

Body of 1 canoeist recovered from Donner Lake

The body of one of the men who went missing on Friday while canoeing on Donner Lake has been recovered.

Crews as of about about 4:30pm Feb. 27 were calling it a day after being on and under the water for most of Saturday. The search will continue Sunday.

The two men in their 30s who are from the Auburn area borrowed the canoe from the place they were staying at the lake. The canoe capsized in rough waves that were reaching 3 feet at times on Friday afternoon. Neither was wearing a life jacket.

The names of the men have not been released.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Thunder Valley casino to spend \$40 mil. to expand hotel

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

When Thunder Valley Casino Resort opened its hotel in 2010, it represented one of the largest construction projects completed in the Sacramento area during the recession.

The Indian tribe that owns Thunder Valley hedged its bet,

however, leaving three floors unfinished as an acknowledgment of tough economic times.

On Wednesday, the casino announced it will build out those floors, adding 111 rooms to the property, in a signal of the resort's continued prosperity.

Read the whole story

LTCC taking education to prison inmates



Inmates at Folsom State Prison are receiving an education from Lake Tahoe Community College staff.
Photo/LTN file

By Kathryn Reed

Being in prison does not mean being sentenced to a life without education.

For nearly a year Lake Tahoe Community College has been striving to educate a slew of inmates in Northern California

correctional facilities. There are 127 active students, with 234 inmates having been part of the program since it started in spring 2015.

Shane Reynolds, who heads the incarcerated student program for LTCC, gave an update to the board of education on Feb. 23. About every two weeks he is at the prisons, working one-on-one with inmates, delivering materials, seeing how he can help them succeed. LTCC is affiliated with the five prisons that are under Folsom State Prison as well as High Desert State Prison in Susanville.

Instructors from LTCC videotape lectures. Regular online classes are not an option at this level of prison because Internet access is limited or nonexistent.

Students are given packets of work from the English, math and history departments. The whole sequence of math classes is required. Instructors Bruce Armburst and Wynn Walker make trips to the prisons to offer tutoring.

Next quarter geology will be offered.

As with all classes, these students have deadlines for turning in coursework and are graded like any other student. LTCC is the only college offering incarcerated students the opportunity to make the dean's list and honor roll – of which seven have done.

"We want to be leaders in education to the incarcerated," Reynolds told the board.

LTCC works with the state board of governors when it comes to getting these students enrolled and then receiving payment as though they were taking classes on campus. Their books are also provided for free. The college is not losing any money on this remote education program, but instead is actually getting credit for the students as though they were in South Lake Tahoe.

The goal is that after nine quarters these students would have an associate of arts degree in social sciences that would be transferable to a UC or CSU. Most are taking three four-unit classes per quarter.

One thing Reynolds said needs improving is the bridge from prison to higher education once the person is released.

At the start these incarcerated students are given a 29-page guide detailing what is expected of them, it has the course descriptions, program details and a brief history of the college. It is an outline that would be beneficial to any student.

“The students want to know what is going on on campus. They want a connection to the campus community,” Reynolds said.

Reynolds, though, reiterated multiple times that this is a unique population working under constraints that those on campus aren’t contending with. Many of the prisons were on lockdown at various times last fall. All learning stops at times like that.

It took two quarters for Reynolds to convince prison officials that pencils should be allowed. The concern is they would be a weapon. Staples keeping papers together were another no-no at the get-go. It took three quarters to change the policy.

The next goal for Reynolds is to have the local jail be part of the incarcerated student program.

Caltrans on track to build

roundabout in Meyers



Caltrans is contemplating a roundabout in Meyers. Map/Caltrans

By Lake Tahoe News

Caltrans is moving forward with making improvements at the intersection of highways 50 and 89 in Meyers.

“A roundabout isn’t the only option being looked it. A signal and design changes to the intersection are also being considered,” Steve Nelson, spokesman for Caltrans, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “That being said, it is fair to say that the project development team believes a roundabout is the best option to meet the purpose and need of the project, which is safety improvement to reduce collisions and reduce the severity of collisions.”

The project is in the environmental review phase. That should be finished in November.

Caltrans has been working with the Meyers Community Council, El Dorado County, Tahoe Transportation District and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

It is projected to cost \$3.15 million. The money is in hand

from the federal government.

The timeline includes having the right-of-way acquisition and design completed in January 2018, construction beginning in September 2018 and completion in March 2020.

For now, that is the only improvement to the state highway in Meyers.

“There has been interest expressed for a roundabout at 50 and Pioneer Trail, but Caltrans doesn’t have any other projects currently programmed in Meyers,” Nelson said.

2 canoeists missing on Donner Lake

The search for two men who went missing when their canoe capsized on Donner Lake will resume Saturday morning.

Truckee police received a call Feb. 26 at 4:44pm regarding the incident.

Search crews on boats, divers in the water and a helicopter were unable to find the men. The search was called off because of darkness.

The canoe has been recovered. It is believed the men borrowed it from the house they were renting.

Sgt. Bob Womack told *Lake Tahoe News* one of things investigators are trying to solidify is how far the men were paddling from shore. Reports range from 100 feet to 200 yards. At the time they fell into 40-degree water the winds were blowing between 15 and 25 mph, with 2- to 3-foot waves.

Womack said the men are in their 30s and not from the Truckee area. They also were not wearing life jackets.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

UN report warns of fewer bees, other pollinators

By Seth Borenstein, AP

Many species of wild bees, butterflies and other critters that pollinate plants are shrinking toward extinction, and the world needs to do something about it before our food supply suffers, a new United Nations scientific mega-report warns.

The 20,000 or so species of pollinators are key to hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of crops each year – from fruits and vegetables to coffee and chocolate. Yet 2 out of 5 species of invertebrate pollinators, such as bees and butterflies, are on the path toward extinction, said the first-of-its-kind report. Pollinators with backbones, such as hummingbirds and bats, are only slightly better off, with 1 in 6 species facing extinction.

“We are in a period of decline and there are going to be increasing consequences,” said report lead author Simon Potts, director of the Centre for Agri-Environmental Research at the University of Reading in England.

And it's not just honeybees. In some aspects they're doing better than many of their wild counterparts, like the bumblebee, despite dramatic long-term declines in the United States and a mysterious disorder that has waned.

The trouble is the report can't point to a single villain. Among the culprits: the way farming has changed so there's not enough diversity and wild flowers for pollinators to use as food; pesticide use, including a controversial one, neonicotinoid, that attacks the nervous system; habitat loss to cities; disease, parasites and pathogens; and global warming.

The report is the result of more than two years of work by scientists across the globe who got together under several different U.N. agencies to come up with an assessment of Earth's biodiversity, starting with the pollinators. It's an effort similar to what the United Nations has done with global warming, putting together an encyclopedic report to tell world leaders what's happening and give them options for what can be done.

The report, which draws from many scientific studies but no new research, was approved by a congress of 124 nations meeting in Kuala Lumpur on Friday.

"The variety and multiplicity of threats to pollinators and pollination generate risks to people and livelihoods," the report stated. "These risks are largely driven by changes in land cover and agricultural management systems, including pesticide use."

But these are problems that can be fixed, and unlike global warming, the solutions don't require countries to agree on global action – they can act locally, said Robert Watson, a top British ecological scientist and vice chairman of the scientific panel. The solutions offered mostly involve changing the way land and farming is managed.

"There are relatively simple, relatively inexpensive mechanisms for turning the trend around for native pollinators," said David Inouye of the University of Maryland, a co-author of a couple chapters in the report.

One of the biggest problems, especially in the United States, is that giant swaths of farmland are devoted to just one crop, and wildflowers are disappearing, Potts and others said. Wild pollinators especially do well on grasslands, which are usually more than just grass, and 97 percent of Europe's grasslands have disappeared since World War II, Potts said.

England now pays farmers to plant wildflowers for bees in hedge rows, Watson said.

There are both general and specific problems with some pesticide use, according to the report.

"Pesticides, particularly insecticides, have been demonstrated to have a broad range of lethal and sub-lethal effects on pollinators in controlled experimental conditions," the report said. But it noted more study is needed on the effects on pollinators in the wild. Herbicides kill off weeds, which are useful for wild pollinators, the report added.

The report highlighted recent research that said the widely used insecticide neonicotinoid reduces wild bees' chances for survival and reproduction, but the evidence of effects on honeybees is conflicting.

In a statement, Christian Maus, global pollinator safety manager for Bayer, which makes neonicotinoids, said: "The report confirms the overwhelming majority of the scientific opinion regarding pollinator health – that this is a complex issue affected by many factors. Protecting pollinators and providing a growing population with safe, abundant food will require collaboration."

Potts said global warming is "very clearly a real future risk" because pollinators and their plants may not be at the same place at the same time. England has seen one-quarter of its bumblebee species threatened, and those are the type of bees most sensitive to climate change, he said.

England has lost two species of wild bumblebees to extinction and the U.S. has lost one, Inouye said.

The story of honeybees is a bit mixed. Globally over the last 50 years, the number of managed honeybee hives – ones where humans keep them either as a hobbyists or as professional pollinators – has increased, but it has dropped in North America and Europe, where there is the most data, the report said.

Potts said the number of managed hives in the United States dropped from 5.5 million in 1961 and dropped to a low of 2.5 million in 2012, when colony collapse disorder was causing increased worries. The number of hives is now back up slightly, to 2.7 million.

Dennis vanEngelsdorp, a University of Maryland bee expert who wasn't part of the report, praised it for looking at the big picture beyond honeybees.

Doing something is crucial, he said.

"Everything falls apart if you take pollinators out of the game," vanEngelsdorp said. "If we want to say we can feed the world in 2050, pollinators are going to be part of that."

2 Incline bartenders accused of selling drugs

Two Incline Village bartenders were arrested this month on narcotics charges following a series of undercover operations by Washoe County sheriff's detectives.

Juan Pablo Lepe, an employee of Rookies Sports Bar and Grill,

was arrested Feb.10 and Nicholas Webber, an employee of the Village Pub, was arrested Feb. 19. Both face multiple drug-related charges.

Detectives said they bought cocaine from the two bartenders. A search of one of their vehicles result in the seizure of 9.2 grams of powder cocaine, officials said.

These undercover operations took place between Jan. 28 and Feb. 4.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Study: Poorest areas missed out on recovery

By Nelson D. Schwartz, New York Times

The gap between the richest and poorest American communities has widened since the Great Recession ended, and distressed areas are faring worse just as the recovery is gaining traction across much of the country.

These findings, outlined in a study released Thursday by the Economic Innovation Group, a new nonprofit research and advocacy organization, may help explain why the country's economic and political situation has become so polarized in recent years. The results, broken down into areas as small as individual ZIP codes, provide one of the most detailed looks at the nation's growing inequality.

From 2010 to 2013, for example, employment in the most prosperous neighborhoods in the United States jumped by more than a fifth, according to the group's analysis of Census

Bureau data. But in bottom-ranked neighborhoods, the number of jobs fell sharply: One in 10 businesses closed down.

Read the whole story

SLT gas station's liquor license suspended

American Gas in South Lake Tahoe has had its liquor license suspended for 20 days.

South Lake Tahoe Police Department and California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control officials said the suspension is a result of an undercover operation conducted Nov. 12 in which owner Stefka Dimitrova was arrested after allegedly selling a glass pipe used for smoking methamphetamine.

The suspension started Feb. 25.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Tahoe casinos post gains in January

Stateline casino revenue was up in January, while statewide it was down.

The Gaming Control Board on Feb. 26 said statewide revenue fell 2.87 percent in January compared to 2015 to \$925.3

million.

Gaming revenue rose 9.22 percent at the South Shore casinos.

North Shore casinos also posted a gain – 22.35 percent higher than 2015.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*