

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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ISSUES II-III

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

Tidal Marsh Restoration Advances Channel and Sailboat House Beach

The Weed Warriors continue to tend the Lake Merritt Channel Tidal Marsh by planting and constructing wire cages to keep the Canada geese away from pickle weed sprouts.

Recently, another citizen stewardship project has taken off at the parking lot beach outside the Lake Merritt Institute office. Students from St. Paul’s School and from Alameda’s Little Explorers put in pickle weed sprouts supplied by Oakland Public Works. The St. Paul’s students are monitoring the site and conducting an experiment to see if wire cages like the ones installed at the channel will allow the pickle weed to establish. If successful, the shoreline will give passers-by a glimpse of what the shoreline may have looked like in the time of Dr. Samuel Merritt when the wildlife refuge was first designated by City Council under his mayorship in 1869.



Local residents and school children are helping to restore the Sailboat House Marsh with pickle weeds.

On the Horizon

The Hines Corporation plans to build a new high rise office building at 415 20th Street (20th and Franklin) in Downtown Oakland. It would offer four stories of parking and green spaces open to the public on several levels. The 600-foot building would become the highest building in Oakland, and this has some wildlife-lovers concerned. Tall buildings can alter wind patterns and if lit up at night can disorient migrating birds (see The Tidings Oct. 2017). If you would like to find out more or give public input, contact the planner, Rebecca Lind at rlind@oaklandca.gov.



LMI in JANUARY: 3990 gallons of trash were removed from the lake by staff and volunteers in DECEMBER. Total gallons collected to date in 2021 is **3,990 gallons**.

LMI Director James Robinson and Staff hosted **25 volunteers** and attended 1 meeting.
0.00 inches rain were recorded in Jan at Oakland Airport

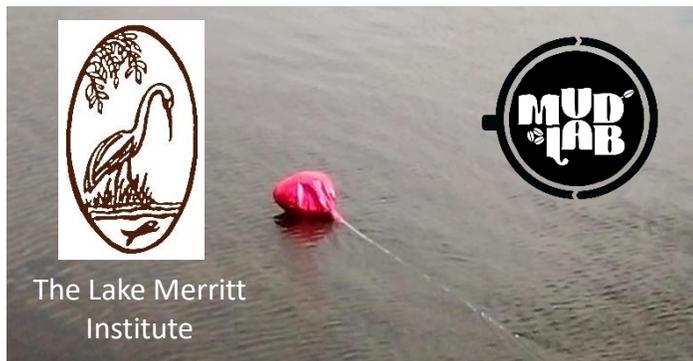
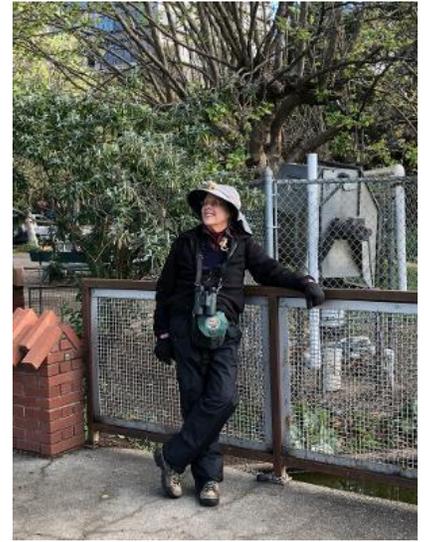
LAKESIDE CHATS FEATURE LAKE MERRITT TOPICS

Rotary Nature Center Friends is hosting a series of interactive, free, online talks about a wide range of Lake Merritt natural history and community topics. The series is called “Lakeside Chats,” and takes place from 7-8 p.m. on the first Friday of the month (generally). On February 5th, Hilary Powers, our guest editorial columnist for The Tidings, took participants on a virtual bird walk at Lake Merritt. She shared her love of birding and introduced viewers to the fascinating habits of species commonly seen at the first wildlife refuge in the United States. You can read Hilary’s bird walk column every month in [The Tidings](#) newsletter of The Lake Merritt Institute.

If you missed the program, you can view the recording on YouTube at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Seg7BEtPhzk>

Please share this with colleagues and friends!



In April 9th, The Lake Merritt Institute’s Dr. Richard Bailey and Vanessa Pope of MudLab will be guest speakers at the program entitled “Nature versus Nasty: From Our Hands to Planet Earth.” You can register for free by Eventbrite link at:

<https://lakesidechat4-lakemerrittinstitute-and-mudlab.eventbrite.com>

A zoom link will be sent to you before the program. Please register before 6 p.m. on April 9th to be sure to receive the link in time.

You can find links to Eventbrite registrations for future Lakeside Chats and YouTube recordings for past Lakeside Chats at: [Rotary Nature Center Friends](https://sites.google.com/view/stem-at-lake-merritt/home). <https://sites.google.com/view/stem-at-lake-merritt/home>

City of Oakland Lake Merritt Survey: LOVE THE LAKE?

The City of Oakland is asking for your thoughts about Lake Merritt issues. Please take time to fill out this brief online survey. The survey is an excellent place to express support, even more support, for the good work of The Lake Merritt Institute. LMI removes thousands of pounds, or gallons, of trash from the lake every

LOVE THE LAKE?

We want your ideas!

The City of Oakland is looking for feedback about Lake Merritt.

Scan this to take the survey!

Or use this LINK!

CITY OF OAKLAND

Let us know your thoughts about:

- Street vending
- Traffic and parking
- Cleanliness and the environment
- Quality of life issues
- The top issues you care about

Take the survey at:
oaklandca.gov/lakemerritt

Or, scan this to take the survey!

month. An open Rotary Nature Center with active naturalists and exhibits relating to climate change, biodiversity and stewardship would create a more positive atmosphere supporting taking care of the lake. Six-hundred people walk past the RNC in an hour on a sunny non-covid day.

CITIZEN WATER QUALITY REPORT

Water quality was measured by St. Paul's Episcopal Middle School Students on February 27th, 2021 at the Lake Merritt Boating Center dock.

Temperature: 13 degC at the top/12.8 degC at the bottom
(55.5 deg Fahrenheit at the top/54.5 deg Fahrenheit at the bottom)

Dissolved Oxygen 7 parts per million (ppm) at the top/8 ppm at the bottom.
(Meets EPA standard)

Salinity 30 parts per thousand (ppt) top/34 ppt bottom (**unseasonably salty**)
pH: 7.4 at the top/7.8 at the bottom

At right, St. Paul's Episcopal Middle School teacher Tony Bald's students measure dissolved oxygen with a colorimetric test.



Student Lake Merritt Water Quality Monitoring 20-year data set is now up on <https://cd3.sfei.org/> and the State Water Boards thanks to funds donated by LMI. The Lake Merritt Institute mentors this citizen science project and is listed as the sponsoring organization. Thank you, LMI, for supporting K12-community college education. Rotary Nature Center Friends has organized youth participation in water testing at the lake since 2017.

THE CLEAN LAKE PROGRAM IS OPEN!



LMI's Executive Director and Board of Directors have resumed weekly trash removal operations in accordance with Alameda County and City Covid-19 regulations. The A-Team is back in action in time for the rainy season. If you would like to join the A-Team and other experienced volunteers who remove trash from the water at Lake Merritt, email James Robinson at lmi@netwiz.net. He will arrange for your training by an experienced volunteer. If you would like to bring a group of volunteers or use the U-Clean-It stations, contact James at lmi@netwiz.net or call the LMI office at (510) 238-2290 and leave a message so that he can explain our policy for volunteering and assist you in proper training to participate in the Clean Lake Program.



To all our subscribers: If you receive a hard copy newsletter in the mail, or pick it up from a coffee shop, library or the volunteers at the You-Clean-It boxes, please consider switching your paid subscription from a print version of The Tidings to an electronic version. The Tidings will be emailed to you instead of snail mailed. This will help the LMI save on the cost of paper and envelopes, printing and postage, and the photos are in COLOR! A-Team volunteers must meet in person to stuff newsletters into envelopes each month. To request the email version please email lmi@netwiz.net with "Requesting email version" in the subject line.

CLIMATE CORNER: SOME PEOPLE JUST DON'T GET IT

-- A Guest Editorial by Dr. Richard Bailey

I foolishly responded to a social media post that was in favor of a proposed 28 pump gas station at a Costco store. My comments were:

1. That gasoline as a fuel needs to be phased out if our children are to have a livable planet. Unless carbon levels in the air stop increasing in about 10 years, and then decline by at least 16% from where they are now, the fires, smoke, increase in disease, flooding, sea level rise, climate immigration and shortages of food and water that we are experiencing now will overwhelm our ability to continue living as we know it.

2. Gasoline is currently being phased out.

<https://www.marketwatch.com/story/how-many-gas-stations-are-in-us-how-many-will-there-be-in-10-years-2020-02-16>

The following auto manufacturers have publicly committed to producing electric vehicles: General Motors (all vehicles, all electric by 2035); Tesla (now); Rivian (now); Toyota (half of sales from electrified vehicles by 2025; Volkswagen (40% of its global fleet by 2030); Volvo (50% of its global sales from EVs by 2025). Other companies (Fiat – Chrysler, BMW, Nissan, Honda) will be selling dozens of new electric models in the next 2-5 years. These vehicles will sell because prices are dropping; they are cheaper to operate (about 110 mpg compared to gas using cars), range is already high enough for almost every user and is steadily increasing, more charging stations are being installed. Maintenance is much lower than that of pollution spewing models; and (for those who care) acceleration is faster.

3. We have enough convenient gas stations already anyway to fill current demand. When was the last time you had to wait in line at a gas station?

Sure enough, a reply to my comments was quickly posted. The writer supported more gas stations because the alternative, electricity, was a major producer of carbon dioxide, and included a pie chart showing electricity as producing 33% of the carbon dioxide in the U.S. Well yes, making electricity does produce carbon dioxide but -duh- that is because fossil fuels are burned to produce electricity. I'm not sure if the writer was deliberately misled, or was unable to understand that electricity can be produced without burning fossil fuels.

The reply went on to say that until we find ways to produce electricity without producing carbon dioxide, we will need gasoline! Hello: We have those ways - they are called solar panels, wind generators, hydroelectric power, solar thermal power, and the generators on electric vehicles that charge the car battery every time you brake or slow down. These sources of power are growing rapidly. According to <https://bcse.org/factbook/?> in 2020, despite the pandemic, the combined new 33.6 gigawatts of new renewable energy were more than 50% higher than the previous record set in 2016. Yes, gasoline is still needed, but its demise as a source of energy is rapidly approaching. To those willing to look (and not be blinded by fossil fuel propaganda), the writing is on the wall, and in economic reports.

Foolishly the discussion continued, (you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink, i.e., some people will never change their positions). I noted that the coal industry is dying, and forward-thinking people are already transitioning away from natural gas (e.g., heat pump hot water heaters and space heating/air conditioning; bans on gas in new construction, induction stoves). That triggered the exhortation that assumptions were being confused with facts. Does that sound familiar?

In summary, we still need gasoline, but we don't need more new gas stations. Gasoline is not going away overnight, and won't until our addiction to it is broken. Until then, its use will continue to make our climate emergency worse. Because of this emergency, a huge new gas station at a Costco store should not be built just so some people can save a few pennies a gallon.

The real solution that prominent economists say we must enact, is a fee on carbon emissions levied at the well, port of entry or mine (not at the gas pump) and given in equal payments to all Americans, which stimulates the economy, pushes fossil fuel companies to become renewable energy companies, supports individual choice but nudges it, and provides a monthly income to those that need it the most. Maybe the political structure will finally agree on that. And maybe those more interested in their personal wellbeing at the expense of everyone else will come around and stop supporting new gas stations.

Big Day Between Storms at Lake Merritt - by Hilary Powers – Golden Gate Audubon Society



Mew Gull; Photo by Donna Pomeroy, iNaturalist 2014

Or at any rate, the January still-not-Golden-Gate-Audubon walk was a big day for species count – 55 in all, counting two reported from midafternoon, a tie with the 2014 record for the month – but what the five of us (three birders and two leaders) were mostly saying was “Where are all the birds?” Numbers of individuals, especially scaup, were way low, leaving large expanses of the lake almost empty. But only almost. Comforting ourselves by figuring the absentees were probably feeding elsewhere in calm waters, and with what we *could* see (eventually including two kinds of merganser drake, among the most decorative ducks to visit us here), we settled into our usual practice of savoring what was before our eyes. That began with the barrier floats, occupied by a few dozen Black-crowned Night-Herons of all ages, plus Hank-the-rescue-pelican, a Great Blue Heron, a Snowy Egret, and almost no gulls at all. The Red-breasted Merganser drake (gray slacks, black sweater, and rust cravat) swam off to the right of the floats, and a few Common Goldeneyes bobbed up and down beside them.

Then we headed round to the bird paddock, enjoying the ride-‘em sheep toy still clinging to its spot by the dome cage door. The paddock

was also relatively thin of company, but our female Northern Pintail was still in residence, standing on the edge of the pond and showing off her slate-gray feet – a big contrast with the orange-footed Mallards.

Along the lake shore, the first Mew Gull since 2019 sat in a line of ringbills, wearing its signature soda straw bill. Nearby, a pair each of Clark’s and Western Grebes – the big ones with the long white necks – swam together, close enough to make it easy to tell them apart. (The standard word is that a Clark’s Grebe has white feathers around its beady red eye while a Western has black, but that only works in breeding plumage; the rest of the year, they’re all gray there. But you can still tell them apart by the color of the beak: Clark’s wear bright yellow, almost candy-corn, while Western have a more greeny-mustard tint.)

The day’s mystery slept on one of the near islands: a biggish lump lying perpendicular to the shore, black head twisted round and buried in a black back between bright white sides, with screaming orange bits on the ground in the middle. Huh what? Mutt Mallard? Careful observation showed the hint of a crest stirring along the back of the head, and that – coupled with the female Common Merganser cruising elegantly in front of the island – told us that this must be a male of the same species... in the least graceful pose ever encountered.

Wherever we went, lots of White-crowned Sparrows bounced through the grass, except along Bellevue outside the park, where they were Western Bluebirds instead. That was another treat, since we’d dipped on bluebirds the past two months despite being sure they had to be around somewhere. (They still feel like a novelty even though we’ve been seeing them here since 2013.)

As one does, we spent the latter part of the morning talking about regulars not seen yet – most notably, chickadees and titmice. Even the garden seemed chickadee-free from one end to the other, until we turned back toward the redwood grove hoping for Pine Siskins (little jewels with bright yellow wing bands, said to be unusually common in the area this year). Not a siskin to be found, but suddenly we were surrounded by Chestnut-backed Chickadees, hopping through the bushes at eye level and bouncing down to the path – to join the Oak Titmice foraging there. Ask and (at least some of) it shall be granted!

Also, under the trees, we encountered the third of the day’s three hawks, a young Red-tailed Hawk that glided in to perch about 12 feet up and sit, and sit, and turn around and sit some more, allowing us to observe every feather. The Cooper’s Hawk that shot through the branches like a bullet and disappeared and the Red-shouldered Hawk that circled overhead were both delights, but couldn’t compare for satisfaction.

Cedar Waxwings, dapper and almost sinister in their black masks, moved from tree to bare tree in front of the Garden Center, seeming to multiply as they went. It takes much better counting skills than my one-two-three-many to begin to guess their numbers even when they stay put, and these just didn’t. And nor did we. By then it was well past noon, and we went off in search of fodder of our own, happy with yet another in Lake Merritt’s unbroken chain of good good days.

*******AUDUBON BIRDWALKS AT THE LAKE:** Join bird expert Hilary Powers any fourth Wednesday of the month for a free “Bird walk” 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. ***



TIME TO MAKE A CHARITABLE DONATION TO THE LAKE MERRITT

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. Help us preserve our beautiful and hard-working lake in the heart of downtown Oakland.

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.

“The Tidings” is published by the Lake Merritt Institute (LMI) entirely with private funding donated to LMI, and not with funds from the City of Oakland. To contribute to LMI, use PayPal at the LMI website (lakemerrittinstitute.org) or send a check to: Lake Merritt Institute, 568 Bellevue Ave., Oakland, CA 94610-5026. LMI is a California State non-profit corporation; IRS Code 501(c)(3); EIN 94-