

Scientists analyzing crayfish impacts on Tahoe

By Tom Lotshaw

Researchers with UNR are working to better understand the impacts that a small but voracious non-native freshwater crustacean is having in Lake Tahoe and Crater Lake, two of America's deepest, clearest lakes.

Public agencies deliberately introduced signal crayfish into Lake Tahoe and Crater Lake in the early 1900s to help feed stocked sport fish popular with fishermen. The crayfish may be doing more than altering food webs in the two lakes; they may be affecting their famed water clarity.

An omnivore that can feed on plants and animals, signal crayfish rapidly established themselves throughout Lake Tahoe's near shore waters, negatively impacting native invertebrate and non-game fish species.

At Crater Lake, signal crayfish did not start to expand beyond a couple of sites until the mid-2000s. They are now spreading and taking over the habitat of the Mazama newt, an endemic amphibian found nowhere else in the world. It was the top predator in Crater Lake before fishes and crayfish were introduced into its waters.

"From 2008 to 2014 crayfish increased their range in Crater Lake. We are now finding crayfish where we used to find Mazama newts," said John Umek, UNR freshwater ecology researcher.

The spread of crayfish and the corresponding decline in newt populations raised questions for researchers: Is there competition between the two species for habitat or food? Or are crayfish eating newts when they can?

“Turns out it is all of the above,” Umek said. “We found they prefer the same substrate areas, rocky boulder areas where there is protection to hide from predator fish and ultraviolet light. They are also eating similar food sources, so we do see competition for food and habitat.”

Researchers suspect climate change is helping crayfish expand in Crater Lake. Increased water temperatures give crayfish more energy to forage and reproduce, and as crayfish populations reach their maximum in one site, they head out to colonize new areas.

“As crayfish populations expand in nearshore areas in Crater Lake, we see the area for newts getting smaller and smaller. There’s a lot of discussion about what we can do to impede or slow down crayfish in the nearshore and hopefully provide refuge for these newts,” Umek said.

One potential area of refuge for the newts is the small seasonal pools around the shore of the lake, formed by rock slides and avalanches. “We have not found crayfish in any of those pools, so one idea is to do more research into how newts are using those pools and make sure we keep crayfish out of those areas,” Umek said.

Crayfish are impacting more than newts at Crater Lake. Researchers have seen a seven- to eight-fold decrease in benthic (deep water) invertebrate densities in the areas where crayfish have expanded. As crayfish reduce those populations, researchers are seeing an increase in algae biomass along the shoreline, a result of invertebrates no longer consuming algae at the normal rate.

Umek is also working to understand how crayfish are impacting benthic invertebrate populations and algae growth at Lake Tahoe, as well as how crayfish are impacting non-game nearshore fishes such as the redbside shiner, Tahoe sucker, and Tui chub, since they also compete for food sources and

habitat.

“From other research in our laboratory at the University of Nevada we’ve seen a reduction in benthic invertebrates in Lake Tahoe, almost a 60 percent decline from research done in the 1960s and 1970s compared to research done in 2009-10,” Umek said. “So we’re curious how the reduction in benthic invertebrates may increase algae on rocks and sand in the near shore. Are crayfish helping increase the amount of algae as they reduce invertebrates that eat the algae? Or maybe the increase of algae comes from the addition of nutrients to the nearshore that increase the numbers of crayfish as they graze on this plant material in the nearshore environment.”

Understanding the impacts that signal crayfish are having and managing the impacts is a goal for both lakes.

Now that crayfish are well-established in the lakes, it would be extremely difficult to eradicate them. That’s in part because young crayfish hide in rock crevices for their first year to avoid predation, making them difficult if not impossible to trap. “Even if we went in and trapped heavily, we may remove certain age classes, so we would need to have a continual removal of crayfish,” Umek said.

A few years ago, California and Nevada changed their policies to allow the private harvest of crayfish from Lake Tahoe. Working with private business and encouraging them to remove crayfish could be an opportunity to facilitate the continual removal over time.

“Visitors expect to see clear, blue nearshore areas at Tahoe, and if crayfish are impacting algae biomass in those areas, that could have impacts not only for the ecology of the lake, but the economy as well. People don’t want to see these large algae blooms,” Umek said.

Tom Lotshaw is public information officer at the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. This article first appeared in Tahoe

Split-second decisions all part of cops' job

By Kathryn Reed

An agitated suspect danced around, moving toward the officers in an aggressive manner. To shoot or not to shoot? Use another tool like a taser or baton?

In a matter of seconds some of these “officers” shot at the suspect, others held back.

It turned out the “perp” was reaching for his wallet, and after that a cell phone to record what was going on. All the while he was acting like he was hyped up on meth.

While this was a make believe scenario last week, it resembles what real law enforcement officials are faced with on a regular basis. On this particular night it was the South Lake Tahoe Citizens Academy classmates who had to make the decision – to pull the trigger or not.

The academy is a free seven-week course designed to give residents a better understanding about how the city works as well as an opportunity to ask questions of staff. This reporter is part of the current class.

The class participated in three scenarios using guns with non-lethal bullets. The suspect was a real officer playing the part of the bad guy. Later that night video from the dash camera on a patrol car was shown in a debriefing. The camera only captures what is going on immediately in front; there is

no way for it to track the entire scene.

The use of cameras was a big part of Police Chief Brian Uhler's opening presentation. South Lake Tahoe officers do not wear body cameras even though these devices are becoming more popular in the wake of officer involved shootings.

He explained how the norm is the cameras are not on all the time, that officers must consciously activate them. For Uhler, he'd rather have his officers focused on the situation at hand instead of whether it should be filmed. After all, seconds can mean the difference between life and death.

A video showed how police cameras don't always capture everything that is going on. The outcome was that cameras could actually favor officers.

Uhler is hoping technology will be developed to better aid officers and the public to the point that one day cameras would be more seriously considered as a viable tool in South Lake Tahoe.

Officers Jeff Roberson, Mick Carlquist, Matt Morrison and Davis Spaid handled most of the nearly four-hour class session.

Many officers have gone to wearing vests instead of a belt to carry all of the tools of their trade. It's easier on their bodies; still they've been criticized it makes them look more militarized. Those vests weigh about 30 pounds for the average officer, closer to 70 pounds for SWAT.

Handcuffs, expandable baton, gun, taser, radio, flashlight, ammo, wireless microphone – it's all part of the standard equipment. The only thing really optional is to carry pepper spray.

Officers find the audio recorder most beneficial during domestic violence calls because the truth tends to come out in

the heat of the moment. After the fact the couple might make up and recant their statements.

Most officers carry a Glock 22. Each quarter they must pass a shooting test. To practice there is a mobile range at the department. They also have rifles. Shotguns with beanbags are used as a pain compliance tool, or to shoot out windows, as was the case in the most recent fire in the Tahoe Keys.

The type of crimes local officers contend with is all over the board, especially being a border and tourist town.

“For a city our size we have an inordinate amount of **gang activity**,” **Detective Carlquist** said.

He spent a good amount of time talking about the various cases he has worked in the eight years he’s been with the department.

A large part of what the 12-member SWAT unit contends with is gang related.

At the end of the night the class left with a greater appreciation for what the men and women in blue deal with 24 hours a day, and seemed to appreciate what Officer Morrison said: “Everyone behind the badge is human. We are not a robot.”

Study: Schools have role in income segregation

By Sonali Kohli, Los Angeles Times

It’s no secret that in searching for a home, parents

scrutinize nearby schools. The wealthy can afford to live in neighborhoods with small school districts, where most other students are wealthy, too.

Now, a new study out of USC lends credence to the notion that this decision-making process is partially responsible for the rise in America's income segregation between 1990 and 2010.

In the country's 100 largest metropolitan areas, "income segregation is nearly twice as high among households with children as among those without," according to the study from USC sociologist Ann Owens, published in the American Sociological Review in late April.

Read the whole story

DMV fees going up for El Dorado County residents

The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors raised local residents' DMV renewal fees.

Prior to the board's action last month, DMV was billing county residents \$9 per vehicle, per year on behalf of the Board of Supervisors. The supervisors raised the fee to \$10. The additional \$1 will be used to pay for automated fingerprint identification services throughout the county.

The remaining \$9 per vehicle fee goes to:

- \$1 for highway call boxes (charged since 2000)
- \$6 for the Air Quality Management District (charged since 2006)

- \$1 for Abandoned Vehicle Abatement (charged since 1992)
- \$1 for DUI/Auto Theft Prosecution Program (charged since 1993).

The sheriff, district attorney, and auditor-controller all supported raising the fee.

However, the county-auditor asked the electeds to review the other \$9 that is levied.

“When your board charges a fee to an individual, the intent of the California Constitution requires that there is a reasonable relationship between the amount of the fee charged, the individual charged, and the benefit or service provided to the individual by the county. I believe that in the case of the automated fingerprint identification fee a reasonable relationship exists,” Auditor Joe Harn wrote to the supervisors. “I believe that the relationship of the fees charged for the Air Quality Management District and the highway call boxes is not nearly as clear”

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Lake Tahoe luxury home sales blossom

By Mark Glover, Sacramento Bee

Luxury home sales are flying high again in the exclusive Lake Tahoe region and the Sacramento area.

Tahoe City-based Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage said the number of single-family luxury home sales in the North

Lake Tahoe/Truckee region soared more than 62 percent in the first quarter of the year compared with the same period a year ago. The figures were derived from Multiple Listing Service data of all single-family homes sold in the region with a sales price of more than \$1 million during the most recent quarter.

The biggest increase in sales in the first quarter was in the \$1 million to \$2,499,999 segment of the market, with 34 transactions, up about 80 percent from the 19 sales in that price range a year ago.

Read the whole story

Refugees coming to Northern Nevada

By Julia Ritchey, KUNR

The U.S. State Department has greenlighted a Northern Nevada nonprofit to help resettle refugees escaping hotbeds of conflict around the globe beginning this fall.

Carina Black, executive director of the Reno-based Northern Nevada International Center, says their application to become an official resettlement agency was approved in February. They've since been laying the groundwork, and building a stakeholders' network, before those first few families arrive.

Black says initially about two families – approximately 10 people – could arrive by September. For the federal fiscal year running October 2016 through 2017, they've asked to resettle at most 75 refugees.

All refugees relocating to Reno will go through a vigorous, federal screening process, which can take between 18-24 months.

Read the whole story

Nonpartisan voters face hurdles in Calif. primary

By Jeremy B. White, Sacramento Bee

With the presidential nominating contest about to conclude in California, elections experts are warning that voters who aren't registered with a party could miss out on a chance to help pick the Democratic standard-bearer.

As California's fastest-growing voter bloc, people without a party play an increasingly instrumental role in elections. They can vote in this year's Democratic primary, which will cap a nominating process in which candidates Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders are still competing.

But they must take some extra steps to do so, fueling concerns that the additional requirements will prevent unaffiliated voters from participating.

Read the whole story

Tahoe Vista man guilty in Incline burglary



Cameron
Francis
Covington

A jury found a Tahoe Vista man guilty of stealing from a doctor's office in Incline Village.

In February 2014, Cameron Francis Covington, 33, entered the office through a window. He stole non-narcotic medications, a prescription pad and \$260.

Because of Covington's prior 11 felony convictions, the Washoe County District Attorney's Office said it intends to ask for a stiffer sentence on June 17 for this one burglary conviction. He face one to 10 years in prison.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

NRA eager to defeat Nevada

gun initiative

By Sean Whaley, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – The National Rifle Association’s Institute for Legislative Action has launched an informational website to stop the “Californication” of Nevadans’ gun rights.

The www.votenoquestion1.com website “exposes the truth” about how a universal background check would criminalize the commonplace activities of many Nevada gun owners, the group announced Wednesday.

The background check measure will be on the Nov. 8 general election ballot. It was qualified through the initiative process and is before Nevada voters because the Legislature did not enact the measure in the 2015 session.

The measure would extend firearm background checks to private party sales and some transfers.

Read the whole story

Revised Calif. budget has less money for new programs

By John Myers, Los Angeles Times

Gov. Jerry Brown sent legislators a revised version of his state budget on Friday, insisting that lawmakers hold overall spending flat while endorsing a \$2-billion bond to help the homeless.

“We have the money, and it’s a serious problem,” Brown said at a state Capitol news conference.

The support for a housing bond, which still would face sizable legal and political hurdles, was the most noticeable pronouncement in a \$173.1-billion spending plan that otherwise holds the line on new programs and confirms a noticeable erosion in state revenues compared to estimates from January.

Overall, tax receipts are now expected to shrink by \$1.9 billion. And Brown’s budget team continues to say that California could face as much as a \$4-billion deficit by the summer of 2020.

Read the whole story