100-ounce Sierra gold nugget going to auction

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

Imagine a gold nugget the size of a small fruitcake.

Fred Holabird, a mining geologist, doesn't have to imagine, because a gold prospector brought one into his Reno office in 2010.

Holabird remembers shouting, "Oh, my God!" or something similar, but unprintable in a family newspaper.

"I made some exclamation that was very, very loud," Holabird said Tuesday.

Holabird will auction what is now dubbed the Washington Nugget in March.

The stunning piece of gold was literally turned up from the ground near the town of Washington in Nevada County. It weighs nearly 100 ounces.

Read the whole story

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3 publications coming in '11 from Bona Fide Books

Look for Bona Fide Books' first three titles to come out this year.

In the coming months, the Meyer's publishing house will

publish “Permanent Vacation: Twenty Writers on Life and Work in Our National Parks”, Jason Schossler’s collection of poetry, “Mud Cakes, and Tahoe Blues”, a collection of flash fiction and nonfiction about Lake Tahoe. Submissions for the latter are open through May 1.

Ski report: Warming up



Enjoy another beautiful day on the mountain, with temperatures in the high 30s. Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Vonn wins World Cup downhill, Mancuso 16th

By U.S. Ski Team

ZAUCHENSEE, Austria -– Olympic champion Lindsey Vonn of Vail nearly skied into the fence Saturday, but reeled it back in to win the women’s Audi FIS Alpine World Cup downhill in Zauchensee, her fourth win of the season. Vonn gained 50 points on overall leader Maria Reisch of Germany, who finished fourth.

In the tiny mountain village nestled above Altenmarkt, just

south of Salzburg, Vonn charged out of the gate to beat the women's downhill field by 0.43, marking her second career World Cup win and fourth podium in Zauchensee.

"I don't know what's gotten into me this year. I seem to be making big mistakes in almost every downhill that I race in and still have a good result," Vonn said. "For me, it's just a matter of keeping my cool. It's just belief and the cool factor – just staying cool even though you make mistakes."

Teammate and fellow Olympic champion Julia Mancuso of Squaw Valley experienced trouble on the same section as Vonn finishing 16th.

Sweden's Anja Paerson finished behind Vonn in second with Austria's Anna Fenninger in third. Despite gaining 50 points on overall World Cup leader Riesch, Vonn remains 136 points behind heading into Sunday's super G.

The women will push out of the Zauchensee start house again on Sunday for a super G race.

Official results, Audi FIS Alpine World Cup, Zauchensee, Austria, Downhill

1. Lindsey Vonn, Vail, CO, 1:46.39

2. Anja Paerson, Sweden, 1:46.82

3. Anna Fenninger, Austria, 1:47.37

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16. Julia Mancuso, Squaw Valley, CA, 1:48.50

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34. Stacey Cook, Mammoth Mountain, CA, 1:49.87

37. Leanne Smith, Conway, NH, 1:49.91

40. Laurenne Ross, Klamath Falls, OR, 1:50.27

46. Chelsea Marshall, Pittsfield, VT, 1:51.03

Weibrecht joins Sullivan on U.S. Ski Team’s injured list

By U.S. Ski Team

Olympic medalist Andrew Weibrecht of Lake Placid will miss the remainder of the 2011 Audi FIS Alpine World Cup tour with a season-ending shoulder injury, announced U.S. Ski Team Medical Director Kyle Wilkens Friday. Weibrecht suffered a dislocated left shoulder while training slalom in Hinterreit, Austria, prior to the annual post Christmas downhill in Bormio, Italy. The injury will require surgery to repair.

The unplanned time off snow will allow Weibrecht to recover while attending Dartmouth where he’s in his third year of an Earth Science degree.

Fellow teammate Marco Sullivan of Squaw Valley, who suffered a downhill training crash in Bormio, remains sidelined as well. Sullivan is currently home in Squaw Valley undergoing tests.

“Both Andrew and Marco are members of our family,” added Rearick. “But these guys know how to be smart and put in the hard work it takes to come back strong.”

Labor law seminar

The North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce and the Truckee Donner Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the Sierra Human Resources Association are offering 2011 Labor Law Update and Wide-Open Q&A on Jan. 20 from 8:30am to noon at Cedar House Sports Hotel, 10918 Brockway Road in Truckee.

This employment law seminar includes updated information, new laws and best employment practices managers and business professionals need to know for 2011. Also covered will be medical conditions, including FMLA and ADA obligations; wage and hour update, as well as exemptions for meal and rest breaks; social media and related technology; medical marijuana, organ donation leaves and other trends; 2011 notice and posting requirements; and recommended 2011 handbook updates. Attendees may submit specific questions confidentially in advance to laura@tahoetrainingpartners.com so they can be addressed at the seminar.

The seminar speaker is Julie A. Vogelzang, an employment law attorney and partner at Duane Morris LLP in San Diego. She has successfully defended large, medium and small companies sued in cases including those alleging wage and hour, wrongful termination, sexual harassment, discrimination, retaliation and breach of contract claims.

Registration is $55 for North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce and SHRA members and $65 for non-members if registered before Jan. 13. Last-minute registration runs $60 for North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce and SHRA members and $70 for non-members. Seating is limited.

To register and for more information about the workshop, call Laura Moriarty, of SHRA, at (530) 573.0224 or North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce Manager Kym Fabel at (530) 581.8764. Attendees can also register online at www.sierrahra.com.

Coalition: Climate change threatens Sierra Nevada habitat

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

Both the Sierra Nevada and the San Francisco Bay-Delta have been named by environmental groups to a new list of 10 American habitats threatened by climate change.

The list was released Wednesday by the Endangered Species Coalition, a network of hundreds of conservation groups in the United States.

The 10 threatened habitats – deemed most important for endangered species in a warming world – were selected by a panel of 10 scientists from across the country representing academia and the conservation community. They relied on existing data rather than new research.

It is a first by the coalition, which previously generated annual lists focused on individual species rather than whole habitats.

Read the whole story

Study to determine if rare plover is on verge of extinction

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

The bird wears anonymous tan plumage and often tries to blend into a crowd. Few people know it visits California, much less spends most of its time here.

The mountain plover has been hiding in plain sight in California for decades. But that’s about to change.

A major new survey starting in January aims to find out just where this rare shorebird spends its time, with the goal of figuring out once and for all if it merits protection as an endangered species.

The Audubon Society, working under a $35,000 grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will conduct the survey Jan. 20 through 24 at many locations in California, including the Central Valley.

Volunteers are needed to help.

Read the whole story

Youth driving Olympic sports options

By Bill Marolt

There was an aura of excitement at Copper Mountain last month for the Visa U.S. Halfpipe Grand Prix. That excitement was echoed last week when organizers of the FIS Freestyle World Ski Championships at Deer Valley and Park City Mountain Resorts confirmed slopestyle skiing on the schedule.

The weekend at Copper mixed halfpipe skiing and snowboarding for the first time at the Grand Prix with back-to-back events at a resort where skiers and snowboarders routinely drop into the halfpipe together. Hopefully, they'll being doing the same at Sochi in 2014.

Freeskiing's stars, including Americans Jen Hudak and Simon Dumont, are chomping at the bit for their Olympic moment – a decision which could come later this winter from the International Olympic Committee. The athletes echoed each other in their pride of being part of the Grand Prix and enthusiasm to show off their sport for the IOC.

In a very progressive move this fall, the IOC gave an informal nod to halfpipe skiing, plus both slopestyle skiing and snowboarding, subject to evaluation after this year's World Championships. The organizers of Snowboard World Championships in La Molina, Spain have also added slopestyle. And a combined Junior World Championships in New Zealand in August featured freeskiing and snowboarding in the same event.

The three potential Olympic events mirror what is taking place at virtually every winter resort. Tens of millions of kids around the world are spending their on-mountain time in feature-filled terrain parks, riding over obstacles and dropping into pipes. It's a credit to the IOC for recognizing the relevance of these sports to the real world of skiing and snowboarding.

The integration of skiing in addition to snowboarding into the already popular Revolution Tour [halfpipe, slopestyle, cross] is resulting in the biggest fields ever for that series with

1,200 entries to the four event series selling in less than two hours including 500 slopestyle snowboarding spots in seven minutes. Sales of twin tip skis and participation by skiers and riders in pipes and parks are growing at a rate of around 10 percent a year.

It’s simple. This is what kids like to do at resorts today. And whether you’re a skier or snowboarder, you feel the same level of excitement. It doesn’t take long being with these athletes to see their passion and professionalism. This is the same passion kids around the world want to see and feel at the Olympics.

Bill Marolt is president and CEO of the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association.

Feeney joins Barton Pediatrics as mid-level practitioner

Mother, wife and community volunteer Michelle Feeney is known for dedicating her extra time in the Lake Tahoe community – from poverty to nutrition, she is devoted to making changes in the area.

She has worked for Barton Health at the Community Clinic, Barton Family Medicine and is now joining Dr. Jennifer Ehmann at Barton Pediatrics as a nurse practitioner.



Michelle Feeney

“Dr. Ehmann has been our [family’s] pediatrician and I know what an excellent provider she is,” Feeney said in a prepared statement. “I look forward to collaborating with her to provide great continuous medical care for her patients.”

Feeney emphasizes the importance of building strong relationship between the medical provider, the patient and their parents.

“Consistency is very important to detect the subtle changes in children as they grow and develop,” she said. “This long-standing relationship helps provide the best care for the child.”

Feeney obtained a bachelor’s degree in human biodynamics from Cal and soon after became a registered nurse. She earned a master’s in nursing, specializing as an FNP from the University of San Francisco.