

Big, toothy fish found in Nev. chomped prey like sharks



The *Birgeria americana* predates Nevada's most famous fossil, the Ichthyosaur, by more than 30 million years.
Photo/University of Zurich

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

If fishing reports existed 250 million years ago they probably would have warned anglers to bring extra sturdy line to Northern Nevada.

That's because newly described fossil evidence shows the warm waters of the time were home to a toothy apex predator that chomped its prey like a modern shark.

"The surprising find from Elko County in northeastern Nevada is one of the most completely preserved vertebrate remains from this time-period ever discovered in the United States," said Carlo Romano of the University of Zurich, lead author of a *Journal of Paleontology* article about the find.

Read the whole story

Fire near Mt. Rose 35% contained

Updated 5:35pm:

The fire burning near the Mount Rose Highway is 35 percent contained and has burned 29 acres.

Lightning started the Whites Fire on Aug. 1 near the White Creek Trailhead southwest of Reno. Access to trails in that area is closed.

“The fire is burning in an area that is rocky and extremely dense with vegetation, timber, and forest litter. Our crews have done a great job reinforcing fire lines, suppressing spot fires, and mopping up hot spots within the fire perimeter,” incident commander Stacy Saucedo said in a statement. “We are hoping to have the fire 100 percent contained by the end of the day Thursday.”

Timberline Drive remains open to locals only, and there is no access to the Whites Creek and Thomas Creek Trailheads on the Carson Ranger District.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Star Guide: Countdown to the

eclipse

By Tony Berendsen

On Aug. 21, along a 70-mile -wide path of totality, stretching from coast to coast of the United States, millions of people will experience a total solar eclipse. The last total eclipse in the U.S. happened in 1979, so this will be the first total eclipse experience for many Americans.

For those planning to be in the path of totality to view the eclipse it will be without a doubt the event of a lifetime, never to be forgotten as the day the moon blocked out the sun and day became night for a moment.

First-grade student Sienna Larrucea of Loyalton Elementary School expressed her excitement for her upcoming eclipse trip in a poem:

I'm going to see the solar eclipse

With a smile on my lips

It sounds exciting when the moon is in front of the sun

I bet I will have a lot of fun

I will sit there in my special glasses

And watch as the moon slowly passes

As the darkness comes along

The birds will sing their evening song

Then it will get bright once more

And things will look like they did before

You see I am so excited to go

To see the eclipse in Idaho.

Most of us will not travel to the path of totality, experiencing a partial eclipse of the sun instead. In Lake Tahoe and the surrounding region, the partial eclipse will begin on Aug. 21 at 9:04am with maximum eclipse (83 percent) at 10:20am, and the end of partial eclipse at 11:43am.



High-altitude balloons take flight during a test launch in June near Rexburg, Idaho. Photo/Kelly Gorham/Montana State University

Unfortunately, almost all of the geeky astronomer types in our area will not be in town during the eclipse, so there aren't a lot of options for organized public viewings. But anyone with proper solar viewing glasses, a pin hole camera, or standing under a tree looking down at the pin hole type projections on the ground can watch the progress of the moon crossing the disk of the Sun.

There is an interesting option to take a balloon ride to the stratosphere 100,000 feet up to view the eclipse with the Eclipse Ballooning Project.

Eric Wang, associate professor of the Department of Mechanical Engineering, is associated with the project through Nevada Space Grant which has been active in high altitude ballooning for the past 15 years.

I had a chance to ask him a couple questions about the project:

What is the eclipse ballooning project?: "The basic concept is to launch as many high altitude (stratospheric) balloons as possible to capture and live stream the eclipse. About 60 teams from universities, community colleges, high schools and private ballooning groups will be doing a coordinated launch from dozens of sites across the path of the eclipse. The balloons will provide live coverage of the eclipse as viewed from balloons at about 100,000 feet. As the eclipse progress across the U.S., teams will launch their balloons and live stream the videos for anyone to watch."

Will the balloon images show the eclipse, or the shadow, or both?: "The live stream will show mainly the eclipse. We are also recording the entire event with 360 degree spherical cameras so anyone can rotate the view in VR (virtual reality) to view either the eclipse or the shadow."

The public can view the live stream **here**.

Wang added that he was very excited to witness the eclipse, and fell lucky to participate in a project of this size. "We will be launching from eastern Idaho and have a few alternate sites to use if it turns out to be cloudy in eastern Idaho."

Whether you are traveling to totality, viewing a partial with those special glasses, or hopping on a stratospheric balloon ... happy eclipse viewing!

Tony Berendsen runs Tahoe Star Tours. He may be reached at 775.232.0844 or tony@tahoestartours.com.

Would-be buyer of KMS fails to come up with money

The former Kingsbury Middle School property is back on Douglas County School District board's agenda.

The electeds will be asked to approve or deny a sales extension to Patrick Taylor at the Aug. 8, 3:30pm meeting in Stateline. The Cave Rock resident a year ago entered into an agreement to purchase the Stateline site for \$3.15 million.

He has been given multiple extensions. The latest expired this week. He did not come up with the requisite money to keep the property in escrow.

Taylor was not available for comment.

His plans had been to turn the site into affordable housing. Not everyone is thrilled with that idea based on the density proposed and what it would do to traffic congestion.

If the extension is denied, then the district could put the property back up for sale. It's possible the board would seek another appraisal since the market has changed in the basin. Taylor's was the only formal offer to date. The school site was closed eight years ago this summer.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Edible garden tour in Truckee

Slow Food Lake Tahoe is offering a tour of edible gardens on Aug. 13 from 9am-2 pm.

This is an opportunity to get ideas for gardens of all shapes and sizes, from a beginner container garden to a high production permaculture greenhouse.

It will be a caravan style tour beginning and ending at the Truckee Demonstration Garden located at the Truckee Regional Park. A variety of Truckee home gardens in Sierra Meadows, Glenshire and Prosser will be visited with light refreshments at each stop.

Tickets may be purchased **online**. They are \$10 for adults and no charge for children. Check in will begin at 8:30 am at the Truckee Demonstration Garden.

\$94.6M invested in Tahoe's environment in 2016

By Kathryn Reed

In the last five years, 137 environmental projects have been initiated in the Lake Tahoe Basin, with 207 in the planning stage. They will cost \$1.5 billion to implement, but only \$670 million has been secured.

This was some of the information delivered at last week's

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board meeting.

Kim Caringer, TRPA's division manager of the environmental improvement program, gave an overview of accomplishments to the board.

Project categories include: water quality, watersheds, habitat; forest health; transportation and air quality; sustainable recreation; science; and program support.

In the last year, 20 projects have been completed. These include work in the forest, aquatic invasive species, stream restoration, erosion control and air quality projects.

In 2016, \$94.6 million was spent on environmental projects in the basin. California contributed the most with \$53.1 million, \$13.2 million from the feds, \$12.6 million in private sector funding, \$8 million in local government dollars, and \$7.6 million from Nevada.

Of note is that while the federal Lake Tahoe Restoration Act was signed last year by President Barack Obama, it has not been funded. It is supposed to bring \$415 million to the basin in a 10-year period. The original LTRA was approved by Congress after President Bill Clinton launched the Lake Tahoe Environmental Summit in 1997. (This year's summit is Aug. 22, 10am at Valhalla, hosted by Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif.)

The LTRA is expected to be one of the theme's at this year's summit. With Harry Reid no longer in the Senate, it means more work for the current California and Nevada delegations. The senators have often been in lockstep on Tahoe issues, while members of the House have not always been in agreement.

Other summit agenda items will include climate change, the impacts of last winter and sustainable recreation.

625 acres on North Shore to be thinned

Starting this week mechanical whole tree removal will take place on approximately 625 acres above Carnelian Bay and Tahoe Vista. Work is expected to conclude in mid-October.

Thinning will begin off the east side of Highway 267 and forest road 16N52 (Gas Line Road). Depending on conditions, work will then proceed to the west side of Highway 267 off the Fiberboard Freeway, forest road 16N74 and Old County Road.

Mechanical whole tree removal involves cutting the entire tree and moving it to the landing area to remove the limbs and cut it into sections.

The U.S. Forest Service advises the public to avoid these areas due to the hazards posed by heavy equipment and falling trees. Hazards may be present even when operations have ceased for the day.

Movie highlights struggles of schizophrenia

“Elizabeth Blue,” a movie about schizophrenia, is being brought to South Lake Tahoe by NAMI El Dorado.

The drama stars Anna Schafer, Ryan Vincent, Kathleen Quinlan, and Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje. The story centers on the

Elizabeth – played by Schafer – who suffers from schizophrenia and is struggling to regain control of her mental stability and her life as she begins to plan her wedding.

The film will be shown Sept. 16 at 3pm in the board room at Lake Tahoe Community College. It is free. Doors open at 2:45pm.

Opinion: From death comes a new best friend

By Kathryn Reed

Five years ago today one of the saddest and what turns out to be best things happened. My friend **Joy died** and her dog became a member of my family.

When Joy was diagnosed with cancer the previous fall one of the first things she did was ensure AJ's future. I tried to avoid the conversation, but Joy wouldn't have it. And, really, how could I? Her strength to have this most difficult discussion was the prelude to nearly a year of moments that made me admire my friend even more. She taught me how to die with grace and dignity.



Joy and AJ

AJ was Joy's 9-year-old dog. Her baby. Her child. This part greyhound, part yellow Lab and part things we don't know was her companion.

The three of us would walk on occasion. AJ provided me with my dog fix since at the time I was dog free.

That last year of Joy's life I became AJ's primary dog walker. Joy told me AJ soon recognized the sound of the Jeep pulling into the driveway and would get excited. (She still does.) Sometimes the three of us walked, but in the last months it was just me and AJ.

I miss those walks – the three of us. I miss my friend more than I ever imagined, and love this dog of ours more than I thought possible.

It took me a while to consider myself AJ's mom; somehow doing so seemed to diminish the memory of Joy. But I know Joy wanted me to be mom; and that brings me comfort.

I remember the first time AJ got into my Jeep. She sat on my lap as we drove. We were going for her mani-pedi as Joy called it. AJ knew it was just a nail trim. She didn't look back at Joy – which I heard all about. But she also made driving down Highway 50 a bit challenging. I finally got her into the passenger seat.

Now she is a regular there. I often take her on errands with me. I'm not sure which one of us wants the company more.

It wasn't an easy transition for AJ. She had become Joy's protector, not wanting people to get close – especially as Joy spent more time in bed. AJ transferred that protection to me. This wasn't good.

I enlisted the help of Karenina with Dogs with Issues for some training sessions. AJ was softening and at the same time starting to have a firm grasp of my heart.



Hiking to Winnemucca Lake in 2015.

Joy wasn't AJ's first mom. We don't know what abuse she may have endured that led her needing to be rescued.

She still has issues. She doesn't like other dogs in her house; doesn't even really like them in their home. She can be temperamental on occasion. And she really doesn't like men in

sandals or flip flops.

AJ sleeps on my bed now; something I had never allowed a dog to do. She even uses a pillow. On special occasions or when I'm feeling sad or there's thunder she's invited onto the couch. (This is our little secret.)

I have more pictures of AJ than any human family member or friend. I've stopped thinking it's weird to have a dog as a best friend.

She's 14 now. That's how old my last dog lived to. She's smaller than Bailey, so I'm hoping there's a few more good years ahead of us. There are too many hikes I want to go on, too many bunnies and squirrels for her to chase, too much life to still share.

Sometimes we talk about Joy; we even talk to Joy. I thank my friend all the time for AJ. That's not to say I wouldn't rather have my friend be alive, and for AJ to be with her. But clearly that's not going to happen.

On this anniversary of Joy's death, I will smile at knowing she knew what she was doing when we had that difficult conversation, then I'll hug and kiss on AJ and be thankful for the gift my friend gave me.

AJ (Audrey Jean) is proof that something magical can come from something so sad. It took me a while to appreciate that. The circle of life is quite powerful.

Trump's rural broadband goal

won't be easy

By Mark Niquette and Alan Bjerga, Bloomberg

President Trump has promised to expand broadband service to rural areas as part of his \$1 trillion nationwide infrastructure plan. That may be easier said than done.

It would take an estimated \$80 billion to extend broadband to all U.S. areas that lack it, but the White House has initially proposed spending just \$25 billion over 10 years on rural infrastructure needs. At the same time, policy experts disagree about how best to expand rural broadband – and what responsibility government has to subsidize it.

“Our suspicion is the president’s plan won’t be sufficient,” said Johnathan Hladik, policy director for the Center for Rural Affairs, a Nebraska-based nonprofit that advocates for small farms. “We’re happy he’s saying it. You also have to do it, and that’s where it gets tough.”

Read the whole story