Rare weather pattern could inundate region

By Edward Ortiz, Sacramento Bee

Scientists at NASA say they have identified a rare weather pattern that assures intense and potentially prolonged wet weather will strike California.

The research findings are a crucial addition to weather forecasting tools and may go a long way to alerting officials to the possibility of floods, mudslides and levee failures.

“We have found a strong connection between certain phases of two systems and the frequency of their atmospheric landfalls in California,” said Bin Guan, an earth sciences researcher at UCLA and lead researcher of the study.

Conducted in collaboration with scientists at UCLA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the study found a conclusive link between the alignment of two specific weather patterns in the Northern Hemisphere and the formation of an “atmospheric river” headed for California.

The research results were gleaned in part from data provided by NASA’s 11-year-old Aqua weather satellite – one of more than 40 weather-related satellites that circle the globe.

Atmospheric rivers are narrow bands of wind, often a mile high, that can pack the punch of a hurricane. As they move over the ocean they become laden with water vapor – and can carry with them as much water as the Mississippi River dumps into the Gulf of Mexico in an average week.

An example of the power of such an atmospheric river event was seen in 1999, when a winter storm hit California and caused 15 deaths and $570 million in damage.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Frommer’s says the Ritz-Carlton at Northstar is one of the 10 best “ski lodges” in the country.

• Lack of snow is forcing Northstar to push back its opening date. The Truckee resort was going to open Nov. 22. Now the opening date is unknown. Kirkwood was also supposed to open Friday but is in a wait-and-see mode.

• Lake Tahoe Museum will be open Dec. 7 from 11am-7pm and Dec. 8 from 11am-3pm with music, refreshments, calls to the North Pole, tours of the 1930’s cabin, and books and gifts for sale. The museum is at 3058 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

• Barton Memorial Hospital’s actual 50th birthday is Nov. 23.

• The U.S. Postal Service has issued the Harry Potter limited-edition forever stamp.

Drinking alcohol after 40 gets more complicated

By Andrea Petersen, Wall Street Journal

When you're in your 40s, it's pretty common to need reading glasses. You might need smaller wine glasses, too.

That's because alcohol hits people harder in their 40s and 50s than it did during their 20s and 30s. The reasons for this include changes in body composition to brain sensitivity and liver functioning. Lifestyle factors are at play, too. And since people tend to take more medications—both prescription and over-the-counter—as they age, there are more chances for uncomfortable and even dangerous booze-drug mixing.

"All of the effects of alcohol are sort of amplified with age," says David W. Oslin, a professor of psychiatry at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. "Withdrawal is a little bit more complicated. Hangovers are a little bit more complicated."

Part of the issue is that people in their 40s and older simply tend not to drink as much or as often as those in their 20s and 30s, which lowers tolerance. "You're becoming more work-oriented, more family-oriented," says Robert Pandina, director of the Center of Alcohol Studies at Rutgers University.

So when you do drink "you might have a more sensitive response to alcohol because you've lowered your exposure to alcohol over all."

Some people swear that only certain types of alcohol—red wine, tequila—are a problem. Generally, doctors say there's little science indicating that some drinks make people drunker or lead to more miserable hangovers. It is true, however, that people at any age can develop sensitivities to sulfites and

tannins in wine, which can cause headaches and an upset stomach, Pandina says. And the carbonation in sparkling wines or even in mixed drinks like whiskey and Coke “seems to increase how rapidly alcohol is absorbed,” says Reid Blackwelder, president of the American Academy of Family Physicians and a practicing family doctor in Kingsport, Tenn.

Read the whole story

Scientists decoding language of plants

By Elizabeth Preston, Nautilus

Entomologist Richard Karban knows how to get sagebrush talking. To start the conversation, he poses as a grasshopper or a chewing beetle – he uses scissors to cut leaves on one of the shrubs. Lopping off the leaves entirely won’t fool the plants. So he makes many snips around the edges and tips of the leaves – “a lot of little bites.”

A few months later, Karban, a professor at UC Davis who studies plant defense communication, returns to the sagebrush and examines its leaves, many of which now have damage from real grasshoppers or beetles. However, within about two feet of the branches he clipped, leaves have been spared the worst ravages of the hungry insects. That’s because Karban’s cuttings convinced those damaged leaves they were under insect attack, so they sent chemical alarms into the air. Neighboring leaves intercepted and deciphered the code messages, and began prepping their own defenses against the bugs.

If plants seem silent to us, it’s only because we’re oblivious

to their chatter – we are just beginning to tap into their cryptograms. Plants emit codes into the air all the time, helping them defend against insects and other threats, and in some instances serving as warnings to their neighbors. Moreover, plants can send “SOS” calls for rescue missions and summon predators to feed on insect invaders.

Plants speak in chemical codes – carbon-containing molecules called volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Characterized by the ease with which they enter the air, VOCs are a diverse group: plants alone make more than 30,000 varieties. Some VOCs produce familiar herbal or flower smells. Others are released only in response to a specific cue. Within seconds of being damaged, plants send out green leaf volatiles (GLVs), which we can detect too – for example, as the smell of a newly mown lawn.

Read the whole story

Money available for motorized trails in Nev.

The Nevada Division of State Parks has approximately $214,000 in grant funds available for motorized recreational trails projects.

These funds from the Recreational Trails Program of the Federal Highway Administration are for motorized projects only. Applications are due Jan. 31 by 5pm.

Federal, state, city and county governments, special governmental districts, trail organizations and private individuals are potentially eligible for the grants.

Application packages are available online.

For further information or questions, contact Jenny Scanland at (775) 684.2787 or jscanland@parks.state.nv.gov.

T.J. Maxx profits better than expected

By Reuters

Retailer TJX Cos Inc, owner of T.J. Maxx and Marshalls, reported a better-than-expected adjusted profit and said the holiday shopping quarter was off to a strong start.

The company, which maintained its current-quarter profit forecast of 77 cents to 80 cents per share, said it was well-poised for the holiday season.

“The fourth quarter is off to a good start and we see exciting opportunities for this holiday selling season,” Chief Executive Carol Meyrowitz said in a statement on Tuesday.

This year’s holiday season is projected to be the toughest since the economic crisis of 2008, according to Morgan Stanley.

But analysts say lower-cost retailers such as T.J. Maxx and Ross Stores Inc. are better-placed to prosper than pricier rivals, even as margins come under pressure due to heavy promotions.

Read the whole story

Holiday bazaar benefits Tahoe and beyond

Zawadisha Fund, a Tahoe-based nonprofit, is teaming up with Bona Fide Books to offer an opportunity to shop locally while having a global impact.

The 3rd annual Zawadisha Holiday Bazaar on is Dec. 7 from 10am-3pm at Bona Fide Books,1069 Magua St. in Meyers.

Items for sale will include housewares, linens and bags from Kenya, wellness and beauty products, jewelry, , locally published books, knitted and crocheted hairpieces, toys and more.

Zawadisha arms women with access to capital and the life-saving tools they need to lift themselves out of poverty.

Heavenly mountain bike park moves forward

By Kathryn Reed

While opening day at Heavenly is just two days from now, there may come a day when the South Shore resort is open year-round for recreation.

Skiing starts this week, as does the comment period for the scoping for the environmental documents involving the expanded

summer recreation. While much of the first phase of the non-skiing on-mountain recreation is completed (the zipline opens in December and rope courses in the summer), Heavenly wants to develop a mountain bike park, hiking trails, and more ziplines and rope courses.

It's possible construction of the mountain bike park would start in 2015. The 8 to 10 miles are proposed to include beginner to expert terrain, according to Sally Gunter at Heavenly. But it won't necessarily cost avid cyclists anything to ride at Heavenly Mountain Resort. This is because the plan is to tie the park into the Tahoe Rim Trail and connect to Van Sickle Bi-state Park.



The ropes course above Tamarack Lodge at Heavenly opens to the public in summer 2014. Photo/Provided

"We are aiming for an intermediate trail system catering to families and folks who want to play together," Jonathan Cook-Fisher, USFS recreation special uses program manager, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We want access to and through Heavenly that connects to a wider system. Connectivity to recreation in the Tahoe basin is key."

Cyclists, for a fee, would be able to ride the gondola and then access trails via Dipper, Comet and Tamarack chairlifts. It would be possible to ride off the mountain – back to town, or ride loops on what are commonly known as ski slopes.

The first phase of non-skier activities centers around where the gondola ends on top of the mountain. What is being proposed next would spread the activities out more – east toward East Peak Lake Basin and west to Sky Meadows Basin. The three areas would be connected via ski lifts, hiking trails, ziplines and roads.

In addition to the bike park, Heavenly wants to add zipline and skycycle canopy tours, a ropes course, water activities, hiking trails, mountain excursion tours and nature interpretation.

A snowcat emergency evacuation route for the gondola line is also part of the latest plans.

About three miles of hiking trails will be added to what's already available.

The water activities don't actually involve getting in the water. Cook-Fisher said it's more like learning about mining, perhaps having a sluice box, as well hiking around East Lake.

"For us, it's all about educating the next generation," Gunter told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It will create an appreciation for the national forest and outdoors."

She anticipates the apparatuses and bike park will be a draw for locals and tourists.

These new activities are allowed now because of the Ski Area Recreational Opportunity Enhancement Act of 2011.

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Notes:

• The deadline to comment on the scope of the EIS is Dec. 20. The Forest Service expects to release a draft environmental impact statement in August 2014 and a final EIS the following January. For more info, go online.

• TRPA’s Advisory Planning Commission will discuss the proposal Dec. 4 at 9:30am at the agency’s Stateline office. The Forest Service will host a workshop Dec. 18 from 5:30-7:30pm at the South Lake Tahoe office, 35 College Drive.

Editorial: Don’t arm federal airport officials

Publisher’s note: ***This editorial is from the Nov. 6, 2013, Sacramento Bee.***

The shooting at Los Angeles International Airport reveals a harsh truth.

In our free, democratic society, we have a lot of open places – airports, train stations, shopping malls, grocery stores, post offices, schools and parks – where large numbers of people gather.

We cannot make them 100 percent safe.

Anyone can walk into any of these open public places with anything in a bag – as U.S. Attorney Andre Birotte Jr. said the LAX suspect did with an M&P15 semi-automatic tactical rifle (which is Smith and Wesson’s version of the AR-15 rifle), five 30-round magazines and hundreds more rounds in boxes. At airports, bags don’t get screened until the security checkpoint.

One thing we should not do is to seize upon this one incident – which resulted in the death of a TSA employee, the first killing in the 12-year history of the Transportation Security Administration – to arm TSA screeners.

Read the whole story

Soroptimist looking for award nominees

Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra and South Lake Tahoe are accepting applications for Women's Opportunity, Violet Richardson and Ruby Awards.

The Women's Opportunity Award is bestowed upon women in the community who provide primary financial support for their families, and who are enrolled in or have been accepted to a vocational/skills training program or undergraduate degree program. The local winners will each receive $2,000 and are eligible to compete at the region and national competitions.

The Violet Richardson Award is recognition for young women ages 14-17 engaged in volunteer action within our community or schools. The award is given to young women whose activities make the community and world a better place. This monetary award of $100 goes to eligible young women who have a passion for volunteerism which support women and/or youth in some capacity. There are no restrictions on the type of activity.

The Ruby Award honors women who have worked to improve the lives of women and/or youth through their professional and/or volunteer work. Awardees will receive a $150 donation for the nonprofit organization of their choice.

Applications are available online at SITS or SISLT. Applications are due by 5pm Dec. 1.

For more info, contact Sandy Williams at kesan7@sbcglobal.net

or (530) 541.2844 or Pam Barrett at zippygirl1@att.net or (530) 545.3388.