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*Goose Management continued...*  
 intensive human use through installation of temporary fences during the summertime, to divert the geese to alternative areas for grazing and refuge.

4. **Waste Collection:** The abundance of Canada goose droppings is a key nuisance factor for many Lake Merritt visitors. Goose waste has only a minor effect on water quality or human health, but it prevents park users from using lakeside paths, picnicking, and other informal recreation. After the public meeting was held last summer, Public Works staff tested the Naturesweep machine, a small tractor designed to sweep up goose poop from lawn surfaces. Waste collection would allow the geese continued presence on all surfaces, while also maintaining cleaner paths for walkers and joggers and cleaner turf for families and picnickers.

City staff will be bringing a proposal for implementing goose management techniques to the City Council within the next few months, asking them for approval and funding.



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**THE LAKE MERRITT**  
**INSTITUTE** AN URBAN RUNOFF AND  
 WATERSHED RESEARCH CENTER

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**Goose Management at Lake Merritt**

By Lakshmi Rajagopalan



Primary Use Areas

Lake Merritt is home to a resident population of approximately 200-400 Canada geese that remain throughout the year. Resident Canada geese are those that nest and live at Lake Merritt and do not demonstrate the typical migration patterns to the north and south. In the summer months the population swells to nearly 2,000, as migrant birds arrive seeking a safe and comfortable spot to molt and regrow their flight feathers.

Primary use areas around Lake Merritt include:

- Area north of the Lake in the Adams Point District;
- Southeastern edges of the Lake;
- Along the grassy areas next to Lakeshore Avenue north of Wesley Avenue;
- Lawns adjacent to Lakeview Branch public library;
- Between East 18<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Streets.

The geese can also be found drinking water near the McElroy Fountain, storm drain outlet pipes, gutters, and puddles produced by turf irrigation.

Due to lack of natural predators and stringent protection laws, the goose population has increased, especially in summer. This increase has created a nuisance that has affected the recreational use of the lakeside parks

Due to various factors such as the Lake's State wildlife refuge status, migratory nature of the summer

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population, proximity of residences and abundance of users along the Lake's boundaries, the City's ability to manage the goose situation is limited. Some possible techniques include:

1. **Population Monitoring:** The City can track the seasonal and annual growth or decline, providing a baseline for future adaptive management techniques. Monitoring to date indicates that the resident goose population is relatively small and stable, and reproductive control of those birds is not needed.
2. **Discourage Feeding:** The City can adopt an ordinance restricting feeding of geese and install educational signage reminding visitors that geese should not be fed.
3. **Goose Exclusion Areas:** The City can establish Goose Exclusion Areas that discourage goose flocking in areas of



Possible Exclusion Areas

## Bonsai Trees: Intertwining Nature with Your Soul on

### Lake Merritt

By Kaletha Patterson

Hopefully within one's life there will be moments of greatness, moments of beauty and moments of unexpected bliss that will open one's eyes to new situations, new ways of thinking, and new paths of discovery.

In our fast-paced and congested world, there should also be moments for reflection that can transport individuals from their current state to a relaxed space and state of being.

In the heart of Oakland, this sort of tranquility and unexpected bliss can be found at the Bonsai Gardens nestled inside Lakeside Park at Lake Merritt. This 16-year-old oasis is home to numerous Asian plants known as bonsai.

Bonsai is best described as miniature potted trees which are grown in such a way that they typically develop into sculpted shapes that resemble adult trees. Many types of trees can be trained to become bonsai trees.

The process originated in China more than a thousand years ago and was referred to as pun-sai – a practice of growing single specimen trees in pots. The early specimens were said to resemble animals and dragons due to their coarse, distorted trunks.

These magnificent plants were later introduced to the Japanese culture and within time became synonymous with Japan's elitist livelihood and craft.

These trees have often been called botanical pieces of art and those who have chosen to own one may find their dedication to raising them and guiding their shape is much like spending time on creating artwork of their very own.

Due to the tiny size of the pots in which they grow, only small amounts of special soils are



*Creeping Juniper Bonsai*

needed, such as the akadama and pumice combination that is used for planting Japanese black pines. These soils are drier than ordinary soils used in other types of potted plants which is a necessity for bonsai as their roots are not to be kept wet.

Once an owner plants a tree, the technique of shaping can begin immediately during the tree's infancy. To achieve the shape, many owners coil copper wire around the branches to form the direction of their tree.

Thus in designing the architecture of a tree, one can find tranquility through focus and beauty from the development of one of nature's greatest gifts. Unlike a common plant or shrub, the excitement in nurturing a bonsai lies in the unknown because the final result may prove to be beyond one's expectations.

Upon entering the Bonsai Gardens inside Lakeside Park, visitors can view the numerous variations of bonsai including a Japanese black pine that is over 300 years old and a Daimyo oak which may be one of the original bonsais to enter the United States. Each tree careens in their own direction as if blown by tropical winds.

While enjoying the unique beauty of the bonsai garden, visitors can also take advantage of the other features on the surrounding grounds which include a small, peaceful waterfall with benches and shaded trees, a water fountain, a sundial, a koi pond, the butterfly garden, a vegetable and fruit demonstration garden (with two access points into Lake Merritt) and a variety of trees, shrubs and flowers.

Adding to the authenticity of the garden is Kathy Shaner, the curator and first non-Japanese woman to be named a certified bonsai master.

*Continued on Page 3*

## The Monthly Bird Report

By Hilary Powers

### Turkeys on the Prowl

Two wild turkeys crossed the path of the December Golden Gate Audubon walk at Lake Merritt – the first I've ever seen there, despite visiting the Lake once or twice almost every week for the last decade. We all watched them with amazed delight, somewhat tempered by the depressing thought, "There go the next Canada geese. . . ." (Seriously, 30 years ago people used to drive miles for "the chance to see the stately Canada Goose," as one birding guide put it. So come see the turkeys while they're still fun to watch!)

The turkeys weren't the only rarities. Down by the fountain at the Embarcadero was a young male Tufted Duck – all black except for bright white panels on the wings, and just the beginnings of the species' characteristic feathered ponytail on its head (which is how we figured it for a youngster). The male Ring-necked Duck was still hanging out by the Nature Center, notable for black head and back, gray wings except for white at the shoulder, and a bright white ring around the bill. (The ring on the neck is essentially invisible.)

The female Redhead (all clear brown with a white line like a rubber band around the end of her bill) was among the birds waiting to get fed at the Nature Center – mostly greater and lesser scaup drakes (the ones with the black heads and brindled gray backs), with a few scaup hens (brown with heavy white skin around the beak), plus some canvasbacks – mostly drakes with

canvas-white backs, rust-red heads, and natty black scarves, but a few hens (gray and fawn, but easily recognized by the same ski-jump profile on the forehead and beak).

The woods birds were surprisingly scarce – this should have been a good month for them – possibly because a gorgeous adult Red-tailed Hawk was patrolling the area over Children's Fairyland – but we did see a large flock of yellow-rumped warblers working the ground by one of the bowling lawns.

And a Ruby-crowned Kinglet flew so close over my head the other trip leader thought it was going to land, but it picked a branch a couple of feet in front of my nose instead. It doesn't get better than that – even at Lake Merritt, where every day is a good day.

*Bonsai garden continued...*

The garden can be an oasis for meditation, and perhaps pruning a bonsai can give a person's soul an even deeper connection with the earth.

Demonstrations take place on the last weekend of every month and admission to the garden is free; however, donations are welcome. Visiting hours are from Wednesday to Friday from 11 A.M. to 3 P.M., Saturday from 12 to 4 P.M.



*Chinese Juniper, grafted on Sierra Juniper Bonsai*