The Lake Merritt Institute
A COMMUNITY BASED, NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

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“Tidings” is an editorial newsletter. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the City of Oakland.

PSSSST: WANT TO SEE A GREAT, NEW LAKE MERRITT WEBSITE? Then go to:
http://www.lakemerritt.org/

- Home
- Lake Merritt Links
- LM Sites of Interest
- Birds
- Gardens
- People
- Recreation
- News&Contact
- more...

This fantastic compilation of photos and information is the creation of John Kirkmire, a member of the Institute board of directors, author and photographer. Complete with videos (some are even accompanied by music) this new resource provides details on the many activities that are ongoing around the Lake. You can spend many happy hours browsing the sights and scenes, recognizing some of the folks who frequent our lagoon, finding out what you didn’t know about and catching up on the latest news. Were Sam Merritt still here, he would be proud.

HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER: If you’re reading this and you are not a member of the Lake Merritt Institute, you can thank a real member and the City of Oakland for maintaining Lake Merritt for you. Or, you can join the 125+ dedicated folks whose $50 or more a year support our work at the Lake, and get yourself a monthly newsletter. Just send in this form. All contributions are tax deductible to the extent of the law and support Institute programs.

Name: ____________________________ ____  Address: _____________________ (B+W copy via mail)
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MAIL TO: THE LAKE MERRITT INSTITUTE, 568 BELLEVUE AVENUE, OAKLAND, CA 94610

( ) $50 Snowy Egret Member   ( ) $75 Blue Heron Member
( ) $100 Business/Swan Member   ( ) $250 Leopard Shark Member
( ) $500 Striped Bass Member   ( ) $1,000 Least Tern Members
**RIVER OTTER SEEN AT DOCK:** Nobody remembers seeing one here before, but there it was, staring back at the camera.

This is a river otter, not a sea otter, and other sightings have been reported nearby, including at a marina in Alameda. He (she?) did not say if it came down from one of the creeks/storm drains, or swam in through the channel. And why not have an otter here? We have plenty to eat for them, and the people are friendly. But don’t be too friendly; if you see one, keep your dog away and do not try to feed it, like our overly enthusiastic neighbors in San Francisco did when one appeared at the Sutro Baths. Ah Lake Merritt, where every day has a surprise.

**CLIMATE CORNER – THE FURTHER DEBATES OF JOE AND SCHMOE:**

Schmoe – These all electric cars are a waste of money.
Joe – Tell you what: You give me reasons why they are bad, and for each one, I’ll give you a reason why they are good.
Schmoe – OK. They don’t go far enough.
Joe – Most go at least 74 miles without a charge and charging stations are popping up everywhere. You can charge them at home or at work too. Seventy four miles is more than most people drive in one day.
Schmoe – They cost too much.
Joe – You get really big tax rebates when you buy one.
Schmoe – They look funny.
Joe – You don’t have to pay for tune ups; no spark plugs etc.
Schmoe – I don’t like ‘em.
Joe – You don’t have to pay to replace anti-freeze, thermostats, radiators, hoses etc. because there is no cooling system.
Schmoe – You have to plug them in.
Joe – Running on electricity is about 1/3 cheaper than gas; no heat energy is wasted out the tail pipe.
Schmoe – I still don’t like ‘em.
Joe – You can go in the car pool lane and save time.
Schmoe – Well, you, uh, uh.
Joe – You don’t have to pay for mufflers, belts, air filters or catalytic converters.
Schmoe – Be Quiet!
Joe – You don’t have to pay for oil or oil changes.
Schmoe – Shut up!
Joe – They don’t pollute the air.
Schmoe – Shut up! Where’s my Hummer?
Joe – They don’t make them any more.

P.S. No smog checks either!

AND: Ask newspapers to follow LA Times’ lead to reject letters that deny climate science.

BIRD COLUMN: Osprey at Lake Merritt
For the first time in a decade and more of 4th Wednesdays at the lake, the October Golden Gate Audubon walkers were treated to the sight of an Osprey - a hook-billed, crested gray-and-white fish eagle. And not just a fly-over; it was sitting on one of the dead trees on the islands, taking its ease for half an hour or so from the time we first noticed it. (A few years ago, someone suggested putting up an Osprey nest platform at the lake, and I laughed; as well try to coax in an elephant. But maybe... if we see a few more... and the new water access brings in a few more big fish....)

And that was only the highlight. A big raft of scaup - probably both Greater and Lesser Scaup - had showed up in the last few days, almost all juveniles. (Well, the males were mostly juveniles, with a lot of brown on their soon-to-be-white wings; with the all-brown females, who can tell?) We also had Ruddy Ducks (not ruddy at this season, but with their jaunty tails pointed skyward) on the lake, along with one Clark's Grebe (the big gray-and-white bird with the long snaky neck, this one with a candy-corn yellow beak), and a lot of pelicans, both brown and white.

Over in the trees, the warblers and woodpeckers were out in force. Along with the predictable chickadees and titmice and burglar-masked Townsend's Warblers, we had an unusual number of Yellow-rumped Warblers - at least a couple of dozen, foraging on the ground as well as in the trees - plus an Orange-crowned Warbler (olive drab, with olive drab streaks on a yellow breast; another first sighting), both Nuttall's and Downy Woodpeckers (one with a ladder back and the other with a broad white patch between the shoulder blades), a few Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and both Scrub and Steller's Jays - the former uncommon and the latter vanishingly rare at the lake.

All told, we saw 44 species of birds - a great opening to the fall migration season and an all-round good day at Lake Merritt, where every day is a good day...

THE OUTDOOR ASH TRAY PROJECT:
• Plans are being made to install an ash tray or two at McElroy fountain, one of the cigarette butt hotspots in Lakeside Park. This will be a pilot project to see how well they are used.

• Christine Fairless, Susan Porter & students from St. Paul’s School will be presenting their experiences and cigarette butt data from the
Lake Merritt watershed at the “Tobacco Product Litter” session of the Bay Area Trash Summit in San Jose on November 15th.

• The Institute is researching various designs and prices for outdoor ash trays and has purchased two samples.

• Ideally, there would be a proposition on the ballet requiring all establishments (bars, restaurants, convenience stores etc.) with over x butts per linear foot of curb to have an outdoor ash tray available. The lower cost ones ($28 plus shipping) would hardly be a burden on such places. They hold a huge number and would not have to be emptied but once a month or even less. Places not wanting to comply could just clean their sidewalks + curbs weekly. Who wants to head up the campaign?

• Note also that Save the Bay is sponsoring a “Keep Your Butts Out of Our Bay” campaign.

**THEY DON'T DO IT TO YOU:** Check out these ads by Save The Bay and see what would happen if seals and sharks dumped pollution in our environment like we do to them!
http://www.flickr.com/photos/savethebay/5219496864/
http://www.flickr.com/photos/savethebay/5219496794/in/photostream/

**HONORING OUR HERITAGE:** A venerable Lake Merritt establishment is 84 years old this year. The Bellevue Club, located in that beautiful building overlooking the Lake, is hosting a gala event on Sunday, December 8 from 2 – 5 pm at 525 Bellevue Avenue. Tickets ($85 and up) are available by advance purchase only, and cocktail attire is requested. There will be live music, fine wines, lavish hors D’oeuvres, live and silent auctions, a champagne reception with decadent chocolates and tours of the Club. RSVP by 11/25 to The Bellevue Club Foundation, 525 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610-5096.

**RECENT SCENES FROM THE LAKE**

An Eared Grebe devours a pipefish… while dragon boaters compete. Photos by Lee Aurich

This edition of “Tidings” was published entirely with private funding donated to the Lake Merritt Institute, and not with funds from the City of Oakland. To contribute to the Institute, use PayPal at our website or send a check to: The Lake Merritt Institute, 568 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610.