

Man dies at Angora Lake

A 42-year-old man visiting Lake Tahoe died at Angora Lake on July 24.

The name of the man has not been released.

An autopsy is pending to determine the exact cause of death.

He had been at the South Shore lake with friends. When they didn't see him above water they went searching for him.

Eric Hildinger, who runs the resort, told *Lake Tahoe News* it took about 20 minutes before the victim was found at the bottom of the lake in about 10 to 15 feet of water.

CPR was given until paramedics arrived. He died at Barton Memorial Hospital.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Nevada gaming win up – but not at Stateline

Northern Nevada was not much help in June when it came to gaming revenue.

While statewide revenues were up 14 percent compared to the previous year, they were down in Stateline and Reno.

The state Gaming Control Board today released June's numbers that show the state brought in \$907 million. Stateline casinos

were down 2 percent, with \$12 million in revenues and Reno revenues were down 3 percent to \$48 million, compared to 2013.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Drought impacting Tahoe's forest health



A moth is causing pine needles in Meyers to turn orange. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

MEYERS – The tiny moths that are turning a large swath of the South Shore orange are out mating so there will presumably be more organisms to wreak havoc.

The needle miner is a micro moth that lives about a year, but can do tremendous harm in its short lifespan. They live in the needles of pine trees.

Soon they will lay eggs on the current growth of green

needles. If they continue to populate, their work will turn up in a year.

They have taken over about a 40-acre area near Pioneer Trail and Highway 50 in Meyers. The exact acreage will be noted in September when the U.S. Forest Service takes its annual aerial photographs of the Lake Tahoe Basin.



Forest pathologist Martin MacKenzie shows needles from 2011, top, 2012, 2013 and 2014. The moth has not landed on the 2014 needles – yet.

“They are native and have been here all along,” Martin MacKenzie, a forest pathologist, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “They are species specific. This one is so little-known it doesn’t have a name.”

MacKenzie works out of the Stanislaus National Forest, but was in the basin last week surveying the local damage caused by the needle miner to the Jeffery pines.

Taking a small branch off an infected tree, MacKenzie surveys

the growth rings. Removing needles from each section it's easy to see the increased damage that has been done by the moth since 2011.

It's not until every needle is red that the tree is dead.

The needle miners that attack lodgepoles are more common. The only Jeffery stands the needle miners are known to have infested are the ones in Meyers, the Al Tahoe neighborhood of South Lake Tahoe, and eight miles along Highway 395 in the Inyo National Forest.



In some places the forest is more orange than green.

"I think the recent climate phenomenon has allowed this moth to get out of whack," MacKenzie said.

The moths' natural predator is a wasp. What happened to the wasp is a mystery. The wasp will lay its egg on the caterpillar and eat inside out so a moth never comes to life. That process is what is missing.

"The natural balance is out of control," MacKenzie said.

While MacKenzie and Rita Mustatia, forester with the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, don't believe the moth will kill the trees, prolonged destruction of the branches combined with the drought could weaken the trees. For now, though, it is

more of an aesthetic issue. The trees look like they are dying.

That is one reason why Forest Service officials don't want people running to a tree service to have them felled. Odds are the trees will survive.

Mustatia points to thinning tree stands as one way to help the longevity of the pines. Trees grow faster with more sunlight and when they don't have to compete for water. A healthier tree is going to withstand the ravages of the moth for a longer period of time.

High level of bacteria found in Kings Beach creek

High bacteria levels at a creek in Kings Beach resulted in a health advisory being issued this week by Placer County Environmental Health.

Griff Creek is near highways 267 and 28. The advisory includes the creek near the highway road culvert and bridge where the creek widens and ponds.

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board tested the water earlier this month and found E. coli levels that exceed state health guidelines for fresh water recreation areas. More tests will be taken until the creek is deemed safe.

The cause of the elevated bacteria is undetermined, but is most likely naturally occurring from area wildlife and may be associated with drought conditions that have resulted in reduced water flow rates that are warmer than normal within

the creek drainage, according to Placer County officials.

“There is currently no health concern involving the waters of Lake Tahoe or any of the surrounding beaches at Lake Tahoe,” Wesley Nicks, director of Environmental Health for Placer County, said in a statement.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Survey: Increase in teens using performance enhancing drugs

By David Crary, AP

NEW YORK – Experimentation with human growth hormones by America’s teens more than doubled in the past year, as more young people looked to drugs to boost their athletic performance and improve their looks, according to a new, large-scale national survey.

In a confidential 2013 survey of 3,705 high school students, released Wednesday by the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids, 11 percent reported using synthetic HGH at least once – up from about 5 percent in the four preceding annual surveys. Teen use of steroids increased from 5 percent to 7 percent over the same period, the survey found.

Travis Tygart, CEO of the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, depicted the numbers as alarming but not surprising, given the extensive online marketing of performance-enhancing substances and near-total lack of any drug testing for high school athletes.

"It's what you get when you combine aggressive promotion from for-profit companies with a vulnerable target – kids who want a quick fix and don't care about health risk," Tygart said in an interview. "It's a very easy sell, unfortunately."

Nine percent of teen girls reported trying synthetic HGH and 12 percent of boys.

"A picture emerges of teens – both boys and girls – entering a largely unregulated marketplace (online and in-store) in which performance-enhancing substances of many varieties are aggressively promoted with promises of improved muscle mass, performance and appearance," said the report. "This is an area of apparently growing interest and potential danger to teens that cries out for stricter controls on manufacture and marketing."

Given the high cost of authentic HGH, it's possible that some of teens who reported using it may in fact have obtained fake products. As the survey said, "It's very difficult to know what exactly is in the substances teens are consuming, or what the short- and long-term impact on their health may be."

Steve Pasierb, president of the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids, said the motives of today's youthful dopers were different from the rebellious or escapist attitudes that traditionally accompanied teen drinking and pot-smoking.

"This is about how you feel, how you look," Pasierb said. "They're doing this thing to get ahead. ... Girls want to be thin and toned. For a lot of boys, it's about their six-pack."

He urged parents to talk candidly with their children about the dangers of performance-enhancing substances, but to avoid moralizing.

"It's not about illegality, or whether you're a good parent or bad parent," he said. "It's a health issue. These substances literally alter your body."

Pasierb said high school coaches have a key role in combating doping. Some are vigilant, other oblivious and perhaps a third are prepared to tolerate doping in the interests of winning, he said.

The new survey noted that the upsurge in teen HGH use occurred even as famous athletes were caught up in high-profile doping cases. Last August, Major League Baseball punished Alex Rodriguez with a lengthy suspension after investigating his use of performance-enhancing drugs. A few months earlier, Lance Armstrong admitted in a TV interview to doping throughout his cycling career.

One of Armstrong's former teammates is Tyler Hamilton, who was forced to return his 2004 Olympic gold medal after being found guilty of doping. In recent public appearances, Hamilton has implored young athletes to resist the temptation to dope.

"There's so much pressure on winning – it's tough for these kids to stay true to themselves," he said. "I can't change every kid's mind, but if I can do my part and other people do their part, we can beat this monster."

Tygart, who as USADA's chief oversaw investigations of Armstrong and Hamilton, noted that stringent testing regimens are an increasingly effective deterrent to doping among athletes in major pro sports and in international competitions.

"But most young athletes are not in any testing program, and their chance of getting caught is zero," he said. "When left unchecked, the win-at-all-cost culture will take over and athletes will make the wrong decision."

Synthetic HGH is supposed to be available only by prescription, yet products claiming to contain HGH are widely promoted and enforcement of the regulations is inconsistent, Tygart said.

Among the groups seeking to reverse the teen doping trend is the Texas-based Taylor Hooton Foundation, named after a 17-year-old high school athlete whose suicide in 2003 was blamed by his family on his use of anabolic steroids. Its staff has spoken to thousands of young people at school assemblies and sports camps.

Donald Hooton Sr., Taylor's father and the foundation's president, depicted teen doping as an epidemic fueled by widespread ignorance among parents and coaches. He estimated that more than 1.5 million youths in the U.S. have tried steroids.

Information about teen use of performance-enhancing drugs is readily available online. The Mayo Clinic, for example, provides a list of possible hazards and side-effects, including stunted growth, acne, liver problems, shrunken testicles for boys and excess facial hair for girls.

The clinic urges parents to check the ingredients of over-the-counter products used by their teens, and to be on the lookout for warning signs, including increased aggressiveness, rapid weight gain, and needle marks in the buttocks or thighs.

The Partnership for Drug-Free Kids survey also reported on other forms of substance abuse. Among its findings:

- Forty-four percent of teens report using marijuana at least once within their lifetime; 24 percent report using within the past month; and 7 percent report using at least 20 times within the past month. These levels have remained stable over the past five years.

- After a sharp increase in teen misuse and abuse of prescription drugs in 2012, the rate remained stable in 2013, with 23 percent of teens reporting such abuse or misuse at least once. Fifteen percent reported having used the prescription painkillers Vicodin or OxyContin without a prescription at some point.

The survey of 3,705 students in grades 9-12 was conducted at their schools between February and June 2013.

The margin of error was calculated at plus or minus 2.1 percentage points.

Founded in 1987, the New York-based Partnership for Drug-Free Kids is a nonprofit working to reduce teen substance abuse and support families affected by addiction.

Nevada National Guard helping in Tonga

Eight airmen from the Nevada Air National Guard joined 160 people from seven nations July 21 to provide humanitarian assistance to the citizens of Tonga as part of Operation Pacific Angel-Tonga.

The mission will continue until July 26.

Tonga is Nevada National Guard's partner in the National Guard's State Partnership Program, the Department of Defense program that links a state's National Guard with the armed forces or equivalent of a partner country in a cooperative, mutually beneficial relationship.

The Nevada Air National Guard is supporting Pacific Angel this week by providing Airmen who are experts in medical care and civil engineering. Specialized airmen will assist with the medical health services outreach mission that focuses on general health and primary care, dentistry, optometry, women's health and pediatrics as well as the engineering civic action

programs mission that focuses on the repair and refurbishment of medical and school facilities in Vava'u, Tonga.

Second WCSO boat sinks at Lake Tahoe

Washoe County Sheriff's Office lost another boat at Lake Tahoe.

The search and rescue vessel that sank at Incline Village overnight is the second boat to have done so. The other sank in May.

"The command staff is talking over what the options and availability are for the lake at this point," Bob Harmon, spokesman for the department, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Both boats went down while moored off the Hyatt. Normally the search and rescue boat is trailered, but the trailer was in Reno for repairs so the boat was tied up to the buoy July 23. Now the boat is in Reno to determine if it is salvageable.

Douglas County lost a boat this season, too.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Fire significantly damages South Tahoe hotel



The Deerfield Lodge and hotel guests' vehicles were destroyed July 23 by fire. Photo/Susan Wood

By Kathryn Reed

Two people were injured when the Deerfield Lodge in South Lake Tahoe went up in flames Wednesday night.

The fire that swept through the Ski Run Boulevard two-story hotel displaced all of the guests. Thirty-five people were taken to Lakeside Inn for the evening and are expected to return today.

The back building that had six rooms was completely destroyed, while the front is intact and does not have smoke damage.

South Lake Tahoe Fire Chief Jeff Meston estimated the damage

at between \$2 million and \$2.5 million.

Also gone are four guest vehicles and two cars parked on Spruce Avenue, about 25 feet away from the hotel.

The people who were injured jumped from the second story balcony. Meston told *Lake Tahoe News* they were taken to Barton Memorial Hospital with significant injuries, but did not have further details.



Firefighters on July 24 assess the damage to Deerfield Lodge and investigate the cause.

Photo/Susan Wood

The fire started at 11:45pm July 23 and was brought under control at 2:35am. Assisting South Lake Tahoe were firefighters from Tahoe Douglas and Lake Valley, along with an engine from CalFire. The cause is under investigation.

Tahoe Douglas' ladder truck was used because South Lake Tahoe's new one is still not in service because it was damaged when the manufacturer had someone drive it from Louisiana to Tahoe in four-wheel drive.

Susie Horst, who lives across the street on Spruce Avenue, had her windows knocked out from the fire. She had to evacuate.

Horst told *Lake Tahoe News* it was like she was having a

nightmare because she could hear all of these people screaming.

A guest woke up Jerry Birdwell, owner of the Black Bear Inn located next door to the Deerfield, to tell him about the fire.

A truck was spraying water from the side street next to the Black Bear across the bed and breakfast's property to the Deerfield.

"I looked and my god it was blazing," Birdwell told *Lake Tahoe News*. "They protected our property. The manner in which the firefighters worked, the police worked and when [City Manager] Nancy [Kerry] got on scene and handled the situation with Deerfield guests ... it was absolutely professional."

It was Kerry who arranged for a BlueGo bus to take the people to Lakeside Inn and was calling all over town before she was able to secure rooms for the night at the Stateline casino-hotel.

The city is coordinating relief efforts for guests – adults and teenagers – who lost everything. Anyone who can assist with clothing, lodging or other amenities should call 530.542.6016.



The Deerfield Lodge goes up in flames. Photo/Denis

The Red Cross is not much help in situations like this because their focus is on people who live in a town, not tourists.

The Deerfield used to be the Dream Inn until Eric and Robin Eichenfield bought it in May 2006 for \$800,000 and then invested more than \$1 million to turn it into an upscale boutique hotel. New owners took over a year ago this month. No one was answering the phone this morning at the Deerfield.

This was the third South Lake Tahoe hotel fire in a last few weeks. On July 20 the Highland Inn was affected by the fire at Mountain Mike's T-shirt shop. Then there was a small fire at Lake Shore Lodge that started in a dryer.

Susan Wood contributed to this story.

Arson dog helping track Tahoe fire starter

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – With an arsonist on the loose on the South Shore setting brush fires, Simmie is even more important.

Simmie is Lake Valley Fire Protection District's arson dog. She was at the Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe lunch on Wednesday at Harrah's Lake Tahoe with her handler Gareth Harris.

Harris, fire chief for Lake Valley, has been working with

Simmie for a couple years. She came to the department via a donation from a nonprofit. And she is the only arson dog that services Northern Nevada.



Firefighters on June 18 hike to a blaze in Stateline that was intentionally set. Photo/Carol Faccinetti

“There is no doubt it was started with an accelerant,” Harris said of one of the Stateline area fires.

Simmie is trained to sniff out hydrocarbons. Samples are then sent to a lab in Sacramento for confirmation.

Multiple agencies are working to track down the person or people setting the local fires, with a task force convening on Monday.

While the basin has not had many arsons, three people were arrested earlier this month in connection with starting a fire at an Incline Village restaurant, the January house fire in South Lake Tahoe was the work of an arsonist who has not been caught, and in October 2012 a South Lake Tahoe man was arrested on charges of arson at a residence. And of course there is the Angora Fire of 2007 that, while not deemed intentional, was started by someone not extinguishing an illegal campfire.

According to the South Lake Tahoe Fire Department, arson

killed more than 800 people in 2012 and was the largest single cause of fire damage to property.

Harris explained how it wasn't until the 1980s that arson dogs came into vogue. Bomb and drug sniffing dogs had been used long before that.

He said Labradors, like Simmie, have 4,000 times more powerful noses than humans. Simmie trains by searching for a piece of cloth that has one drop of gasoline on it. The cloth is in a prescription bottle that is then placed in a Tupperware container.

Instead of pawing at the evidence, she sits when she finds something. She makes eye contact with Harris and then uses her nose to point to where the accelerant is located. This way she does not use her paw to contaminate the scene.

The other part of the July 23 talk focused on defensible space, and the increased need for it this year with the risk of fire escalating every day the drought lingers. Plus, it's the law in California to have defensible space.

Leona Allen, who works for Lake Valley, said 75 percent of the houses in the Angora burn area that had defensible space survived.

While there are rules about what is allowed at certain distances from a structure, the main test is think about throwing a softball-size ember anywhere on your property. Would it catch fire? If, yes, you need better defensible space, Allen said.

More info about defensible space may be found online.

2 bears caught and released by NDOW

Two black bears trapped on July 22 have been released back in to the wild by Nevada Department of Wildlife. One was caught in Incline Village and the other Gardnerville.

Both bears were tagged, tattooed and microchipped in order to identify them in the future should they come back in to contact with humans.

A male black bear estimated to be 2 to 3 years of age was caught in Incline in an area where nuisance bear behavior had been occurring. It was taken about 50 miles east of Gardnerville.

The 4-year old male bear that was caught in a rural area of south Gardnerville was released into the Pine Nut Mountain Range.

Since July 1, NDOW has handled 15 bears in western Nevada. Eleven of those bears have been safely released back in to the wild. Two of the bears were hit and killed by cars, one was euthanized for public safety reasons and one was euthanized for depredating upon livestock.