

‘Guzzler’ atlas maps Nevada’s wildlife watering holes

By Benjamin Stillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

What do you buy for the outdoors-loving Nevadan who has everything?

Consider the gift of life giving water.

Or, at least an atlas that shows the location of approximately 1,300 Nevada Department of Wildlife guzzlers.

Read the whole story

Tribal liaison is a bridge to the USFS



Grace Newell has been a bridge between the U.S. Forest Service and local Indian tribes. Photo/Jeremy Spoon

By Erica Hupp

When asked to describe her job, Grace Newell said with pride, “I serve as a bridge between the tribes and the U.S. Forest Service. And it’s a two-way bridge; that’s very important.”

Newell is the tribal liaison for the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, stationed at the supervisor’s office in Sparks. She goes on to explain that she communicates the agency’s mission to the Nevada tribes and relates their perspective to the Forest’s leaders.

As a Paiute Shoshone tribal member, Newell grew up on Lone Pine Reservation in the Eastern Sierra. She now lives in Truckee. Though certainly not required for the job, she said that her heritage has helped her establish positive working relationships.

“It’s a welcome change for the tribes. They feel comfortable having a fellow Native American as their liaison,” said

Newell. "However, it can also be awkward at times. I work for the agency, not vice versa."

Her career began with an academic scholarship to Dartmouth College, where she studied history. After graduation in 1978, she continued working for the university as the director of its Native American Program. She recruited academic Native American students from across the Western United States.

After her father passed away in 1983, Newell returned home to Lone Pine to be with her family. She took a summer job with the Sequoia National Forest as a wildland firefighter on the Horseshoe Meadow Hotshots, the first fire crew composed primarily of tribal members. She was one of only two women in the group.

"At that time, there were very few women in wildland firefighting," Newell said. "So I was breaking through barriers."

That summer job turned into a lifelong career. "I fell in love with the Forest Service and never left," she said.

For many years she served in a variety of wildland fire positions in California and Nevada, including helitack crew, fire engine operator, rappel crew, hand crew captain, fuels specialist, and fire management officer.

"Early in my career I was advised to get a wide range of experience in order to move up in the agency," said Newell.

Nearing the mandatory firefighter retirement age of 57, Grace decided to take on a new role so that she could keep working. "Fifty-seven just seemed too young to retire," she said. So in 2012 she started to work in Sparks as the tribal liaison for the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.

Newell said her most memorable experience from her current role has been representing tribal perspectives during the

development of bi-state sage-grouse management policies.

“The tribal voice really needed to be heard,” she said. The policies were designed to manage sage-grouse habitat, where pinyon trees had encroached upon sagebrush ecosystems, rendering them uninhabitable for the birds. However, the tribes viewed the issue differently.

“To them, the pinyon represents the tree of life,” said Newell. “It’s a food source as well as a cultural center for family gatherings. To the tribes, the tree goes where it needs to. There’s no such thing as encroachment.”

Newell’s efforts helped managers reach a compromise to restore the sage-grouse’s habitat while still respecting tribal views and needs.

Now 61, Grace said she is finally ready to retire and looks back on her career with satisfaction. “I feel proud of the work I’ve done,” she said. “I think I’ve played a role in helping the Forest Service, the land, and the tribes.”

Erica Hupp works for the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.

Talk to focus on needs of businesses in 2017

Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce’s annual human resources update will be Jan. 18 from noon-1:30pm.

Topics will include the new minimum wage, all gender bathrooms, worker protections, and more.

The goal is to provide updates to make sure businesses stay

protected in 2017.

Bring your lunch to the chamber conference room in Stateline. Cost is \$10 for members, \$20 for others.

Road Beat: An improved Lexus RX450h FWD



The Lexus RX450h FWD has plenty of new features to brag about. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

Sometimes all new vehicles are rehashed old designs. But not so with the new Lexus RX; it is all new.

It is the best-selling Lexus, so messing with success can be dangerous, but not in this case. While the new design is an evolutionary step forward, having a shape relationship to the prior generation, that too is much improved with a new found edgy appearance defined by its extreme character line, new muscular hood, triple headlights, new window line with an extended rear quarter window treatment and so much meaningful detail. The rakish, beautifully proportioned profile looks sleeker, longer and lower. About the only negative is the signature character grille which attempts to dominate the otherwise terrific front end.

Growth is another aspect of the new RX and it is in almost every direction as it is 5 inches longer at 193 inches, on a 2-inch longer wheelbase at 110 inches, width is up by half an inch at 75 inches and it has grown taller by an inch or so at 68 inches. RX even has an inch more ground clearance at 8 inches. Weight, however, has been held in check only growing by about 100 pounds to 4,608 for FWD models and 4,740 for AWD issues. Only the fuel tank remains the same 17.2 gallons.

Under the hood is a new version of the Atkinson Cycle, 3.5L DOHC 24 valve V-6 which makes a bit more power at 259 hp at 6,000 rpm and 247 pounds of twist at 4,800 rpm, up by numerical values of 14 and 13, respectively, at the same rpm. It is probably due in large part to the increased compression ratio of 13:1. Adding to that output is an electric hybrid system that can add as much as 50 hp, bring total output to 309 hp. Literature on the RX may say 308 hp, but 259 hp plus 37 kW equals 308.6 hp. Anyway, power in my tester is sent to the front wheels through an extremely smooth CVT. In AWD models, an electric motor power the rear wheels. It is a pretty simple system.



Specifications

Price \$52,235 to about \$62,000

Engine-conventional

3.5L DOHC 24 valve V-6 259 hp @ 6,000 rpm

247 ft.-lb. of torque @ 4,800 rpm

Electric motor front axle 155 hp

Electric motor rear axle 67 hp (AWD only)

Sealed nickel metal hydride (Ni-MH) 50 hp

Transmission

CVT

Configuration

Transverse mounted front engine/front wheel drive/all-wheel drive (rear axle is electrically powered)

Dimensions

Wheelbase 109.8 inches

Length 192.5 inches

Height 67.7 inches

Width 74.6 inches

Weight (FWD) 4,608

Track (f/r) 64.4/64.0 inches

Ground clearance 8.2 inches
GVWR 5,864 pounds
Tow capacity 3,500 pounds
Fuel capacity 17.2 gallons
Cargo volume (second row
up/second row folded)
40.0/80.3 cubic feet
Seat belts (passenger
capacity) 5
Wheels (std/opt)
18X7.5/20X7.5 inch alloys
Tires (std/opt)
235/65X18/235/55X20
Turning circle 38.0 feet
Steering lock to lock 2.70
turns
Coefficient of drag 0.34

Performance RX450h FWD

0-60 mph 6.48 seconds
50-70 mph 3.42 seconds
50-70 mph uphill 4.50
seconds
Top Speed Electronically
limited to 112 mph
Fuel economy EPA rated at
31/30/30
city/highway/combined mpg
(AWD). Expect 30-31 mpg in
rural country driving with
some stop and go and 33 plus
mpg on the highway at legal
speeds.

Smoothness is the key word for this system. The throttle is very predictable and linear. Combining the two systems is imperceptible and Toyota/Lexus has really made hybrids undetectable in the way they perform as everything in the

system is seamlessly integrated. But (don't you love it when the "but" appears), the auto stop and start of the system can still be felt from a dead stop when the brake is released (brake release starts the engine after stopping). Now, however, many cars (hybrids and conventional, alike) with auto stop and start "suffer" from this. But in the RX, most drivers will be unaware of it.

Hybrids are about improved fuel economy and performance and this rig does well at both. This new RX flat out got it done, with a 0-60 mph elapsed time averaging 6.48 seconds, about a quarter of a second improvement over the prior generation. Passing times also reflected a significant improvement with a 50-70 mph time of 3.42 seconds and an uphill run of just 4.50 seconds. The prior generation posted times of 6.75, 3.72 and 5.75 seconds respectively.

Fuel economy is also improved, in this case by about 10 percent. EPA numbers are 31/30/30 mpg city/highway/combined. But in 350 miles of varied driving with about 15 percent spent on the freeway, the RX 31.7 mpg. On a level highway two way run at 70 mph, 33.3 mpg was the average. The new 450h averaged 32.7 mpg in a roundtrip from Placerville to South Lake Tahoe. Prior generation numbers were about 28 mpg overall and 30.3 mpg in its 70-mph highway run. Think of it, driving a luxo, 4,608-pound SUV that accelerates from 0-60 mph in less than six and a half seconds and yields a solid 30 plus mpg. Not too shabby.

Handling can be best described as secure. My RX tester came with the Luxury Package (\$3,125) which means upgraded semi-aniline leather seats, but it also means 20X7.5 inch alloys shod with 235/55 series tires (standard are 18X7.5 inch alloys with taller profile 235/65 series rubber) and that means crisper grip and more tire feel. Suspension is MacPherson struts up front and a double wishbone system in the rear and steering while quick at 2.7 turns lock to lock is the only negative in its numbness which means you will have to guide

the big RX to get the most out of its sophisticated suspenders. But it will do the twisties at speed with confidence. No problem here.

Ride quality is enhanced by the RX body and construction which feels like it was carved out of a steel ingot. It is just that solid. Just open and close a door, feels more like closing a bulkhead door on a battleship. The ride is solid, it absorbs everything the road can dish out, big or small, smoothing out every road and there is no float. Wind and road noise are non-existent. There is no tach so engine rpm at speed while unknown is probably at or below 2,000 rpm. But here is the deal, this RX will operate on pure electric below about 45 mph and then things get really smooth and quiet, amazingly so. But any throttle pressure brings on the gas engine. It's a small, Nickel Metal Hydride battery.

I don't know the engineering requirements or space available, but if the battery was just a bit bigger (a cubic foot or so) allowing a more continuous power draw and a higher pure electric top speed of 55-60 mph and the ability to do this for perhaps three or four miles would be wonderful. I am not talking plug in hybrid, just a hybrid with a bit more battery. Doubling the current battery might only add a hundred pounds. Another question is if there is enough energy recapture to make it work. Lexus, give this idea some thought.

Braking is by huge (13 inch), ventilated four wheel discs with all the acronyms and they are firm and strong. No less than 10 airbags protect the driver and passengers along with electronic aids like an enhanced vehicle stability control system. But nothing replaces good judgement. Headlights are amazing.

Getting back to the luxury package makes for extremely comfortable seating. The quality of the appointments is outstanding, everything you touch exudes a dense softness. Instead of a tach, there is a meter showing the hybrid system

operation. Centered between the speedo and system gauge is an info/trip computer. While the speedo is large, my tester had a handy heads-up display (\$600). Most everything is standard including moonroof, full power (10-way front seats) and even a drivers' seat, mirror and steering wheel memory. Rear seating is copious for three and cargo space is large at 80 cubic feet.

Pricing for the RX450h FWD is not cheap at a base of \$52,235 plus \$940 for the train and truck from Ontario, Canada. My tester had about \$8,000 in options including the Luxury Package bringing to total with destination to \$61,420. The least expensive of the options is worth noting as it was \$430 for the huge 12 inch NAV system stuck on top of the center stack. After understanding the all-purpose nature of the RX, it is no wonder it is the top selling Lexus.

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

- BlueGo is offering free rides on routes 50 and 53 on the South Shore from Dec. 24-Jan. 1. For more info, go **online**.

- El Dorado County Board of Supervisors is having a special meeting on Dec. 28 at 10am in Placerville to consider accepting a \$57.14 million loan from the USDA to build a public safety facility. The interest rate will be 2 3/8 percent.

- The Minden Library is showing “The Jungle Book” (rated PG) on Jan. 7 at 2pm. The movie and popcorn are free. The library is located at 1625 Library Lane.

- AAA expects to rescue more than 980,000 motorists over the 11-day holiday travel period, with the primary reasons being dead batteries, flat tires and lockouts.

- Squaw Valley’s upper mountain has potable water; with operations in full service.

Markleeville men accused of illegally killing deer

By Kathryn Reed

Two Markleeville men face multiple charges related to illegally hunting deer in Alpine County.

“This is about as egregious as anything we deal with, second only to wildlife trafficking,” Lt. Chris Stoots with California Department of Fish and Wildlife told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Ramsey Horse, 29, and William Berreman, 26, are accused of spotlighting, which is when hunters use a flashlight or the headlights to locate deer at night. This is where the phrase “a deer in headlights” comes from.

“They freeze, they are confused and they have lights shining in their eyes. They lock up and they are susceptible to being killed,” Stoots explained.

As nocturnal animals deer see extremely well at night – in the

dark.

This is the time of year when deer rut and they find habitat out of the snow; a safe place to spend winter. It's an easy shot because so many are in one spot and they have other things on their mind besides survival.

This investigation started in fall 2015 with reports of shots being fired at night. A warden set up surveillance cameras near Diamond Valley and Airport Roads, which led him to the suspects last week.

It is not known how many deer the men may have killed in this illegal fashion.

If found guilty, the two could face a \$1,000 fine and six months in jail for each of the four counts.

Calif. forests failing to regrow after intense wildfires

By Bob Berwyn, Inside Climate News

There are warning signs that some forests in the Western U.S. may have a hard time recovering from the large and intense wildfires that have become more common as the climate warms.

After studying 14 burned areas across 10 national forests in California, scientists from UC Davis and the U.S. Forest Service said recent fires have killed so many mature, seed-producing trees across such large areas that the forests can't re-seed themselves. And because of increasingly warm

temperatures, burned areas are quickly overgrown by shrubs, which can prevent trees from taking root.

Historically, severe fires were uncommon in the forests covered by the study, largely made up of yellow pines and mixed conifers, but extended drought and heatwaves have exacerbated fire conditions across the West. The changing climate is also seen as a factor in recent wildfires in the Southeast, which is also mired in drought.

[Read the whole story](#)

Ice needles in the Sierra

By Bill Lindelof, Sacramento Bee

Winter is here, and so are ice needles in the Sierra Nevada, a frozen phenomenon.

Michael C. Brelle, a chemistry professor at Sierra College, discovered them on his property in Alta, elevation 3,700 feet, in 2014, his first winter in the rural community.

Each year around the winter solstice, Brelle observes ice needles all over his 9-acre property. The pushing-up of the ice needles from the ground this year followed, as it usually does, a good rain and then cold temperatures.

[Read the whole story](#)

Arrest made in travel company fraud case

A South Lake Tahoe woman is accused of operating a fraudulent travel business near Reno.

Washoe County Sheriff's Office received 71 complaints from victims of this business since the investigation began in September 2015.

Vivian Saenz-Alvarado, 39, was arrested Dec. 7 and a week later transferred to the Washoe County Detention Facility on Dec. 14. She is charged with four counts of embezzlement, four counts of obtaining money under false pretense, and four counts of using a credit card of another without consent.

Vivian Saenz-Alvarado was the owner of Vysa Travel, a vacation travel company which operated in the Sun Valley area and unexpectedly closed in fall 2015. Numerous customers told detectives they prepaid for vacations through the company prior to the closing of Vysa Travel and the money was never refunded.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

STHS grads tapping into craft

beer craze

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe planners this month approved the change in operation permit as well as issued the building permit for the old Ace Hardware store near the Y to be turned into a brewery.

“The proposal includes a mill and grain storage room, two ADA accessible restrooms, office space, a cold box, multiple brewing storage tanks, bar and table seating, as well as an outdoor patio/seating area,” Hilary Roverude, deputy director of Development Services, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Chris and Nicole Smith, who graduated from South Tahoe High School in 2006, moved back to the area about a year ago with designs to open a brewery. They expect the doors to South Lake Brewing Company to open in February, maybe March.



The old Ace store is being gutted and transformed into a brewery. Photo/Provided

A few things that will set them apart from the other breweries in the area include having the most square-feet (6,000) and largest capacity (10-barrel brewhouse).

Each barrel is the equivalent of 31 gallons of beer. A barrel is two kegs. Two batches of beer are needed to fill their fermenters, which is 40 kegs worth of beer.

“My favorite beers to brew are hoppy ales that are not too bitter,” Chris Smith told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We like to do easy drinking English ales and lagers in the German style.”

They plan to open with six taps, but have the ability to grow to 16. They are leaving room in the building if more tanks need to be added. The name so far are Angora IPA, Marlette Blonde, Barrett Brown and Emigrant Saison.

Food will be secondary to the beer. Packaged snacks will be for sale. However, the brewery will allow outside food to be brought in. The building has room to add a kitchen down the road if that seems appropriate.

Chris Smith is responsible for the beers, Nicole Smith handles the finances and the front of the house.

Right now the interior is being transformed into the brewery. The building on Lake Tahoe Boulevard has sat empty since Ace left in January 2011.

“We wanted to be on the west side of town. We didn’t want to go any farther than Ski Run,” said Smith, who grew up in Meyers. The goal is to add a bit of community feel to the Y area; to give people another reason be on that side of town.

Once the brewery has been operating for a bit the plan is to bottle the beer to sell and to have different ones available at other restaurants. Growlers will be the first way for people to take home South Lake Brewing Company beers. Membership is already possible in the Bär Society – the growler club – via the brewery’s **website**. (Bär is German for bear.)

The couple also plans to work closely with the community in

terms of giving back via hosting fundraisers or bringing beer to an event.