

Nevada marijuana sales dip in November

By Colton Lochhead, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Nevada marijuana sales continue to soar well above the state's projections, with dispensaries selling \$33.4 million in marijuana and the state bringing in more than \$5.5 million in taxes in November.

Sales dipped from October's massive \$38 million in sales, according to data released Monday by the Nevada Department on Taxation. But November's totals were \$11 million more than the state projected for the month.

The 10 percent retail excise tax brought in over \$3.3 million for the month, down from \$3.8 million in October. In the first five months of marijuana sales in Nevada, which started in July, that excise tax has brought in nearly \$16 million. All of that revenue goes into the state's rainy day fund.

Read the whole story

Quadruple cork is the future of snowboarding

By Gordy Megroz, Outside

Snowboarders in South Korea will fly higher and perform more-complicated maneuvers than ever before, thanks in part to practice airbags. The cushy landings provided by the stuntman-style crash pads mitigate injury risk, allowing riders to

master tricks they'd otherwise never dream of trying.

"The amount of progression that occurred during the 20 years when we didn't have airbags has been matched during the four years since we started using them," says Jack Mitrani, a former competitive rider.

Still, one of the hardest moves we're likely to see at the 2018 Winter Games was developed the old-school way, by repeatedly bashing out attempt after attempt on cold, unforgiving snow.

Read the whole story

Nev. officials cracking down on marijuana testing labs

By Colton Lochhead, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Nevada regulators are cracking down on marijuana testing labs, as nearly half of the state's marijuana labs have had their license suspended in the past five months.

Since the Nevada Tax Department took over the marijuana regulation on July 1, four of the state's nine cannabis testing facilities have had their license suspended – three since late-December. The Tax Department has never suspended the license of any marijuana retail store, cultivator or producer.

"Our aim is to address issues early – well before anything rises to the level of a public health or safety concern," Tax Department spokeswoman Stephanie Klapstein said. "Independent testing labs serve an essential function as quality assurance

before products reach the public. We want them to understand we have a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to regulatory noncompliance, even in cases where good lab practices are not followed but there is no imminent public health concern.”

Read the whole story

Oddsmakers cry foul over NBA's proposed 'integrity fee'

By Todd Dewey, Las Vegas Review-Journal

For years, the NBA and other major pro sports leagues claimed they wanted to stop the spread of legal sports betting in order to protect the integrity of their games.

Now, the NBA wants a piece of the action. To protect the integrity of the game.

If, as expected, a federal ban on sports betting is lifted in the coming months, the NBA wants sports books to pay the league 1 percent of the money wagered on its games as an “integrity fee.”

Read the whole story

Placer County making strides with affordable housing

Placer County last week approved a contract for a company to develop an affordable housing strategy.

The \$186,860 deal with BAE Urban Economics Inc., whose nearest office is in Davis, includes four main tasks:

- assess and identify affordable housing needs and development opportunities
- make recommendations about any current housing standards and policies that may be hampering development
- develop a site evaluation tool to help determine the profitability of potential projects
- review recent state housing policy changes to ensure Placer's policy remains consistent.

BAE's work is designed to support the county's housing work plan that supervisors approved last August. The work plan's main focus includes: creating more incentives to build affordable and workforce housing, changing regulations to make building easier, advocating for state and federal assistance, and furthering partnerships for meeting regional housing needs.

"We've been working with the Mountain Housing Council and making positive steps toward workforce housing in North Lake Tahoe," Supervisor Jennifer Montgomery said. "It's not just those with low income who are struggling. We have folks who make a good living who can't find anywhere to buy. So we continue to be focused on tangible steps to get new housing inventory on the ground."

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Hikers find human remains in Placer County

By KCRA-TV

A body was found by hikers Saturday morning along Foresthill Road, the Placer County Sheriff's Office said.

The body was found in an area of brush about 200 feet from Foresthill Road between Upper and Lower Lake Clementine Roads.

Deputies said the body had been there for a while and had degraded to skeletal remains.

[Read the whole story](#)

In Tahoe, a wild intersection of golf and celebrities



Serious golf is only for a few at the ACC; mostly it's about partying/gambling off the links. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

By Malika Andrews, Joe Drape and Karen Crouse, New York Times

STATELINE – The 17th hole is the party spot. Nearby is a dock where fans motor up wearing swimsuits.

The football coach Herm Edwards remembers playing with the talk show host Maury Povich when his tee shot landed on a boat. Is that out of bounds? Povich asked. Edwards laughed. “No,” he said, “you can hit from there.” And so he did.

They were competing – or perhaps simply participating – in the annual American Century Championship, a celebrity golf tournament at Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course, a loose affair in

its rules and its atmosphere. It's not so much a sporting event as a gathering of famous and not-so-famous athletes and Hollywood talent on the shores of Lake Tahoe.

The tournament, entering its 29th year, sits in the not-taken-seriously corner of the sports landscape, with a reputation among golf-mad celebrities as a first-class frat party where short days give way to long nights at gambling tables and nightclubs.

This month the event got a new claim to fame, or infamy: According to the *Wall Street Journal*, a pornographic-film star was paid \$130,000 before the 2016 election to conceal a past relationship with President Trump that began at the tournament.

[Read the whole story](#)

Road Beat: 2017 Lexus 300h — fabulous execution



The 2017 Lexus 300h makes one rethink opinion about hybrids.
Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

Most of my readers know that I am not a fan of hybrids, but recent experiences may be changing my mind. The coup de grace may have been rendered by the new Lexus 300h, which offered unparalleled quiet, comfort, performance and fuel economy in a luxurious package for well under \$50,000.

And this was a completely loaded vehicle right down to the splendid Mark Levinson sound system and the luxury suite for the boat ride from its Fukuoka, Japan, manufacturing plant.

Even my brother who owns a competing Q50 Infiniti made the remark he thought for him the Lexus was not just a better car overall, but considered trading his Q for this ride.

Lexus L'Finesse design is taking hold as this was a beautiful vehicle. I finally get the front-end design. It's the first

Lexus sedan that looked pretty from the front. The rest of the design is conservative with excellent proportions and lines. It is a big midsize with a longish 111-inch wheelbase and a length of 193 inches, but it's narrower width of 72 inches makes the 300h extremely manageable. It stands a reasonable 57-inches tall.

It's quiet comes partially from its hybrid power system. In other words, during much of the drive, the Lexus runs pure electric. The main engine is the venerable but re-tweaked 2.5L DOHC, 16 valve Atkinson cycle engine, which puts out 156 hp at 5,700 rpm and an equal amount of twist peaking at a lower 4,500 rpm. While not much info is given about the electric aspect of the drive train, one can deduce that maximum hp available from the electric motor is 44 hp giving the combine output off 200 hp. May not sound like much, but it performs like it has at least 250 hp or more as evidenced by the numbers.



Specifications

Price \$42,795 to near \$49,999

Engine

2.5L DOHC, 16 valve inline four cylinder 156 hp @ 5,700 rpm

156 lb.-ft. of torque @ 4,500 rpm

Maximum Electric motor

output 44 hp

Combined power output 200 hp

Transmission

CVT

Configuration

Transverse mounted front engine/front wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 111.0 inches

Length 193.3 inches

Width 71.7 inches

Height 57.1 inches

Weight 3,682 pounds

Weight distribution (f/r)
59/41 percent

GVWR 4,740 pounds

EPA passenger volume 100.1
cubic feet

Trunk capacity 12.1 cubic
feet

Fuel capacity 17.2 gallons

Wheels 17X7 inch alloys

Tires 215/55RX17 all season

Steering lock to lock 2.9
turns

Turning circle 37.4 feet

Co-efficient of drag 0.27

Performance

0-60 mph 6.63 seconds

50-70 mph 3.73 seconds

50-70 mph 4.93 seconds

Top speed Governed at 112
mph

Fuel economy EPA rated at
40/39/40 mpg
city/highway/combined.

Expect 36 mpg in rural

country driving and 42.2 mpg on a level highway at 70 mph (two-way run).

Zero to 60 mph arrives in a scant 6.63 seconds. That is very quick. Passing performance numbers are equally as telling as a 50-70 mph simulated pass was timed at 3.73 seconds and the same run up a steep grade only slowed that number by just over a second to 4.93 seconds. This thing flies. Good thing it doesn't have wings. And it's no light weight either, tipping the scales at 3,682 pounds.

So, it runs like a scalded dog at full tilt boogie, so you would think it goes through fuel like a 747 on takeoff (a slight exaggeration?). EPA rates the 300h at 40/39/40 mpg city/highway/combined, but it does a little better. At 70 mph on cruise control, the Lexus averaged 42.2 mpg and in my round trip to Carson City over the Sierra, which included plenty of aggressive driving, the 300h averaged 40.4 mpg for the round trip and 47.2 mpg for the trip from Carson City to Placerville. Overall fuel economy in aggressive rural driving the fuel economy averaged 35 mpg as there was less regen time for the battery and less EV time, but the 300h will EV under very light throttle pressure to about 55-60 mph.

Steering was quick and light, just 2.9 turns lock to lock. MacPherson struts are in all four corners and it is set up to offer more comfort than a track vehicle. Wheels 17 x 7 inch alloys shod with 215/55 rubber, not exactly what are known as meats. Track is wide at 63/62 inches front and rear. So, you wouldn't expect to see Mario hustling around Mazda Laguna Seca Raceway, but automobiles have really improved and the 300h isn't half bad in the twisties and exceeds most drivers' capabilities. Yeah there is some body roll, more than a super sport sedan, but the 300h tracks well and doesn't lose its composure when pushed hard. It acquitted itself beautifully on Highway 50 from Ice House Road all the way to the summit.

But the benefit is a magic carpet, sublimely quiet ride. If your passengers need to rest, this 300h will cure their insomnia. It smooths out road irregularities as if the pavement were new. Maybe Caltrans instead of fixing the roads should deliver new 300h's to all California drivers and go home as their job of fixing roads would be done and as an additional benefit, it would lower California's fuel consumption. Now why didn't I think of that earlier? Maybe a certain San Francisco assemblyman/woman will introduce a bill for just such a thing claiming he's saving the environment. Here's an easy way to do it.

Safety is all there in spades, great ABS brakes, all the rest of the safety acronyms, enough airbags to make Washington politicians look like lightweights and then there are the superb low beam LED headlights. High beams, while not LEDS are also very good. Please remember, basic safety comes back to driving ahead, staying ahead of the power curve, paying attention and exercising good judgment.

Lexus is about value, quality and luxury and while the 300h is more of an entry level Lexus (the hybrid version of the ES350), it leaves little to be desired with respect to all three of those qualities. Attention to detail and quality of materials are second to none. Everything is power and the leather seating is sublime.

Built on the Avalon platform, it is very spacious inside and the instrument panel, while not glitzy, is a champ even sporting a tach when operating in sport mode. Something needs to be mentioned about the driving modes which offer ECO, normal and Sport. Let me tell you there is a difference between Sport mode and the other two. This ES changes character in Sport mode from an extremely smooth and fluid runner to an aggressive cat. It literally jumps at a touch of the throttle with almost instant reactions. It really surprised me and what a great surprise it was. Kudos to Lexus for that.

Two tiny negatives with the 300h, the gas tank while still large is 17.2 gallons and the trunk loses a couple of cubes, down to 12.1 cubes.

Pricing for this superb automobile, which my brother thought may have been one of my best test cars ever, starts at \$41,820, plus shipping of \$975 from its Fukuoka, Japan, assembly plant. My ride had some great options including the Mark Levinson sound system (\$2,590) pushing the grand total to \$48,415, still a good price considering what you get in the bargain. And bargain may be the operative word here.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- Western Association of Schools and Colleges representatives will be at South Tahoe High School March 18-20 to review the school regarding accreditation. A decision is expected in June. An update on the process will be given at the Lake Tahoe Unified School District's Jan. 30 board meeting.
- Something Blue Wedding Expo will be at MontBleu in Stateline on March 25, 11am-3pm. For more info, go **online**.
- Elaine Howle, 59, of El Dorado Hills has been reappointed by Gov. Jerry Brown as the state auditor.
- Bridgeport Winter Recreation Area on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest's Bridgeport Ranger District opened

snowmobiling on Jan. 27.

• Check out **this video** of Jamie Anderson of Meyers snaring bronze at the X Games:

Tahoe basin home to a variety of unusual species

By Adam Jensen

Think of them as your next-door neighbors – the hundreds of species of wildlife inhabiting the Lake Tahoe region. From boas to beavers to salamanders that roll down hill, the area boasts some unique inhabitants. Each is adapted to its own niche in the sometimes unforgiving Sierra Nevada. Some species you may know, others maybe not, but here's a look at just a few of Lake Tahoe's wildest locals.

Showshoe hares and white-tailed jackrabbits

As you're out and about this winter, there are two types of rabbit species that may be donning new coats right alongside you. Both the snowshoe hare and the white-tailed jackrabbit make their homes at Lake Tahoe, and both turn white during the winter months to camouflage themselves from predators.

While some people assume all white rabbits seen during the winter at Lake Tahoe are snowshoe hares, white-tailed jackrabbits are widespread in open country above 8,000 feet, said Will Richardson, executive director and co-founder of the Tahoe Institute for Natural Science (TINS). Snowshoe hares, the smaller of the two species, can be found "just about anywhere on the West Shore," he added.

Another common rabbit variety, cottontails, began their spread around the Lake Tahoe Basin in the early 2000s and closed the final gap in their east-to-west distribution in 2016, Richardson said. TINS is interested in speaking with people with first-hand knowledge of when the cottontails began appearing in their neighborhoods to further its understanding of the species' spread.

"I've been here 21 years, and I think the first time I saw a rabbit was five years ago," said Kathy Strain, a South Shore resident and associate professor of biology and environmental science at Lake Tahoe Community College.

The spread of the cottontails may have helped the gray fox expand its range into the area as well.

Mountain beaver

People may be familiar with the distinctive dams built by the paddle-tailed variety of American beavers, which were pre-settlement inhabitants of the Lake Tahoe region before being trapped out of existence in the area and later reintroduced.

There's another variety of beaver that also calls the area home. The mountain beaver is significantly smaller than the American beaver and lacks the distinctive tail. Richardson described the species as an "overgrown and very primitive vole."

While they don't build large dams like the American beaver, the burrowing species can still change hydrology, making perennial streams go underground through extensive tunnels it builds just under the soil surface.

"There's not a lot known about them," Richardson said. "We seem to think that they're fairly rare."

There are American beavers all around the Tahoe area, as well as muskrats, which could be confused with the mountain beaver.

The muskrat has a long, flat tail, while the mountain beaver's tail isn't clearly visible.

Northern rubber boa

"Boa constrictor" and "Lake Tahoe" are not often found in the same sentence, but the area does host a species of snake that uses constriction to catch its food.

The northern rubber boa varies in color from brown to orange to pink and can be found in a variety of habitats around the lake. Desolation Wilderness, near the lake's southwest corner, offers particularly inviting environs for the snake.

The boa can reach about 2 feet in length and is not dangerous to humans. Its head-like tail confuses both predators and prey, and it has a reputation among herpetologists as having one of the better personalities among its ilk.

"If there's a sweetheart in the reptile world, it's the rubber boa," Richardson said.

One snake variety with a less stellar reputation among the public, the rattlesnake, may also be finding homes closer to the Lake Tahoe Basin.

It's pretty clear that rattlesnakes are able to reach the Lake Tahoe Basin from the west, Richardson said, noting the number of the venomous snakes that can be found at places like nearby Lover's Leap. It's unclear if they are also able to make it up from the east, Richardson said.

There is evidence that climate change is driving species to higher elevations. Whether the movement of rattlesnakes toward Lake Tahoe is temporary or a long-term trend is unclear, Richardson said.

While rattlesnakes may not be people's favorites, Richardson noted they do provide an important ecological role of controlling rodent populations that can spread disease.



The Western pearlshell mussel can be found in the Upper Truckee River.
Photo/LTN file

Western pearlshell mussel

Mussels may be more associated with the California coast than the Sierra Nevada, but some South Shore streams host a long-lived native bivalve that is an indicator of environmental health.

The average life span of the western pearlshell mussel is 60 to 70 years, although some individuals are thought to have lived more than 100 years, according to the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation.

“Because this species is sedentary, sensitive to environmental changes, and long-lived, it can be an excellent biological indicator of water quality,” according to the society.

The mussels depend on trout species as part of their life cycle, as the juvenile form of the western pearlshell attach to fish prior to dropping off and burrowing into soft substrate as adults.

The native mussels should not be confused with Asian clams, an aquatic invasive species that has established populations in the lake, or quagga or zebra mussels, potentially devastating aquatic invasive species that can be found in western

waterbodies but have been kept out of Lake Tahoe through prevention efforts including mandatory boat inspections.

Mount Lyell salamander

The often dry slopes of the Sierra Nevada can be a harsh environment for amphibian species. Still, the Lake Tahoe area does support native populations of frogs, toads, and salamanders.

One of these salamander species, the Mount Lyell salamander, makes its home soaking up the water near snowfields and doesn't have an aquatic phase in its life cycle.

Living below ground and staying inactive during extreme temperatures and conditions, the small gray-to-brown salamander blends in with its granite surroundings. It has also developed an unusual way of defending itself.

"Because they live in steep, rocky, icy terrain, when they get threatened, they curl themselves into a wheel and actually roll downhill," Richardson said.

Canyon live oak

Known for its expanses of pine trees, Lake Tahoe also supports satellite populations of canyon live oak trees, which are typically found at lower elevations in the foothills.

The trees, also known as golden cup oaks, attract specific species of animal communities.

The California sister butterfly, which features an orange spot near the tips of its wings, is among the species people can find living near canyon live oaks, Richardson said.

Once completed, the Incline Village to Sand Harbor Bike Path will be a great place to look at some of Tahoe's oak trees. The hike down to Vikingsholm in Emerald Bay also provides glimpses of some huge individuals.

Spotted owl

When it comes to owls, people are most likely to hear great horned owls at Lake Tahoe, and they're most likely to see northern pygmy owls, active during the day and given away by squawking birds signaling their arrival. People could also find spotted owls – but only if they're extremely lucky.

There's a handful of breeding pairs in the area, but the nocturnal species doesn't make itself known to the casual observer, Richardson said.

As with a great deal of wildlife viewing, staying quiet, patient, and observant are keys to finding some of Lake Tahoe's more unusual wildlife. It also never hurts to be in the right place at the right time.

*Adam Jensen is the environmental education specialist with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. This article is republished from the winter 2017 edition of **Tahoe In Depth**.*