Birds nesting earlier to try to survive global warming



Steller Jays find all sorts of places to build a nest. Photo/LTWC

By Kurtis Alexander, San Francisco Chronicle

The early bird not only gets the worm, but may stand a better chance of riding out global warming.

A study finds that birds in California are breeding up to 12 days earlier than they did a century ago, an apparent effort to maintain their optimal nesting temperatures as the planet warms.

Like many plants and animals, birds have been known to relocate to cooler places to compensate for rising temperatures, moving north or to higher elevations. But the research published this month in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences highlights the extent to which birds are going to adapt in other ways to a changing world.

Read the whole story

Grant funding available through NDOT

Nearly $6 million in federal transportation funds for projects that improve non-motorized mobility, historic preservation for transportation-related projects, scenic accessibility, safe routes to school and more are available through the Nevada Department of Transportation’s Transportation Alternatives Program.

Governmental agencies, tribal governments, school districts, private schools and nonprofit organizations can sponsor TAP applications. Each eligible application received will be evaluated using scoring criteria detailed on the application website. Projects require a minimum of 5 percent matching funds from the sponsor, and must be able to receive administrative clearance for a notice to proceed with construction within three years.

Under the program, there are two broad types of eligible activities: transportation infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects.

More information on project eligibility requirements may be found **online**.

LTVA, STR collecting goods for Christmas Cheer

The Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority and South Tahoe Refuse are partnering to make giving to Christmas Cheer easy.

The LTVA's Drive and Drop for Christmas Cheer takes place Dec. 4-9, 9am-5pm. Drive through the visitor center parking lot at 3066 Highway 50, South Lake Tahoe to donate food or toys into the bins provided by STR.

Cash donations should be brought into the center.

STR is also having its annual Community Holiday Food & Toy Drive Dec. 4-8. Leave canned/packaged food or toys curbside on your regular collection day, or drop off at South Tahoe Refuse, 2140 Ruth Ave., South Lake Tahoe during business hours.

Christmas Cheer feeds more than 1,000 people each month, year-round, and the need for wholesome meals is even more important to families with children who are out of school at the holidays.

Christmas party all about veterans

All veterans and the community are invited to Veterans Healing Camp for a family Christmas party on Dec. 16 from 3-7pm.

The celebration will feature a potluck dinner, live music and singing with Randy Ide, games, ugly Christmas sweater contest,

white elephant gift exchange, and pictures with Santa and Mrs. Claus.

Veterans Healing Camp is a nonprofit located in the heart of Silver Springs that is dedicated to helping local veterans make a successful transition from military to civilian life. The mission is to provide a safe place for fun, activities, and fellowship. The goal is to help educate veterans to overcome fear and anxiety to live a healthy and productive life.

Veterans Healing Camp is at 1775 Highway 50 in Silver Springs. For more info, call 775.781.2394.

Substantive garbage rate increase on South Shore



South Tahoe Refuse plans to raise rates beginning Jan. 1. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

One of the largest rate increases ever requested by South Tahoe Refuse is expected to go into effect Jan. 1.

While the respective jurisdictions still must approve the increase, the Waste Management Joint Powers Authority board this week signed off on it. South Lake Tahoe customers would see an 8.81 percent increase, El Dorado County 9.34 percent and Douglas County 6.81 percent. On a monthly residential bill this would equate to an increase of $2.34 to $28.89, $2.85 to $33.32 and $1.21 to $18.93, respectively.

STR had wanted a 10 percent increase, but the auditing firm tasked with analyzing the proposal came back with the lower rates.

According to the report from Crowe Horwath, without the rate increase STR has a projected revenue shortfall of $1,370,489 for 2018.

The larger increase in large part has to do with a credit from the construction of the resource recovery facility (RRF) going away.

“STR removed the RRF fund credit which had been paid to JPA jurisdiction ratepayers, to account for excess rate revenues collected during the construction of the RRF. On March 2, 2012, the JPA approved a RRF fund credit of $4,722,285, with a six-year payback period, applied in base years, beginning in 2012,” the report says.

Beginning in 2018 that credit is gone.

“This is the most significant factor in causing rates to increase for 2018, and effectively represents approximately 50 percent of the requested rate increase,” the report states.

Lake Tahoe News asked STR President Jeff Tillman if these sorts of rate increases will become the norm.

“I certainly hope not to see these,” Tillman told *LTN*. “That’s

why we said it could be spread over two years.”

It will be up to the individual jurisdictions to OK the full increase for 2018, or for it to be split with two-thirds of the proposal taking affect next year and the remainder in 2019.

Other reasons for the rate increase are labor and disposal expenses. Employees are getting a 3.4 percent raise, health insurance has gone up 6.7 percent, and workers’ comp bills soared 19.4 percent.

The South Lake Tahoe-based refuse company per its contract is permitted every three years to come back with a base rate adjustment. This is what these increases are. However, the company may seek interim rate increases as well, which in large part are based on the Consumer Price Index. Those increases are usually 2 to 3 percent. Rates at the start of this year went up less than 2 percent in each jurisdiction, with no increase in 2016.

Opinion: Working to solve SLT’s water contamination

By Jennifer Lukins

In South Lake Tahoe we take pride in having, hands down, some of the best drinking water you can find. Around town folks carry “Drink Tahoe Tap” water bottles. We turn our noses up at bottled water.

The primary source of drinking water in the South Shore area is groundwater. Unfortunately, few residents realize that this

precious resource is threatened by contamination from the man-made chemical tetrachloroethylene, or PCE, an ingredient in dry cleaning solvents. The state of California has designated PCE as a chemical that is known to cause cancer and has established a regulatory limit for how much PCE can be in drinking water.



Jennifer Lukins

The PCE groundwater contamination plume in the South Y area is a major problem facing the entire community. The plume extends north from the South Y Shopping Center up to the Tahoe Keys, and is continuing to migrate toward the lake itself. Since 1989, when the state first required PCE to be sampled in drinking water wells, numerous public and private wells in the South Y area have been contaminated with PCE at levels above state and federal drinking water standards.

Three providers of public drinking water to South Lake Tahoe – Lukins Brothers Water Company, South Tahoe Public Utility District and the Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association – have all been harmed, in one way or another, by the PCE groundwater contamination. During the 1990s, South Tahoe PUD installed a treatment system to remove PCE contamination from groundwater pumped from four of its drinking water wells. In 2009, Tahoe Keys POA installed a wellhead treatment system to remove PCE contamination at one of its wells.

As for Lukins Brothers, in July 2014, we discovered PCE in two of our groundwater wells at levels above state and federal

drinking water standards. To protect our customers, Lukins Brothers immediately stopped using the contaminated wells and began to supplement the water produced from our one remaining well with water purchased from South Tahoe PUD. While this has allowed Lukins Brothers to continue to provide our customers with safe, reliable drinking water, it has unfortunately increased their water bills and placed additional stress on available drinking water from the South Tahoe PUD system. Lukins Brothers is now in the process of completing engineering and design plans for a PCE treatment plant at one of our contaminated well sites. Construction of this plant will be an important first step in getting Lukins Brothers back to being self-reliant, though it still will not put us back to where we were before our groundwater supplies became contaminated with PCE.

So, while the South Lake Tahoe water providers did not cause the PCE contamination problem, we have joined forces and worked tirelessly to develop and implement short-term fixes and plan for long-term solutions that will allow us to continue to provide clean drinking water to our community.

Turning now to the cause of the problem; in the three decades since the South Y PCE plume was discovered, the state regulatory agency with oversight over the cleanup, the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, has conducted numerous investigations to determine the source of the PCE. After all of their efforts, the only confirmed source of PCE groundwater contamination in the South Y area is the site of the former Lake Tahoe Laundry Works dry cleaning facility, which operated during the 1970s in the South Y Shopping Center. On May 12, 2017, the regional board issued a “Cleanup and Abatement Order” directed to the parties responsible for the PCE contamination at that site. Unfortunately, after decades of study, the order requires neither cleanup nor abatement of the regional PCE plume, only further investigation. Of even greater concern: while prior drafts of

the order confirmed that the Lake Tahoe Laundry Works responsible parties are also responsible for causing the regional PCE plume, the final draft left out this significant staff finding.

One result of this omission is that there continue to be no plans in place for stopping or limiting the continued movement of the PCE plume from the South Y toward Lake Tahoe, aside from the voluntary efforts undertaken by the Groundwater Stakeholder Advisory Group. This group, which includes Lukins Brothers, South Tahoe PUD, the Tahoe Keys POA, and representatives from other local agencies, is currently working to secure grant funds from the state to develop a feasibility study that will help to identify potential alternatives for addressing the regional PCE groundwater contamination problem.

As for the ongoing regulatory investigation, under the regional board's recent order, the Lake Tahoe Laundry Works responsible parties are directed to investigate and determine the total extent of the PCE groundwater contamination plume originating from their facility. It will now be up to the regional board to ensure that this investigation actually results in responsible parties being held responsible for the costs of cleaning up contaminated drinking water supplies.

Jennifer Lukins runs Lukins Brothers Water Company in South Lake Tahoe.

To maintain muscle and lose

fat as you age, add weights

By Gretchen Reynolds, New York Times

Trying to stay trim as you age? Surprisingly, if you're cutting calories to lose weight, adding weights to your weight loss regimen may be more effective than beginning a walking program, according to a new study that adds to growing evidence that weight training is important for vigorous aging.

Successful weight loss is never easy, as most of us know from experience, and becomes more difficult with age. Instead of losing or maintaining weight as we grow older, most of us gain a pound or two each year during middle age.

At the same time, we also often begin naturally to lose some of our muscle mass, so that our bodies wind up increasingly composed of fat.

Read the whole story

More than 1 answer to how well Nev. funds education

By Amelia Pak-Harvey and Meghin Delaney, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Talk to just about anyone in Nevada and they'll agree that the state's public education system needs to improve.

But the unanimity ends there.

Superintendents and many education advocates have long called

for the Legislature to put more money into schools.

But many legislators and other critics say they want evidence that the school districts are spending wisely and getting results before giving them more money.

Read the whole story

Christmas and Santa coming to SLT museum

Lake Tahoe Historical Society is planning a festive day of free family fun on Dec. 9 from 11am-7pm.

The museum is being transformed into a Victorian Christmas scene. Tour the museum and 1930’s log cabin.

Santa arrives by sleigh at 5pm. There will be sleigh rides for all.

Ukulele Christmas music will be playing, the South Lake Tahoe Children’s Choral Society singing, plus there will be children’s activities and gift making along with refreshments of cookies, hot cider and more.

The entire event is free. The museum is at 3058 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

Road Beat: Latest Miata is sleek and supple



The 2017 Mazda Miata MX-5 should be a Nobel Prize winner. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

If there were a Nobel Prize for fun and motoring enjoyment, the Mazda MX-5 would be the hands down winner. No if, ands, or buts. Now in its fourth generation, the more time I spend in the left seat (the right seat ain't too bad either), the more I want one. In my week of thrashing this MX-5 Miata through an athletic regime at full tilt boogie, most of the time throwing some caution to the wind, the Miata averaged between 35 and 36 mpg. It is more economical than most every other car I have driven, except for some hybrids.

Its body is edgy, muscular and looks to be shaped by a

Samurai's sword. During my week of testing, this car received more compliments of any test vehicle in recent memory. Some people rolled down their windows wanting to know about the car. There is no question, the "Kodo" school of design is the winner among manufacturers, think, Mazda 3 and 6 and their three CX models.

Miata has gone back to its original roots, being much smaller and lighter than its prior generation with a length of just 154 inches or about your basic Mini Cooper. But it is wide (for its length) at 68 inches affording a track of 59 inches front and rear while standing just 49 inches tall.

Under its beautiful bonnet sits a longitudinally mounted 2.0, high tech four-cylinder Atkinson cycle engine driving the rear wheels via a six-speeder manual tranny, that's so smooth, upshifting rarely requires the clutch, nice if you have a lazy left leg. Down shifting requires more skill. Atkinson cycle engines have extremely high compression (13:1) and late closing intake valves which improve engine efficiency by expanding the compression and power stroke ratios. See paragraph one as to overall fuel economy proof.



Specifications

Price $24,915 to about $33,000 plus $820 for the boat from Hiroshima, Japan

Engine

2.0L inline four-cylinder

DOHC, 16 valves 155 hp @ 6,000 rpm 148 lb.-ft. of torque @ 4,600 rpm

Transmission

Six-speed manual

Six-speed torque converter automatic

Configuration

Longitudinal front engine/rear wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 90.9 inches

Length 154.1 inches

Width 68.3 inches

Height (17-inch wheels) 48.8 inches

Ground Clearance (17-inch wheels) 5.32 inches

Track (f/r) 58.9/59.2 inches

Fuel Capacity 11.9 gallons

Truck volume 4.6 cubic feet

Turning circle (wall to wall) 32.9 feet

Steering lock to lock 2.7 turns

Wheels (std/opt) 16X6.5/17X7 inches

Tires (std//opt) 195/50X16//205/45X17

Weight 2,332 pounds

Weight distribution (f/r) 53/47 percent

Performance

0-60 mph 5.91 seconds

50-70 mph 3.32 seconds (3rd gear)

50-70 up hill (6%) 4.53

seconds
Top Speed Estimate 140 plus mph (have ear plugs)
Fuel economy EPA rated 26/33/29 mpg city/highway/combined. Estimate 30-32 mpg in suburban driving, 35 mpg in rural driving and 40 plus mpg at 70 mph on level ground.

Power output is still very good at 155 hp at 6,000 rpm along with 148 pounds of peak twist at 4,600 rpm. Performance is absolutely world class with a 0-60 time of 5.91 seconds backed up with a level simulated pass time of 3.32 seconds and an uphill pass of 4.53 seconds. Nailing the throttle will pin your backside to the seat. Miata rocks, especially third gear. Although not a 500 hp 5.0L powerhouse, this 2.0L mill gives you good power in the lower gears from 1,500 to 2,000 rpm. Throttle response feels like its connected to your brain.

While the fuel tank is just 12 gallons, your range will be limited by your own physiology as this Miata averaged 42 mpg on the highway at 70 mph, meaning an easy 400 miles. EPA rates the Miata at 26/33 mpg city/highway meaning a combined number of about 29 mpg. But while they are the government mandated test numbers, I achieved much higher numbers, my round trip to South Lake Tahoe and back averaged 40.1 mpg using full throttle in at least 15 of the passing zones up and down Highway 50.

Handling is the real Nobel effort of Mazda. The laws of physics have been redefined by Miata. Suspenders are state of the art, steering is a quick double pinion power rack (2.7 turns) and while wheels are 17X7 inch alloys the tires aren’t huge meats at 205/45. Those tires make the Miata more playful.

Also, which needs mention is the under 33 foot turning circle and its more important light weight of 2,332 pounds. Changing directions in a Miata is about the most fun you can have either in the vertical or recumbent position. Not much else comes close. It does exactly what you want and nothing you don’t. And if your exuberance gets the better of you, your corrections can even be more fun and satisfying. It loves to rotate and getting the rear end out will not cause you a five-yard penalty of back field in motion.

Ride quality is firm. But you won’t be braking any fillings and it is well controlled. And it is remarkably quiet, even with the top down. But don’t expect it to be a CX-9. The engine spins 2,900 rpm at 70 mph.

Safety includes most of the acronyms including the braking ones, even lane departure warning, along with four-wheel discs. Headlights are fabulous made even better by the adaptive front lighting and automatic high beam.

Within the confirms of my Grand Touring roadster (soft top) is a rather luxo interior, with plenty of leather on the seats, steering wheel and shifter, plus full power except for the seats. Instrumentation is about perfect and now that I have had plenty of seat time with Mazda’s multi-function commander control, I have finally got it down. It’s still not the best, but it works, but there are still too many steps involved in the control system.

The other thing missing is luggage and interior storage capacity. The small trunk is actually quite usable and although it only holds 4.6 cubic feet, it is well shaped. If you golf however, Fed Ex or Ship Sticks will be pre-programmed into your phone or computer. No glove box or center console storage, either but there is a little compartment between the seatbacks which is basically inaccessible while seated, unless you are a member of Cirque du Soleil.

Pricing for your basic Miata starts at below $25 large, but my “loaded” Grand Touring model stickers for $30,065, plus $835 for the boat from Hiroshima, japan. It’s a lot of fun for the money, but be careful how you have your fun as the penalties are more than five yards. Miata is about driving enjoyment. Did I forget to mention it’s also an economy car designed for the long and windy way home.

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.