 presentation and attended 2 meetings.

0.00 inches rain were recorded by LMI rain gauge gauge.

THANK YOU TO OUR NOVEMBER VOLUNTEERS! Volunteer groups: **West Coast Whiskey Ambassador, MudLab, DowntownStreetsTeam** and the **LMI A-TEAM** regulars. Special thanks to newly trained regular volunteers. We appreciate your efforts and community spirit. Great Job! See photos in the December email version of The Tidings.

If you would like to join the A-Team and other experienced volunteers who remove trash from the water at Lake Merritt, email LMI's Executive Director James Robinson at lmi@netwiz.net. He will arrange your training by an experienced volunteer so that you can clean the lake safely and properly with other physically-distanced volunteers or by using the U-Clean-It boxes.

IN THE NEWS: Visit Calendar on lakemerritt.org more.

Lakeside Chats, a free online speakers series launches with a mystery story! Fri, Dec 4, 2020 7:00 PM-8:00 PM

Register at https://lakemerritt-mystery_drjimcarlton.eventbrite.com

CalAcademy Snapshot December - Help scientists study biodiversity and climate change from the safety of home or on your own socially-distanced outings. Uses *iNaturalist*.

<https://www.calacademy.org/calcoas>



The Tidings Editor Katie Noonan received an award for science and stewardship at the Mayor's Town Hall on November 19th. Parks Recreation Advisory Commissioner and WELO (We Lead Ours) co-founder **Dwayne Aikens** and OaktownPROUD's **Daniel Burns** were also honored for their stewardship and mentorship work.

<https://www.pscp.tv/LibbySchaaf/1MnGnlBXywjxO>

<https://www.facebook.com/MayorLibbySchaaf/videos/149000500257095>

CITIZEN WATER QUALITY REPORT

Measured on October 31, 2020

Dissolved Oxygen 5 parts per million (ppm) top/6 ppm bottom (barely meets 5 ppm E.P.A. standard)

pH 7.5 top/7.5 bottom (normal)

Salinity 38 parts per thousand (ppt) top/38 ppt bottom (salty!)

Water Temperature 16.5 degrees Celsius top (62 degrees Fahrenheit) top/17 deg Celsius bottom (63 degrees Fahrenheit) (normal)

Water Clarity (Secchi) >1.90 meters (normal)



Tidings Editor Katie Noonan and Mario Gabiati of Citizen Science Water Testing Initiative tested water clarity with a Secchi

The last professional study of Lake Merritt water quality was completed in 2015 by [Amec Foster Wheeler Environment and Infrastructure, Inc.](http://www.amec.com) In the study, dissolved oxygen, salinity, water clarity, pH and temperature at 5 stations were followed over a year's time at the top and bottom of the water column (Figure 2). The study concluded that there was no difference in dissolved oxygen before and after Measure DD channel improvements were made, but closing the tide gates more than 48 hours reduced dissolved oxygen (p.14). Student Lake Merritt Water Quality Monitoring data collected from 1997-2013 for 5 lake stations can be viewed on <https://cd3.sfei.org/>. Funds are being raised to add the student data from 2014-2017, and beyond to the website.

Avian Crowds at Lake Merritt - by Hilary Powers – Golden Gate Audubon Society

The October 4th-Wednesday (non) Golden Gate Audubon lake walk drew a somewhat scary 12 participants, evoking a nervous “Hey, we’re a lot less than six feet apart” on at least one occasion. We do try, but especially under the trees the places from which a given bird can be seen don’t offer a lot of choice. If the turnout continues to grow, we may need to split the group for the park section of the trip in coming months....

But it wasn’t just birders who were crowding around. The day opened with a true feeding frenzy: a few hundred Double-crested Cormorants (mostly bronze juveniles) were playing hopscotch down the lake, clearly in pursuit of something fast-moving, while dozens of Brown Pelicans of all ages swooped and dived above them among a cloud of assorted gulls, American White Pelicans paddled along snarfing things up from the water, and both Great and Snowy Egrets lined the shore looking to grab anything forced close to them. Unfortunately, it was the far shore – making the details hard to make out, especially with only binoculars for optics.



White Crowned Sparrow@
Alexandre Cowles, *iNaturalist*

So what were they catching? Fish, presumably, but we couldn’t see until a Ring-billed Gull came flapping over to the floats with something big and white clamped in its beak. “What’s he got? What’s he got?” A ten-inch feather, broad and blunt-ended, which provided several minutes’ play value for the gull and no information at all for the humans.

As the fisher-flock adjourned to the floats and islands to rest and digest, the birders proceeded past the paddock to head down the lake. The big pond in the paddock was full of ducks – practically shoulder to shoulder and beak to tail – almost all in the classic Mallard plumage but of a wide range in sizes. Some were small enough to be true wild birds; others clearly had had parents and grandparents on the farm, picking up the super-sizing genes developed there. (Most domestic duck lines started with Mallards, and the wild birds have never lost interest in their cousins.)



The area near the Rotary Nature Center was thin of company – just some coots and one adventurous Lesser Scaup – but the little olive tree just past the playground was aflutter with tiny birds. Bushtits for starters, looking as always like flying mice, but in numbers even more outrageous than usual. The joke about Bushtits is that if you have to report a count, say 17: a plausible prime number for *lots*. This time, I’d doubled that – lots and lots on every twig. And where they weren’t, there were Ruby-crowned Kinglets (the first of the season) and assorted warblers, plus a couple of Anna’s Hummingbirds hovering for some reason between the branches and the ground, with their scarlet gorgets catching rays of sun like little warning lights.

Bushtit @Tony Iwane, *iNaturalist*

We walked close enough to the fountain at El Embarcadero to see that the pair of Canvasbacks had moved on (but we counted them anyway, as several in the group had seen them on the way to the meeting spot). That end of the lake was doing a brisk business in scaup – both Greater and Lesser, not that the difference makes much difference if you’re not a scaup yourself – and thoroughly non-ruddy Ruddy Ducks. And American Coots, of course, well on their way to their usual top-poundage-on-the-lake winter status. Well, maybe that’s an exaggeration, but plausible: they’re small birds, but there are droves and bunches of them.

Across Bellevue and heading towards Children’s Fairyland (where it was a come-in-costume day, adding

miniature dragons and princesses and whatnot to the scene), we paused to enjoy a pair of juvenile Red-tailed Hawks circling overhead – either sister and brother or one much lower than the other, as it looked huge by comparison. The ground was jumping with sparrows, mostly White-crowned arriving for the winter, but some Golden-crowned and one Fox Sparrow, the first ever recorded on an October walk. And – common bird in an uncommon spot – a Black Phoebe sat like an angel atop my favorite tree, the prettiest Dawn Redwood in the world, which spreads its branches beside the Garden Center building.

All told, we encountered 47 species of birds, the most since 2015 (which gave us 48) – a throng of another sort. And it was a lovely day, sunny and not too hot, with only the occasional cheery chime from the bad-air-o-meter beside the Nature Center, so we had yet another in Lake Merritt’s unbroken string of very good days.

*******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. ***

Lake Merritt Institute Partners with Ocean Conservancy to Analyze Trash



The California Coastal Commission awarded The Lake Merritt Institute a \$12,000 grant to continue and improve our Clean Lake Program. We are very grateful to the CCC for their support. In partnership, LMI volunteers are now using the Ocean Conservancy Clean Swell app to help characterize the trash we remove from the shore and water of Lake Merritt. You can see the results here:

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



OUR WILDLIFE AT RISK – A guest article by local citizen, Lyla Arum

One evening in October, I saw a flighted American White Pelican with a six inch fishing lure and weight hooked into it's left wing. You could see it dangling when the pelican flew and dragging in the water when it swam. It also had fishing line tangled between both wings and several feathers from the right wing appeared damaged or about to fall out.

Since the pelican could both swim and fly, there was not much to do except file as many reports as possible to alert interested parties. This included notifying Oakland Animal Services and the California Department of Fish & Wildlife. I also left word at International Bird Rescue (IBR) that a white pelican, if caught, could be arriving for medical care.

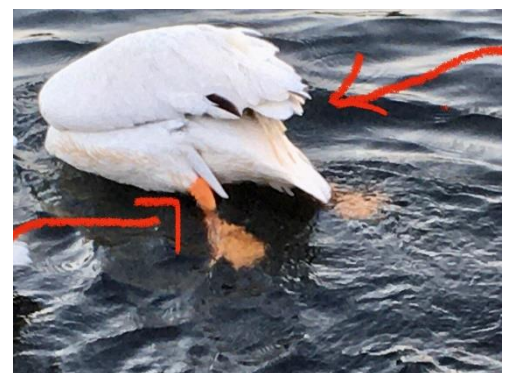


Photo by Lyla Arum, 2020

Since the pandemic, there has been a big uptick in the number of people fishing at the lake both day and night. When I recently asked two Oakland Police Officers about this situation, they shrugged their shoulders stating there was not much they could do since, even if it were illegal to fish at Lake Merritt (and *it is* illegal), there were no signs around the lake forbidding it. I personally saw a fisherman cast his line and accidentally hook a Canada Goose. It was awful. He joked that it was the second one their group had hooked in two days.

Unfortunately, it's not just fishermen who are harming the wildlife, but also people with their motorized toy racing boats, drones, stand up paddlers, etc. I'm not sure how we address all of these issues, but it is starting to take a toll on the wildlife at Lake Merritt like this injured white pelican. Perhaps the first step is for the City of Oakland to install multiple signs around the lake stating that it is illegal to fish at Lake Merritt.



Photo by Lee Aurich, 2013

CLIMATE CORNER: THE GREAT STORM IS OVER - by Dr. Richard Bailey

*Original words and music by Bob Franke: Modified to reflect our lives in 2020.

Alleluia the great storm is over,
Lift up your wings and fly.

Evil and corruption gave voice to the night,
Democracy and honor cried out in their fright,
Hush America, a story I will tell,
Of a people that have vanquished
The powers of hell.

Sweetness in the air and justice on the wind,
Laughter in the house where the virus has been,
The truth shall have music and science have new eyes,
The threat of autocracy taken down by surprise.

Release for the immigrants, an end to the wall,
The Paris Agreement, new hope for all,
The common people will dance as they sing,
When a vaccine is approved in the spring.



Pre-existing conditions, let go of your fear,
The promise of health care for all is here,
A stimulus act in Congress will pass,
With jobs for all, regardless of class.

Racial justice we all can embrace,
With love for our neighbor regardless of race,
Mr. Trump will be gone, his legacy in tatters,
His ridiculous tweets will not even matter.

Education and health care homelessness will
defeat,
As wealthy and poor together will meet,
Corruption will die and be put in its grave,
And together we all the planet shall save.

Please fill out this form and mail to:

The Lake Merritt Institute – New Member
568 Bellevue Avenue
Oakland, CA 94610

All contributions are tax deductible and support Institute programs.

name: _____

address: _____

city, state, zip code: _____

e-mail: _____

Membership level – choose one

\$35 Cormorant (newsletter available via electronic mail only at this level)

The following membership levels include either email newsletter, or paper copy via US mail

Please circle your preference: email or US Mail

\$50 Snowy Egret

\$50 Blue Heron

\$100 Business/Swan

\$250 Leopard Shark

\$500 Striped Bass

\$1000 Least Tern

Document named LMI New Member Application last revised 2020.07.06



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

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