



Lake Merritt Institute

THE TIDINGS

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FALL ISSUE

“The Tidings” is a publication of the Lake Merritt Institute, and is neither funded by, nor does it represent the opinions of the City of Oakland.

SF BAY REGIONAL WATER BOARD FIELD TRIP TO LAKE MERRITT



Can we prevent another deadly algal bloom in Lake Merritt? After the devastating impact it had on the lake’s ecosystem, the San Francisco Regional Water Quality Board is taking action—and the Lake Merritt Institute recently hosted their field trip to the lake. Nearly 100 water quality board staff members joined us to discuss the future of Lake Merritt’s water health. LMI’s Executive Director, James Robinson, shared insights about the lake, while the water board unveiled a comprehensive plan to address key issues like low dissolved oxygen and excess nutrients. Their strategy includes:

- Forming a Technical Advisory Committee
- Continuous nitrate monitoring
- Nutrient testing of sediment
- Developing a Water Board Restoration Plan
- Supporting the City of Oakland’s Lake Management Plan
- Engaging with community stakeholders

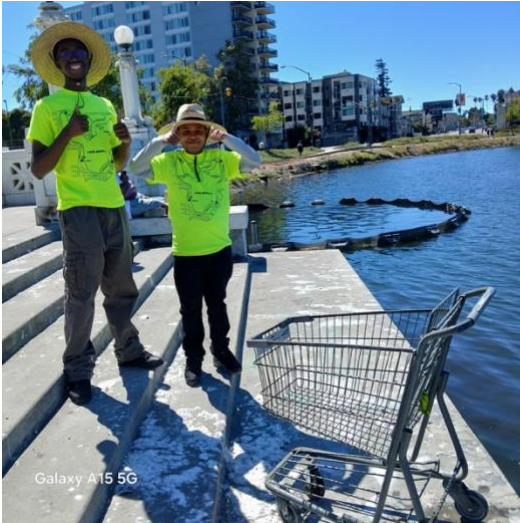


Imagine a cleaner, healthier Lake Merritt—where the water teems with life, free from harmful algal blooms. The collaboration between scientists, local governments, and passionate community members is laying the groundwork to restore this vital ecosystem. Through careful study of nutrient levels, dissolved oxygen, and sediment health, we’re moving closer to lasting solutions.

For the full article of *The Tidings* in color, visit <https://lakemerrittinstitute.org/tidings>

RAY OF HOPE SPOTLIGHT

In memory of Ray Perman



This month, our *Ray of Hope* spotlight shines on two outstanding externs who have gone above and beyond in their efforts to become stewards of Lake Merritt. From removing trash to assisting with event setups and learning water quality testing, they've played a key role in improving the lake's environment.

As their externship wraps up at the end of October, LMI will thank them with gift cards, and Tora Rocha has generously provided tickets for them and their families to attend the Autumn Light Festival.

A special thank you to Tora Rocha, Elena Bermeo, and the Rising Sun Fellows for making this possible. LMI takes pride in offering young people meaningful life and work experience.

'Tis the Season for Giving!

This holiday season, we hope you'll consider donating to LMI. Your support helps us continue our work in keeping Lake Merritt clean and beautiful. Plus, all donations are tax-deductible!

Pictured here are our new nets, funded by generous contributions from supporters like you.

To contribute to LMI, use Network for Good at the LMI website (lakemerrittinstitute.org) or send a check to:

Lake Merritt Institute, 568 Bellevue Ave., Oakland, CA 94610

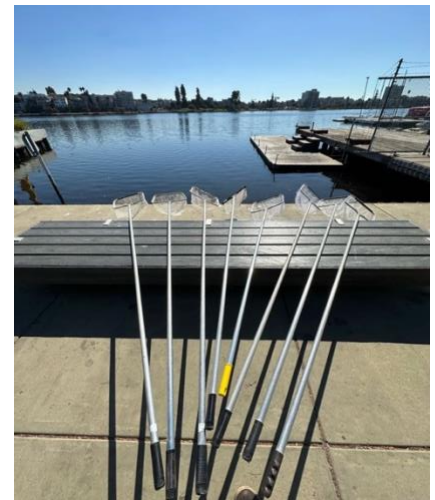
LMI is a California State non-profit corporation; IRS Code 501(c)(3): EIN 94-3214160

As a supporter, you play a critical role in this journey. Stay informed and be part of the change by subscribing to our newsletter and visiting our website for updates. Together, we can restore Lake Merritt to its full glory. Visit lakemerrittinstitute.org today to learn more and get involved. The full version of *The Tidings* is available on our website.

LMI Clean Up Days

Join the Lake Merritt Institute's public cleanup days every Tuesday and Saturday at 10 am! We meet at 568 Bellevue Ave and provide all the necessary supplies and safety training. It's a great way to connect with the community and help protect Oakland's beloved lake.

For teams, classrooms, and groups, email us at info@lakemerrittinstitute.org to schedule.



THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR VOLUNTEERS!

A big thank you to our dedicated weekly and new volunteers who came out to help us clean the Lake in October: The A-Team, Saturday Volunteers, Park Day Middle School, Norvartis BioMedical and Regional Water Quality Board.

Check out more news, volunteer recognition and photos on LMI's [social media blog](https://lakemerrittinstitute.org/blog/) at <https://lakemerrittinstitute.org/blog/>.



Suzanne, our volunteer extraordinaire! Thank you!

LMI NOV 2024 Trash Report: In October 2024, the Lake Merritt Institute set a new monthly record by removing **8,190 gallons of trash**, bringing the year's total to **62,190 gallons**. With 234 volunteers, LMI also safely disposed of 25 used hypodermic needles, highlighting the community's commitment to a cleaner, safer Lake Merritt.
0 inches of rain were reported at OAK Int'l Airport

Park Day Middle School Students Dive Into Science and Service



Students from Park Day Middle School enjoyed a fantastic day of exploration and volunteerism at Lake Merritt. Through hands-on marine science activities and trash removal, they learned how cleaning the lake directly improves water quality.

By conducting water tests, they assessed the health of the lake, gaining valuable insights into its ecosystem.

If your school is interested in a similar experience—learning about the science of Lake Merritt while helping to clean up its waters—please contact us at info@lakemerrittinstitute.org.



Lake Merritt Water Quality

Water quality: Dissolved Oxygen (D.O.) in Lake Merritt was between 6-9 ppm for the month of October. D.O. in Lake Merritt needs to be above 5ppm to be in the healthy range. During the red tide of 2022 the D.O. reading at the Boathouse dock was 0.



Measuring salinity with Park Day Middle School students & dissolved oxygen readings with Arise High School students



Arise High School students cleanup after water quality testing

LMI Volunteer Highlights



Piedmont Community Service Crew Students & East Bay Innovation Academy HS



CEO of Energy Solutions and team came out for cleanup

To align with our environmental goals, we're reducing the number of pages in the printed version of *The Tidings*. The email version, however, will remain full-length and in color!

Lake Merritt Institute would like to acknowledge that Lake Merritt is known as Huchiun, the unceded and ancestral territory of the Lisjan Ohlone People.

Please direct questions and comments to info@lakemerrittinstitute.org

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Gray Delights of Lake Merritt

– by Hilary Powers, Golden Gate Bird Alliance Volunteer (September 25th Bird Walk)

The September 4th-Wednesday bird walk began with a Spotted Sandpiper (a universal favorite for its tail-bouncing prow) – but unfortunately, that was before I arrived, though I wasn't late. The two people who beat me to the meeting spot were burbling about it when I arrived – nothing pleases like having seen something someone else missed – but the day quickly crowded out the disappointment.

For starters, the far island really was carpeted with Brown Pelicans of all ages, including lots of white-headed gray adults, making August's visitors look like off-season tourists. This time, we had so many birds competing for every scrap of ground that the late-comers couldn't find any. They were perched in the treetops, which can't be restful for such a huge web-footed flying fortress. White Pelicans were there too, but only four at first – in the water and heading flotilla-fashion for co-leader Lyla, who was waiting with the day's fish for Hank-the-rescue-pelican. (They had to wait for Hank to arrive, but seem to have found the trip worthwhile.)

The sheer numbers of birds confirmed the rising health of the lake. Little gray Forster's Terns once again lined the floats, and Double-crested Cormorants were everywhere. Gray and white adult Black-crowned Night-Herons rejoined the juvenile gang – not really a flock as they mostly stay several yards apart – and the White Pelican population tripled in the course of the day (settling on a different island, not the one the browns had staked out).



We heard the rattle-call of a flying Belted Kingfisher several times, but didn't get a really good look until it flew straight at us, chattering fiercely, attacking not us but the fine adult Red-shouldered Hawk that had quietly appeared out of nowhere to perch on a lamp post overhead. The kingfisher drove at the hawk and chased it off across the gray sky toward the garden, leaving a few awed and puzzled humans in their wake. Why? That kingfisher clearly meant business, but it wasn't defending youngsters (wrong season, and they don't nest at the lake anyway) or food supply (red-shoulders don't eat fish) or its own survival (it swooped in from a block away, and red-shoulders prefer mammalian and reptilian prey). So who knows.... "You killed my father; prepare to die!?" It looked like that.

Left: Red-shouldered Hawk (photo by Johan Langewis, September 25, 2024)

And only a few birders had the chance to see this wonder. For some reason, the human turnout was low, especially to begin with. We dithered around the meeting spot till almost 10 am, slowly assembling only seven guests. Half a dozen others strolled up as we were heading out for the walk, still an unusually small group, though not embarrassing – and not explainable either; the cool gray morning was pleasant after recent heat and not something to inspire people to huddle at home.

Out on the lake, we found a fair number of Pied-billed Grebes and enough American Coots to be a notable population, though not yet approaching the majority-shareholder position they may claim come winter. The substantial gull flock proved to be mostly adult Western Gulls, though we did see a few California Gulls and a couple of Ring-billed Gulls among them.

Great Egrets and Snowy Egrets prowled the shallows, and a young Great Blue Heron cruised in to perch at the spindly top of a neighboring pine. “How can you tell its age?” someone asked. “Look at the neck. It’s dark and streaky, with just a few longer feathers down at the base. An adult would have a pale neck, almost unmarked, ending in a bunch of feathers like a shaggy beard.” This one was probably hatched in 2023, but the season-by-season differences are subtle and not always identical from bird to bird; they generally take three years to reach full adulthood.



Above: Young Great Blue Heron (photo by Lyla Arum, September 25, 2024)

The garden proved quiet, although the day’s first gleam of sun livened things up among the trees. For several in the group, the primary attraction was the moderately well-kept porta-potty hidden off to one edge – the only open seat in the park these days, with all the public toilets except the boathouse locked down tight. Close second (or first for those better endowed in the plumbing department): tiny, shining froglets clutching long leaves near the bee hotel. Or – framed in the dark arch of a low-growing juniper-ish bush – the clutch of white fairy lilies gleaming like the gate to a better world.



Right: Froglet clutching long leaf (photo by Hilary Powers, September 25, 2024)



Quiet, but rich – like the rest of this gray day. All told, and counting the pair of Eared Grebes swimming on the far side of the lake and spotted only because someone told us exactly where to look, we recorded 40 species of birds, well up from last year’s 31 and in line with preceding September totals. Even gray has charms of its own at Lake Merritt, where every day is a good day – regardless of color.

Left: White fairy lilies (photo by Hilary Powers, September 25, 2024)

*****BIRD WALKS AT THE LAKE:** Join Hilary Powers any fourth Wednesday of the month for a bird walk at the lake. Muster at the end of the Boat House parking lot nearest the geodesic dome at 9:30 a.m. for what are always fascinating introductions to local bird life. This trip happens rain or shine. It is free but may ask for advance registration by Golden Gate Bird Alliance on their website.

Register [HERE](#): for November 23rd bird walk.

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