State officials kill bear in Douglas County

The second bear this year has been killed in Douglas County, according to Nevada Division of Wildlife officials.

Carl Lackey, biologist with the state agency, said the bear was put down Friday near Holbrook in southern Douglas County because people had been feeding it, which led the bear to break into homes to obtain people food.

This bear was a repeat offender – having been tagged in 2010.

The first bear killed was near Heavenly Mountain Resort, officials said.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Fire consumes South Tahoe mobile home

A mobile home on Julie Lane in South Lake Tahoe was destroyed by fire Monday night.

South Lake Tahoe and Lake Valley firefighters found about one-third of the double wide mobile home consumed by fire when they arrive at 10:21pm June 12.

Firefighters said the attic space was hot and full of smoke.

“The quick action of the initial attack crews kept the fire contained to the structure and kept it from spreading to adjacent structures,” Marty Scheuerman, South Tahoe division

chief, said in a statement.

No one was living in the mobile home.

The cause of the fire is under investigation.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Lawmakers propose raising retirement age for public workers

By Jon Ortiz, Sacramento Bee

Earlier this year, former Assemblyman Roger Niello proposed a ballot initiative that contained a politically explosive idea: set 62 as the full retirement age for all California public employees, including current workers.

Another idea floated by a pension reform group includes making "defined benefits payable when employees reach the retirement age established by the Social Security Administration" – now 62 years old.

The Little Hoover Commission, an independent state oversight agency, has suggested that looming pension costs as baby boomers retire threaten to crush state and local government programs. Part of the solution, the commission says, is giving current workers less incentive to retire early.

Retirement age is increasingly under discussion as strapped local and state governments scrutinize a range of expenditures, from cellphone costs to employee pay and

benefits.

Nearly 60 percent of California voters think the minimum age for drawing a government pension needs to be increased, according to a March Field Poll.

Many public pension systems allow retirement as early as 50, although benefits increase if workers stick around longer.

Read the whole story

Voluntary evacuation lifted for Donner Lakes area community

The voluntary evacuation order for the Serene Lakes community was lifted after clean-up work was done on the last active property known to be affected by a propane leak.

The order was lifted by the Truckee Fire Protection District and Placer County Sheriff's Office in consultation with the county's Environmental Health Division and county Office of Emergency Services. The order was put into place about two months ago to encourage property owners to avoid Serene Lakes as much as possible until the propane emergency was resolved.

Emergency officials cautioned the public needs to be aware the potential for new propane leaks still exists.

Since March, 42 properties at Serene Lakes, a community near the Donner Summit, have been affected by propane leaking from the plumbing that connects the tanks to houses. Leaking propane was the likely cause of an April 8 explosion that

demolished an unoccupied three-story cabin in Serene Lakes.

Overdue backpacker found safe

A local backpacker reported overdue by friends on Saturday walked out of Desolation Wilderness on Sunday afternoon safely.

“The subject was lost, ditched his camping gear, but was able to work his way out near Loon Lake. All ended well with no injuries at about 5pm,” El Dorado County sheriff’s Lt. Les Lovell told *Lake Tahoe News.*

The young man, as he was described by officials, went into Desolation Wilderness by himself.

The search began Saturday. Sheriff’s search and rescue crews were assisted Sunday by other agencies.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report

Increase in Hispanic high school graduation rate

Proportionately more young Hispanic adults are completing high school and fewer are dropping out than were doing so a decade ago, according to an analysis of enrollment trends by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Among Hispanic 18- to 24-year-olds, 22 percent were not enrolled in high school and lacked a high school diploma or equivalent in 2008, compared with 34 percent in 1998.

These statistics come from a new analysis, School Enrollment in the United States: 2008,which examines a number of trends among the U.S. population enrolled in school. The analysis focuses particularly on the issue of enrollment below modal grade, resulting from students being held back or made to repeat a grade.

Among Hispanics who had been enrolled in high school in October 2007, 5 percent reported being out of school with no diploma or equivalent in October 2008, compared with 6 percent for blacks. The percentage for non-Hispanic whites was 2 percent, and for Asians it was 4 percent. The percentage of Asians who left school without a high school diploma is not statistically different from the percentage of non-Hispanic whites, blacks and Hispanics.

Fourteen million Hispanics were enrolled in schools at all levels in 2008 out of a total enrollment of 76 million students across the United States. The Hispanic portion of all students (18 percent in 2008) increased by 5 percentage points from a decade earlier (13 percent in 1998).

Nineteen percent of students ages 6 to 17 were enrolled at a grade level that is lower than the typical grade for their age in 2008, often referred to as “below modal grade.” The below modal grade rate for Hispanic students was the same as for the white-alone, non-Hispanic population.

Migraine research suffers from lack of funding

By Linda Shrieves, Orlando Sentinel

Migraines affect more Americans than diabetes and asthma combined, but funding for migraine research is low. Without an infusion of research dollars, researchers say, it will be hard to conquer migraines.

Migraine specialists attending the American Headache Society meeting in Washington last weekend said they believe more government money for migraine research holds the most promise for winning the battle against the disease.

When asked to rank four areas of research need, 40 percent of those attending the conference said increased public funding is more important than understanding basic aspects of the disease. And public research dollars also were considered more important than early intervention in a migraine attack, migraine genetics or the role of the thalamus.

“The infusion of public money in migraine research is central to the conquest of this disease,” said Dr. David W. Dodick, president of the American Headache Society. “Even researchers funded by private grants from academia or industry are calling for increases in allocations in federal spending for this disease.”

NIH allocates less than $13 million a year to migraine reasearch. “Given the burden this disease carries and the great number of people who suffer with it, it should be more like $260 million,” Dodick said.

Read the whole story

Placer County adopts tentative $720 mil. budget

Placer County Board of Supervisors adopted a proposed 2011-12 budget to ensure the county has a spending plan in place when the next fiscal year begins July 1.

The $720 million budget is down 4.9 percent from the final 2010-11 budget. The county budget has dropped by 16.8 percent since the 2008-09 fiscal year.

Board Chairman Robert Weygandt noted the decline of the construction industry has had a major impact on Placer County, one of the state's fastest growing counties over the last decade.

The county budget team expects property tax revenue, the county's largest revenue source, to drop by $4.8 million next fiscal year.

The size of the county workforce will be 13.5 percent smaller next fiscal year than in 2007-08, largely as a result of a hiring freeze approved by the board in 2007.

The hiring freeze has helped Placer County avoid the large-scale layoffs experienced by many counties and cities. Over the last three years, Placer County has laid off 17 employees due to reduced workloads or insufficient state funding, representing 0.6 percent of the workforce. Most were land-development staff whose workloads dropped significantly in response to the construction industry slowdown.

A small number of layoffs may be necessary during the 2011-12 fiscal year due to reduced workloads and funding reductions.

Adopting the proposed budget completes the first phase of the county’s two-phase budget-approval process.

The two-phase approach allows the county to adopt a final budget after final estimates of available funding have been determined. The board plans to hold budget workshops in August and is tentatively scheduled to adopt a final budget Sept. 13.

Placer County still could face substantial revenue shortfalls and service disruptions if the state reduces funding for mandated county programs and shifts responsibility for some state programs to counties without accompanying funding. The budget team estimates the county has from $30 million to $60 million at risk in the state’s budget battles.

Placer County still does not know whether its Redevelopment Agency will survive the state budget battles. Gov. Jerry Brown has proposed eliminating local redevelopment agencies throughout the state.

In a report to the board Tuesday, Finance and Budget Operations Manager Graham Knaus said the proposed budget maintains critical services to county residents, aligns service demands with available resources, and is balanced without reliance on general fund reserves. In addition, the proposed budget preserves additional mitigation options to address state budget impacts that will be presented to the board during the August workshops.

Unread bills slide through

Nevada Legislature

By Anjeanette Damon and David McGrath Schwartz, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY – Any lobbyist will tell you it's much easier to kill a bill than to get one through the Nevada Legislature.

But there is a golden hour at the end of every legislative session that is the exception, particularly for industries and individuals with the right connections to a small circle of connected lobbyists.

The end of every session is a frantic rush to close the 120-day process, when lawmakers, lobbyists and reporters have their attention diverted in a thousand directions. And as a result, with the right legislator on your side, the right lobbyist can bypass the political fights, public hearings and debates and slip through legislation, almost unnoticed.

To wit: Five minutes after midnight Tuesday – a mere 55 minutes before the constitutionally mandated close of the 2011 legislative session – lawmakers introduced a policy that could cost NV Energy ratepayers $1 billion.

Read the whole story

Tire recycling grant benefits STHS

By Sacramento Business Journal

A tire recycling grant program by the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) has made several

grants in the Sacramento region.

Out of $7.5 million to be sent to local agencies, four of the 83 agencies selected are in the region.

“By promoting and developing markets for waste tires, we stimulate the state’s economy while helping to conserve natural resources and protect the environment,” CalRecycle acting director Mark Leary said in a statement.

According to CalRecycle, California generates more than 40 million waste tires each year, and 11 million end up in landfills or illegally dumped. The agency estimates 2.1 million tires will be kept from landfills by using them in the grant programs.

Funding comes from the $1.75 recycling fee charged for each new tire sold in California. CalRecycle gets $1 of that money, and the rest is used for tire-related emission programs.

Cities, counties, special districts, American Indian tribes, schools and universities are eligible to apply for grants that include using products made from waste tires.

In Sacramento County, three parks districts will receive money to make improvements with recycled rubber. Arden Manor Recreation and Park District received $104,352 and will replace wood chips with rubber bark. The North Highlands Recreation and Park District got $24,120 to install rubber safety surfaces. The Fulton-El Camino Recreation and Park District received $149,223 for installing rubber park at five highly used playgrounds.

Lake Tahoe Unified School District was awarded $91,434 for a multi-use synthetic field at South Lake Tahoe High School. It will replace a grass field and save water.