Cherry season almost in full bloom

By Debbie Arrington, Sacramento Bee

Here’s some cheery news for cherry lovers: After a slow start, it’s shaping up to be a good season.

“It’s just getting going,” said Jim Culbertson, executive manager of the Lodi-based California Cherry Advisory Board. “The season is five to six days late. That may not seem like much, but it makes a big impact, particularly on holiday sales.”

Memorial Day weekend is big for cherry sales. The Bings – California’s favorite sweet cherry – should start rolling in by May 25, just in time for holiday celebrations.

Currently in farmers markets and stores are the early season varieties: Brook, Burlat, Tulare and Coral. They’ll be followed by the yellow-and-red Rainiers and dark red Bings.

“The real volume comes in after Memorial Day,” Culbertson said. “But the entire season is only six to eight weeks long.”

California, which represents about one-third of the nation’s sweet cherry crop, will produce about 162 million pounds of cherries this season, with Bings representing about 45 percent. Oregon and Washington are the other major sweet cherry-producing states. Michigan grows tart or sour cherries.

Read the whole story

Foothills provide mountain biking, spectacular scenery

By Kathryn Reed

COLOMA – Hiking, biking and waterfalls – all in one day.

Blood, scratches and poison oak – all in one day.

Happy, irritated and in pain – all in one day.

The idea was to drop in elevation without going too far. Done. Then to mountain bike in a pretty area. Done. And to walk to waterfalls more than 100-feet high. Done.



Sue Wood on a bike trail May 7 outside Coloma. Photos/Kathryn Reed

If only I hadn't fallen off my bike, landing smack in the middle of my back on a log about 7 inches in diameter.

The National Outdoor Leadership School says 50 percent of outdoor injuries come from falls. I think 100 percent of mine come from falling – or tripping. My back, left arm, right leg and both ankles have recovered from my tumble earlier this month.

Once I caught my breath, we kept pedaling along this rocky, single-track trail off Highway 49 near Coloma. Magnolia Ranch is part of the 362 acres that were acquired in 1996 by the American River Conservancy and Bureau of Land Management.

Green grasses more than a foot high and sprawling oaks are a welcome change from the muddy-snowy trails of Tahoe and all the pine trees.

Several trails for cyclists, walkers and equestrians leave from here. We head to the river trail. Rafters are making their way down the South Fork of the American River. Although they are in wet suits and helmets, the water looks appealing. It's hot in this part of El Dorado County on May 7.

Wildflowers are out – mostly lupine, a few poppies and some yellow bush with buttercup-like flowers.

Sweat beads on our foreheads as we pedal. It's more the sun than the exertion at this point.

Neither Sue nor I are gnarly mountain bikers and usually we start the season with something tamer than the trail we are on to get our legs, balance and arms all in sync. The rocks on the trail are testing us. I obviously failed one of the tests in a big way.

Still, even after landing with my head pointed toward the water, I got back on the bike. I'll admit we had to walk our bikes at times. Finally, the trail disappeared because the river is running so high.

This section ends at Folsom Lake.

A change of scenery often provides me with a much needed attitude adjustment this time of year. The fall required another attitude adjustment because it sent me into unpleasant whiney world.

Up the road a bit we arrived (by Jeep) at Marshall Gold

Discovery State Historic Park. The walk to the falls was just what I needed – loosening up the muscles that were stiffening and doing something other than cycling.

We met a group of guys coming off the trail who said don't go beyond the waterfalls because they encountered a lot of snakes. Great. Give me a bear or coyote any day, snakes are not the kind of critter I ever like to see.

Meandering along the trail, we finally hear water. Not knowing how far the falls are, we are skeptical about going farther. Snake fear has taken hold of me.

A couple comes by and encourages us to keep going.

Wow.

Dutch Creek Falls are really two falls that plunge more than 100 feet each into the creek that then feeds into the American River.

Laying on the rock, listening to the water tumble from above, wispy clouds float by, as half dozen hawks scan the area for lunch. If only it didn't hurt to be on my back, I would be in heaven.

Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, take Highway 50 west to Placerville. Turn right (north) onto Highway 49. Travel about 12 miles. Magnolia Ranch trailhead is on the left.

From there, head toward Placerville. Go back a short ways to Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park. Pay the $8 to park near the museum. Cross the street and walk on Mt. Murphy Road, cross the Coloma Bridge (built in 1915), turn right on Bayne Road. The trail entrance is on the left across the street from a brown house. This is about 1.25 miles from the museum.

The waterfalls are another mile up on an old goat trail that is not maintained.

Both venues are in El Dorado County.

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Gardnerville pilot's plane, remains found in Amador County

By Sam Cohen, FOX40 News

AMADOR COUNTY – The plane of a missing winery owner has been found in Amador County near Salt Spring Reservoir.

Search and rescue aircraft flew over areas in Amador and Calaveras counties Friday looking for Robert H. "Budge" Brown and his plane.

Friday afternoon, Brown's son confirmed to FOX40 that his father's plane was found in Amador County. The son said he was numb from the news, and his heart sank as he watched news coverage Friday night. A body was found in the wreckage.

According to Amador County sheriff's deputies, around 3:45 Friday afternoon, members of the search team found the wreckage of Brown's Lancair plane south of Bear River Reservoir in very rugged, snow covered terrain in the El Dorado National Forest.

The plane crashed outside the initial search area that was covered by ground crews. The wreckage covers about a 300-yard

area, but officials were able to find the tail and serial number and did confirm the plane belongs to Brown. They also found personal items in the debris, including Brown's passport.

Read the whole story

Spooner Summit Fire Station open house

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is having open house at the new Spooner Summit Fire Station from 11am-1pm on June 1.

Staff will be on hand to answer questions about the green construction techniques used in the fire station, the Spooner Summit fuels reduction project, USFS Engine 44 and Patrol 44, and the job of a wildland firefighter. Smokey Bear will make a guest appearance.

The Spooner Summit Fire Station is located at 2367 Highway 50. For more information on the open house, call Cheva Heck at (530) 543.2608 or Lisa Herron at (530) 543.2815.

North Tahoe hosting meeting

for frontline staff

The North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce is hosting its annual Summer Recreation lunch June 9 from noon to 3pm at Sunnyside Resort in Tahoe City.

This event is geared to provide insight about summer happenings, including events, festivals and activities to frontline, front desk and concierge employees, along with business owners and managers. Attendees can give a brief presentation at the event, as well as provide 90 brochures or other pieces of collateral to be distributed during the lunch.

This event sells out with ap

Probation for Incline woman who stabbed husband to death

By Reno Gazette-Journal

Judge Robert Perry sentenced an elderly woman Friday to probation in the slaying of her husband of 42 years, a sentence the couple's children had requested.

Mary Baymiller told Perry how remorseful she was for the slaying of Charles "Skip" Baymiller, 73, and said she believes it was strictly her medication, including Paxil and sleep drugs, that led to his stabbing.

"The killing was done in a catatonic, drug-induced state," her attorney Tom Viloria said.

Baymiller, who now lives in Reno, said she felt like she

ruined her children’s lives and that she loved her husband a great deal.

The Baymiller children also pleaded with Perry to grant her probation, saying it’s what their father, a developer and winery owner, would want.

Read the whole story

Tree felling accident ends without serious injuries

A member of a tree cutting crew was pinned beneath a tree Friday afternoon.

It took members of the Lake Valley Fire Protection District and South Lake Tahoe Fire Department to free him.



Fire personnel provide aid to the injured worker. Photo/Leona Allen

The victim’s name has not been released. He was taken to Barton Memorial Hospital with minor injuries.

A section of tree being cut approximately 100 feet above ground splintered and fell, causing the victim to be pinned against the tree with his harness.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Indian casinos compete for music acts; Tahoe-Reno impacted

By Carla Meyer, Sacramento Bee

On Saturday night, John Fogerty will play at Yolo County's Cache Creek Casino Resort while his ex-bandmates play Lincoln's Thunder Valley Casino Resort as Creedence Clearwater Revisited.

"I thought that was very ironic," Cache Creek entertainment manager Ben Slaght said of the Creedence Clearwater overflow. "It is like having the Rolling Stones with Mick (Jagger) and Keith (Richards) on one stage and the Rolling Stones with Bill Wyman" on another stage.

"It is not ironic, it is intentional," Thunder Valley spokesman Doug Elmets said. Upon learning Cache Creek had booked Fogerty to open its new venue, Thunder Valley sought its own piece of the Creedence crowd. "It is a competitive market out there."

Competition and the economy are reshaping the concert scene in Northern California and Northern Nevada. Tapping a level of act once more commonly found in Reno and Lake Tahoe casinos, Cache Creek and Thunder Valley also are drawing from a huge

baby boomer market.

Boomers buoyed the concert business in 2010, when overall receipts decreased 12 percent, but Bon Jovi and the Eagles ranked among top ticket sellers, according to concert magazine Pollstar.

“The (first) goal is to provide an entertainment option for the region,” Elmets said of Thunder Valley’s amphitheater, which will hold boomer favorites the Beach Boys and Chicago and, like Cache Creek’s venue, is a “seasonal” structure built atop a parking lot. “Goal two is to get people of a particular demographic to come to the casino – either gambling or going to the restaurants or the spa.”

Read the whole story

I-80 construction closes 2 off-ramps heading east

Caltrans is alerting motorists of eastbound ramp closures on Interstate 80 due to construction.

On Interstate 80, the eastbound on-ramp at Castle Peak and the eastbound off-ramp to Donner Lake are closed through Oct. 14.

The closures are necessary to reconfigure traffic to facilitate work on the $71 million Donner III pavement rehabilitation project. The project will reconstruct and improve the section of roadway between Castle Peak and Donner Park. Completion is expected by fall.

Roadside message boards will be used to post the latest information. Unexpected weather may prolong or cause the work

to be rescheduled.

Combining cycling with wine tasting

By Blair Anthony Robertson, McClatchy-Tribune Newspapers

The rolling hills and the largely quiet country roads in and around Auburn make it one of the most reliable areas for a great cycling experience.

Over the years while riding these roads, we kept noticing the appealing little wineries that have cropped up. Wouldn’t it be nice if we could combine two of our favorite things bike riding and wine tasting?

In the Napa Valley, folks from around the world come to rent bikes, follow routes and hop from one great winery to the next. The Placer Wine Trail isn’t on that scale yet, but there is a map and a website that promotes the Sacramento-area wines.

In this installment of “Great Rides,” we’re going to give the activity a try in this emerging wine region. I’m no exercise physiologist, but I know that a sip or two of wine won’t interfere with a bike ride of moderate intensity. Wine has plenty of carbs for energy and tastes far better than Gatorade. And you don’t have to dress in Lycra from head to toe in order to do this ride. Less conspicuous attire might be more suitable if you plan to stop in at the wineries.

We’ve mapped out a route of about 25 miles that leads you past four wineries, gives you a good workout, and tests your legs

on plenty of gentle hills and one long, steep climb on Baxter Grade on the way to Auburn that is so tough you'll think you've stumbled upon a route suitable for the Tour de France.

If this hill isn't tough enough for you, there's a secret little hill thrown in as an option at the end of the ride. It's not that long, but it is incredibly steep. If you're not in tiptop shape, you may have to get off your bike and push it up the hill. More on that in a moment.

Of course, no one says you have to cover the entire route by bike. You can tackle some of it as a cyclist and some as a motorist. Or, if you're not into cycling, this route makes for an excellent sightseeing drive.

Read the whole story