

Ellis Peak – like being on top of the world



Suzy and Mark take in Lake Tahoe and all the scenery from the false summit of Ellis Peak. Photo Copyright 2013 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

HOMEWOOD – If you survive the first half hour, the rest of the hike will feel like an average walk in the woods. But there was nothing average about the views.

This is what the six of us discovered earlier this month as we set out to climb the 8,740-foot Ellis Peak on the West Shore. It was the first time any of us had been there.

The total elevation gain is 1,465 feet. A significant amount of it comes right at the start. But the reward is so worth it.

It's like walking into a watercolor painting. A sea of colorful wildflowers covers the expansive meadow – mule's ear, Western blue flax, Indian paintbrush, thistle and other flora no one knew the name of fill the plateau.

To our right is Loon Lake with its island and other points in the Crystal Basin. Granite Chief and Desolation wilderness areas surround us.

We marvel at the ruggedness and rather daunting drop offs. Even from this spot it's a bit like being on top of the world.

But it only gets better.

The trail is well maintained. Much of it is soft dirt. Shade keeps us cool.

In one section trees are covered in moss on all sides so if we were lost, there would be no knowing which direction was north.

Crossing the road that is open to four-wheelers was no big deal. We never saw nor heard any motorized vehicles.

At times Lake Tahoe comes into view. Along the trail it seems so far away.

We scamper up a rock formation we think is the top of Ellis Peak. We eat lunch, take pictures and congratulate ourselves. Then we look to our left and see people on another peak. Oops. Down we go to the real Ellis Peak.

It wasn't that much farther, but pride insisted if we had gotten that far, we were going to make it to our true destination.

In one direction is Lake Tahoe. We are so high that we see behind the basin; the Pine Nut range is in the far distance.

At the base of Ellis is the lake by the same name. From this

perch it looks dark and dank like some backwoods Mississippi swamp.

A structure in the foreground looking out to Lake Tahoe is the top of one of Homewood Mountain Resort's chairlifts. If it were operating, it looks like it would take off substantial time in terms of hiking Ellis Peak.

To avoid the false summit, stay to the right as you near what looks like the peak. We missed the cairns on the way up, but they were clearly there on the way back. The true summit cannot be seen at this point.

The route is about 6.5 miles roundtrip. Just the first part might have some people thinking something less ambitious would be smarter. But the six of us – Sue, Rosemary, Carolyn, Suzy, Mark and I – never thought twice about reaching our destination.

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Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe take Highway 89 north. Beyond Homewood and before Sunnyside in Tahoe City will be a sign for Kaspian Campground. Turn left there. The road goes for about 7 miles. (Veer to the left and don't go straight on the dirt road like some people.) At the end of the hill the pavement turns to dirt. The trail is to your left. Park on the side of the road.

Bug juice and sunscreen are recommended.

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Nicki Bluhm to headline on the North Shore

Nicki Bluhm and the Gramblers are going to be headlining the Crystal Bay Club on Sept. 1.

The San Francisco based band is releasing a self-titled sophomore album on Aug 27.

Since the beginning of 2013, the group has headlined more than 80 shows around the country and performed at esteemed festivals including Bonnaroo, Newport, SXSW and Hangout.

The band became a household name after the viral video in 2012 for their “Van Session” cover of Hall and Oates “I Can’t Go For That” – which features the band, in their van, performing the song on travel sized instruments. This particular session has garnered over 3 million hits and the Van Sessions have 2.5 million hits overall.

The concert starts at 9pm.

Steve Martin to bring music, comedy to MontBleu

Steve Martin and the Steep Canyon Rangers featuring Edie Brickell will bring a blend of music and comedy to MontBleu in Stateline on Oct. 5.

The show combines bluegrass music, heavy on the banjo, with dashes of Martin’s comedy.

The show begins at 9pm. Tickets are between \$60 and \$80 and are available through Ticketmaster.com or the MontBleu Box Office, 888.829.7630.

6 days to see artists in S. Tahoe at work

The annual Tahoe Art League Studio Tour is for six days over two long weekends.

The free event is July 26-28 and Aug. 2-4.

Twenty-three artists will be at 11 locations on the South Shore.

This is an opportunity to see artists' work up close.

The tour route map is available at the TAL Art Center, 3062 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

Fast food talking to chefs about increasing nutrition

By Stephanie Strom, New York Times

ST. HELENA – The chicken thighs, smoked for two hours, then soaked in buttermilk spiked with Crystal hot sauce and dredged

in flour, turned a perfect golden brown, full of the promise of succulence and crunch, under the stern watch of Chef H. Alexander Talbot.

But not one, alas, went into a salivating mouth as soon as it left the bubbling rice bran oil. Rather, it was rushed under a glass “udder” bristling with slender filaments and tended by technicians, who would soon analyze it at a PepsiCo lab in Illinois for the magic that gave it such flavor and crispiness.

Other creations, destined for the same lab, went into Styrofoam containers bedded on dry ice, part of a continuing effort to find new ways to improve the nutritional quality of the giant food company’s products without losing recognizable flavors.

“The challenge facing us and other big food companies today is not easy: to have a great-tasting product without as much salt, fat and sugar,” said Greg Yep, senior vice president for long-term research and development at PepsiCo. “Chefs have ways of tricking the taste buds that we can use in our products.”

Prodded by consumers, regulators and politicians, major food companies like PepsiCo are under extraordinary pressure to make healthier foods. Kellogg has cut as much as 30 percent of the sugar in children’s cereals like Apple Jacks and Froot Loops, removed salt from others and increased fiber. Taco Bell last month announced a new Power Protein menu that will include items with less fat and calories, and other companies are rushing to get their products in shape.

“We’re not only thinking about making great-tasting foods but about the nutrition guidelines we need to deliver on,” said Greg Creed, chief executive of Taco Bell, referring to the company’s pledge to bring one-third of the meal options in its restaurants into compliance with the federal dietary

guidelines by 2020. “This is a huge change in mind-set.”

Read the whole story

Bear near Verdi relocated; traps set in Incline

A 325-pound black bear that was captured by the Nevada Department of Wildlife in Verdi was released this morning in the Gold Ranch area.

The 6-year-old male was captured Tuesday in a culvert trap set near a residence where it was doing some damage to property.



This bear caught near Verdi on July 23 was released today. Photo/NDOW

“This bear has never been in trouble before, making it a perfect candidate for our aversion conditioning program,” Carl Lackey, bear biologist with the state agency, said in a statement.

On July 23, NDOW set a trap in Incline Village in response to complaints of a nuisance bear in one of the forested

neighborhoods of that community. “Unfortunately, we’ve had people sabotaging our traps, keeping us from capturing the nuisance bears in Incline Village,” said Chris Healy, spokesman for NDOW, said. “Instead of saving bears, the individuals and groups interfering with our public safety mission could be creating more aggressive and dangerous bears that are being allowed to become habituated to humans. For the sake of public safety and common sense, the deliberate sabotaging of traps needs to stop.”

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Calif. Dems want Obama to back off pot enforcement

By Robin Wilkey, Huffington Post

SAN FRANCISCO – Marijuana may not be fully legal in California, but the state’s Democratic Party has made its position clear.

In a resolution released on Sunday, the California Democratic Party requested that President Obama end the federal crackdown against states with marijuana laws on the books:

“The California Democratic Party requests: President Obama to allow the newly enacted marijuana legalization laws in Colorado and Washington to go into effect with no federal interference, and [...] end the Department of Justice interference and raids by federal agencies in states with medical marijuana laws.”

The authors cited voter support for marijuana, the cost of

enforcing prohibition laws and racially biased punishment as motivations for the resolution:

“18 states and the District of Columbia have passed laws legalizing the use of cannabis [...] and Colorado and Washington in 2012 passed laws legalizing the recreational use. [...]”

“The United States spends over \$20 billion a year enforcing marijuana prohibition laws, and thousands of people are murdered every year involving the smuggling of illegal drugs into the United States and marijuana accounts for over half of these illegal drugs [...]

“Marijuana prohibition laws are racially enforced with a far larger percentage of African-Americans and Hispanics convicted and imprisoned for marijuana prohibition offenses than their white counterparts even though marijuana use in their communities is no more than in white communities.”

The party also encouraged state legislators to establish parameters to guide cities and counties in the distribution of medical marijuana, and announced plans to begin a comprehensive study “to produce recommendations for reform of our nation’s marijuana prohibition laws.”

News of the resolution was applauded by marijuana reform advocates, including Marijuana Majority founder and chairman Tom Angell.

“In just the past few weeks, we’ve seen the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the *New York Times* editorial board and now the Democratic Party of our nation’s most populous state call on President Obama to finally follow through on his campaign promises to respect state marijuana laws,” Angell told the *Huffington Post*.

A recent survey released by the Partnership at Drugfree.org, one of the nation’s harshest critics of drug use, indicated that a strong majority of Americans support medical marijuana

legalization, and nearly half support recreational use.

“Polls show that the American people support what candidate Obama pledged to do over what President Obama has actually done,” said Angell. “Now would be a good time for the president to start delivering on the changes he promised in 2008.”

Night devoted to learning about bats

Learn what bats eat, where they live and why they are important from local bat expert Brian Buttazoni. Participants will also hear the sounds they make and see photos of bats from around the world.

The event is Aug. 3 from 8:30-9:30pm at Washoe Lake State Park's equestrian area pavilion. Washoe Lake State Park is five miles north of Carson City.

There is no charge for the program, but there is a \$7 per vehicle entry fee; Nevada residents receive a \$2 discount.

For more info, call (775) 687.4319 or email washoelake@hdiss.net.

Youth soccer camp at Kahle

Douglas County Parks & Recreation along with Steve Maltase of Whittell High School will be offering a weeklong soccer camp from July 29-Aug. 2.

The camp is open to everyone ages 4-14. Participants ages 4-6 (Lil Kicks) will have camp from 10am-1pm each day and the cost is \$125.

Kids 7 and up will have camp from 10am-3pm, with Friday ending at 1pm and the cost for that age group is \$145.

Each player needs to bring a lunch, water bottle, shoes and shin guards and have sunscreen applied.

For more information and to register, call Kahle Community Center at (775) 586.7271.

Volunteers needed for Great Sierra River Cleanup

The Great Sierra River Cleanup is Sept. 21 starting at 9am.

Help pick up trash and recyclables in South Lake Tahoe along the river and lake.

Email nikki@sierranevadaalliance.org to register.