

# Life after ski patroller's death at Squaw Valley

By Megan Michelson, Co-op Journal

Exactly one year ago, Joe Zuiches kissed his half-sleeping wife, Mikki, on the forehead as he left his house in the dark, at 3:30 in the morning on Jan. 24, 2017. Joe was on his way to his job as a ski patroller at Squaw Valley. He'd once read that you live longer if you kiss your spouse before you leave the house each day, so he always made a point to do so.

Later that morning, as a golden sun was rising over a brilliant blue sky—after days on end of pounding storms and feet upon feet of snow—Joe texted Mikki to say, “Another patroller blew his knee out, so I’m the supervisor.” He was doing avalanche control work to ready the snow-drenched mountain for the day’s onslaught of skiers and riders.

She responded, “Be safe.”

**Read the whole story**

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# Historical characters of the North Shore

By Pat Dillon, Moonshine Ink

The early years of the white man's exploration and settlement of the Tahoe Basin provided many examples of eccentric characters. The more famous of these, such as Mark Twain and Pretty Boy Floyd, have been well-documented. I'm intrigued,

however, by a lesser-known character from our neighborhood.

James Stewart – alias James McLaughlin – was well known as a timber faller in the late 1800s. It was said he could take down two trees in the time it took lesser men to fall one. He was also known to be a hot-tempered gunslinger when drinking – which he often did.

On Oct. 27, 1874, he mounted his horse at his camp at Lonely Gulch near Rubicon Peak and rode for Tahoe City to quench his thirst. Tying his horse in front of the Grand Central Hotel where Commons Beach is today, he stomped down to the Custom House bar on the wharf. Barkeep Fred A. Scott was serving a few happy regulars, but the bar became quiet at Stewart's entrance and most patrons wandered back up to the Grand Central where they might drink in peace.

**Read the whole story**

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## **Measure R's 'extra' money for fields exhausted**

**By Kathryn Reed**

The \$500,000 that Measure R provided for South Lake Tahoe fields has been spent.

The recreation joint powers authority that oversees the bond was given an update about the status last week. That board is made up of representatives from South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County and Tahoe Paradise Resort Improvement District.

Originally called Measure S when voters passed it in 2000, it was renamed Measure R in 2011. At that time voters agreed to

restructure how the money was spent on fields and bike trails. The property tax assessment expires in 2030. (Voters could reauthorize it or it could be rewritten in some manner.)

Field improvements included the play area at Sierra House Elementary School, funds for South Tahoe High School's softball field, and the new field and new T-ball field at Al Tahoe.

Until the measure expires in 12 years, \$50,000 will continue to go toward field maintenance on an annual basis.

"It is designated to go for maintenance of the field and other facilities built with JPA money at LTCC," John Upton told *Lake Tahoe News*. Upton is the lone paid staff member of the JPA. He has overseen Measure S since the get-go, and was instrumental in it evolving into Measure R.

"The money goes to the city, which then transfers it to the consortium, of which the city is a partner. The provision for the \$50,000 going to the city for that maintenance is part of the original JPA Joint Facilities Agreement," Upton explained.

The Community Play Consortium was created in the past couple of years, with the city and Lake Tahoe Community College the members. They control the artificial turf field where the college soccer team plays, which was the original community field paid for by Measure S. The two new fields built last year near that site and where SnowGlobe was held the last two years are the other fields under the purview of the consortium.

At this time the consortium is satisfied with the \$50,000 it receives. Representatives can always ask for more, but there is no guarantee it would be forthcoming.

Lauren Thomaselli, who heads the city's recreation department, told the JPA board that the long-awaited concession stand is finally going to be built. The \$15,000 left over from the

restroom facility will be used for the food venue. It will be an addition to the current structure.

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# Season pass war heats up between Vail, Alterra

By Jason Blevins, Denver Post

Skiers and snowboarders notched yet another victory Monday as Telluride ski area joined the Epic Pass for the 2018-19 season, the first limited-access partner to take up with Vail Resorts as it squares off with Alterra Mountain Co. in a season-pass brawl.

Last week, Denver-based Alterra announced its Ikon Pass, an alliance of 23 owned and partner resorts that would vie to unseat the decade-old Epic Pass' 750,000 annual sales.

The two passes could soon account for up to a third of all North American skier visits, and the winners in the snowy skirmish will be skiers.

**[Read the whole story](#)**

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## California pays out millions

# for sexual harassment

**By Marjie Lundstrom, Sacramento Bee**

Four young men who were locked in a youth correctional facility in Southern California accused a male staff counselor of coercing them into sex acts in exchange for contraband and special treatment. The cost to taxpayers to settle their lawsuit: \$10 million.

At CSU Fullerton, a female student in her 20s reported that her professor encouraged her to drink whiskey with him in his office and advised her to masturbate during the week to relax, then report back to him on her progress. The cost? The CSU system paid \$92,000 to settle her case, while the student became fearful and anxious after the encounters and her "quality of life declined," her lawsuit contended.

And at California State Prison-Corcoran, which has housed the likes of Juan Corona and Charles Manson until his recent death, a female correctional officer said a fellow guard repeatedly made explicit sexual comments, stared at her breasts and crotch, touched her with his hands and pelvis and called her at home, according to court documents and interviews. The state settled her case for \$750,000.

**Read the whole story**

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## TRPA board not in sync regarding VHRs

**By Kathryn Reed**

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's future involvement with vacation home rentals is up in the air based on comments from Governing Board members.

The board received an update about VHRs on Jan. 24 from the bi-state regulatory agency's staff. Part of it included going over what the city and each county in the basin are doing.

About 10 years ago the board made VHRs an allowable use in residential neighborhoods, and for the most part has let individual jurisdictions regulate them how they want. But not everyone agrees with how the local entities are handling the situation so they've asked TRPA to take a more active role.

The Local Government Committee of the TRPA was tasked with delving into the issue a bit. A report was completed in December, with the findings presented this month to the full board.

The report concluded, "Each local jurisdiction is addressing VHRs according to the characteristics and circumstances in each locale: preservation of neighborhood character, permanent resident quality of life, safety and enforcement. The local jurisdictions are acting responsibly to resolve VHR issues so that the concerns of residents and stakeholders, and policies of the Regional Plan are addressed."

The recommendation was to bring annual updates to the whole board.

"I definitely think this is a local issue," Austin Sass, South Lake Tahoe's rep on the board, said Wednesday.

He disagreed with fellow board member Clem Shute who advocated for using the residential allocation process to curtail the proliferation of VHRs. Sass's rationale is that there are so few allocations left that it won't address the issue in any meaningful way. He believes the voters, at least in South Lake Tahoe, will make the ultimate decision regarding the future of

VHRs. It's possible competing VHR initiatives will be on the November ballot.

"I will ask RPIC (Regional Plan Implementation Committee) to ask staff to amend the code to limit how our allocations can be used for vacation rentals," Shute said. He wants the allocations to be used for work force/affordable housing – "things that matter to the public."

It was suggested there be a joint meeting between the RPIC and Local Government Committee, to which Executive Director Joanne Marchetta said would really mean bringing the VHR topic back to the whole board because the two committees combined are a majority of the members.

Five members of the public spoke at the meeting. Jesse Patterson with the League to Save Lake Tahoe called VHRs a "pervasive issue" and that his agency supports a "regional assessment."

Jessica Tucker-Mohl, California deputy attorney general, sided with Shute and the League.

The other three were also not big fans of the current VHR situation in the basin.

Sue Novasel, who represents El Dorado County on the TRPA board, recused herself as she awaits a decision from the Fair Political Practices Commission as to whether she has a conflict of interest. Douglas County Commissioner Nancy McDermid was absent from the meeting.

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# **Nev. officials cracking down on marijuana testing labs**

**By Colton Lochhead, Las Vegas Review-Journal**

Nevada regulators are cracking down on marijuana testing labs, as nearly half of the state's marijuana labs have had their license suspended in the past five months.

Since the Nevada Tax Department took over the marijuana regulation on July 1, four of the state's nine cannabis testing facilities have had their license suspended – three since late-December. The Tax Department has never suspended the license of any marijuana retail store, cultivator or producer.

“Our aim is to address issues early – well before anything rises to the level of a public health or safety concern,” Tax Department spokeswoman Stephanie Klapstein said. “Independent testing labs serve an essential function as quality assurance before products reach the public. We want them to understand we have a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to regulatory noncompliance, even in cases where good lab practices are not followed but there is no imminent public health concern.”

**Read the whole story**

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## **In Tahoe, a wild intersection of golf and celebrities**



Serious golf is only for a few at the ACC; mostly it's about partying/gambling off the links. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

**By Malika Andrews, Joe Drape and Karen Crouse, New York Times**

STATELINE – The 17th hole is the party spot. Nearby is a dock where fans motor up wearing swimsuits.

The football coach Herm Edwards remembers playing with the talk show host Maury Povich when his tee shot landed on a boat. Is that out of bounds? Povich asked. Edwards laughed. “No,” he said, “you can hit from there.” And so he did.

They were competing – or perhaps simply participating – in the annual American Century Championship, a celebrity golf tournament at Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course, a loose affair in

its rules and its atmosphere. It's not so much a sporting event as a gathering of famous and not-so-famous athletes and Hollywood talent on the shores of Lake Tahoe.

The tournament, entering its 29th year, sits in the not-taken-seriously corner of the sports landscape, with a reputation among golf-mad celebrities as a first-class frat party where short days give way to long nights at gambling tables and nightclubs.

This month the event got a new claim to fame, or infamy: According to the *Wall Street Journal*, a pornographic-film star was paid \$130,000 before the 2016 election to conceal a past relationship with President Trump that began at the tournament.

**Read the whole story**

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## **Tahoe basin home to a variety of unusual species**

**By Adam Jensen**

Think of them as your next-door neighbors – the hundreds of species of wildlife inhabiting the Lake Tahoe region. From boas to beavers to salamanders that roll down hill, the area boasts some unique inhabitants. Each is adapted to its own niche in the sometimes unforgiving Sierra Nevada. Some species you may know, others maybe not, but here's a look at just a few of Lake Tahoe's wildest locals.

### **Showshoe hares and white-tailed jackrabbits**

As you're out and about this winter, there are two types of

rabbit species that may be donning new coats right alongside you. Both the snowshoe hare and the white-tailed jackrabbit make their homes at Lake Tahoe, and both turn white during the winter months to camouflage themselves from predators.

While some people assume all white rabbits seen during the winter at Lake Tahoe are snowshoe hares, white-tailed jackrabbits are widespread in open country above 8,000 feet, said Will Richardson, executive director and co-founder of the Tahoe Institute for Natural Science (TINS). Snowshoe hares, the smaller of the two species, can be found “just about anywhere on the West Shore,” he added.

Another common rabbit variety, cottontails, began their spread around the Lake Tahoe Basin in the early 2000s and closed the final gap in their east-to-west distribution in 2016, Richardson said. TINS is interested in speaking with people with first-hand knowledge of when the cottontails began appearing in their neighborhoods to further its understanding of the species’ spread.

“I’ve been here 21 years, and I think the first time I saw a rabbit was five years ago,” said Kathy Strain, a South Shore resident and associate professor of biology and environmental science at Lake Tahoe Community College.

The spread of the cottontails may have helped the gray fox expand its range into the area as well.

## **Mountain beaver**

People may be familiar with the distinctive dams built by the paddle-tailed variety of American beavers, which were pre-settlement inhabitants of the Lake Tahoe region before being trapped out of existence in the area and later reintroduced.

There’s another variety of beaver that also calls the area home. The mountain beaver is significantly smaller than the American beaver and lacks the distinctive tail. Richardson

described the species as an “overgrown and very primitive vole.”

While they don't build large dams like the American beaver, the burrowing species can still change hydrology, making perennial streams go underground through extensive tunnels it builds just under the soil surface.

“There's not a lot known about them,” Richardson said. “We seem to think that they're fairly rare.”

There are American beavers all around the Tahoe area, as well as muskrats, which could be confused with the mountain beaver. The muskrat has a long, flat tail, while the mountain beaver's tail isn't clearly visible.

### **Northern rubber boa**

“Boa constrictor” and “Lake Tahoe” are not often found in the same sentence, but the area does host a species of snake that uses constriction to catch its food.

The northern rubber boa varies in color from brown to orange to pink and can be found in a variety of habitats around the lake. Desolation Wilderness, near the lake's southwest corner, offers particularly inviting environs for the snake.

The boa can reach about 2 feet in length and is not dangerous to humans. Its head-like tail confuses both predators and prey, and it has a reputation among herpetologists as having one of the better personalities among its ilk.

“If there's a sweetheart in the reptile world, it's the rubber boa,” Richardson said.

One snake variety with a less stellar reputation among the public, the rattlesnake, may also be finding homes closer to the Lake Tahoe Basin.

It's pretty clear that rattlesnakes are able to reach the Lake

Tahoe Basin from the west, Richardson said, noting the number of the venomous snakes that can be found at places like nearby Lover's Leap. It's unclear if they are also able to make it up from the east, Richardson said.

There is evidence that climate change is driving species to higher elevations. Whether the movement of rattlesnakes toward Lake Tahoe is temporary or a long-term trend is unclear, Richardson said.

While rattlesnakes may not be people's favorites, Richardson noted they do provide an important ecological role of controlling rodent populations that can spread disease.



The Western pearlshell mussel can be found in the Upper Truckee River.  
Photo/LTN file

### **Western pearlshell mussel**

Mussels may be more associated with the California coast than the Sierra Nevada, but some South Shore streams host a long-lived native bivalve that is an indicator of environmental health.

The average life span of the western pearlshell mussel is 60 to 70 years, although some individuals are thought to have lived more than 100 years, according to the Xerces Society for

## **Invertebrate Conservation.**

“Because this species is sedentary, sensitive to environmental changes, and long-lived, it can be an excellent biological indicator of water quality,” according to the society.

The mussels depend on trout species as part of their life cycle, as the juvenile form of the western pearlshell attach to fish prior to dropping off and burrowing into soft substrate as adults.

The native mussels should not be confused with Asian clams, an aquatic invasive species that has established populations in the lake, or quagga or zebra mussels, potentially devastating aquatic invasive species that can be found in western waterbodies but have been kept out of Lake Tahoe through prevention efforts including mandatory boat inspections.

## **Mount Lyell salamander**

The often dry slopes of the Sierra Nevada can be a harsh environment for amphibian species. Still, the Lake Tahoe area does support native populations of frogs, toads, and salamanders.

One of these salamander species, the Mount Lyell salamander, makes its home soaking up the water near snowfields and doesn't have an aquatic phase in its life cycle.

Living below ground and staying inactive during extreme temperatures and conditions, the small gray-to-brown salamander blends in with its granite surroundings. It has also developed an unusual way of defending itself.

“Because they live in steep, rocky, icy terrain, when they get threatened, they curl themselves into a wheel and actually roll downhill,” Richardson said.

## **Canyon live oak**

Known for its expanses of pine trees, Lake Tahoe also supports satellite populations of canyon live oak trees, which are typically found at lower elevations in the foothills.

The trees, also known as golden cup oaks, attract specific species of animal communities.

The California sister butterfly, which features an orange spot near the tips of its wings, is among the species people can find living near canyon live oaks, Richardson said.

Once completed, the Incline Village to Sand Harbor Bike Path will be a great place to look at some of Tahoe's oak trees. The hike down to Vikingsholm in Emerald Bay also provides glimpses of some huge individuals.

### **Spotted owl**

When it comes to owls, people are most likely to hear great horned owls at Lake Tahoe, and they're most likely to see northern pygmy owls, active during the day and given away by squawking birds signaling their arrival. People could also find spotted owls – but only if they're extremely lucky.

There's a handful of breeding pairs in the area, but the nocturnal species doesn't make itself known to the casual observer, Richardson said.

As with a great deal of wildlife viewing, staying quiet, patient, and observant are keys to finding some of Lake Tahoe's more unusual wildlife. It also never hurts to be in the right place at the right time.

*Adam Jensen is the environmental education specialist with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. This article is republished from the winter 2017 edition of **Tahoe In Depth**.*

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# Outdoor gear sales slip as millennials drive shift in habits

By Dan Elliott, AP

DENVER — Sales of outdoor equipment are slipping as millennials drive changes in U.S. consumer habits by favoring clothes and sporting goods that are less specialized and more versatile, analysts say.

Industry retail sales totaled \$18.9 billion from December 2016 through November 2017, down 6 percent from the previous 12 months, according to NPD Group, a market research company that tracks trends in two dozen industries.

The company announced the numbers this week as manufacturers and buyers gathered in Denver for the Outdoor Retailer and Snow Show, the industry's biggest winter marketplace.

**[Read the whole story](#)**