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# THE TIDINGS

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“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.

## SUMMARY OF LAKE MERRITT WATER QUALITY STAKEHOLDER MEETING:

by Dr. Bailey

The meeting was held on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024. About a dozen folks attended in person, and a dozen more via an online connection.

In a nutshell:

- Approval to use the 1 million dollar federal grant for the Healthy Lake Initiative Project was anticipated to be received from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) by January 20, 2025, assuming the appropriation is approved. Specific usages of the money are general now, and can be modified later based on incoming results of nutrient monitoring, continued evaluation of the oxygenation machine, recommendations from the Technical Advisory committee, and the hope that there will still be EPA employees around after the Trump administration is done gutting the agency.
- The oxygenation machine has worked well, when it was working. But there have been significant down times when it was not. This is new technology, and improvements in reliability are needed if it is to be sustainable. It is designed to put out about 20 kg of oxygen today, but the overall lake may need as much as 300 kg/day, so it is likely that several of them would be needed to treat the entire 155 acres if that is the ultimate recommendation. Stay tuned.
- The current study directed by the Regional Water Quality Control Board, an advance restoration plan, has focused on the nutrients nitrogen and phosphorus. Results show that lake productivity (and the potential for plankton blooms) is limited by nitrogen, and the waters of the Glen Echo creek tributary, which drains ~40% of the watershed, is limited by phosphorous. However, data is currently inadequate to identify the specific sources of the nutrients, and future work is needed to identify inputs from the Bay and tributaries; the latter of which may be bringing too much nitrogen into the lake. Lake sediments, which could be removed by dredging, could also be a source of nutrients.
- The Future: Preliminary analysis of the nutrient data is expected by April/May, 2025. Starting this summer, the Technical Advisory Committee should start work, continuous monitoring of nitrogen will



occur, and another stakeholder meeting will be held. Restoration options are to be evaluated by November, 2026 (22 months from now).

Except for continued monitoring, as shown at the city dashboard (<https://www.my.laketechnology.com/public-portal/LakeMerritt>), and partially evaluated in weekly posts at Lake Merritt Commons on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/p/Lake-Merritt-Commons-61554247913101/>), don't expect changes at Lake Merritt any time soon. The one million dollar grant is expected to be appropriated, but if it is befuddled by the current federal administration, the city will be hard pressed to install additional oxygenation, begin long overdue dredging, or implement yet to be determined recommendations.

## RAY OF HOPE SPOTLIGHT

### *In memory of Ray Perman*

This month, we're proud to shine our Ray of Hope spotlight on Paris Organist, a dedicated member of the A Team and a true champion for wildlife. When Paris isn't tirelessly clearing trash from Lake Merritt, he's traveling the globe to rescue endangered sea turtles.

Paris emphasizes how the work we do at Lake Merritt impacts ecosystems far beyond Oakland. "It takes about 100 nests to produce one adult sea turtle," Paris explains. "If that adult is killed by a plastic bag floating out of the lake, it means I need to find and save 100 more nests."

His powerful message serves as a reminder that every action we take to protect our environment can ripple across the world, helping species in need.



## Reflecting on 2024

Thanks to over 1,800 amazing volunteers in 2024, we removed a total of **75,960 gallons of trash** from the shorelines and water of Lake Merritt. Each effort brought us closer to preserving Lake Merritt as a thriving environment for wildlife and our community.

## Thank you MLK Day of Service volunteers!

We kicked off the year at Lake Merritt Institute (LMI) with a successful MLK Day of Service this month. We want to thank all the new and returning volunteers that showed up on Monday, January 20th. Together we removed 53 bags of trash that day!

## Lake Merritt Institute 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 classrooms, teams, and groups, email us at [info@lakemerrittinstitute.org](mailto:info@lakemerrittinstitute.org) to schedule.

### New Year, New Nets!

Renew your support to keep the momentum going.

This season we're saying goodbye to eroded equipment beyond repair and restocking with **new** nets, pickers, and cleanup supplies — and would love your help.

#### All donations are tax-deductible

- ◆ Donate online: [www.lakemerrittinstitute.org](http://www.lakemerrittinstitute.org)
- ◆ Or mail a check to: **Lake Merritt Institute**

568 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610

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



## Bright Morning at Lake Merritt— by Hilary Powers, Golden Gate Bird Alliance Volunteer (November 27<sup>th</sup> Bird Walk)

The lovely day before Thanksgiving drew almost 30 people to the 4th-Wednesday Golden Gate Bird Alliance Walk at Lake Merritt, at least half a dozen on their first-ever bird walk. That gave me the chance to trot out one of my favorite lines, asking the newcomers to identify the medium-sized gray birds with gleaming pinkish necks strolling around on the beach. “Pigeons,” one said, in a “whyever would you bother to ask me *that*” sort of voice. “Yes,” sez I happily, “and that’s where birding starts! You can see it; you don’t have to identify it, you just recognize it like a chair or a human. And the more trips like this you take, the more birds will join this one – and you can feel your brain grow!” That’s the insight that keeps me going....



**Pigeon (photo by Lyla Arum,  
November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024)**

The day's biggest event came right at the end, when only a few were left to see. (The whole walk takes up to three hours, and people drift away as energy and other commitments require.) But those who stuck with us saw the first-ever Golden-crowned Kinglet encountered on one of these trips, a tiny, busy gray bird with a black and white face and a bright yellow mark on the top of its head, working the tall pines near Grand Avenue. There were Western Bluebirds and a Brown Creeper in the area as well, making a wild almost-finale for the trip.



**Western Bluebird (photo by Lyla Arum,  
November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024)**

Not that that was the only high point. We were graced from the start by the birder's hope: a brilliant child (about ten years old) already devoted to the hobby. As we headed out from the starting point, he told me that his biggest wish for the day was a Spotted Sandpiper, which would be the 500th bird for his life list. (Five hundred! Wow. And his mother told me that was real; they travel....) Anyway, not five minutes later, in front of the Rotary Nature Center and sitting on a rock in the lake, there was a Spotted Sandpiper, large as life and twice as cute, summoned up on demand. Our third one this year, but by no means a guaranteed sighting.

As we strolled down toward El Embarcadero, we saw most of the expected winter ducks – the Bufflehead were out in force along with the Ruddy Ducks, and we saw a few Greater Scaup and two Canvasback hens. The largest group of Common Goldeneyes I've ever seen in one spot clustered near the fountain, having made their way down from Alaska and through the Pacific Northwest to brighten our day. We wound up missing only Lesser Scaup among the reliable regulars, and only Barrow's Goldeneye among the unsurprising rarities. We also picked up all three small grebes – Pied-billed, Horned, and Eared – but neither of the large ones (Clark's or Western). So the future still has much to offer! (As always.)

Deep croaking calls drew all eyes to the sky, where we saw not one but *four* ravens, a first-ever count. Ravens tend to be solitary or in pairs, at least as adults. (Youngsters in wild places can form large gangs, in part because sheer numbers give them a chance to displace their elders from a tasty carcass.) But what we had here were two couples, each gliding almost wingtip to wingtip and circling lazily, crossing paths with the other pair and drifting apart and back together with hardly a flap among them. The display gave us plenty of time to observe one of the other raven field marks, the way the tail forms a long diamond shape when spread in flight. (A crow – which says “Caw!” and not “Grrork!” – spreads its tail in a rounded fan shape, while a raven's tail widens and then narrows to a definite point.)

The ravens were the best of the day, for me. If I had to pick, I'd be a raven. They have *fun* with their lives, like these two couples out for a lazy glide over a lake in the sun....

Crows also have fun, but it's nastier. We saw a lot of crows too, many having their own fun. (“Crows mind their own business,” sez I, “but their business is being evil bastards to hawks!”) While we were admiring the ravens, a small hawk flew low overhead too fast to identify with several crows cawing madly in hot pursuit. They all disappeared over some trees, then the crows emerged to rise after a different and much larger bird, clearly a Red-tailed Hawk. We later spotted a young Red-shouldered Hawk in the same grove and figured that was probably the first victim.

By the time the last few of us got to the garden – after the long detour out to Grand Avenue in pursuit of the Golden-crowned Kinglet – my feet and stomach were putting the prospect of lunch ahead of my will to see yet

more birds. We'd collectively observed 48 species already – a record for the last few years' worth of Novembers – making an altogether satisfactory addition to our string of very good days at Lake Merritt.

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**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 Golden Gate Bird Alliance asks for advance registration on their website.

Register or the next monthly bird walk [here](#)

### **The Tidings Update**

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](mailto:info@lakemerrittinstitute.org)

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- Donate online: [www.lakemerrittinstitute.org](http://www.lakemerrittinstitute.org)
- Or mail a check to:  
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For the full article of *The Tidings* in color, visit <https://lakemerrittinstitute.org/tidings>