E-bikes may rejuvenate cycling industry

By Buck Wargo, Las Vegas Review-Journal

The future of bicycling rolled toward a clear trend this week, gaining speed throughout the 34th annual Interbike Exposition in Las Vegas with only a light push of the pedals.

Once aboard the electric bike, that’s all the effort it might take.

Imagine you’re riding a bike, come to a hill and slow down as you climb. The e-bike’s sensors can tell you’re struggling. All of a sudden it feels like you have a hand on your back, pushing while you barely peddle.

That’s the new rage in biking, though some traditionalists consider an electric motor cheating. But the industry, which has seen bicycle shops in the U.S. decrease from 5,000 to 4,000 over the last decade, sees the e-bike as a product that could reverse the trend.

Read the whole story

Squaw’s Ganong going after downhill title

By Megan Harrod, USSA

Growing up minutes from Squaw Valley, Travis Ganong found himself in the Mighty Mites peewee program as a tyke. He

devoured the opportunity.

“Cliffs, chutes, pillow-lines, arcin’ turns down the Dog Leg! I couldn’t get enough,” he recalls.

With his sisters showing the way, he got into the race program. He pointed to his sister Megan’s time on the U.S. Ski Team and said he wanted to follow her lead.

The U.S. men’s alpine team has accomplished almost every major feat on the Audi FIS Ski World Cup – Olympic gold, World Championship gold, slalom and giant slalom titles, Hahnenkamm gold.

That is, except for winning the coveted downhill title. Steven Nyman (Sundance, Utah), Travis Ganong (Squaw Valley) and the rest of the American downhillers hope to change that in 2017.

At the end of the 2016 season, Nyman was ranked sixth, a rank that matched his previous career best from 2015. However, he also did something no other American downhiller had done before – not Tommy Moe, nor AJ Kitt, nor Truckee’s own Daron Rahlves, nor even Bode Miller (Franconia, N.H.).

Nyman grabbed four podiums in four consecutive World Cup races: Jeongseon (third), Chamonix (second), Kvitfjell (third) and St. Moritz (second). Not only does that streak bode well for Nyman at the 2017 World Championships in St. Moritz, but that kind of consistency also suggests good things for his quest to hoist the crystal globe.

“Obviously, to finish the season in the U.S. will be special, but with the way our team is currently performing … I think there’s going to be a lot to celebrate at the end of the year. For me, my big goal is that downhill title,” said Nyman. “I believe I can do it, and if I’m the first American male to ever win the downhill title, that would be a storybook ending in Aspen.”

With the confirmation of World Cup Finals in Aspen, the Americans have the chance to win crystal globes on home turf.

Let’s take this one step further: Nyman and Ganong have the chance – for the first time ever – to win an American Downhiller title.

To do that, though, they’ll have to fend off the dynamic duo of Norwegian skiers Aksel Lund Svindal and Kjetil Jansrud – along with the young Aleksander Aamodt Kilde – ranked second, fourth and 12th, respectively, in the downhill standings in 2016.

Ganong was ranked 11th last season. The Italians – Peter Fill is the reigning downhill champion – and the French will also be in the hunt, along with Nyman’s podium ping-pong comrade, Switzerland’s Beat Feuz.

Caples Lake area restoration project in the works

About 6,800 acres near Caples Lake could be restored in an ecological project being proposed by El Dorado Irrigation District.

The public may comment on the proposed initial study for this area off Highway 88. EID also wants to adopt a negative declaration.

EID would partner with the Eldorado National Forest over a four-year period to complete the watershed project.

The project includes prescribed fire on about 6,800 acres, meadow restoration, aspen enhancement, and rerouting about a

half mile of trail in the Jake Schneider Meadow.

Comments will be taken until 5pm Oct. 21. There will be a public hearing on Nov. 14 at 10am during the EID board's regular meeting.

For more info, email dcorcoran@eid.org.

Eldorado Forest asking users to take survey

Every five years, the Forest Service conducts voluntary visitor use surveys to learn from forest visitors about their experience. This on-going survey has already been conducted twice on every national forest in the country. The survey team is returning to the Eldorado National Forest to update the information previously gathered, as well as to look at recreation trends over time.

During the last survey in 2012 on the Eldorado, 1,889 individuals were interviewed who reported their primary activities were downhill skiing (42 percent) and hiking-walking (17 percent). This last study estimated a total of approximately 900,000 Eldorado National Forest visits for the year.

Forest Service and contract employees will be working on the new survey at developed and dispersed recreation sites and along Forest Service roads where they will gather more than 200 samples of information from visitors on different days throughout the next year. The survey team will be wearing bright orange vests and have a sign that says "Traffic Survey Ahead". Visitors are encouraged to participate in the survey

by pulling over and doing an interview.

The basic interview lasts about eight minutes. Every other visitor is asked a few additional questions which may take an additional five minutes. The questions visitors are asked include: Where did you recreate on the forest? How many people traveled with you? How long were you on the forest? What other recreation sites did you visit while on the forest? How satisfied were you with the facilities and services provided? About a third of forest visitors will also be asked to complete a survey on recreation spending during their trip. All responses are totally confidential. A person's name is never written anywhere on the survey.

Information collected in this national study will be used for local forest planning and community tourism efforts, as well as at the state planning level, and by Congress.

Why Tahoe never became a national park

By Abby Stevens, Moonshine Ink

When John Muir visited Lake Tahoe in 1888 and saw the devastating effects of the loosely regulated timber business, he felt deep-seated sadness, and grieved for the loss of the old growth forests. By 1897 Muir was crusading to make Tahoe a national park. He knew it would be a gritty and uphill battle.

Scott Lankford, a professor at Foothill College in Silicon Valley, delves into the argument behind the effort to turn Lake Tahoe into a National Park in his 2010 book "Tahoe Beneath the Surface". He describes how in order to achieve his

goal, Muir formed unlikely alliances behind closed doors with powerful businessmen.

The main targets Muir needed on his side were Elias Jackson “Lucky” Baldwin, owner of the Pacific Stock Exchange and the newly opened Tallac House on the South Shore, and Edward Harriman, the powerful and rich owner of Southern Pacific Railroad. Muir convinced both of these men that if Tahoe were to become a National Park, tourism would increase, benefitting both of their businesses. After some persuasion, the two men agreed.

Read the whole story

Fall Fish Fest on the South Shore

The Fall Fish Festival is Oct. 1-2 at the Taylor Creek Visitor Center on Highway 89.

Hosted by the U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit in collaboration with the Tahoe Heritage Foundation, the festival is an opportunity to learn about the variety of fish species that live in Lake Tahoe and its streams, including the federally threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout.

The festival is from 10am-4pm each day.

Festival mascots Lulu the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout and Sandy and Rocky Salmon will make appearances. There will also be a special appearance by Smokey Bear.

Festival events feature children’s activities, food vendors, educational booths, streamside information and Kokanee Trail

Runs on Sunday sponsored by the Tahoe Mountain Milers.

The Fall Fish Festival and Oktoberfest at Historic Camp Richardson Resort occur the same weekend, so the parking lot at the visitor center fills quickly.

Public may tour USFS river restoration site

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit in collaboration with the California Tahoe Conservancy will host a field trip for the public on Sept. 28 at 5:30pm to observe progress on the Upper Truckee River Reach 5 Restoration Project.

The project to replace the existing stream channel with a new channel that is more stable and connected to the adjacent floodplain, will provide a better aquatic habitat, support a healthier meadow ecosystem, and reduce the amount of fine sediment that reaches Lake Tahoe, according the Forest Service.

Meet on Onnontioga Street, just south of the Omaha Street intersection at 5:30pm. Onnontioga Street is located off of Washoan Boulevard on Pioneer Trail. Sturdy shoes are recommended.

LTBMU and CTC staff will be on hand to answer questions and provide information about the project.

Turn yard waste into gardener’s gold – compost

By Melinda Myers

Save time and money by turning landscape trimmings into a valuable soil amendment.

The idea is simple, just collect disease- and insect-free plant debris into a heap and let it decompose into a fine, nutrient rich material that helps improve the soil. Don’t add meat, dairy, invasive plants, weeds that have gone to seed or perennial weeds that can take root and grow in your compost pile.

Speed things up by layering yard waste with soil or compost, adding a bit of fertilizer to each layer and moistening to a consistency of a damp sponge. Further speed up the process by making the pile at least 3-feet tall and wide.

Turn the pile as time allows, moving the more decomposed materials from the center to the outside of the pile. It’s a great work out and speeds up the decomposition. The more effort you put into composting the sooner you have rich organic matter for your garden.



Tumbler composters are great for small spaces and make

loading, unloading and turning much easier. Photo/Gardener's Supply Company

Build the pile in a location that is convenient for adding raw materials and harvesting the finished compost. Consider placing the pile near a water source to make moistening the pile easier. Avoid poorly drained locations that may lead to the pile of compost becoming waterlogged. Soggy materials break down more slowly and may smell.

Enclose the pile in a bin to keep the process neat and tidy. Purchase a compost bin or make your own from fencing, concrete reinforcement wire or old heat-treated pallets.

Single bin wire composters are easy to assemble and move. Enclosed bins keep materials out of sight and neighbors or less enthusiastic family members happy. Look for bins of sturdy UV resistant materials, ventilation for efficient composting and designed for easy loading and unloading.

Tumbler composters are great for small spaces and make loading, unloading and turning much easier. The closed system also keeps out rodents, wildlife and pets. Add garden waste, keep it consistently moist and give it a turn. Continually adding fresh material slows the process, but you will still end up with good compost. Speed up decomposition with two tumblers. Fill one tumbler with plant waste and let it cook, while collecting fresh materials in the second.

And don't let cold temperatures or a lack of space stop you. Everyone can convert kitchen scraps into nutrient-rich compost with the help of red worms. Convert a plastic container filled with shredded paper into a home for the worms and place to recycle plant based food scraps. Or dress things up with a stylish bin like the green Worm Farm Composter and move the worms indoors for convenient recycling.

Add finished compost to your vegetable and annual gardens every spring to help build healthy soil and a productive and beautiful garden. Or spread a one-inch layer over the soil surface of perennials gardens every year or two to keep your flowers looking their best.

As you clear out the summer garden, put all that green debris to work. Convert it to rich compost for next year's garden. Then enjoy the many benefits it will have on your landscape.

Melinda Myers has more than 30 years of horticulture experience and has written more than 20 gardening books, including "Small Space Gardening". Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for Birds & Blooms magazine and was commissioned by Gardener's Supply Company for her expertise to write this article.

Migratory birds flocking to Tahoe basin



A female downy woodpecker does not need a wide branch to hang on to. Photo/Dale Roberts

By Dale Roberts

STATELINE – For those who love Tahoe for its wildlife and natural grandeur, the Tahoe Institute for Natural Sciences has something for everyone whether they are just learning about the wildflowers surrounding their campsite to the serious student of ornithology.



Charles Hopkins from Maryland confirming a bird identification. Photo/Dale Roberts

The Tahoe Institute For Natural Sciences (TINS) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing world-class interpretive studies and education to the Tahoe area. Its staff is comprised of individuals who are widely recognized as experts in their fields, and has a volunteer staff that draws from various naturalists and environmental scientists that live in the Tahoe area.

Last weekend TINS offered two bird watching walks focusing on the migratory birds of the Tahoe basin. There was also a focus on the various bird songs to help people locate and identify the various birds in their habitats.



Western gulls are a common migratory bird in the Tahoe basin. Photo/Dale Roberts

Saturday’s walk at Spooner Summit was led by founding member Kirk Hardie and assisted by Rich Chambers. Sunday’s walk was at Rabe Meadows off of Kahle Drive in Stateline, and was led by Chambers and assisted by staff member Michelle Witte.



Birds were not the only animals out – a praying mantis tries to blend in. Photo/Dale Roberts

In all, approximately 40 species of birds were identified in several habitats in both locations. Between sightings the leaders pointed out various flowers, trees and animals seen along the way. With their depth of knowledge of the area's ecosystems, they were able to answer practically any question a participant may have had relating to the natural sciences.

Most events TINS sponsors are free and are ideal for families. Group sizes are kept small to maximize the learning experience.

Time to buy-sell used outdoor gear

On Oct. 16 the Meyers Community Foundation will host the third annual Meyers Outdoor Gear Swap in the Westgate Center parking lot adjacent to the Divided Sky from 11am-3pm.

Shop for skis, snowboards, bikes, paddle gear, climbing equipment, camping equipment, and other outdoor toys. Cash or credit cards will be accepted.

If you have quality summer or winter gear to sell, merchandise registration will take place in the parking lot between 8:30-10:30am. There is a $1 cash per item fee to register it for the swap. No equipment over 5 years old allowed.

Unsold merchandise may be picked up between 3-5pm; unclaimed items will be donated. Twenty percent of the proceeds will go to the MCF.

MCF is a nonprofit dedicated to improving life in Meyers through its support and promotion of creative and sustainable local projects and community-enhancing events.

For more information about the swap, contact Brian Levy at 530.545.9941 or René Brejc at 530.545.0340.