‘Pioneering’ bears push east into Nevada

By Jeff DeLong, Reno Gazette-Journal

A black bear recently captured by wildlife officials near the Oregon border may be the latest example of a bear making its home in historic Nevada range last occupied by the animals close to a century ago.

After receiving increasing reports of bear sightings, tracks and scat on a ranch in a remote part of northern Washoe County near Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge, biologists with the Nevada Department of Wildlife set a trap in hope of catching a bear for research purposes.

On July 25 the trap was sprung and scientists had their hands on an adult male black bear, maybe seven or eight years old and “in very good shape” for a wild bear, said Carl Lackey, bear biologist for the Department of Wildlife. The bear was tranquilized and weighed, tagged, tattooed and fixed with a microchip. Hair and blood samples were taken for DNA.

By the second decade of the 1900s, black bears were completely gone from Nevada’s interior and likely rare in the state’s western fringes, researchers said. But forests clear-cut for mining regenerated in subsequent decades, improving bear habitat and boosting the bear population in western Nevada.

Read the whole story

Tour to focus on sustainable landscaping

The 8th annual Conservation Landscape Tour on Aug. 19 is an opportunity to learn about sustainable landscaping in Lake Tahoe.

The tour will begin at the Lake Tahoe Community College Demonstration Garden and continue down Pioneer Trail toward Meyers Station.

This free tour will be hosted by the Tahoe Resource Conservation District. Tour participants will view houses that are examples of sustainable landscaping. Each of the houses will be hosted by a local agency acting as the informational resource to these landscapes.

Topics include attracting pollinators to your garden, integrated pest management, sustainable turf care, habitat gardening, attracting pollinators, erosion control, defensible space, and gardening with native and climate appropriate plants.

A community conservation after-party will follow at “The Heart of Meyers” Meyers Station where participants can view their new turf conversion project and geoglyph while listening to the funky tunes of 4-Piece Puzzle and enjoying food at Verde Mexican Rotisserie.

The tour is from 4:30-7:30pm.

Zephyr Cove disc golf in state of flux



Zephyr Cove's disc golf course is known for its views. Photos/Jessie Marchesseau

By Jessie Marchesseau

Douglas County Parks and Recreation has no immediate plans for any major changes to the Zephyr Cove disc golf course.

This may come as a surprise to those who have heard the rumors swirling through the local disc golf community alleging that Douglas County had accepted a proposal to make significant changes to the existing course. Hundreds of people even signed a petition trying to stop this work that was never agreed to. The idea of changing a beloved course which is considered one of the top courses in the country by the Professional Disc Golf Association had people up in arms.

It began after Tahoe residents and disc golf enthusiasts Mike Plansky, Will McKissock and Dan Deegan presented a plan for changes and improvements to the Zephyr Cove disc golf course at the Douglas County Parks and Recreation Commission meeting on June 2. The plan proposed adding a three-hole pitch and putt area near the picnic tables, a six- to nine-hole kids course adjacent to the parking lot, a nine-hole "lakeview loop" and reconfiguring several of the existing 18 holes.

The commission listened to the presentation, but did not approve or move forward with the plan.

"We listen to all ideas, we don't restrict," Scott Morgan, parks and recreation director for Douglas County, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We *can't* restrict."

The official meeting minutes state that the commission was already aware at that time there were some parties in the community who were not in agreement with some aspects of the plan being presented.

One of those parties not in agreement is original course designer Craig Getty. Getty also had a plan to add an additional nine holes to the Zephyr Cove disc golf course and to reconfigure a number of the existing holes. He claimed to have already had a verbal agreement with the acting park ranger to move forward with his plan. However, Morgan said such an agreement is not possible as rangers cannot give consent for park improvements. Douglas County Parks would have to give approval and conduct a public review to make such changes to the course.

Last fall, Plansky had been working with Getty on Getty's plan for alterations to the course, but when the two couldn't come to an agreement on certain aspects, Plansky began working on a different plan with a number of colleagues. This is the plan which was presented at the June 2 meeting. Getty, who has designed eight courses in the Tahoe area, said it was the

first time someone other than himself had submitted plans to make changes to one of the courses he designed.

Since it was built in 1998, most of the changes to the Zephyr Cove course have been pretty minor and completed under the direction of Getty. Morgan described it has having evolved “organically” over the years and said most of the maintenance and enhancements were done rather informally as a result.



The course meanders through the forest above the tennis courts at Zephyr Cove Park.

This is the first time there has been dissent expressed within the community in response to any maintenance or alterations. As a result, the county has decided to move slowly with respect to changes or improvements to the course and require that all parties come to a consensus before any work is done. Until that happens, parks and recreation has put a halt on any work to the course beyond standard safety issues and routine maintenance.

The minutes from the June 2 meeting state that Plansky, McKissock and Deegan were encouraged to “form a nonprofit open to the public organization that would not deny membership to anyone who has an interest in serving in the nonprofit.” In short, they must form a nonprofit group where any and all interested parties come together and agree on things before they are done. Consensus required.

The commission also stated that in order to be granted an MOU for the development, operation and maintenance of the Zephyr Cove disc golf course, a Douglas County staff member must be on the board of the nonprofit. In a subsequent meeting with Getty and his associates, Morgan reiterated these requirements.

“We want to recognize an organization that is there to support and preserve the disc golf course,” Morgan said.

Such organizations are not uncommon for the development and maintenance of county facilities such as tennis courts and the Dangberg Ranch. It’s also not uncommon for disc golf courses. For example, the Reno Disc Golf Association recently finished a large disc golf project in Reno, something RDGA President Skot Meyer said would never have been possible without the existence of their nonprofit group. He said that in Reno, it has worked extremely efficiently and been a great benefit to the community. But noted that most of the people in the RDGA have similar ideas; it may take such an organization in Douglas County a while to come to an agreement on things.

Getty is not optimistic: “not much will get done,” he said of having a group overseeing course work as opposed to an individual. He likened it to having an architect and a bunch of carpenters all build a house and giving them all equal authority. “They all want it done a different way,” he said. “The history of how the course was designed should take precedence.”

But Morgan insists this is the only way, and the county will not approve anything that is not agreed upon by all parties.

“Sounds like we’re all supposed to work together, and that’s what we’re trying to do,” said Plansky, who is moving forward with the development of the nonprofit organization.

While all parties seem to agree that the course needs some work, exactly what that work will be and any progress toward it is unlikely to happen during this disc golf season.

Earthquakes shaking things up in Northwest Nevada



Scientists in the UNR Nevada Seismological Laboratory placed additional earthquake sensors in and around the Sheldon Wildlife Refuge. Photo/UNR

The earthquake activity that began in July 2014 in the Sheldon Wildlife Refuge in far northwest Nevada is continuing to shake

residents.

UNR seismologists are monitoring the on-going activity that includes three earthquakes larger than magnitude 4.0 since mid-July, including the largest of these, a magnitude 4.6 on July 16.

Since last July, scientists have located 5,610 earthquakes in the swarm.

“A temporary station installed in late November 2014 in the Coleman Canyon area has really helped improve locating events. We estimate that we can only pinpoint about 5 to10 percent of everything we can see on this closest station since the seismic network station coverage is very sparse in northwest Nevada. Sharing several stations with our partner network at the University of Washington has also helped in monitoring the activity,” Ken Smith, seismologist at the UNR’s Nevada Seismological Laboratory, said is a statement.

The swarm has now accounted for 209 magnitude 3 and larger earthquakes, 20 magnitude 4 and larger and five earthquakes of magnitude 4.5 and greater. The largest earthquake was a magnitude 4.7 on Nov. 6, 2014.

Scientists haven’t found direct evidence in the seismic data to indicate the swarm is driven by a volcanic process.

Nevada is the third most seismically active state in the country behind California and Alaska.

Eldorado National Forest to discuss travel report

Eldorado National Forest is conducting three meetings about the draft Travel Analysis Report.

The meetings are:

- Aug. 24, 5-8pm, Pollock Pines Community Center, 2675 Sanders Drive, Pollock Pines;
- Aug. 25, 4-7pm, Georgetown Ranger Station, U.S. Forest Service, 7600 Wentworth Springs Road Georgetown;
- Aug. 27, 5-8pm, Amador County Administration Building, Board of Supervisors Chambers, 810 Court St., Jackson.

Eldorado National Forest staff will share how they developed the report, answer questions about the Travel Analysis Process, and have the draft Travel Analysis Report available for review at the meetings.

The Travel Analysis Process is required by the 2005 Travel Management Rule and requires that forests provide a safe, financially, and environmentally sustainable road system that can realistically be maintained. Due to increased use, aging infrastructure, and decreasing budgets, the forest cannot maintain all roads to standards for safety and environmental protection.

Any future project proposals regarding the forest’s system roads will be subject to a site-specific analysis and environmental documentation.

For more information regarding this project is online.

Birds in the basin to be focus of talk

The Tahoe Heritage Foundation and Tahoe Institute for Nature Science is putting on a talk about Birds of Lake Tahoe and the Tahoe Big Year on Aug. 14.

This event will be at Taylor Creek Visitor Center at 8pm. A $5 donation benefits the Tahoe Heritage Foundation.

Will Richardson will talk about birds in the basin, including information about the Tahoe Big Year. The Big Year began Jan. 1, with participants in search of as many species of birds as they can find during 2015.

Taylor Creek Visitor Center is located approximately three miles north of South Lake Tahoe on the lakeside of Highway 89.

For more information, call 530.544.7383.

Hockey team looking for host families

The South Lake Tahoe junior hockey team is looking for families to house players for the upcoming hockey season.

A billet family provides a home away from home environment for the players. Each player pays a monthly fee of $350 to the family to help cover meals and living expenses. Billet families also receive free home game tickets for each family member.

If interested in helping or for more information, contact Tom Maroste, general manager and head coach of Tahoe Icemen, at 307.578.6496.

Landscaper transforms sod into garden



Raised mounds planted with perennials will look dramatically different in a year. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Publisher's note: ***This is one in a random series of stories about what it's like to go through the South Tahoe Public Utility District turf buyback program.***

By Kathryn Reed

A spiral herb garden, raised mounds with endless plants and a dry riverbed. Those were not part of my plans when I decided to remove my turf. Those were Brian Hirdman's ideas when he

was hired to take over my landscaping project.

Hirdman’s passion, creativity and desire to reuse products attracted me to him. Plus, he shops locally. He had a vision that never would have crossed my mind no matter how many magazines I looked at or friends I spoke to. With his iPad he showed me other yards he had transformed. I was inspired knowing I could have something unique and well beyond my ability.

His brand of landscaping expanded my vocabulary to include permaculture and hugelkultur.

He was able to combine my need to use the yard for wood splitting, wanting relatively low maintenance and his sense of style.



Dead grass has been replaced with the prowess of Brian Hirdman’s landscaping .

Enlisting help

I knew I was in over my head I when rented the **sod cutter last month** and started to pick up the pieces. Dirt is heavy.

That aspect of the project alone could have taken me all summer to finish. And the grassy area was only 804 square feet.

I initially met Hirdman in May 2014 when he was putting in a **garden at the Family Resource Center**. We reconnected when I ran into him last month at Ahern's where we were both renting sod cutters.

Fortunately, he called that weekend. I turned the machinery over to Hirdman and his helper Garrett Murphy. With two cutters they had the yard sliced and diced in no time.

The two took the sod and made them into mounds, then covered it with newspaper, followed by horse poop and soil with some repeating – like making lasagna. No need for the black gardening cloth. The newspapers will breakdown. The horse poop from Camp Richardson stables is weed free based on what the animals are fed.

The beds will compact a bit, but for the most part will remain raised.



Newspapers, which will decompose, are part of the process to create the mounds.

Beyond the basics

Naturally, all of this comes with a price. Hirdman is adept at knowing what South Tahoe Public Utility District requires so I will get my rebate check. His base price is three times the square footage of the sod being removed. This includes removing the sod, planting the plants, irrigation, manure and wood chips.

Initially I had hoped to stay close to my rebate of $1,200. That was pre-Hirdman.

An unexpected infusion of cash into my bank account that had nothing to do with work didn’t stay there long. I wanted to do more than the basic turf removal. Hirdman became the financial beneficiary and I no longer have the worst front yard on the street.



Brian Hirdman, left, and Garett Murphy work on the main raised area.

I love that everything in the spiral herb garden is edible or has medicinal purposes. It’s one of Hirdman’s signature designs – creating these out of rock from Tahoe Sand and Gravel. The choice of where plants go is based on the microclimates that are formed from the tiered garden.

This along with the dry riverbed that will catch the excess water from the rain barrel were extras.

Before hiring Hirdman I was most worried about figuring out the irrigation system. Based on the number of hours he was digging in the dirt to deal with a busted line and needing to adjust the pressure, I’m glad all but the extra parts were part of the bid price.

I also didn’t skimp on the number of plants. Oddly, today it looks like more could be planted because there is so much openness between greenery. In a year, though, the yard will look dramatically different, full of color, and taller foliage.

One of the mounds the guys created is designed to attract butterflies, insects and humming birds – my own little ecosystem that goes beyond the squirrels and bunnies (and occasional bear and coyote) that exist today.

Hirdman and Murphy also moved the chairlift swing, which in itself was monumental. I remember how hard it was to get it to where it had been. It’s now in a spot between two large pines that look out onto a California Tahoe Conservancy lot. The plants to the side and behind make a sanctuary of sorts, which in the coming years will be more pronounced as things grow.



Brian Hirdman and Garrett Murphy create the spiral herb garden

More to do

The whole yard is not completely done. I'll be getting gutters this fall that will drain into a rain barrel that still needs to be purchased.

I have rounds picked out to create a bench, but still need to find a couple snowboards or some skis to turn that into a reality.

I'll probably move more sand around from the badminton court to put under the swing.

Next spring I'll bring the wine barrel from the back, which today has thriving tomato plants in it, and place it in a preselected spot. Most likely annuals will go in it.

Oh, and I need to get my South Tahoe PUD inspection so I can get my rebate.

Nighttime bike event at Meyers golf course

Tahoe Games Bike Nights will continue with races on Aug. 15 and Sept. 26.

Family-friendly cross country night bike races will feature a custom illuminated course that runs
through the Lake Tahoe Golf Course, over fairways, into the rough, through sand traps and over
bridges with the occasional cart path. The course is approximately 3 miles per lap, with most
classes riding 2 laps.

Tahoe Game Bike Night is free, with a $15 competitors entry fee. Registration will open at 7pm. Races will begin at 9pm, with three heats based on respective classes and age groups. In addition to the top three riders for each class, awards will be given out to the “Most Awesome” and “Best Glow.”

Helmets and bike lights are recommended for all competitors, however; JetLites will be on-site at
every event offering free light rentals to ensure rider safety. The course will be designed for ages
10 and up to enjoy on any type of non-motorized bicycle.

Perseid meteor to light up night sky

By Jareen Imam, CNN

A moonless evening could give stargazers a fantastic light show this week.

The annual Perseid meteor shower, which is known for being among the brightest of meteor showers, is happening near the tail end of summer.

The major meteor shower will be visible in the Northern Hemisphere.

The best part about the showing is that it will happen a day before the new moon, meaning the night skies will be dark and perfect for meteor spotting. Under clear and dark skies, observers could expect to see up to 100 shooting stars an hour.

Astronomy experts say that those conditions have not been available since 2010.

Read the whole story