Bees, yellow jackets creating a buzz



Toogee Sielsch with El Dorado County Vector Control looks at bees that drowned in a hot tub in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Susan Wood

By Kathryn Reed

The overriding reason to be in a hot tub is to relax. Just the opposite happens when bees buzz around just inches from your face and then want to make the body of water their continual drinking fountain.

Then there are the yellow jackets that have such good sniffers they know where the barbecue is – or any protein that is outside – within a quarter of a mile.

Those bumblebees and honeybees, well, they are just spreading love as they pollinate.

Now is the season for the worker bees and yellow jackets to proliferate. While they are more in abundance now, the prediction is it won’t be a bad year for them.

Toogee Sielsch with the El Dorado County Vector Control while on a stroll through Cove East this week talked all about these winged critters.

Because there were a couple hard freezes in the spring he does not anticipate the yellow jacket season being bad, especially compared to a couple summers ago when it seemed like there was a constant hum in the basin. That was when eating outside was near impossible without sharing your meal with the little buggers, all under the threat of being stung.



Honey bees are getting under a hot tub cover and then drowning. Photo/LTN

There are five species of yellow jackets in the basin. They are part of the wasp family and aren’t actually bees. In nature they are primarily feeding on aphids. They are also a low level pollinator.

The biggest problem is so many people are allergic to their sting. This can become a public health issue and why vector control gets involved.

“We use a powder they crawl through. They spread it to their friends,” Sielsch said of how his department gets rid of yellow jacket nests. Even then, the crew is cognizant of proximity to water and other environmental concerns. He said 600 nests would be a rough estimate of how many were treated during the prolific summer.

“We would never treat primary pollinators,” Sielsch added.

Honey bees and bumblebees aren’t usually going to sting someone. They would have to get pretty aggravated to do so. The problem with yellow jackets is they don’t lose their stingers and can keep after a person. It’s only honey bees that drop their stinger. And it’s only the females that sting.

The good things about the traps that are sold at stores is that they are specific to attracting and then killing yellow jackets so there is no threat of killing off the good bees.

As for the bees showing up in a hot tub, there is probably a nest nearby and that big tub looks like an inviting source of hydration. They just want to share.

Letter: Tahoe rep weighs in on Placer County politics

Publisher’s note: ***Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Garden Valley, wrote the following letter to the Placer County Board of Supervisors.***

I write to support the many local citizen groups that are seeking a resolution declaring that Placer County opposes California’s so-called sanctuary laws. I also urge you to join

the 12 California counties and 42 California cities that are challenging them as incompatible with the rule of law and the supremacy of the federal Constitution over immigration.

California's policy of releasing dangerous criminal illegal aliens back into our communities rather remanding them to federal authorities for deportation presents a critical public safety issue for the people of Placer County. It also imperils federal law enforcement officials who must then attempt to arrest them at grave personal risk to themselves and to innocent bystanders.

There is good reason for immigration law to be in federal hands and every reason for state and local governments to cooperate in their enforcement. If our immigration laws are to be ignored, as sanctuary supporters advocate, then our national borders mean precisely nothing. Nations that cannot or will not defend their borders aren't around very long. The open borders advocated by California officials are suicidal for any nation.

Placer County has suffered grievously because of the non-enforcement of our immigration law. The bloody rampage by a twice-deported illegal immigrant in 2014 claimed the life of Placer County sheriff's Detective Michael Davis. Democratic government relies on fidelity to law. If the law is abandoned, our democracy would dissolve into anarchy. Detective Davis gave his life to uphold the law. All that is asked of Placer County Supervisors is to take a stand in its defense.

Shelter design can help

people recover from homelessness

By Jill Pable, The Conversation

About 544,000 people in the United States have no shelter every night, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Homeless families make up more than one-third of this total.

Beyond exposing them to weather, crime and unsanitary conditions, homelessness can also damage people's self-esteem, making them feel helpless or hopeless. Being homeless is a traumatic experience, in part because of the stigma associated with this situation.

Recovering from homelessness may therefore involve not just finding a job and permanent home but also rebuilding one's self-esteem.

My research on the built environment suggests that the interior design of homeless shelters can either support or hinder people's ability to assert control over their future.

How design affects people

Research has long demonstrated that physical spaces affect human moods and behaviors.

Office environments with many common spaces foster collaboration, for example, while stock investors who work on higher floors take more risks.

Homeless shelters, too, can influence how residents see the world and themselves. A shelter with sterile corridor and glaring lights may silently send the message that, "People don't think you deserve a nice place to live."

Homeless housing designed with warm colors, thoughtful lighting and useful signage, on the other hand, can send the opposite message: “Someone cares.”

In my experience, most homeless shelters are designed simply to house as many people as possible. Others are so dilapidated, violent or dirty that people actually prefer to sleep outside.

What unhoused families need

I undertook a three-month field experiment at a shelter in Florida to understand how bedroom design could support or hinder two families trying to transition from homelessness into permanent housing.

Each family consisted of a single mother with two children. One family had two girls, ages 3 and 4. The other had two boys, ages 3 and 18.

Both parents had generally positive relationships with their children, had completed high school through the 10th grade and were living in the shelter because they had lost their jobs.

Initially, both families stayed in identical 9-by-12 bedrooms. Each had two metal bunk beds, one dresser, pale green walls, a single light fixture and a bathroom shared with a family of four. With so little storage, the families piled their belongings on the unused fourth bunk.

The bedroom door had no lock, so that staff could check in on residents as needed. This is common in shelters.

Housing that looks like jail

After two months, one family moved into a room that our team had upgraded with 18 new features intended to empower residents by offering them control over their environment.

These included drawer-and-bin storage for their possessions,

lap desks, privacy curtains around the beds, bulletin boards and shelving. We also painted the walls a light blue.

I interviewed the mothers in the beginning and the end of their experience.

The mother who would later move into an upgraded room felt “aggravated and frustrated” in the first space. The mother who stayed in that room for all three months described it as “crowded,” “claustrophobic” and “grim.” She even said the metal beds and hard, cold floors reminded her of jail.

Both families piled their belongings on the unused fourth bunk for lack of other storage.

“The more time you spend in it, the more you feel like the walls are closing in,” she told me after four weeks, explaining that she often stayed out late to avoid coming home to this cramped situation.

So did her older son, who sometimes spent all night in the shelter’s computer lab. His mother worried about her son’s “vampire” hours.

This family seemed agitated throughout the three-month study. They sought relief from their housing situation – and from each other – elsewhere.

The family’s experience in the altered room

Things looked different for the other family.

The good lighting and wall cushions encouraged them to read together. They had guests more often. A case worker told me that the family would sometimes spend the entire day together in their shelter bedroom – something they’d never done in their previous space.

Though the two rooms were the same size, a divided dutch door and bed curtains allowed the residents in the altered room to

create personal spaces for listening to music or reading.

They organized and put away their possessions in the storage provided, reducing clutter.

The children liked drawing on the marker boards, so the mother allowed them to use it as a reward for good behavior, exerting parental authority in a positive way.

Signs of ownership

Tellingly, the families also expressed themselves differently in the two rooms.

In the upgraded room with shelving, the family displayed photographs, art and beloved stuffed animals. The kids played dress up in front of the mirror. These are both territorial acts that define and confirm identities.

The family in the unaltered bedroom displayed little art, in part because the mother felt it was an imposition to ask shelter staff for tape to affix items to the wall.

When her 3-year-old boy tried to play cars on the floor, his mom told him it was too dirty. Bored, he would peel paint off the wall near his bed.

She reprimanded him for this behavior, causing arguments. The children also argued frequently with each other.

A place to call home

At the study's end, I asked the mother living in the upgraded space how she would have felt if her family had stayed in the unaltered bedroom. Her answer reflected the role housing plays in keeping a family happy and healthy.

"I don't know if I would say I would be depressed, but I would have had a different feeling," she responded. "Sometimes you just want peace and quiet" – which the bed curtains and dutch

door now offered her.

She also thought her kids might have eventually “cracked,” she said, because they couldn’t act as they would in “a regular home.”

“My older girl will pull the curtains and read books to her sister” now, the mother said. “She feels like she has something that belongs to her.”

The new bedroom, which could be adjusted to fit the family’s needs, empowered them to take ownership of it. I believe such actions may help combat underlying feelings of helplessness.

This small, only partially controlled study is not the final word in shelter design.

But it certainly suggests that shelter architecture can help families experiencing homelessness by giving them a calm, positive and supportive home base for planning their future.

Jill Pable is a professor of interior design and architecture, Florida State University.

Easy ways to reuse, recycle old paint

By Kim Beeler, Moonshine Ink

Summer is the time of year when we gather with friends and family, and part of the tradition of spring and summertime is getting our homes ready for company. Often that includes painting and staining projects.

A lot of homeowners end up collecting old or unused paint and stain over the years and are unclear about what to do with it, but most of us do know that we shouldn't throw it away in our trash cans.

When stored properly, extra paint can last for years.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency conducted a study in April 2007 estimating that about 10 percent of the house paint purchased in the United States each year – about 65 to 69 million gallons – is discarded.

Read the whole story

Nev. likely insulated from possible action on Roe v. Wade

By Colton Lochhead, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – President Trump is set to announce his nominee to replace Justice Anthony Kennedy on the U.S. Supreme Court, and the issue of women's reproductive rights looms large over the decision.

But while talks of the high court potentially overturning the 1973 Roe v. Wade case swirl in the wake of Kennedy's retirement, political observers and legal experts say that Nevada should be insulated from any such a move.

"I think we're in sort of a unique position for a state, really," said Ian Bartrum, a constitutional law professor at UNLV.

Read the whole story

Changing climate at Mono Lake could mean more dust storms

By Louis Sahagun, Los Angeles Times

Climate change is bringing less snow to the Sierra Nevada mountains — and less snowmelt to Mono Lake. That means if Los Angeles keeps taking its allocated share of water feeding into Mono Lake, it might be responsible for dust kicking up off the drying shore, authorities in the Eastern Sierra

When dust storms began rising off the dry bed of Owens Lake, authorities in the Eastern Sierra blamed Los Angeles' thirst. The city had, after all, drained the lake in the 1920s to serve its faucets.

Now, as dust kicks up from Mono Lake, authorities in the Eastern Sierra are once again blaming that water-craving metropolis about 350 miles to the south.

But this time, they're also blaming climate change.

Since 1994, a landmark State Water Resources Control Board decision has capped L.A.'s diversions of the streams that feed Mono Lake, defusing for a time one of California's most protracted environmental battles.
Scientists say climatic shifts, however, are bringing less snow to the Sierra Nevada and less snowmelt to Mono Lake.

Read the whole story

CHP rescues woman hit by boulder south of Tahoe

By David Caraccio, Sacramento Bee

El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office and CHP teamed up to rescue a 56-year-old woman struck by a large boulder while hiking at Sylvia Lake in Desolation Wilderness, south of Lake Tahoe.

The CHP helicopter rescue in the steep terrain was filmed.

Read the whole story

Bike challenge riders rack up miles, trips

During the first two weeks of June, participants in the 13th annual Lake Tahoe Bike Challenge traveled 11,215 miles on foot or on bicycle, burning an estimated 482,245 calories and preventing an estimated 12,105 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions and $2,493 in gasoline purchases.

Organized by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition, the basinwide Bike Challenge is a friendly competition to see who could rack up the most trips and miles by biking, walking, or taking transit instead of driving cars.

Vincent Benoit, of South Lake Tahoe, won the individual challenge for both trips and miles, reporting 49 trips and 376

miles. South Tahoe Refuse and Recycling won the team challenge for most trips with 259, and El Dorado County Department of Transportation and El Dorado County Library won the team challenge for most trips per employee, with 32 trips per employee.

Individual winners (Most Miles)

First – Vincent Benoit, 376 miles

Second – Kevin Willitts, 375.2 miles

Third – Bob Buckholz, 350.06 miles

Individual winners (Most Trips)

First – Vincent Benoit, 49 trips

Second – Carlie Teague, 38 trips

Third – April Grothe, 32 trips

Team challenge winners (Most Trips)

First – South Tahoe Refuse and Recycling, 259 trips

Second – Lake Tahoe Community College, 252 trips

Third – League to Save Lake Tahoe, 250 trips

Team challenge winners (Most Trips Per Employee)

First – El Dorado County Department of Transportation/Library, 32.33 trips per employee

Second – Tahoe Telecommuters, 17.57 trips per employee

Third – Lake Tahoe Community College, 14.82 trips per employee.

Lake Tahoe schools also participated in the Bike Challenge, with 813 students participating in Bike to School Week. All

participating students received safety bike bells, bike lights, reflective slap bands, and instruction on how to maintain and safely ride their bicycles.

Bijou Community School – 351 students

South Tahoe Middle School – 169 students

Lake Tahoe Environmental Magnet School – 112 students

North Tahoe Middle School – 67 students

Sierra House Elementary School – 60 students

Tahoe Valley Elementary School – 54 students.

Forni Meadows now part of Eldorado Forest

The Eldorado National Forest recently purchased Forni Meadows, adding 835-acres of ecologically valuable and historically significant land to an area adjacent to Desolation Wilderness.

The $3 million purchase was facilitated by the Trust for Public Land with funding primarily from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). LWCF is a federal program which uses revenue from oil and gas leases for conservation.

This high-elevation property features views of Pyramid Peak and contains approximately 250 acres of meadows and wetlands, breeding populations of the endangered Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, two miles of streams, and a small pond. It also provides potential habitat for other sensitive species such as the California wolverine, the Sierra Nevada red fox, the

northern goshawk, and the American marten. The large size of Upper Forni Meadow (over 100 acres) is uncommon on the west side of the northern and central Sierra.

The Forni Meadows property includes the historic Forni Ranch which was homesteaded by the Forni family in the 1880s and was used as a summer cow camp. The ranch contains the original cabin built in 1862, as well as other cabins and two barns. The cow camp is expected to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Forni Meadows is located north of Highway 50 and south of Lyons Creek Trail near Strawberry and is surrounded by National Forest System lands. There are currently no trails into Forni Meadows. However, the public can hike into this area along 4½ miles of primitive service roads which are closed to public vehicle access.

Alessi dragging heels to retire to get most money

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe has no idea how long it will have its current city clerk because she can't make up her mind about retiring even though in June she announced she'd be leaving this month.

"We are sort of in limbo here because she has not given me or the council a date," interim City Manager Dirk Brazil told *Lake Tahoe News.*



Suzie Alessi

Alessi on June 19 stunned those in attendance at the council meeting when she said she was retiring before her term expires at the end of the year.

On July 9 she told *LTN*, "I do not have a definite date yet. Waiting to hear back from CalPERS."

Retirement is usually something someone gives a little more thought too. Even on the public employees' retirement website it says, "You may file your service retirement application within 120 days of your planned retirement date."

People do this to ensure they don't have an interruption of taxpayer supported paychecks. Alessi could retire now, she doesn't have to wait for anything from CalPERS. She also can walk off the job without any notice to anyone.

She will make close to $100,000 as a retiree.

Because the city has an elected city clerk there is no one to hold the person in that office accountable. There is no one to say the person ought to make a decision for the good of the city.

Brazil said he is trying to plan for whatever happens. This is so he has options at the ready for the council.

Legally, the council would have 60 days to appoint a clerk after Alessi's retirement. It is state law the city must have a clerk. There are people who fill in on an interim basis much like what Brazil is doing at the helm of the city. This is a

route he advocates.

While the city manager has no oversight of the clerk, Brazil said he does believe the workload is more than one person. Alessi has an assistant. While that woman is a city employee, she reports directly to Alessi, an elected official. This further complicates matters.

Most cities don’t have an elected city clerk. It would take the council putting the topic before voters to change how South Lake Tahoe handles the clerk position. This might happen this fall.

While there has not been anything on an open or closed session since Alessi’s announcement indicating the council was discussing the topic of the clerk’s office, it is expected to be on the July 17 agenda. If the council chooses to take the issue to the voters, there is time to get it on this November’s election.

Each of the council members was asked by *LTN:*

· *What is your feeling about having the city clerk position being elected or appointed?*

· *Do you think the public should decide whether the office should be elected or appointed?*

· *What would you look for in a future clerk?*

· *What are your feelings about the current office?*

Only Councilman Tom Davis responded. He is adamant the position should be elected, saying this gives the public better accountability. While Davis acknowledges it’s not a perfect system, he believes the current set is the best for the citizenry.