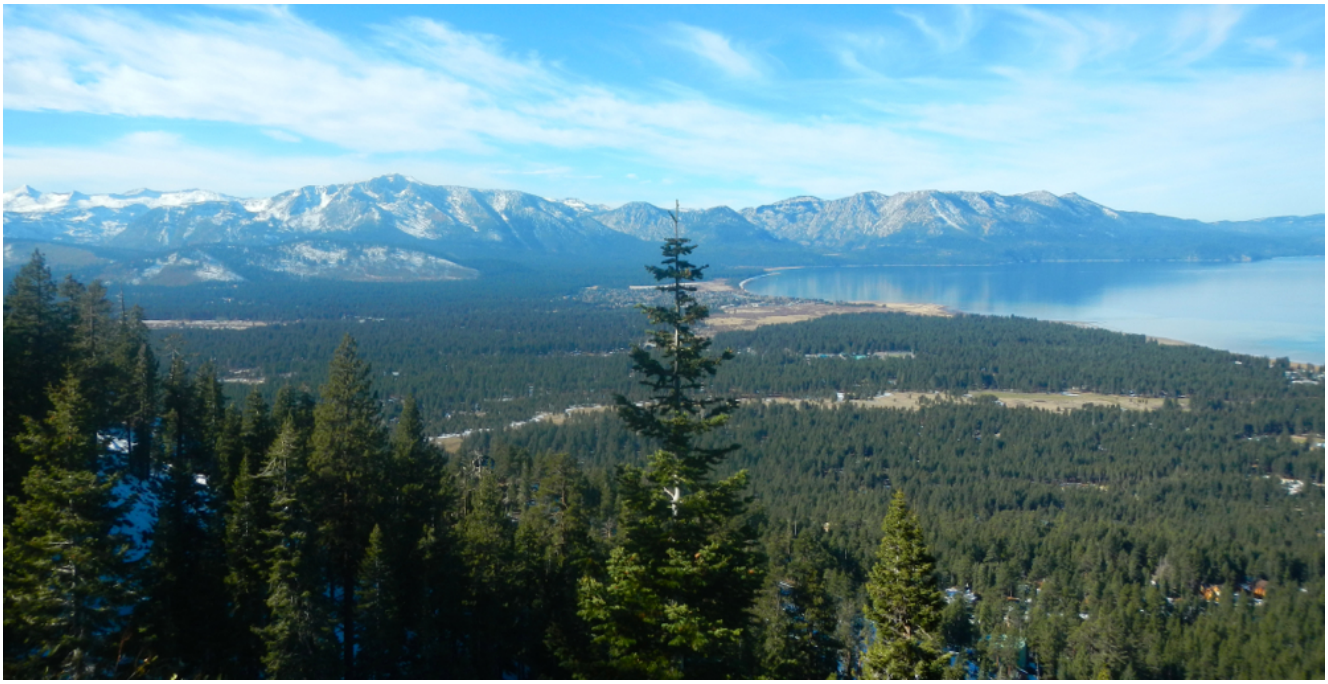
Roundabout snowshoe delivers awesome views



Views along the Roundabout trail are expansive, with Mount Tallac a constant icon. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Solitude. Blue. Calm. Incredible. Inspirational. Awe.

This are just a few of the words that came to mind as I sat looking at Lake Tahoe from the top of Gunbarrel at Heavenly Mountain Resort last Saturday.

Now is the time to snowshoe at Heavenly – before the entire mountain is open to skiers and snowboarders.

Roundabout lives up to its name. The circuitous route is usually the easy way down the mountain to California Lodge. Going up on snowshoes, ascending about 1,600 feet to an elevation of more than 8,200 feet cannot be described as easy. The beauty, though, takes one's breath away – or maybe it was the climb or the altitude.



AJ makes her way down Gunbarrel.

This would be an impossible snowshoe during the ski season. Too many people are on skis on what seems like a narrow path. On snowshoes its like being on a road – wide, with plenty of room.

With the recent snow, conditions are apt to be different. A week ago it was dirt and slick to begin with. Snowshoes were not needed until crossing World Cup. The need for snowshoes a week ago was to have the claws grip the icy, hard pack spots. There were a few bare stretches, but the snowshoes stayed on.

While it wasn't necessary to have poles, it would be a good idea for anyone with knee or balance issues.



Much of the trail is graded from a snowcat.

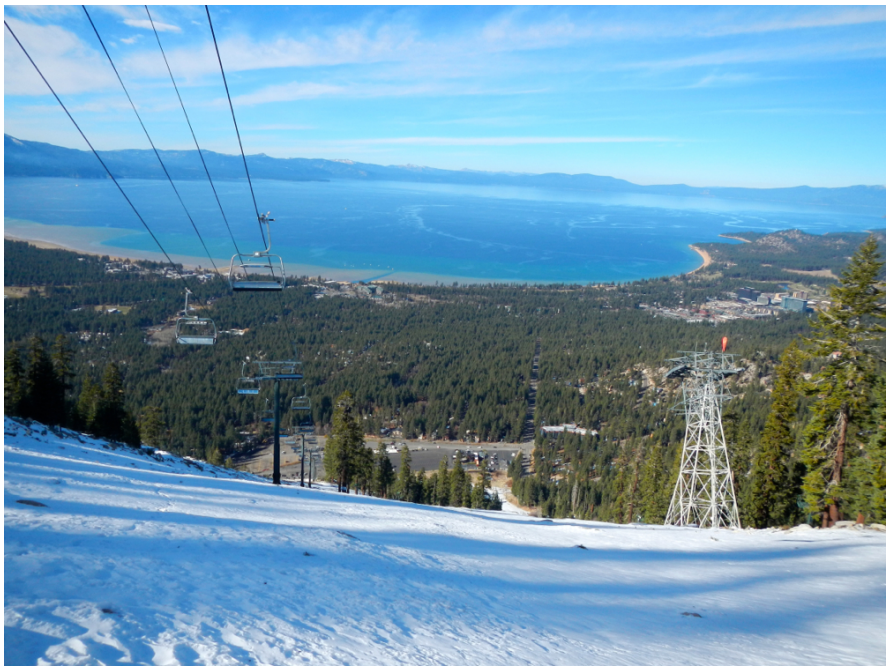
Other than the crunching of the snowshoes against the terrain

there was silence. Be sure to pause to hear the stillness and appreciate the beauty that seems to change at every corner. Various views of Lake Tahoe spill forth. Mount Tallac and Pyramid Peak standout at various times. The casinos, while dominant in some ways, seem so insignificant from this vantage point.

The amount of snow at Powderbowl looks like this chairlift will be spinning in no time.

The end point is the top of Gunbarrel and the tram. This is one view I never get tired of seeing. The whole lake unfolds in a breathtaking view that almost seems surreal.

Instead of going back the same way it's time to see what it's like to snowshoe The Face. A zigzag approach seems best so as not to tumble and become a snowball that careens to the bottom. It took some patience and focus because some rocks weren't far beneath the snow.



Looking out onto the South Shore from the top of Gunbarrel and the tram at Heavenly.

At times the snow was powdery – making the snowshoes a much-needed tool. Too bad the poles were in the garage. Other spots

are crusty, making the trek more of a challenge.

Instead of going all the way down this route, just like on skis, it’s possible to hookup with Roundabout to make it out on a less steep grade.

Roundabout is a great hike in the summer, too. Even then it’s rare to see other people.

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Getting there:

From Highway 50 in South Lake Tahoe turn onto Ski Run Boulevard. Turn left on Needle Peak Road, right on Wildwood Avenue, left on Saddle Road, right on Keller Road, and a right on Sherman Way. The road dead-ends at Sherman. There is a gate there. Just start walking.

Mancuso not ready to retire

By Associated Press

Julia Mancuso of Squaw Valley went in for a simple hip surgery – if there is such a thing – and 51/2 hours later had a hip that was completely overhauled.

And one that now will allow the four-time Olympic medalist to race again, albeit not this season, but certainly pain free next year and almost as good as new by the 2018 Winter Games in South Korea.

Then, and only then, will she consider walking away – on her terms.

“I would never stop my career when I feel like it is being

kicked when you're down," the 31-year-old said as her teammates trained at the U.S. Ski Team Speed Center in Copper Mountain. "It's like, 'OK, now that you're injured, OK, just retire.' Like, I would never do that. I want to be giving my best chance I can."

Mancuso tried everything to get her right hip ready for this season, from injections to having a paralabral cyst removed in April. She went to Chile over the summer to test the hip, only to have the pain return.

Surgery was the only real option. There went her season.

The procedure was more complex than her surgeon expected. Fixed some cartilage damage. Cleaned up some bone spurs. Put more anchors in her labrum because there was a slight tear.

"I just had a lot of stuff repaired," said Mancuso, who also had surgery on her hip in 2006.

She will be on crutches for eight weeks as she goes through rehab in nearby Vail and won't return to the snow until perhaps the spring. Even then, doctors warned her that her hip probably will be about 90 percent of what it was.

"For me, 90 percent feels like a lot," she said.

If she had to do things over again, Mancuso might have called it a career after winning a bronze medal in the super-combined at the 2014 Sochi Games.

"Then I could go out on top," she said, laughing. "See ya later."

Maybe that could happen in South Korea? After all, she has won at least one medal in her past four Olympic appearances, including gold in the giant slalom at the 2006 Winter Games.

"I'm really excited about the next Olympics and really excited about this adventure, having surgery and being able to work

and train hard and reach my physical goals and be able to go out and compete," she said.

Because lately that pain from her hip hasn't allowed her to really be at her best. She can trace the trouble with her hip back to a wipeout in France when she was a teenager. She did the splits that day, possibly throwing her hip out of alignment.

"A nagging thing for a long time," she said. "Last summer, I couldn't hike and do things my friends can do. Just more motivation to take it easy and go slow."

Soda Springs gives new meaning to yellow snow

By Ryan Sabalow, Sacramento Bee

Should El Niño not live up to the hype and dump heavy snow on the Sierra, skiers and sledders at one resort could be gliding downhill this winter on snow that comes from an unusual source: purified water from the local sewage-treatment plant.

In a testament to how water-dependent industries are adapting amid California's four-year drought, Soda Springs Mountain Resort this winter will be the first in California to use recycled wastewater for its snow-making system. The water will come from a nearby Donner Summit Public Utility District treatment plant that just received a $24 million upgrade.

Managers at the resort and water district officials assured customers Monday that the snow will be made from "pathogen-free, crystal clear," highly treated water and that the

recycled product actually will be safer than man-made snow transformed from surface water.

Read the whole story

Ducks Unlimited fires writer over stream access fracas

By Ben Goldfarb, High Country News

On Nov. 9, Don Thomas was headed out his backdoor in Lewistown, Mont., for some whitetail deer bowhunting when his phone rang.

On the line was Matt Young, executive editor at *Ducks Unlimited* magazine, the member publication for the vaunted waterfowl conservation group. Thomas, a physician-turned-journalist, served as the magazine's field editor, and over the years he'd attended more Ducks Unlimited banquets and volunteer events than he could count. He'd also written a back page column since 2001.

But no longer. Young was calling with some stunning news: Effective immediately, Thomas was fired.

The reason had nothing to do with *Ducks Unlimited* magazine. Instead, Thomas was losing his position over an article he'd written for another publication, *Outside Bozeman*. The offending story had detailed the saga of James Cox Kennedy, a billionaire who'd fought for years to block public access to the Ruby River where it passed through his ranch. Thomas' article wasn't impartial – it called Kennedy a "selfish man"

with ethical shortcomings, though it did nod to his conservation contributions – but the facts were indisputable. “I think it’s within journalistic license to call someone selfish and arrogant when they’re clearly being selfish and arrogant,” Thomas says.

Unbeknownst to Thomas, however, Kennedy was a major Ducks Unlimited donor and former board member. Now the group’s current board, Young said, was in an uproar. “We simply cannot condone this type of vitriol directed by one of our contributing editors toward a dedicated DU volunteer, who is among the nation’s most ardent and active waterfowl conservationists,” Young told Thomas in a follow-up email. (Ducks Unlimited denies Kennedy had a role in Thomas’ firing.)

Read the whole story

Biathlon event open to all levels

Ed Z’berg-Sugar Pine Point State Park is hosting a family friendly cross country skiing biathlon on Jan. 16.

Dubbed Citizens Against the Clock, participants will ski a trail similar to the cross country biathlon of the 1960 Winter Olympics, then shoot at a target with a laser rifle for accuracy, all while being timed.

Registration is at 10am, with the event at 10:30am. Skis not provided.

It is free. Parking is $5.

Meet near the entrance station in the campground side of the

park (west entrance off Highway 89).

Prescribed fires to be set throughout Tahoe

North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District, the Nevada Division of Forestry and the U.S. Forest Service will continue widespread prescribed fire operations beginning the week of Nov. 30.

Operations may take place on urban lots on the west side of Incline Village, in Carnelian Bay, Kings Beach, off Fairway Drive near Tahoe City, off Elizabeth Drive north of Tahoma, off South Upper Truckee Road near Meyers, off F Street and Ski Run Boulevard in South Lake Tahoe, and in Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park north of Spooner Lake. Operations will continue over the next several weeks as weather and conditions allow.

The Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team will give as much advance notice as possible before burning, but some operations may be conducted on short notice.

Smoke from prescribed fire operations is normal and may continue for several days after an ignition depending on the project size and environmental conditions.

Before prescribed fire operations are conducted, agencies post road signs around areas affected by prescribed fire, send email notifications and update the local fire information line at 530.543.2816.

Fish ingesting fibers from people’s clothing

By Mary Catherine O’Connor, Outdoors

Humanity dumps 8 million tons of plastic into the oceans each year, according to a study published early this year in *Science*. That’s a mind-blowingly large figure, but it still doesn’t account for the untold billions of tiny plastic fibers from synthetic apparel that leave your washing machine and enter rivers, lakes, and oceans through wastewater treatment plants.

These fibers, as well as tiny bits of degraded trash and microbeads from personal care products, have generated a long list of questions and concerns among environmental scientists. In a new study in Nature, Chelsea Rochman, a marine ecotoxicologist from UC Davis, addressed one of the chief concerns: Are those fibers and other microplastics getting into our food system? The answer: Yes.

To reach this conclusion, Rochman and her colleagues purchased and dissected fish and bivalves from markets near Half Moon Bay and compared their contents to those of fish and bivalves purchased from a market in Makassar, Indonesia. In both locations, more than half of the species and roughly a third of the individual fish and shellfish contained foreign objects—most of which were microplastics—that the fish and shellfish filtered from the water or mistook for food.

Read the whole story

Tahoe area athletes named to U.S. Ski Team

The 2016 U.S. Alpine Ski team was publicly introduced on Nov. 21 during Nature Valley First Tracks, a public celebration at Copper Mountain, Colo., home of the U.S. Ski Team Speed Center.

Olympic medalists Ted Ligety, Lindsey Vonn, Mikaela Shiffrin, Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley) and Andrew Weibrecht were among 43 athletes named to the 2015 A, B and C Team, with another nine to the development team and six to the National University Team.

Bode Miller will miss the 2015-16 season, but remain on the team. Mancuso will miss the 2015-16 season due to hip surgery, but has her sights set on PyeongChang in 2018.

Bryce Astle (Sandy, UT) and Ronnie Berlack (Franconia, NH) were named to the team posthumously. The two were poised at the start of their U.S. Ski Team career when they were killed last January in an avalanche in Austria. It is the first time the U.S. Ski Team has named an athlete to the team posthumously.

Men's A Team

David Chodounksy (Crested Butte, Colo.)
Travis Ganong (Squaw Valley)
Tim Jitloff (Reno)

Ted Ligety (Park City)
Bode Miller (Franconia, N.H.)

Steven Nyman (Sundance, Utah)

Marco Sullivan (Squaw Valley)
Andrew Weibrecht (Lake Placid, N.Y.)

Women's A Team

Stacey Cook (Mammoth Mountain)
Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley)
Alice McKennis (Glenwood Springs, Colo.)
Laurenne Ross (Bend, Ore.)

Mikaela Shiffrin (Eagle-Vail, Colo.)

Leanne Smith (North Conway, N.H.)
Resi Stiegler (Jackson Hole, Wyo.)
Lindsey Vonn (Vail).

Folklore: Wooly worms can predict winter conditions

By Weather Channel

Before there were modern weather forecasters, there were persimmons and wooly worms. Old folklore says that the seeds inside of the fruit and the appearance of the worms will tell you what to expect in the winter.

As ABC11 explains, when it comes to persimmons, tradition says if you slice the seed of the fruit in half, the type of utensil shape you see inside will show you how the winter will be in your area.

When using wooly bear caterpillars, better known as wooly worms, to predict the weather, tradition says the width of the brown band on the worm is key, according to KSPR. If the band

on the worm is narrow, it will be a harsh winter. If the worm has a wider band, there’s a milder winter coming.

Read the whole story

Money available from USFS for local projects

The El Dorado County Resource Advisory Committee is accepting proposals for projects that benefit National Forest lands in El Dorado County. These projects will be funded under Title II of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act.

The deadline is Jan. 22, 2016. Applications, instructions, project evaluation considerations, and other information may be found **online**.

El Dorado County is expected to have approximately $297,000 for eligible projects. After reviewing the proposals, the committee will recommend projects to the Eldorado National Forest and the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit Forest supervisors for implementation on their respective units.

Projects should have broad based support with objectives that may include, but are not limited to: road, trail, and infrastructure maintenance or obliteration; soil productivity improvement; improvements in ecosystem health; watershed restoration and maintenance; restoration, maintenance and improvement of wildlife and fish habitat; control of noxious and exotic weeds; and reestablishment of native grasses.