

# The Lake Merritt Institute

A COMMUNITY BASED, NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

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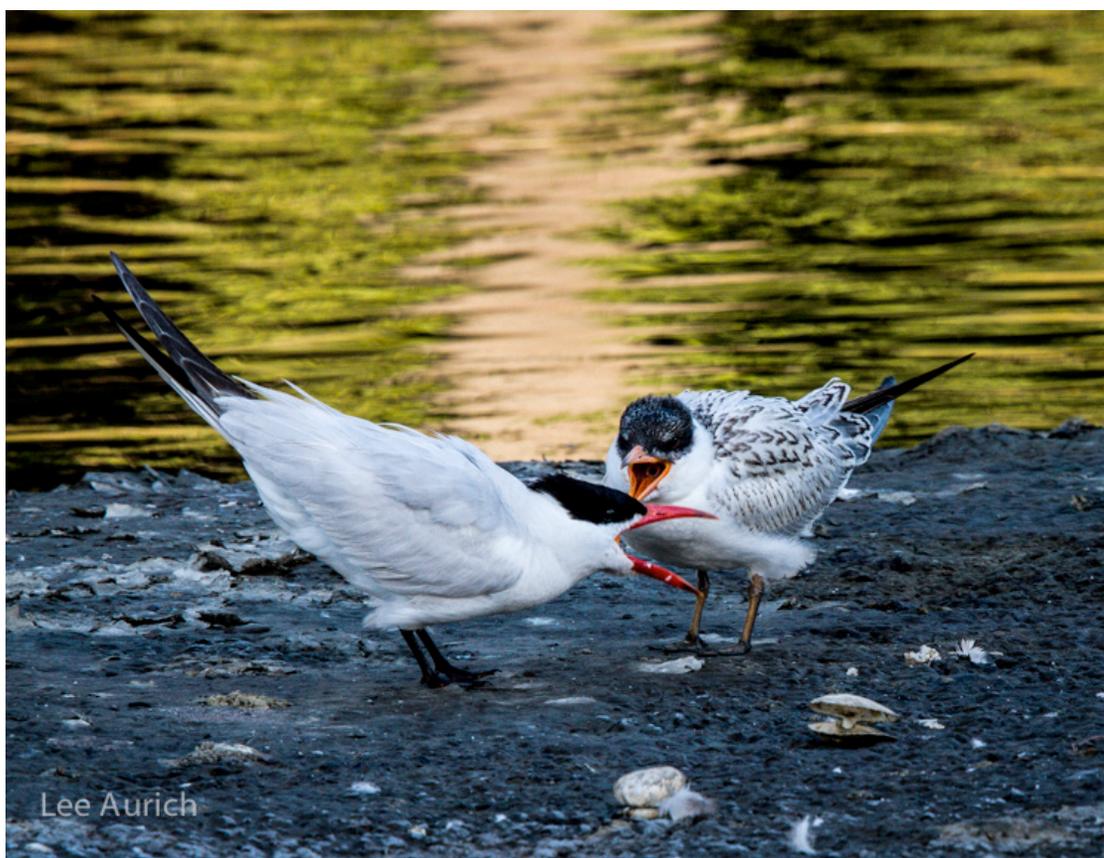
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**BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME:** And they (the birds) are coming. It was not yet born, and may not have been had the bulldozers not dug out soil adjacent to the channel connecting Lake Merritt to the estuary. What the big yellow machines created was a tidal marsh and it has apparently become home to a baby Killdeer recently seen nearby. Finally, after years of talk, years of planning, years of funding and years of construction, we have a salt marsh worthy its association with Lake Merritt.



Caspian terns at the channel marsh. Photo by Lee Aurich

Regarding what this means to our fine feathered friends, this word from Joel Peter:

"...I went down to the new tidal marsh late on Saturday, and saw quite a bit of bird life. Two Caspian terns were sitting at the marsh, loudly squawking whenever a third tern tried to land. A hawk chased a pigeon overhead, but didn't catch it. A couple of adult kingfishers tried to distract me as I poked about the pickleweed on the marsh plain, and sure enough a young kingfisher appeared, still with a bit of fuzz in his plumage. And the usual mallards, juvenile night heron, and Canada geese were present as well. Considering we started with sterile soil and there hasn't been enough time for many benthic organisms to move in and provide food, it's nice to already see the area attract so much bird life. Bodes well for the future as the marsh develops a food web."

Some may say, “so what, there are many other areas where these birds live.” But given the demands of our responsibility-riddled lives, most of us cannot travel to such places. So it is nice to welcome these creatures into Lake Merritt’s back yard.

This does however, raise the question: What to call this iconic habitat? Well, considering his enormous contributions made to our understanding of Oakland natural history, how about “The Paul Covel Marsh?” If you think this is a good idea, forward your comments to the Oakland Measure DD Community Coalition at [www.waterfrontaction.org/dd/](http://www.waterfrontaction.org/dd/)

**CLIMATE CORNER:** (From the Environmental Defense Fund)

“ ... while we’ve been busy promoting climate solutions, the billionaire Koch brothers—Charles and David Koch—have been funneling tens of millions of dollars into an under-the-radar campaign to pressure more than 400 federal and state officials to sign a climate obstruction pledge. The entire U.S. House Republican leadership has signed it, as has a third of the House as a whole and a quarter of the U.S. Senate.

With a combined net worth of nearly \$70 billion, Charles and David Koch are among the richest people on earth. They run Koch Industries, one of the largest privately owned companies in the world with annual revenues of \$115 billion. Yet, instead of dedicating their vast fortune to helping develop clean energy solutions that will give hope to future generations, they’re the largest funders of climate obstruction and denial.”

Part of their fortune comes from the sale of products such as “Brawny” paper towels, “Angel Soft” toilet paper, “Mardi Gras” napkins and towels, “Quilted Northern” toilet paper and paper towels, “Dixie” paper plates, bowls, napkins and cups, “Sparkle” paper towels, and “Vanity Fair” paper napkins, bowls, plates and tablecloths. You might want to keep that in mind when shopping for such products.



Along the lines of good news, this just in from [team@350.org](mailto:team@350.org):

“In the past week, President Obama has delivered some straight talk on Keystone XL:

"I meant what I said; I'm going to evaluate this based on whether or not this is going to significantly contribute to carbon in our atmosphere."

"That oil is going to be piped down to the Gulf to be sold on the world oil markets, so it does not bring down gas prices here in the United States."

"Putting all your eggs in the basket of an oil pipeline that may only create about 50 permanent jobs ... isn't a jobs plan."

Wow.

These comments are the result of years of relentless organizing by folks across the country (and the world) to put pressure on the President. More than 1400 people have been arrested, including some last week, and tens of thousands more have taken to the streets in protests against the pipeline.

In fact, since March, President Obama and his closest advisers have been met by protests at 30 different events -- from Washington, DC to Warrensburg, Missouri to Cape Town, South Africa. Each time the message is simple: keeping your promises on climate change means standing up to the tar sands and stopping Keystone XL."



*A Black Crowned Night Heron dabbles at our new channel marsh.  
Note the red eye which aids in night vision.  
Photo by Lee Aurich*

### **BIRD COLUMN:** Humming Summer Around the Lake

The air was full of Anna's Hummingbirds (the green-backed variety that live here all year), buzzing and diving all over Lakeside Park. Aggressive little guys, and not just with each other; we saw one chase a crow into a tree! I swear, if hummingbirds were the size of pigeons, you wouldn't dare leave the house.

The lake was in its usual summer drowse - the Double-crested Cormorant rookery seems to be closing down early this year (only about a quarter of the nests still occupied), and the swimming birds mainly reduced to Canada Geese, Mallards and mutt ducks, a few Pied-billed Grebes showing off their bright black-striped white beaks, and a lonely American Coot. And the gulls, of course - in order of size, Ring-billed, California, and Western. (The California Gulls have both black and red spots on their bill tips.)

Hank-the-Rescue-Pelican had a dozen or so wild friends lounging on one of the islands, and we got glimpses of four species of long-legged waders: Black-crowned Night-Heron, Green Heron, Snowy Egret, and Great Egret - but only the first in any significant numbers. All big birds; the juvenile Cooper's Hawk lounging on one of the islands may have been keeping the small-bird count down out there.

Over in the trees, the main delight was a family of robins feeding their fledglings in the grass. The Nuttall's Woodpecker (black and white ladder back) was a welcome sight, too. All told, we saw only 28 species, but it was another lovely day at the lake, where every day....

**A NEW FOUNTAIN FOR LAKE MERRITT:** You can see it at Lakeshore and 18<sup>th</sup> Street. It's an aeration fountain, but different from others in the Lake. We got tired of having propellers fall off and having to send them back to the factory, so we ordered this new aerator from a different company. It has cool burning diode lights (which do not have to be submerged) and can be fitted with colorful filters, so look for varying displays as the seasons change. Several different spray-pattern nozzles came with it, so you may be seeing various water designs in the future too. The draft is smaller, so it doesn't touch the bottom at low tide and the intake screen is higher (which we hope will not result in more barnacle growth and trash occlusion. If it works out and we can find enough money (~\$6,000) we can replace the Bandstand fountain (which is also in very shallow water due to the new tidal regime) with one like this one. Parts from the retired fountain will save us money on future repairs. So if you like what you see, consider making a donation to the future fountain fund.

## RECENT SCENES FROM THE LAKE



*A famous Indian keeps this sacred spot free from trash.*



*Visit the Bonzai Display Garden. You'll like it!*

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