

Sierra snowpack well beyond historic average



The entrance to Tahoe Keys is wide and deep – something that could not be said the last several years.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Lake Tahoe News

In years' past a March Miracle would mean a deluge of snow to make up for a dry winter. This year, a March Miracle for most people in Northern California would mean more sunny days than ones filled with moisture.

While the snowpack measurement on March 1 near the entrance to Sierra-at-Tahoe wasn't a record, it is substantial enough that those downstream should not have to worry about water allocations this spring-summer.

The local measurements showed 113 inches of snow, with a water content of 43.4 inches. This is 179 percent of average. The record, set in 1983, is 56.4 inches.

The March 1 average at Phillip's Station is 24.3 inches. The April average is 25 inches, so this location near Echo Summit has surpassed that marker. April is the last reading of the year.

"January and February came in with some really quite phenomenal atmospheric river storms, many of which were cold enough to really boost the snowpack," said Frank Gehrke.

He performs this monthly ritual of hand collecting data for the state Department of Water Resources.

The snowpack is likely to get deeper this weekend.

Statewide, the water content of the snowpack is 45.5 inches, or 185 percent of average.

In February the water content was 28 inches, and in January it was 6 inches.

The snowpack provides water to municipalities and farms throughout California. And while Northern California has come out of the five-year drought, those in Central and Southern California can't say the same.

Caltrans: More delays on Hwy. 50 for repair work

Caltrans is doing emergency work on Highway 50 in the American River Canyon that will mean more delays for travelers.

The highway in Silver Fork between Weber Mill Road and Wildwood Way will be under daytime one-way reversing traffic controls Monday through Saturday for two weeks or more. Crews

will be putting in two culverts under the highway and clearing a drainage inlet. The work started March 1.

A section of the No. 2 westbound lane in Fresh Pond will closed beginning Thursday in order to stabilize the slope off the highway. This is a four-lane section of Highway 50.

The section of the highway at Bridal Veil Falls will continue to be reduced to one lane in each direction. The plan is to build a 600-foot retaining wall, which is expected to take several months.

What's next for Education Savings Accounts in Nevada?

By Thomas Moore, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY – Some opponents of Education Savings Accounts say Nevada's version of school choice is dead. But the Legislature continues to discuss the program's budget, and two new bills – meant to shore up the ESA program – are anticipated to be introduced before mid-March.

The program, the first of its kind nationwide to be passed that doesn't limit applicants based on income, would deposit upward of \$5,100 in state education funds into a bank account to be used by approved families for private school tuition, tutoring and other expenses.

The program was put on hold last year after the Nevada Supreme Court ruled that ESA funding couldn't come from the state school budget, but supporters are hoping to resolve lingering

issues and revive it.

Read the whole story

Stateline casino revenues increase in January

Stateline casinos kept pace in January with the state when it came to gaming revenue.

Statewide the casino win last month was 12 percent higher than January 2016 at \$1.04 billion. This was the highest win since February 2013.

Stateline casinos posted a 10.8 percent increase. The South Shore five have are up 8.9 percent in the last three months, with plenty of winter – and March Madness – still to come.

However, casinos on the North Shore posted a January year-over-year drop of 29.9 percent at \$1.7 million.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Mice invasion in parts of Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

It's not just people's homes that have been flooded in the

Tahoe area. All that water is making mice seek higher ground, too.

“It’s the worst I’ve seen in decades,” Jim Cecil, owner of Boulder Exterminator in South Lake Tahoe, told *Lake Tahoe News* of the rodent infestation.

Mice are the biggest issue, with chipmunks and squirrels next. The latter are more prone to get into



One less mouse in as South Lake Tahoe garage. Photo/LTN

walls, while mice scamper about garages and inside houses.

A large number of calls have come from the Tahoe Keys area because it’s on such a high water table. All the rain has flooded the burrows where the critters had been spending the winter. They want someplace dry, and that someplace is where people live.

Ben Gardner, service manager for Lakeside Termite & Pest Control, said he’s getting calls from around the lake about rodent problems.

“The rain flushes them out of their hiding spots or where they make their nest or home. They are being more aggressive about getting into homes,” Gardner told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The goal is to find where they are coming in from and to seal up that location. That's hard to do because mice, even chipmunks, can squeeze through a quarter-inch opening.

And it's never just one. They bring their family and friends. The females can leave a scent behind. This draws the guys. Mice can have upward of a dozen babies. Then it's pretty much an infestation.

For Joe DeCasper, owner of Paragon Pest Control in Tahoe City, he was getting more rodent calls two years ago with the drought conditions. Normally in winter mice are pretty lethargic creatures. But when it was a warm, dry spring the mice were more active and much friskier.

He did say in the last couple of weeks there has been a mouse outbreak in his region.

Mice don't discriminate – they hit up residences and commercial structures.

All of the pest control businesses *Lake Tahoe News* spoke with said poison is frowned upon. Some is still used, but not like the old days.

As of July 1, 2014, California banned the sale of most d-Con products. The federal Environmental Protection Agency reached an agreement with manufacturer Reckitt Benckiser that production stop nationwide on a dozen d-Con products in 2014, with distribution prohibited after March 31, 2015.

"Bait stations are required for consumer products to protect children and pets from contact with bait pellets," according to the EPA.

Some Tahoe pest control businesses use live traps; some have traps that kill.

For the do-it-yourselfers, steel wool can be a good plug for holes. Mice have scissor teeth, so it's hard for them chew

through it. Check for gaps around interior plumbing. Anywhere there is daylight under doors a mouse can come in. Outside vents can be another entry point.

While some people are reporting ants as being an issue, that's usually more of a spring problem in Tahoe. Carpenter ants are the issue here.

"We get little sunshine and they think spring," Cecil said of ants. "Right now all you can do is bait." This is because the best solution is an outside treatment, and that's impossible with all the snow.

Spiders are also making their way indoors. The pest guys say to call them for help.

Calif. law would let vet bills be write-offs

By Taryn Luna, Sacramento Bee

If you own a pet, you've likely cringed after reading the bottom line of a vet bill.

A state assemblyman wants to ease the financial burden of pet ownership with an income tax credit that allows Californians to write off half the money they spend on vet costs up to \$2,000 per year.

Devon Mathis, R-Visalia, introduced Assembly Bill 942 on Thursday to give pet owners a break on vaccinations, check-ups, surgeries, x-rays, prescriptions and other medical-related expenses for their four-legged friends. The tax credit

is limited to healthcare costs for dogs and cats.

[Read the whole story](#)

More skiers turn to short-term rentals

By Hugo Martin, Los Angeles Times

In search of some extra cash, Jim and Janet Dooley started renting out a spare bedroom in their Big Bear home to skiers and other outdoor enthusiasts.

“This has brought us a couple of hundred dollars a week,” said Janet Dooley, who listed the room about two years ago on the online booking platform Airbnb. Most of the guests have been young travelers, heading to the slopes at the nearby Bear Mountain and Snow Summit ski resorts.

For ski resort towns, the growing popularity of Airbnb, VRBO and other online booking sites has become a mixed blessing.

[Read the whole story](#)

Back country skier safe after

injuring leg



Search crews retrieve an injured skier near Emerald Bay on Feb. 26. Photo/EDS0

A 56-year-old Truckee woman had to be evacuated from Desolation Wilderness on Sunday night after sustaining an injury.

She was skiing with a group near Eagle Buttrass, which is north of Eagle Lake. The leg injury prevented her from getting out of the back country on her own.

The wind was so strong on Feb. 26 that a helicopter could not be used.

El Dorado and Douglas counties search teams skied and snowshoed to her. They used a cascade toboggan to get her to safety; then she was transported to Barton Memorial Hospital.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Taxes on table to fund California roads

By Jim Miller

The way California raises money to maintain and repair state highways and local roads has largely been the same for more than two decades.

Gov. Jerry Brown and Democratic legislative leaders want to change that, and Californians would pay more as a result.

In what would be the biggest shakeup of state transportation funding since the early 1990s, they are trying to craft a package that would raise billions of dollars for road upkeep, goods movement and public transit, mostly through a mix of higher taxes and fees.

Read the whole story

Nevada may end presidential caucuses

By Sandra Chereb, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – Republicans and Democrats could scrap Nevada's caucus system in favor of a presidential primary under a bill to be considered in the state Legislature.

The bill, to be introduced by the Senate Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections, would leave it to the state central committees to request that a secret-ballot

primary be held in February in presidential election years.

The legislative committee had a meeting on the Senate floor Thursday and voted to introduce the bill, likely next week.

Read the whole story