Pesticide blamed for bee deaths linked to bird declines

By Geoffrey Mohan, Los Angeles Times

A class of pesticides linked to the catastrophic collapse of bee colonies has now been linked to declines in bird populations, according to a Dutch study.

The researchers found a strong correlation between pesticide concentrations measured in surface freshwater and lower or negative local population growth rates of 14 species of birds since the introduction of the pesticide imidacloprid in the Netherlands in the 1990s, according to a study published online Wednesday in the journal Nature.

The chemical belongs to the neonicotinoid family of pesticides, which have been associated with the sudden collapse of colonies of domesticated honeybees, used to pollinate food crops worldwide.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Do you want to send Smokey Bear a letter? Just make sure it has the ZIP code 20252.

• Reno-Tahoe Open landed a new title sponsor and will change its name to the Barracuda Championship under a four-year, multimillion-dollar deal with Bay Area-based Barracuda Networks Inc. This year's event is set for July 31-Aug. 3 at Montreux Golf & Country Club between Reno and Lake Tahoe.

• The 55th International Camel and Ostrich Races return to Virginia City Sept. 5-7.

• J. Dean Grimes will talk about how entertainment will save Nevada's economy on July 26 in Incline Village. For more info and to buy tickets, click here.

• Ironman Lake Tahoe is Sept. 21 on the North Shore.

Technology helps those without green thumbs

By Allie Caren, NPR

Don't have a green thumb but seeking the therapeutic nature of gardening? Want the convenience and satisfaction of growing your own produce at home? Not to worry: All you need is an electrical outlet, a flat surface and some water.

Meet SproutsIO Inc., a "plug-and-play" user-friendly microfarming appliance for people to easily grow fresh fruits and veggies inside their home or office.

Here's how it works:

The system includes the appliance and seed cartridges. Though

the seed options will vary, many of the cartridge choices are things you wouldn’t typically find at the grocery store, like black cherry tomatoes.

Once you pop the seed cartridge into the soil-free system, it recognizes what you’re trying to grow, and sets an automatic profile for how that plant should be grown.

SproutsIO uses hybrid hydroculture technology, meaning that they have combined the two main types of plant-watering: hydroponics, which involves submerging a plant’s roots, and aeroponics, which waters a plant through misting.

Ideally, users will interact with their plants with their mobile device through the SproutsIO app. Users can keep track of their plant’s progress (at home or remotely), adjust the lighting or watering to customize the automated profiles, and also interact with others who are using the system.

Read the whole story

Cyclist, driver in Hwy. 50 crash identified

Updated July 11 1:10pm

The 2004 Kenworth tractor truck and trailer that hit the cyclist July 10 was driven by Richard J. Pettay, 39, of Carson City. The bike rider, 48-year-old Clarence M. Aldridge of Bakersfield, remains at Renown Medical Center in Reno with severe injuries.

Pettay did not see the bicyclist and the front of the tractor struck the rear of the bicycle. Aldridge was thrown from the

bicycle inside the tunnel.

Alcohol or drugs is not a factor.

Witnesses or anyone else with more information are asked to call 775.689.4661 or email ckelly@dps.state.nv.us.

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A cyclist was seriously injured Thursday morning when he was struck by a truck inside Cave Rock.

The name and hometown of the man on the bike and the driver of the truck have not been released. They were heading east toward Carson City.

According to Nevada Highway Patrol Trooper Dave Gibson, the man sustained life-threatening injuries. He was CareFlighted to Renown Medical Center in Reno.

More cyclists are in the area now because the annual Death Ride is this weekend.

The investigation is ongoing to determine what happened. The tunnel is narrow and a lane is not wide enough for a bike and vehicle. There is a button cyclists may push that triggers a flashing light to warn motorists there is a cyclist in the tunnel.

The 10am July 10 accident closed down Highway 50 for several hours. All lanes of traffic are now open.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Former CalPERS chief guilty of bribery

By Paul Elias, AP

SAN FRANCISCO – The former head of the nation's largest public pension fund pleaded guilty Friday to bribery and fraud.

Federico Buenrostro Jr., the former chief executive of California Public Employees' Retirement System, entered his plea in San Francisco federal court.

He acknowledged receiving paper bags and a shoe box stuffed with $200,000 in cash, casino chips and other benefits from Alfred Villalobos, a Stateline investment manager who also served on the CalPERS board in the mid-90s.

Buenrostro, CEO of CalPERS from 2002 through 2008, said he used his influence to make investment decisions beneficial to Villalobos' clients.

Buenrostro also said he gave Villalobos access to the pension system's confidential investment information. Further, Buenrostro said he forged letters that allowed Villalobos' firms to earn millions of dollars in commissions for investing $3 billion in the pension fund's money.

Aside from the cash and chips, Villalobos said paid for Buenrostro's wedding and hosted it at his home in 2004, according to the plea agreement Buenrostro signed Friday. Buenrostro also said that Villalobos paid for first-class airfare, hotels, meals and entertainment for a business trips to Dubai, Hong Kong and Macau.

Buenrostro faces five years in prison and a $250,000 fine when he is sentenced in January.

Villalobos has pleaded not guilty to fraud charges and other

related counts.

The state attorney general also sued Buenrostro and Villalobos along with other former pension board and staff members, alleging fraud and kickbacks at the pension board.

In a related sanction, the state's campaign watchdog, the Fair Political Practices Commission, fined other executives and investment managers in 2011 for failing to report gifts that included food, wine and baseball and Rose Bowl tickets.

Student debt a rising burden in U.S.

By Janet Lorin, Bloomberg

In terms of American exceptionalism, student loan debt stands out. No other country imposes the kind of costs on college and university students that the U.S. does, and nowhere else do loans cover so much of those costs.

Experts think the $1.2 trillion in outstanding education debt in the U.S. is more than that of the rest of the world combined. It's a situation that educators, consumer advocates and members of both political parties all decry. Agreement on solutions is harder to find.

In the meantime, the level of student loans is increasingly seen not just as a burden on students, but as a drag on the nation's economy. Young adults are delaying setting up their own households in the face of a mountain of debt while default rates rise to dangerous levels. Recent studies also show a growing economic divergence between young Americans with and

without student loans.

There’s widespread agreement as to who is worst off: college dropouts. They’re stuck with debt, but without the higher earnings a degree might have brought to help pay it off.

Read the whole story

K’s Kitchen: Zucchini soup

By Kathryn Reed

I remember when I grew zucchini it got to the point I had so much even my colleagues were tired of it. Squash can be prolific.

And while it’s possible to get zucchini year-round, I’ll get on my soapbox and shout – fresh is best. Now is the time to be loading up on veggies at farmers’ markets.

Soup isn’t something I usually make in the summer, but with the abundance of zucchini at the market, I had to do something other than my usual mixed veggie medley.

Sue said this was like eating a garden. I thought the flavors came together better a few hours after cooking it. If serving for others, I would suggest making it a day ahead.

She also was afraid it was fattening. It’s not. No cream. But it is thick. The thickness can vary based on the amount of zucchini and liquid used. Add water if you want a thinner soup.



Zucchini Soup

1 T butter

2 T olive oil

1 medium onion, chopped

3 garlic cloves, sliced

Kosher salt and pepper

1½ pounds (or more) zucchini, chopped

1 C vegetable stock

Julienned raw zucchini for garnish, optional

Melt butter with olive oil in large saucepan. Add onion, garlic, salt and pepper. Cover over moderately low heat until soft.

Add zucchini. Cook for about 10 minutes or until soft.

Add stock. Bring to simmer.

Puree mixture in blender until smooth. Return to heat. Season with salt and pepper.

Serve hot or cold, with or without garnish.

Economists: More part-time jobs not a good sign

By Michael De Groote, Deseret News

If someone wants a full-time job, but can't get one, they often will settle for a part-time job. These are the "involuntary part-time workers," and the recent rise in their numbers has some experts worried.

The government reported that there were 288,000 new jobs added in June. That was the silver lining. Paul Davidson at *USA Today* wrote about the dark cloud: "The number of hours employees are working? That's a different story. Among the few worrisome signs in (the) generally encouraging employment report was a sharp rise in the number of part-time workers who prefer full-time jobs. The total jumped by 275,000 to 7.5 million, the Labor Department said."

In May, the number of involuntary part-timers dropped 196,000, so this jump is a bit of a surprise and the highest this year, Davidson wrote.

Economist Bernard Baumohl told Davidson that the better the economy gets, employees should be putting in more time on the job. "Instead, (Baumohl) notes, the economy has been running in place this year."

Ylan Q. Mui at the *Washington Post* says economists have a "gnawing fear" that the dropping unemployment rate (6.1 percent) and other good indications provide "false comfort" in light of the part-time workers numbers.

Read the whole story

Squaw Valley Institute sponsoring farm dinner

Squaw Valley Institute is having a farm to table dinner Aug. 21 at the historic Poulsen family estate in the heart of Squaw Valley.

The evening will have an Argentinian culinary flair. Local chefs such as Elsa Corrigan of Mamasaki, John and Nyna Weatherson of Trokay, Wyatt DuFresne of Plumpjack's, Billy McCullough of Dragonfly and Dan McCabe of Rocker will use organic ingredients sourced from the Tahoe Food Hub for the evening's different courses.

All food will be paired with varietals from Placer County's boutique Vina Castellano winery.

Guests will also be able to enjoy the unique hand crafted selections of local brew masters Alibi Ales of Lake Tahoe. The evening begins at 5:30, with dinner being served at 7pm sharp.

For tickets and more info, go online.

Tahoe celebrity golf tourney aging gracefully



Edgewood Tahoe has been home to the ACC golf tournament all 25 years. Photos/LTN file

By Kathryn Reed

Combine a stunning setting with a mix of serious and comical golf played by athletes and stars who most people only dream of meeting, but suddenly are signing their program, and the result is the annual celebrity golf tournament at Lake Tahoe.

“The venue is a perfect storm in a positive way. You can’t ask for a nicer backdrop,” Gary Quinn, vice president of programming for NBC, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “You would be hard pressed to duplicate that setting anyplace else this time of year.”

A week from today a field of more than 80 celebrity golfers will tee off in the 25th annual American Century Championship golf tournament at Edgewood Tahoe in Stateline.

In this era of give me more, give me something bigger, better, new and different – making it to year 25 is an accomplishment. And everyone anticipates there being another 25 years.

Those who are intimately responsible for putting the event on attribute the success to the partnership of American Century (title sponsor since 1998), NBC, Harrah's, Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority and Korbel.



American Century Investments has been the title sponsor since 1998.

"I think it is partially the spirit of the destination and the people that has helped forge strong bonds and helps to support its long running success. It is the highlight of our summer, if not the entire year," Carol Chaplin, LTVA executive director, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The five entities work closely to keep the feel of the tournament the same without having it get stale and introducing new elements that don't distract too much. That's a careful balance.

Edgewood Tahoe is another key player. While the privately-owned golf course is embarking on developing a hotel on property, it means holes will be changed. They have been meeting with tournament officials about this for the last two years.

"They made contingencies so it won't impact our event. We have been thankful to them for being overcommunicative and letting us know what is going on," Quinn said. "We are excited about

what it will become. It could be an added new component (to the tournament coverage) when it is done."

Success has not come without challenges. There was the year a truck lost its brakes on Highway 50, came barreling onto the course and landed in a creek on the third or fourth hole. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

Lightning has struck once, which caused everyone to scramble. Now NBC has someone on site to monitor passing storms.

The Angora Fire in 2007 also threatened to disrupt the tournament because no one knew how long it would last or if people would be in the mood for that kind of entertainment.

Charles Barkley and others toured the burn area. He gave $100,000 to recovery efforts and took firefighters out to dinner.

Officials point to how the community has embraced the event. This is hardly just something tourists attend.



Jerry Rice often interacts with the gallery perched in the sand and on boats at Hole 17.

"What has changed in the last seven years, maybe eight, it that it just seems the event has clicked in the community," Mike Milthorpe, tournament director for the past 23 years, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "People take vacation, there are more

boats on 17. It's now *the* event in the community."

It's also an affordable family attraction. Ticket prices haven't been raised in at least 10 years. Crowds have been topping 40,000 in recent years, with attendance records regularly broken.

Still, it is a major moneymaker for the area.

"It has an annual economic impact estimated at $15 million [per year] and is consistent with our economic vitality focus area of capitalizing on outdoor recreation and lifestyle," Lisa Granahan, Douglas County economic vitality manager, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

South Lake Tahoe City Manager Nancy Kerry said, "Equally as important are the lasting benefits from national television coverage promoting Lake Tahoe's South Shore to the nation. Viewers watching the event on television may be inspired to visit Lake Tahoe. NBC does a good job weaving in local stories, stunning photographs of our unparalleled beauty promoting the importance of protecting our natural resource. The end result is an event that significantly supports the economy, promotes the natural environment, and even provides donations to local charities."

According to the LTVA, the tournament since it started has:

- Brought in $360 million to the community;
- $600,000 to local charities and service groups;
- National media exposure exceeding $120 million in value, which includes coverage in 168 media outlets.

The LTVA says there are 6.5 million TV viewers per year.

"In the summer it is a challenging time because on the weekends people are out and about," NBC's Quinn said of getting people in front of televisions. "The audience has been

fairly consistent. This is an unheard of made-for-TV event."

The Golf Channel re-airing the broadcast will double this year's coverage to 18 hours.

Pairings on Friday are based in large part on what plays well to viewers and on-site spectators – like having hall of fame pitchers in a foursome, or all the NASCAR guys together.

"We try to keep balance between the fun side because that is why they tune into a celebrity event, but some of these guys are very good golfers," Quinn said.



David Justice and most of the stars have no problems signing autographs and being included in selfies.

The same anchors are the ones who will be broadcasting the U.S. Senior Open this weekend for NBC.

Quinn also expects viewers will be interested in seeing Annika Sorenstam play with the guys. Sorenstam, who has a second home in Incline Village, is thought of as the best women's golfer of all time. She retired in 2008 after having won 72 LPGA tournaments, including 10 majors and 18 other international tournaments.

It was Milthorpe's idea to invite Sorenstam.

"I called Annika's husband back in January. His initial

response he said, ‘I don’t think she’ll play.’ Five minutes later he said she was in,” Milthorpe said.

Keeping the field balanced with known celebrities, longtime favorites and newbies is a challenge. Jack Wagoner, John Elway, Mike Eruzione and Jim McMahon have played every year. It’s easier to get athletes than Hollywood-type celebs because their schedules are more concrete. And some entertainment folks aren’t ready for their golf game to go prime time.

“If you are going to play in this event, you have to be comfortable playing in front of people. If you are not good, you have to have a sense of humor and laugh,” Milthorpe said.

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Notes:

• For more info about the tournament, go online.

• Schedule: July 15 – Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority Tahoe South Celebrity-Am; July 16 – Practice round; July 17 – American Century Celeb-Am Tournament; July 18-20 – American Century Celebrity Golf Championship.

• TV coverage: July 18 live on NBC Sports Network, 1-4pm; July 19 live on NBC from noon-3pm; July 20 live on NBC from noon-3pm.

• Tickets: $15 Tuesday-Thursday, $25 Friday-Sunday.