Pile burning in Tahoe scheduled

Weather permitting, Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District, Nevada Division of Forestry, California State Parks and the U.S. Forest Service may continue prescribed fire operations March 28.

On the North and West shores, operations may take place in Burton Creek and Sugar Pine Point state parks. On the East Shore, operations may take place near Sand Harbor, Spooner Summit, Camp Galilee and Kingsbury Grade near Edgewood Drive. On the South Shore, operations may take place near Lake Tahoe Boulevard and Sawmill Road, Panther Lane near South Tahoe High School, off Highway 89 near Spring Creek, and off Santa Claus Drive and West River Parkway near Christmas Valley.

To view a map with project locations and details, go **online**.

Residual smoke may be seen in locations where operations have taken place over the last several weeks.

To receive prescribed fire notifications, send an email to pa_ltbmu@fs.fed.us.

Fast, cold storm to descend on Tahoe



Warm temps on March 25 had people sauntering into Lake Tahoe at Lakeview Commons. Photo/LTN

The balmy weather in the basin that has been warm enough for people to wade into the water is going away, at least temporarily.

The National Weather Service in Reno is calling it a “slider storm”. Snow showers are expected late Sunday and will continue into Monday afternoon. Daytime highs between Sunday and Monday may drop 20 degrees. The high today and Sunday will be in the 50s, and Monday and Tuesday it will be in the 30s.

Snow is expected to reach Carson City and Reno as well.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Moisture keeps Forest Service roads closed

Based on recent precipitation, the annual closure of dirt roads in the Eldorado National Forest has been extended to April 9.

Rainfall, soil moisture, road and trail conditions, and weather forecasts are factors that trigger extending the seasonal closure beyond March 31.

The seasonal closure is designed to protect roadbeds and watersheds from damage and to protect water quality. A minimum three month closure period from January 1 through March 31 was designated for the core part of the wet season in the Eldorado National Forest Travel Management Plan. This plan also allows the seasonal dirt road closure to start earlier or be extended based on actual conditions in a given year.

Roads subject to seasonal closure are identified **online**.

Tahoe land deal opens new trail opportunities

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

One little land gift is about to become a very big deal for biking and hiking near Incline Village.

That’s because software billionaire David Duffield’s 18-acre gift to the Nevada Land Trust clears the way to develop a connection between Mt. Rose Highway and Tunnel Creek Road –

and many miles of premium single track to the south.

It also creates new opportunities to preserve the Comstock-era bull wheel that once powered the log flume that gave Incline Village its name.

Read the whole story

Stanford hires Haase as basketball coach

By Jon Wilner, Mercury News

Almost a decade after Cal turned to Stanford for a basketball coach, the Cardinal has seemingly dipped into Berkeley bloodlines to invigorate its sputtering program.

The Cardinal will hire former Cal player Jerod Haase, who has spent the past four seasons as the head coach of the University of Alabama-Birmingham.

Haase is a graduate of South Tahoe High School and still has family in the area.

“I have no doubt that Jerod will soon lead our program to Pac-12 championships and that we will be a regular participant in the NCAA Tournament,” Stanford athletic director Bernard Muir said in a statement.

Read the whole story

Sugar Pine Foundation needs help planting

Sugar Pine Foundation has set dates for spring plantings.

The nonprofit provides seedlings, shovels and gloves. Volunteers should dress in layers, wear closed toed shoes and bring plenty of water.

For times and more info, call Maria at 650.814.9565.

Community plantings are:

March 29 – Patagonia Outlet Planting, Reno
April 9 – King Fire Planting, Georgetown
April 17 – Van-Sickle State Park, South Lake Tahoe
May 1 – KUNR Planting, Tahoma.

Winter casts magical spell on national parks

Publisher's note: ***This is one in a series of stories about the National Park Service, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2016.***



Sometimes it’s better to find Plan B when a bison is on the trail. Photo/National Park Service

By Susan Wood

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK – For me, the real stand down involving the national parks occurred long before Yosemite’s former concessionaire Delaware North decided to play hardball with iconic park names they trademarked.

It was a face-to-face encounter almost 20 years ago with three bison standing at the other side of the bridge on my cross country ski journey to Fairy Falls in the 2.5 million-acre Yellowstone National Park.

Reflecting back, it was a memorable time. For years, Yellowstone has been ground zero for controversial land-use issues. These include the reintroduction of wolves and its effect on nearby ranchers; the balance between recreation and environment regarding pollution from snowmobiles; the management of fire prompted by one of the nation’s worst blazes in 1988; the study of geothermal activity in the land

of more than 9,000 geysers; and the protection of a large free-ranging herd of bison from slaughter.

Considering Yellowstone represents a “survival of the fittest” hotbed, I was not about to challenge a 1,400-pound animal that can run 35 mph.



Cross country skiing in most national parks is a special experience, especially so in Yellowstone. Photo/National Park Service

I took a snow shuttle there (part of the beauty in visiting in winter), so there was no vehicle to save me. If I insisted on continuing on the trail, my only other option if it charged would have been jumping into the icy cold Firehole River on long skis. I made the wise move and changed course to Lone Star Geyser from the Old Faithful Snow Lodge, my home base.

I was astounded by the solitude. Although the geyser erupted prior to my approach (it goes off every three hours), I stood in awe. The large mound resembled something out of “Close

Encounters of the Third Kind.”

Yellowstone’s charm lies in its massive, scenic landscape and wildlife encounters – from the serene to the raw reality of nature. It’s accentuated in winter. That’s why the Park Service manages a fleet of snow coaches with top hatches to spring up for photo ops. The commuter van on treads appears like something out of the military, grinding through some of the most challenging terrain in the park.

It’s the vehicle of choice for visitors and wildlife enthusiasts entering the park from the town of West Yellowstone, deemed the snowmobile capital of the United States. I passed on a snowmobile rental given the sub-zero degree temperatures Yellowstone is known for. Park Service employees have a saying of Yellowstone’s seasons – winter, winter, winter, summer.

Regardless of the cold, I knew I was in for a special treat upon my first day. It’s not every day one can catch a wolf gnawing on a dead elk. But that’s the cycle of life at Yellowstone. Hours later, I came within 15 feet of an elk while I was on a quick, introductory 5-mile ski along a cluster of geysers from the lodge near Old Faithful. I suppose I was off in my own little world, but it was plain to see that I didn’t notice him until I was in his zone. The recommended distance from an elk is 25 feet. I veered way out, so I could keep an eye on the animal without getting any closer. I wouldn’t have witnessed a spontaneous eruption from a dormant geyser if I hadn’t taken the alternate route.

Author Thomas Wolfe once characterized the park as “the one place where miracles not only happen; they happen all the time.” I believe it.

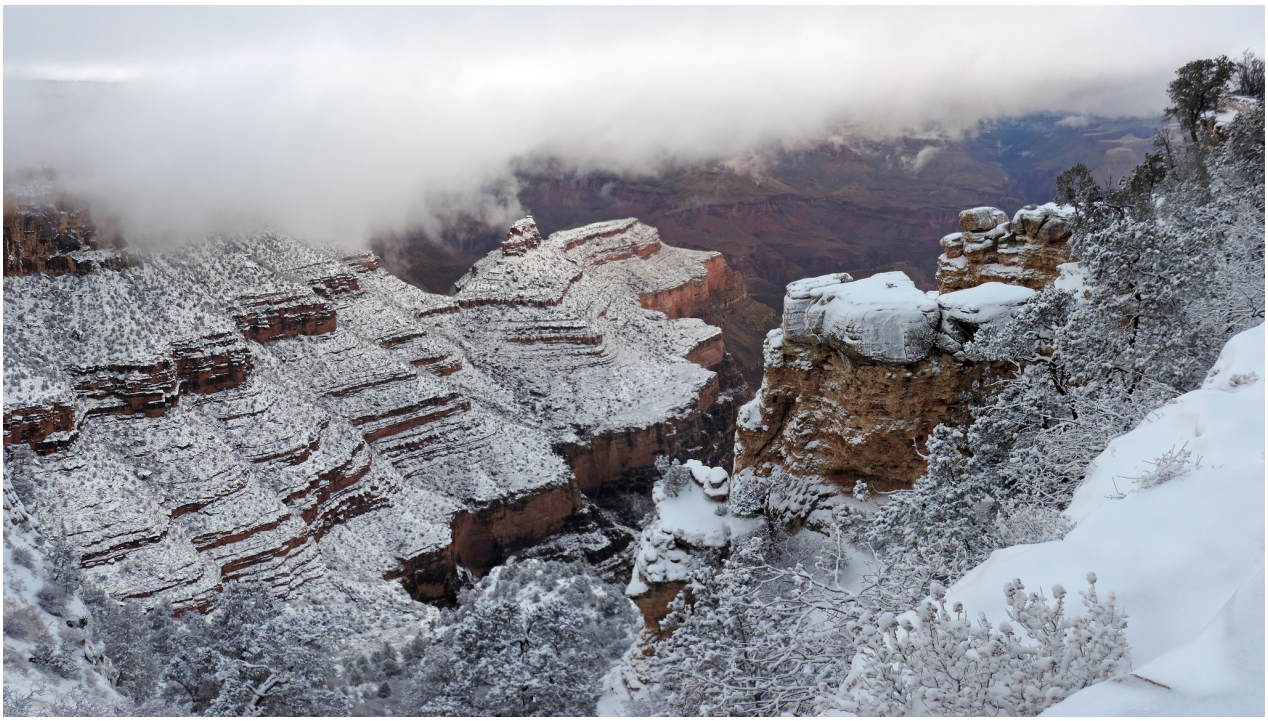
Yellowstone is the oldest national park in the United States; established in 1872.

On Day 2 of my cross country ski adventure, I captured the

grace and elegance of white trumpeter swans on Yellowstone Lake, just south of the Continental Divide. Rick, our guide, was full of stories. Some I didn't want to hear. He drove the snowcoach 30 miles that day, so he had plenty of opportunities to share things like the claw marks of a grizzly bear on a tree next to the trail. I felt mortal at the thought of a possible encounter.

The falls in the West Thumb region plunge with such force they freeze on the back splash, much like Multnomah Falls on the Columbia River Gorge east of Portland – but to a larger scale. As for grand, there is such a thing in the Wyoming Park. The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, as they call it, provides spectacular views of a gash in the Earth 1,000 feet deep and 4,000 feet wide.

The feast for my eyes reminded me of another cross country vacation two years prior.



Crowds are not a problem during winter at the Grand Canyon. Photo/National Park Service

The other Grand Canyon experience

Arizona is known as a sweltering hot desert state. Many a movie scene and vacation photos have shown sunburns and shorts at the South Rim of one of the nation's most popular national parks. It was established in 1919.

However, it's a different world on the North Rim – and an even more unique one in winter. Amid the pinion pines and uncrowded terrain marks the Grand Canyon's North Rim in the winter months. Like Yellowstone, visitors are brought in via snowcat to Kaibab Lodge, an old, rustic lodge complete with a large wood fireplace and the allure of musicians sitting around it. The cabins tucked in the woodsy setting of the Kaibab National Forest were even more rustic – like something out of a youth summer camp.

But what seemed like the minimalist approach in the sleeping quarters went rather upscale in the lodge's "living room," kitchen and trail provisions. The chef, who I heard honed his cooking skills in prison, but I didn't care, whipped up quite a spread for the holidays that might almost rival one at the Ahwahnee Hotel (and I will still call it that).

I chose New Year's to partake in this experience in 1995. Here I have the fondest memory of cross country skiing all day along the sweeping landscape of the North Kaibab Trail. No matter what side of the Canyon a visitor stands on, it's difficult to get tired of the view – whether it's from Cape Royal or Bright Angel Point. The snowcat took a group of us out to the rim where we skied the perimeter. From there, I opted to ski back and I'm glad for doing so. I got in a good 15 miles that day, burning off the calories from the best toasted peanut butter and honey sandwich I've ever had.

My timing on the long ski day was a bit tight. I crested the last ridge back to the lodge as I contemplated pulling out my head lamp when much to my delight my eyes rewarded me immensely. There the lodge stood in the distance, lit up with Christmas lights like part of a Thomas Kincaid painting. It

was heart and body warming to see.



Views of Half Dome and other iconic Yosemite landmarks are even more delightful in the snow. Photo/National Park Service

The Trans-Sierra trip of a lifetime

To backpack and snowcamp Yosemite is to follow in the footsteps of such a notable pioneer as John Muir, but with a few more provisions than a loaf of bread and cup for water. Muir, the iconic Sierra Nevada ecologist before there was such a thing, never grew weary of the granite-dominated, glacier formed national park established in 1890.

On this Sierra Club guided trip set in mid-April 1996 over my birthday, 12 days before Earth Day and Muir's birthday I knew why Muir had such feelings. I threw a 40-pound pack on my back filled with my life for four days and set out on cross country skis from Lee Vining on the east slope of Yosemite while following Tioga Pass Road most of the way.

The first night was a treat. As an introduction to the wilderness, we stayed in the comfort of cabin quarters at Tioga Lodge. The staff even baked a cake for me. Given the preservative-laced stir-up meals on the agenda for the next two nights, I devoured that cake and the entree.

Snowcamping can be a test in patience and logistics.

It takes good prior planning and a Plan B for the unexpected. When your skis decide to stick to the snow because the terrain and temperature changes, it's good to have wax. When you need to climb on crusty slopes, you'd better untangle your skins (a course layer applied to the bottoms of backcountry skis for gripping). When your metal tent anchors freeze deep in the snow overnight, you'd better learn to use long string as a simple trick. And the list goes on and on.

What tries you, though, rewards you with some of the most stunning views of this magnificent spectacle of a national park.

I had a precursor to magnificent views in skiing out and camping at Glacier Point in winter from Badger Pass on another trip and that was enough for me to feel the allure. Try a 180-degree view of Yosemite Valley with Half Dome dead ahead as the sun dipped below the horizon and cast ever-changing shadows on the famous rock monolith.

This Trans Sierra trip provided the type of untouched scenic beauty so pure it can take your breath away – coupled with midday sunny spring skiing conditions where sunscreen rules.

Rewards abound with the appreciation of the simple pleasures. Take the beautiful virgin snow collar that rims a river and its rocks. Take the unbelievable, rarely-seen back side of Half Dome as you descend from the northeast into Yosemite Valley. Take the classic looks on visitors' faces when you walk with full ski gear into the Village without a snow patch to be found. Take the never-take-it-for-granted reward of getting the largest cheeseburger on the menu with French fries and a milkshake at the café because you probably lost 20 pounds reducing your food intake and burning it all off on that day. Take the end of the white-knuckled shuttle plane trip back to Lee Vining in which your seat involves a backpack and you scoff at the pilot handing you a seatbelt.

Then, take the thought of having a real bed for the first time in four days.

Now that my friend is living – living the Sierra Nevada in a winter dream.

Jitloff wins national super G title

By USSA

SUN VALLEY, Idaho – Anna Marno (Centennial, Wyo.) took her first national title, as five-time U.S. national giant slalom champion Tim Jitloff (Reno) scored his first in super G Thursday at the Nature Valley U.S. Alpine Championships.

Thursday's super G was also Marco Sullivan's (Squaw Valley) final race, capping a 17-year U.S. Ski Team career.

In the afternoon women's race, Marno nipped World Cup veteran Laurenne Ross (Bend, Ore.) by 0.28 for the victory. Tricia Mangan (Buffalo, N.Y.), who was third in Wednesday's alpine combined, grabbed her second bronze medal of the National Championships. Mangan was also the top junior.

"I've been to eight Nationals now, and I've been close a few years. So this is a good place to do it – I love Sun Valley," Marno said. "I've had some good results here and I finally made it up to the top step."

Jitloff grabbed his first super G national title on a tight, twisty and technical track that kept the racers on their toes. Ryan Cochran-Siegle (Starksboro, Vt.) was second, followed by Erik Arvidsson (Woodside), who was the top-placed junior, in third.

"The course is very challenging," Jitloff said. "I think when people come to nationals they think that maybe it's going to be a little bit easier, but they definitely didn't give us an easy track here. A lot of guys were close to going out, or (did) go out. I certainly was on the limit. But the track is excellent. They did a heck of a job with the new (trail) they made here for us. It's kind of unforgiving the whole way down."

While 51 of the 52 racers were hanging on the entire way down the mountain, Sullivan made the most out of his final ski race. Sporting Lederhosen and a flannel shirt, Sullivan glided down the track sporting his infectious smile, while hand shaking, high-fiving and hugging coaches and course workers. At the finish, he was greeted by a champagne shower from his teammates to celebrate his retirement.

"So much goes into ski racing – over the years – it's a pretty small community," Sullivan said. "Going down the course, I knew a lot of the course workers, coaches–they've had a hand in my career helping me up along the way. I was just giving

thanks to them and saying that it’s been a great ride.”

Haase a contender to coach Stanford

By Gary Parrish, CBS Sports

UAB coach Jerod Haase has spoken with Stanford officials and is considered among the leading candidates to be the next coach of the Cardinal, a source told CBS Sports.

Haase has been UAB’s head coach for four seasons.

He’s won 20 games each of the past two seasons. UAB won C-USA this season.

Haase, 41, is a graduate of South Tahoe High School. Before UAB, he was an assistant for Roy Williams at Kansas and North Carolina.

Read the whole story

Reliance on technology makes backcountry more dangerous

By J.R. Sullivan, Outside

In July 2013, 66-year-old Geraldine Largay was hiking in western Maine, nearing the end of a three-month,

northbound solo journey on the Appalachian Trail. She'd logged more than 950 miles and traveled through ten states, sending regular texts to her husband, George, who was pacing her by car and meeting up with her from town to town with fresh supplies. On the morning of July 22, the two arranged via text to meet at a nearby trailhead the next day. George arrived on time and waited, but Largay never showed up.

George phoned authorities, and a search party combed the wilderness near Largay's last known location on the trail, but found nothing. Then, last October, more than two years since Largay vanished, foresters surveying a U.S. Navy facility near Mount Redington found Largay's remains and some of her belongings near a stream about two miles from the AT, not far from where she was last seen, the Morning Sentinel reported. According to the coroner's report, released in January, Largay died inside her tent, zipped in her sleeping bag. The official cause of death: inanition—the effects of dehydration and starvation—from prolonged environmental exposure.

It's unclear what exactly happened to Largay, but wilderness experts familiar with the AT point out that a potential factor in her death reflects a major problem among hikers: an over-reliance on technology to navigate and call for help in times of distress.

"One of the worst trends we've seen in the past 20 years is the proliferation of cell phones and technology in the backcountry," says Tim Smith, a registered Master Maine Guide and the founder of the Jack Mountain Bushcraft School, which instructs students in brush living, guide skills, and long-term winter survival.

Read the whole story