8 ways snow makes people happier

By Alena Hall, Huffington Post

There’s no doubt that the worst of winter has arrived (in some places), bringing sub-zero temperatures and icy winds along with it. The dark, frigid days make it tough to stay positive as we slog through our daily commutes and count down each hour of the workweek until we can return to snuggling up on the couch at home with loved ones and Netflix.

However, once a beautiful bout of snow is added to this wintry mix, we often find our feelings of bitterness transform into ones of pure, unadulterated joy.

It seems to wipe the slate of our world clean, rejuvenating our personal perspectives at the same time. Whether you choose to play in the snowfall or appreciate it through a frosty window, there’s no denying that the beautiful snowflakes make you pause and take notice of their arrival.

Read the whole story

Holland just misses podium in snowboardcross

By USSA

Lindsey Jacobellis (Stratton Mountain, Vt.) added a fourth World Championship title to her long list of snowboarding accolades and Nick Baumgartner (Iron River, Mich) collected

his second World Championships bronze medal in Kreischberg on Friday.

Experience was the key to success for Jacobellis and Baumgartner, who both fought hard battles to land on the podium. Jacobellis' fourth win in as many World Championship starts didn't come easy.

"This year was definitely my hardest World Champs to win because I didn't make any starts and I was fighting through all the heats, trying to finding opportunities to pass," said Jacobellis.

In each of the four rounds, Jacobellis failed to win the hole shot, but what she lacked at the get-go, she made up for with her 12 years of World Cup experience.

Baumgartner also rode hard, seizing the opportunities in each race to earn his spot in the final. For the first half of the medal round, it looked like Baumgartner and teammate Nate Holland (Squaw Valley) would take one and two. But in the ways of snowboardcross, Baumgartner was bumped into the fence on an attempted pass and got tangled up with Holland, so the duo settled for third and fourth behind Italian Luca Matteotti and Canadian Kevin Hill.

Weather hampers women's downhill in Italy

By USSA

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy 0- A shortened Cortina downhill became more of a sprint course on Friday, with first-starting

Laurenne Ross (Bend, Ore.) leading the United States.

Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley) was eighth and Lindsey Vonn (Vail) 10, having to wait again for record win number 62 in the Audi FIS Ski World Cup.

Host Italy had its day with Elena Fanchini taking the win by 0.15 over Canada's Larisa Yirkiw. Viktoria Rebensberg of Germany was third.

Ross took the early lead out of the top starting position on a course that was shortened by nearly 20 seconds from Thursday's lone training run due to weather. The start was in the fog with light snow falling during the race. Ross was just three-hundredths off the podium. Three of the top four started in the first five as conditions deteriorated through the running order.

"I was surprised at how foggy it was – all the way to Daytona, the big left footed turn," said Vonn. "I charged but I had a hard time seeing everything. And it was snowing so that slowed it down, especially on the flats. Sometimes it happens that way when the weather changes – some people have sunshine, some have fog. It's not always fair but it's an outdoor sport. Tomorrow's another day I'm looking forward to it."

Ross drew lucky number one and had somewhat better course conditions, but had to run on trust and without the benefit of a course report.

"It was definitely a sprint – any tiny errors added up to a big amount of time," she said. "I feel happy with my result. I was pretty lucky to draw bib one although going first it's always tough because you don't get a course report. You have to test it out. From that new tart I didn't know how the speed would be or how I would have to adjust my line. You just have to trust."

Heavy fog during inspection forced organizers to move the

start down to the lower super G start. “It took out some of the fun aspects of the Cortina downhill,” added Ross. “But it was good we actually got to race.”

More snow is forecast for Friday night and through Saturday, putting the weekend schedule in jeopardy.

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6 Tahoe basin meadows slated for restoration



Meiss Meadow is targeted for restoration by the U.S. Forest Service. Photos/LTN file

By Kathryn Reed

Restoring the health of six meadows in the Lake Tahoe Basin is the goal of a project the U.S. Forest Service wants to undertake starting this summer.

The agency is seeking comments on the environmental documents through the first week of February. Two options are part of the environmental assessment – do nothing and the proposed work plan.

Between 2000-11 the agency studied 37 meadows, with six rising to the top of needing immediate help.

Those six are Baldwin Meadow, which is south of Baldwin Beach; Benwood Meadow, south of Adventure Mountain snow play area on Echo Summit; Freel Meadow north of Thompson Peak, which is north of Luther Pass near Grass Lake; Hellhole Meadow, which is north of Freel Meadow; Meiss Meadow is on the south end of Meiss Country, north of Highway 88; and Star Meadow, which north of Freel Peak and west of Star Lake.

Restoration efforts would include a combination of tree removal, prescribed fire, stream channel repair, planting of vegetation and rerouting trails.

When asked why the USFS believes it is necessary to intervene with Mother Nature, the agency responded, “The Forest Service and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency have identified meadow ecosystems as an important focus area for restoration efforts in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Past land use and recurring droughts have impaired the natural function and processes of many meadows in the basin. Fire suppression, grazing, stream incision, conifer encroachment, climate change and recreation and trails have combined to produce complex effects on meadow function, composition and structure.”

The proposal calls for removing trees from 228 acres and thinning another 359 acres – all by hand. Controlled burns would occur on about 1,226 acres.



The corral in Meiss Meadow is on the repair list.

Stream channels, some of which are not named, will be worked on in every meadow area except Hell Hole Meadow. In total, about three miles of water will be affected. This includes planting willows on 22 acres.

Pacific Crest Trail hikers will be affected. The plan calls for 1.1 miles to be rerouted and 1.1 miles decommissioned.

“We are not sure when implementation will occur, therefore cannot identify how this will impact hikers next summer,” Herron said.

The goal is to build the new section, then decommission the old trail.

“The Forest Service plans to minimize impacts to hikers during implementation by coordinating the trail reroute alignments with the Pacific Crest Trail and Tahoe Rim Trail associations and notifying them both regarding timing of project activities,” Herron said. “We will work with both associations to alert trail users of planned work and potential impacts via their websites and social media.”

Lodgepole pine that will be removed from Meiss Meadow will be used to repair the old corral. This will allow pack animals visiting the area the opportunity for daytime or overnight stays.

A price has not been determined for the work that is planned – either by individual meadow or cumulative. A fraction of the millions that is needed will come from the Southern Nevada

Public Land Management Act. Other funding sources have not been determined. Money usually becomes available for projects like this once all the environmental documents are completed.

Work will take place as money becomes available. There is no time line for when the work will be completed.

“If additional work is needed in other meadows where long term plots have been established and continue to be monitored, additional projects may be proposed,” Herron said.

Notes:

• The deadline to comment is Feb. 6.

• The draft environmental assessment is available online.

• For more information, contact Matt Dickinson at 530.543.2769 or mattdickinson@fs.fed.us.

USFS offers free ski tours at Heavenly

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit’s Ski with a Ranger at Heavenly Mountain Resort begins Jan. 16.

Tours begin at the top of the gondola at 10am and 1pm every Monday and Friday. Spanish Ski with a Ranger returns Feb. 20, 2015, with tours offered every Friday at 10:30am. Both programs last approximately one-hour and continue through April 10, weather permitting.

Participants must be intermediate level skiers/boarders or above and provide their own lift ticket. No reservations are

required; attendance is on a first-come, first-served basis.

These free conservation education programs are offered to educate the public about the mission and role of the Forest Service in ski area management, to improve public understanding of natural resource processes and issues, and to promote environmental literacy and stewardship. Programs are led by U.S. Forest Service conservation education staff and volunteers, and operate through a cooperative effort between Heavenly Mountain Resort and South Lake Tahoe.

For more information, go online.

5K run benefits EDC 4-H group

El Dorado County 4-H will host Color Me Green 5K Run at the Shingle Springs Rancheria on March 7.

The 5K run is designed to encourage youths and community members to increase their physical activity while also having fun. During the run, participants are showered with green colored dye as they pass through each marker point.

Participants are encouraged to wear St. Patrick’s Day attire.

For more info, go online.

S. Tahoe photographer capturing historic climb

By Jeff Jardine, Modesto Bee

To suggest Corey Rich of South Lake Tahoe has a bird's-eye view of the historic climb going on in Yosemite National Park might be an understatement.

Our fine feathered friends haven't ventured nearly as close to the climbers as Rich, who began his career at the *Modesto Bee* as an intern in 1996.

Two days after Christmas, 36-year-old Tommy Caldwell of Colorado and 30-year-old Kevin Jorgeson of Santa Rosa began their ascent of El Capitan's Dawn Wall in a 3,000-foot free climb, using only their hands, feet and safety ropes.

Experts will tell you these gents are making perhaps the world's most difficult free climb because of the smoothness of the mountain's face on the route they've chosen.

And there is Rich, 39, right with them capturing their efforts – their daily successes, struggles, failures and victory – but most of all, their will to conquer the Dawn Wall. This is his love as well, a life's dream being fulfilled. He joined the climb Jan. 3, just 48 hours removed from a trip to South America, using the ropes that dangled to the valley floor to catch up with them already well into their climb.

Just about everyone involved, from the climbers themselves to Rich to others shooting from the ground, has been posting on their Facebook pages (search for his at Corey Rich or Corey Rich Productions).

Read the whole story

USFS waiving fees for part of long weekend

The U.S. Forest Service will waive fees at most of its day-use recreation sites five times in 2015, beginning with Jan.19, in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

No fees are charged at any time on 98 percent of national forests and grasslands, and approximately two-thirds of developed recreation sites in national forests and grasslands can be used for free. Check with your local forest or grassland or on Recreation.gov (link is external) to see if your destination charges a fee. Use the Forest Service map to find a national forest or grassland near you.

The 2015 fee-free days observed by the Forest Service are Jan. 19, Feb. 16, June 13, Sept. 26 and Nov. 11.

The fee-free program is in cooperation with other Federal land management agencies under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act. Fees are waived generally for day-use areas, such as picnic grounds, developed trailheads and destination visitor centers. Concessionaire-operated sites may be included in the waiver if the permit holder wishes to participate. Contact your local national forest or grassland to learn what fees might be waived.

Training alone may make one more resilient

By Jon Gugala, Outdoor

Six days a week for five years, pro runner Brett Gotcher would meet with his McMillan Elite teammates to run. During the snowy, windy winters in Flagstaff, Ariz., they would huddle together between 8:30 and 9am; in summer, when the high desert heat is at its worst, they'd meet between 7 and 8 a.m. Under this rigid program, Gotcher ran his personal best in the marathon—2:10:36, which stands as the fourth-fastest debut ever by an American.

"Just having people out there is huge," says the 30-year-old Adidas-sponsored athlete.

But there was a downside: Not everyone improved at the same pace.

Finally, not long after he placed fifth in the U.S. Olympic Team Trials marathon in 2012, Gotcher decided to leave Flagstaff, return to California, and train alone.

Read the whole story

Skiing or boarding – which burns more calories?

By Amanda MacMillan, Outside

Q: *My buddy and I have a bet going. He says snowboarding burns*

more calories, I say downhill skiing does. Who's right?

A:You and your buddy should probably buy each other a Shotzski and call it even, because the most accurate answer to your question is a big fat, "It all depends."

According to the nonprofit trade association Snowsports Industries America, alpine skiing burns approximately 500 calories an hour while snowboarding lags slightly behind at 450. Neither stat includes time spent on the lift. But those numbers are just estimates – there are no published comparison studies–and the experts we spoke with say that in reality, it's likely more of a toss up.

"Your skill level, the difficulty of the slope, and your technique are all going to affect the muscle groups you're working and how many calories you're burning," says Kevin Jordan, a ski and snowboard instructor at Aspen Snowmass in Colorado and ambassador for Learn to Ski and Snowboard Month. (That's January, by the way!)

Read the whole story