

Sugar Pine State Park celebrating 50 years

Sugar Pine Point become a California State Park 50 years ago.

To celebrate, this year's annual Living History Day on July 25 will be a 50th birthday bash for the park with a day filled with free family friendly events ranging from live '60s music to a children's activity zone. The historic Hellman-Ehrman Estate will come alive from 11am-4pm.

Living history activities will include family lawn games, open house tours, children's activity zone, music, a car and boat show, an art exhibit, birthday cake, and an auction. Refreshments will be available for purchase. All events are free, though there is a \$10 parking fee.

Volunteers are needed for a variety of roles, ranging from greeters to raffle assistants. Volunteers may contact the Sierra State Parks Foundation at 530.583.9911 or volunteer@sierrastateparks.org for additional information.

Climate changes can throw off wildlife patterns

Publisher's note: *This article was first published in Tahoe In Depth and is reprinted with permission.*

By Ruby Lyon

A shifting climate affects the timing of important events in the plant and animal world. These important life cycle events

– known as phenology – happen when the wildflowers bloom, when plants make fruit or new leaves, or when birds migrate or build nests. The timing of these life cycle events is intricately connected to many environmental factors, including elevation and weather.

For example, a long winter with heavy precipitation will result in many phenological events happening later in the season, while a mild, dry winter, such as those in recent years, is linked to the early arrival of spring.

Some phenological processes may be responsive to weather events and therefore can react quickly as climate shifts. For example, local sparrows, robins, and bluebirds may only descend to lower elevations during the harshest winter weather, then return after a couple of mild weeks.

Migrating animals

This is not the case for many other organisms. Western tanagers wintering in Central America have no idea if Tahoe is having a mild winter and an early spring. They try to get here early to secure the best territory and capitalize on the brief summer flush of resources, but if they arrive too early, they may be faced with limited food and freezing weather. Migration patterns develop over many generations, and it can take a while for these patterns to shift to match changing conditions at Lake Tahoe.

With small feet and heavy bodies, Tahoe's mule deer are not built to cope with deep snow. To make matters worse, their principal food source gets buried. Therefore, Tahoe's deer typically move to lower elevations for the winter, with many making the shortest trip possible by heading east. Many of Truckee's Loyalton herd will descend the Truckee River canyon to Verdi; others head north. The Carson Range deer have an easy migration to lower elevations, while deer in Christmas Valley and the Angora Burn area migrate up over Luther Pass to

Hope Valley, and then down the Carson River.

It is not unheard of for deer to be caught by early snowfall and get trapped in the Tahoe basin, and such animals usually are seen in the vicinity of Emerald Bay, where they spend the winter at lake level. Quite a few deer have been seen at Tahoe mid-winter in recent years, and earlier this year a few young bucks were seen swimming off Pope Beach in February. The timing and routes of deer migrations are worked out over many generations, and are passed down culturally by older members of the herd. After four years of drought, it is safe to assume that many of the deer now overwintering at Tahoe have never experienced a “real” Tahoe winter, and have never learned to migrate away from an average Tahoe snowpack. Mule deer only live around 10 years on average, so additional mild winters may bring about a significant drop-off in the numbers of deer that know how to migrate.

Early insects

Plants seem to be more responsive than animals to warming temperatures, leafing out or flowering as soon as possible. However, danger lies in that flowers may open up before their pollinators are available.

Another challenge is that flowers are vulnerable to spring storms and frost damage. This latter issue is equally problematic for the insects that try to emerge earlier in an attempt to sync up with the plants. Many insects may not have a choice, and butterflies are a classic example. Plants develop chemical compounds to make themselves unpalatable to insects. Butterflies then evolve defenses and a tolerance to these compounds, and as a result they begin to specialize in only eating certain plants as caterpillars. Therefore, most butterflies have a fairly narrow range of options for larval host plants. If the plants are growing earlier in the season, the caterpillars must be active earlier in the season as well, and often that means the adults must fly earlier in the season

to find the right plants on which to lay their eggs.

Research has shown many different adaptations to shifting climate as it relates to butterflies and their host plants. Most commonly, we see the butterflies flying earlier in the season, but emerging earlier is still a risky move in the mountains, and spring storms are always likely. Many butterfly species are shifting habitats or ranges. Some are showing disrupted migration patterns, while other species are showing more novel shifts like staying locked in their typical timing, but shifting host plants instead. However, many species have shown a complete lack of adaptive response, falling out of sync with their host plants, and these species and populations may be disappearing.

Future monitoring

The understanding of life cycle events and their consequential effects on birds, insects, and mammals will be an important factor to monitor in the future. Anecdotal evidence is already demonstrating a shift in the behavior of Tahoe's organisms due to unseasonably warm winters and drought conditions. A more permanent shift in our weather patterns could have effects on everything from successful gardens and ski seasons to larger-scale impacts related to food security. In response, the Tahoe Institute for Natural Science has created the Sierra Seasons Project, a citizen science program monitoring Tahoe's phenology. It is our hope that long-term observations from local school kids, hikers, and residents will result in data that can be used to determine how climate change is affecting the phenology of Tahoe.

Ruby Lyon is an outreach manager and AmeriCorps member with the Tahoe Institute for Natural Science.

Truckee making it easier to license dogs

Starting on July 7, in person dog licenses will only be issued at the Truckee Animal Shelter Tuesday through Friday from 10am-2pm.

The shelter is located at 10961 Stevens Lane, Truckee.

There are three additional ways to pay. One is to renew your dog's license online with a Visa or MasterCard. The rabies vaccination must be current and/or be provided by fax or email the same day that the online payment is made. You may also renew by mail by making the check payable to Town of Truckee and send payment to 10961 Stevens Lane, Truckee, CA 96161. Be sure to enclose a copy of your dog's rabies vaccination certificate if it is required. Or renew by credit card over the phone at 530.582.2450 during the above-mentioned hours.

For any dog licensing questions, call 530.582.2450.

Man dies diving off Angora Lakes cliffs

A 21-year-old man from Illinois died Wednesday at Angora Lakes.

Cameron Gillen, 21, Libertyville, Ill., was diving off the cliffs at the lake about 6pm July 1.

There are three normal areas where people dive. Gillen went up higher, according to El Dorado County sheriff's Sgt. Michael

Seligsohn.

“This young man went to the highest point and then scaled the cliff another 40 to 60 feet. As he goes up, he’s not going straight up, he’s also going away from the lake,” Seligsohn told *Lake Tahoe News*. “When he jumps I don’t think he possibly could have gone out far enough, so he struck at the base of the cliff.”

Paddleboarders brought him to shore and CPR was begun

First responders from the sheriff’s department, Lake Valley Fire and Calstar tried advanced life saving techniques for an hour before pronouncing the man’s death.

The lake level is not an issue. But the spot where one jumps from can make a world of difference.

Seligsohn warns people, “You can only jump as far out as you can jump from the ground.” In other words, if someone can do a 6-foot broad jump on flat ground, that’s as far as they will be able to leap from a cliff.

“Keep it to where everyone dives in from and you are likely to be safe,” Seligsohn said. Seeking a new, riskier adventure, he said, can have fatal consequences.

– Kathryn Reed

Time to register for Reno-Tahoe Senior Summer Games

Registration is open for the 2015 Reno-Tahoe Senior Summer Games, a program dedicated to promoting and implementing

fitness.

Anyone 50 years of age or older may compete in sports such as track and field, swimming, bowling, golf – even a slot tournament.

There will be opportunities to compete individually, as a doubles team, or as part of a team of five or more. Gold, silver, and bronze medals will be awarded. New sports for the Summer Games include fly casting and a golf tournament at Sierra Sage Golf Course.

An early base registration fee of \$25 per person (plus an additional \$10 per-sport fee) will be offered through July 31. After July 31, the base registration fee will increase to \$30. Registration includes a T-shirt, sport bag, and closing ceremonies lunch dance ticket.

To register, or for more information including a schedule of events, go online or call 775.657.4602.

Free weekly movies offered in Tahoe Vista

Movie Mondays in the Park will move to Tahoe Vista Recreation Area this summer.

Movies will starting at dusk (about 8:30pm) and run from July 6-Aug. 17.

The movies are free, however parking is \$5 per car without a valid North Tahoe Public Utility District resident sticker.

Movie schedule:

July 6: "How to Train Your Dragon 2"

July 13: "Penguins Movie"

July 20: "Earth to Echo"

July 27: "Big Hero 6"

Aug. 3: "Into the Woods"

Aug. 10: "Guardians of the Galaxy"

Aug. 17: "Maleficent".

Weather a critical factor in Washington Fire



The Washington Fire for several days threatened the town of Markleeville. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

Updated 10:55pm: *The Washington Fire's perimeter is 90 percent contained, at 17,790 acres; full containment expected by July 31.*

By Susan Wood

Fire officials evaluated the response timeline of the 2-week-old Markleeville-area blaze that spread rapidly in a wind-driven 24-hour period and found good news and bad news in their assessment.

The good news: The fire agencies and respective personnel followed protocol to the best of their ability under normal circumstances.

The bad news: The new normal is anything but normal in drought conditions and climate change. Hot, cold or

otherwise, climatologists have long warned of more severe weather conditions in multiple seasons with climate change. One of those factors is wind.

“They did a good job, but it wasn’t textbook,” Russ Bird, U.S. Forest Service fire management officer in charge of nine ranger districts in Nevada and a slice of California from Bridgeport to north of Reno, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

“The way they responded and how the people responded – they followed procedure. No one could have predicted (the wind) would have come up like that. I don’t think they knew the severity of the weather. It was not worth the risk. It was hard to get people up there,” Bird said of June 20,



Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E.

Key Activity Timeline – Washington Fire near Markleeville

June 9-11, 2015 – Wide-spread heavy rain with lightning activity took place in the area where the fire began. With the right fuel and moisture conditions, this lightning can often ignite deep dead vegetative material on the forest floor that can smolder undetected for a couple of weeks before changing weather conditions such as low relative humidity, wind, and high temperatures fan embers to life, causing visible smoke.

June 19 about 6:15pm – Smoke was first reported in the Silver Peak area on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest (HTNF) Carson Ranger District.

June 19, 6:30pm – Both HTNF fire staff and Alpine County fire and law enforcement personnel began looking for the fire’s exact location by

the second-day inferno when 40 mph consistent wind carried the fire and tree snags crashed, leaving embers flying every which way in steep, overgrown terrain.

"It was 40mph constant wind. It was like a cold front passing," Bird said.

Lightning sparked the June 19 blaze, which has consumed almost 18,000 acres and is 77 percent contained. Fire officials believe the lightning hit Alpine County 10 days prior to the first reports of smoke at 6:15pm June 19 in the Silver Peak area off Highway 4 in the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest of the Carson Ranger District. This was reported in the timeline from the U.S. Forest Service Minden dispatch team to the duty officer of the Markleeville station.

traveling different routes.

June 19, about 7:15pm – HTNF fire staff located the general area of the fire, estimated to be about an acre in size, in a remote location. An engine was staged nearby while best access points were identified.

June 19, about 7:45pm – When it became apparent the fire was in an area with no road access, a helicopter was ordered to arrive in the morning. By the time a helicopter could have reached the fire when initially ordered, darkness would have made its use inappropriate.

June 19, about 8:40pm – A fire patrolman on foot arrived within 50 yards of the fire to better establish its location and size. The fire was in steep terrain with dense old-growth timber.

June 19, about 9pm – The four-person engine crew arrived at the nearest road location and began hiking into the fire area for initial attack of the fire with hand tools. Soon after, additional crews were ordered for the morning shift as they would not have been able to safely enter the fire area under darkness.

June 19, about 11:15pm – The engine crew reported the fire's latitude and longitude and the fire size at approximately 1.5 acres with active fire in the perimeter, including group-torching of trees in deep duff. The crew planned to conduct hand-tool suppression work through

Upon hiking in to within 50 yards of the fire at 8:40pm that night, a fire patrol scout assessed most of the crews should stand down that night and wait to go in upon first light.

At another time, the fire's intensity prompted all the resources to disengage to reassess the situation from a safe location. The wind was erratic and more resources were ordered, the latter an answer to a shortcoming Tactical Team Division Chief Kevin Kutterer complained about when Lake Tahoe News asked about progress while on the scene off Wolf Creek Road.

Kutterer wasn't the only one being critical.

Local businessman and property owner Tom Abdoo questioned what took so long for

the night.

June 20, about 7am – Overnight the crew had been able to build line around one-third of the 1.5-acre fire. Snags within the perimeter were throwing out embers and would need to be felled.

June 20, 8am-3pm – Additional ground crews and air support conducted suppression activities, including building line, felling burning snags, and dropping water and retardant from the air. Hot, windy conditions caused the fire to grow quickly as its intensity increased, bringing long-range spotting and group tree-torching.

June 20, about 4pm – Because long-range spotting was becoming more frequent, the decision was made to order Air Attack, including a heavy air tanker.

June 20, about 4:45pm – Fire intensity increased further, and winds became more erratic, causing the need to disengage all resources from the fire to reassess the situation from a safe location. More fire resources were also ordered to prepare for future operations.

June 20, 5pm – The fire size had grown to about 35 acres, and Air Attack recommended ordering another heavy air tanker.

June 20, 5:45pm – The Type III Sierra Front team was ordered in time to be mobilized the following morning.

June 20, about 6:30pm – Extreme fire behavior continued, and the fire was spotting over a mile in front of

firefighters to attack the blaze.

“There was a 24-hour period when nothing happened,” Abdoo told *Lake Tahoe News*. “It was hard to get to. I understand that. But there were several ways they could have attacked it. Then, it went crazy.”

In some respects, Bird would agree with Abdoo that the fire went crazy on the second day. And, both men would like to see more tools at firefighters’ disposal to use for what many think the Sierra Nevada is embarking on – one of the worst fire seasons ever.

Under conditions of “high” fire danger, protocol calls for federal fire officials to send a chief officer, air tanker, three engines and a helicopter. But there’s no real protocol on when. The timing is based on a case-by-case basis.

“It takes time to get in there to figure things out,” Bird said of the rugged terrain.

The firefighting veteran would like more money for cameras so firefighters have more eyes in the woods. The two cameras that

itself. Fire leaders determined a Type II team was needed. The request was made immediately. Before midnight, the Type III Sierra Front team was briefed in preparation for taking over management of the fire in the morning.

June 21, 6am – The Type III Sierra Front team took over management of the fire until the transition to the Great Basin Incident Management Team (Type II team) at 6am on June 22.

Source: U.S.

Forest Service

the UNR has installed on Snow Valley Peak and another at McClellan south of Carson City were turned the wrong way at the time of the fire, Bird said.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- Lake Tahoe Community College President Kindred Murillo was just given a raise. She now makes \$185,000 a year, whereas until July 1 her salary was \$165,000. With benefits she makes \$204,400 a year.
- Truckee's Fourth of July parade this year starts at the intersection of Frates Lane and Donner Pass Road. The parade will be from about 10am-noon.
- Caltrans will have occasional overnight lane closures of Interstate 80 in Placer County as part of the Canyon Way/Placer Hills Road overcrossing project.
- All recreation facilities in the Eldorado National Forest are open except for Stumpy Meadows, Black Oak, and Big Meadows campgrounds, which were damaged in the King Fire last year.
- California's excise tax on gasoline decreased by 6 cents per gallon, from 36 cents to 30 cents per gallon, as of July 1.

State of the Lake talk set for July 23

UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center will release the annual Tahoe: State of the Lake Report on July 23.

Geoff Schladow will present the most important factors that affected lake health last year at a public presentation at 6pm.

The report includes changes in Lake Tahoe's water quality and ecology over the past year, as well as the examination of the long term trends that have been taking place at Tahoe. Schladow's presentation will cover clarity data, present developments occurring in the nearshore regions of the lake, and review how Lake Tahoe is being affected by the drought.

Schladow is the founding director of TERC.

A \$5 donation is suggested for this event. Doors open at 5:30pm. TERC is on the campus of Sierra Nevada College in Incline Village.

Police, bike advocates work to make roads safer

By Kathryn Reed

Most fatalities involving a vehicle in South Lake Tahoe are

the result of a bicyclist or pedestrian being hit, not cars crashing into each other.

The police department is in the preliminary stages of building a campaign to make people more aware of others who are on the road. The Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition wants to be part of that message.

At a meeting in late June police Sgts. Shannon Laney and Shannon Norrgard spoke to a group of residents – mostly cycling advocates – about options, funding and solutions.

In the city limits in 2012 there were three deaths, one in 2013 and three in 2014 involving a vehicle hitting either a cyclist or pedestrian.

The No. 1 factor in the deaths is drivers under the influence, then failing to yield, and third is pedestrians not in a sidewalk, according to Laney.



Sgt. Shannon Laney listens to ideas about how the public could help with bike safety in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

It was pointed out how there is blame on all sides for accidents and fatalities. No matter the mode of transit – including walking – people are not always following the rules. Bicyclists are under the same laws as motor vehicles.

Laney said it could be difficult to catch up to cyclists who are violating the laws, especially riding on the wrong side of the street. It has to do with traffic and being able to flip a U-turn, and then whether that infraction rises to a level of importance to be worth chasing down.

South Lake Tahoe has an ordinance that makes it illegal to cross Highway 50 outside of a crosswalk. With crosswalks at times being quite a distance, many pedestrians opt to jaywalk. It is up to Caltrans to add crosswalks.

A new law in California says motorists must give cyclists 3 feet of space. Laney said that's pretty hard to enforce until there has been a collision. That's when citations get written. He said it would take a sting operation or dedicated personnel to actively enforce that law. Manpower is an issue.

That is where the Bicycle Coalition might be able to play a role. It could work on securing grants that would pay for increased patrols for bike related enforcement as well as education material.

Education, all sides agreed, is one component that has been missing. This would be for cyclists and drivers.

Norrgard mentioned how it would be great to blast a message about the 3-foot law so more people would know about it. Eventually it would be engrained in people's heads and then behavior would change without having to think about it. It might be similar to when 10 years ago the "click it or ticket" campaign was foreign, but now most people know it is about buckling up.

Cycling activist Curtis Fong said handing out literature at key intersections could be the first step to start educating people about the rules of the road – whether one is on two wheels or behind a wheel.

Both sides agreed to work more closely with one another.