# Time to sign up for master gardener class

Training to become a master gardener of Lake Tahoe will begin March 13 in South Lake Tahoe.

The training continues for 12 weeks until May 29 on alternating Fridays/Saturdays from 10am-3pm.

Lake Tahoe Basin residents from Nevada and California are encouraged to apply. The University of California Cooperative Extension – Central Sierra is offering the training.

Upon completion of the 50-hour training course, certified master gardeners of Lake Tahoe will provide the community with research-based information about home horticulture and gardening.

The training will consist of core programs in horticulture and botany, native plants, soils, irrigation, pest management, plant nutrition, diseases, soil health, forest health, wildfire defensible space plus additional topics specific to the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Once certified, Master Gardeners volunteer 50 hours during their first year of service and 25 hours in subsequent years.

The application is available online and is due Jan. 16 at 5pm.

For more info, call 530.621.5528.

# Skiing becomes a present for many in Tahoe



Mother Nature delivered a package of fresh powder to Sierra-at-Tahoe on Christmas. Photos/Kathryn Reed

**By Kathryn Reed**

TWIN BRIDGES – New and untraditional traditions – that's what skiing on Christmas Day is all about.

"We don't see snow every day. That's what Christmas is all about," Andrew Benavides said as he sat at the bar at West Bowl at Sierra-at-Tahoe with his dad, Mike Withers.

The two live in Orangevale, so an easy day trip to the resort on Highway 50. They had a big Christmas party the night before, invited others to ski, but they were the only two to make it up the hill.

"Tahoe is just awesome," Withers said. He learned to ski at Sierra, so he still has a fondness for the resort.

Skiing on the holiday is becoming a tradition for the Dawsons who live in El Dorado Hills. First they unwrapped what Santa brought and then they loaded the vehicle for an afternoon on the slopes.

Six-year-old Christopher had opened a present on Monday so the family of four could ski that day, too. Fluorescent green ski pants were in the box.



Pyramid Peak popped in and out of the clouds as flurries blew and the temps never got above 40 degrees Dec. 25.

More people than usual on Thursday were in the plaza at the base of the ski resort in footwear other than ski or snowboard boots. Anna Venhan of Palo Alto had her hood on to ward off the chilly breeze. She was focused on her book.

“It’s kind of relaxing,” she told *Lake Tahoe News*, especially knowing her kids were in ski school.

Being six months pregnant is keeping her off the slopes this season.

Bobbie Bennett and a group eight have been here since Sunday from the Houston area. Another nine from Houston were arriving in time for a big Christmas dinner.

“We are here because Heavenly didn’t have enough snow. We are happy here. The staff is very friendly,” Bennett told *Lake*

*Tahoe News*.

Her legs were too sore to strap on equipment, but her teenage sons were out shredding. Bennett was perfectly content to keep warm by the fire pit in the plaza.



David Kim relaxes at Sierra's plaza.

David Kim of Folsom was stretched out in one of the lounge chairs at the plaza. His daughter and wife were skiing while he hung out in the sun. Knowing it had rained at their house the day before they were in search of freshies on Christmas.

Sierra did not disappoint with the 4 inches it received overnight. Stashes of powder could still be found in the afternoon – another present to unwrap.

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# Calif. introduces pass to Tahoe state parks

California State Parks is launching the annual Park Pass Program, bringing back the popular Golden Poppy and introducing a Tahoe area regional pass.

The program consists of four passes with a variety of

admissions to parks statewide.

**The passes are:**

· Tahoe Regional Annual Pass ($75): The pass includes admission to D.L. Bliss State Park, Ed Z'Berg Sugar Pine Point State Park, Emerald Bay State Park, Kings Beach State Recreation Area and Donner Memorial State Park.

· California Explorer Annual Pass ($195): Offers vehicle entrance to 134 state parks, including the Southern California beaches along the Orange, Los Angeles and San Diego coasts.

· Golden Poppy Annual Pass ($125): This popular pass is making a comeback, and includes vehicle entrance to 112 state parks.

· Historian Passport ($50): Includes admission for up to four people to State Historic Parks that generally charge a per-person admission fee.

· Off Highway Vehicle Day Use Annual Pass ($50): unchanged from last year.

Passes are available online.

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# Drought drives bears into Tahoe-Reno area

**By Kyle Roerink, Las Vegas Sun**

Ernie Feld makes apple strudel, cookies and poppy seed pastries.

His Incline Village bakery is also known for bear claws – but not the confectionary kind.

Feld’s scarred storefront – gouged by a black bear drawn by the scent of baked goods in October – is a glaring sign of the bear problem in the Reno-Tahoe region. The drought plaguing the West has diminished the natural supply of water and food at higher elevations where black bears normally roam. The dearth of provisions and a sense of smell 2,100-times better than humans have prompted black bears to forage among civilization.

In 2014, NDOW captured and released 93 bears – a more than 130 percent increase from 2009 and 34 percent increase from a decade ago. Last year, NDOW captured and released 97. Those numbers are the highest on record save for 2007 – a drought year that saw 159 captures. After bears are trapped, wildlife officials tag and relocate bears to the wilderness as part of an ongoing study. Research suggests bears will often return to familiar locations once they are released and continue previous behavior.

This year, the state handled an additional 45 bears that were either hit by cars, killed during hunting season or died from natural causes. NDOW euthanized three bears: the bear that wandered on the beach and two that killed livestock. The department says there are at least 300 bears in the Reno-Carson region of the Sierra.

The bear influx has spurred a debate about how communities can cohabitate with animals that can reach 400-plus pounds in a region known for tourists and metropolitan vacationers who think bears are a cute novelty.

**Read the whole story**

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# Benefits of biking indoors

**By Erin Beresini, Outdoor**

A bike trainer is a great tool for improving your cycling skills and overall fitness level, regardless of what the weather's like outside. Because it has constant resistance, the trainer has the potential to deliver an even more efficient workout than you'd get outside – but you may have to make it hurt more to get a comparable workout.

The first thing you'll notice when you hop on a trainer: No hills to coast down. That makes a significant difference in actual time spent pedaling, says sport scientist and cycling coach Neal Henderson, owner of Apex Coaching and Consulting.

"When you're outdoors, even in time trials and racing scenarios, it's normal to coast 10, 15, even 20 percent of the time," he says. "But when you're on a trainer, you can pretty much go non-stop the whole time."

That can make your workout more targeted and allow you to practice things you wouldn't be able to outdoors, like holding a 100-RPM cadence for ten minutes straight, or focusing on evening out your pedal stroke. It also means you can get as good a workout in a shorter amount of time.

**Read the whole story**

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# SnowGlobe entertainment goes

# beyond music




Professionals demonstrating ski and snowboard tricks is part of the SnowGlobe experience. Photos/Andrew Jorgensen

**By Jessie Marchesseau**

Dozens of music artists on multiple stages for three days. There is no question the SnowGlobe Music Festival offers plenty of music for ticketholders, but the entertainment doesn’t stop there.

In addition to regulated decibel levels and ground-shaking bass which can be heard for blocks, festival-goers are also exposed to a variety of visual stimuli. They may witness fire dancers performing flame-entwined choreography, sculptors creating fresh artwork, and skiers and snowboarders soaring 30 feet above the crowd while executing finely tuned McTwists, backflips, 720s and inverted whatnots.

“People are coming here to experience not just the concert, but Tahoe. So whether they get on the hill or not, it still exposes them to that snowsports environment,” Rob Giustina, big air producer for OnCourse Events, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Giustina said the inclusion of winter sports was part of SnowGlobe’s design from the beginning. It was a way to incorporate the overall Tahoe atmosphere, add more visual stimuli and encourage sponsorship from local companies such as ski resorts. He also pointed out how other music festivals are incorporating sports, too, such as the Warped Tour with its skateboard and BMX demonstrations.




Snowsports events bring the mountains to the music venue.

Giustina puts together a roster of about 15 local riders who perform three to four 20-minute segments each night — Dec. 29-31 — on the ball field next to Lake Tahoe Community College in South Lake Tahoe.

“We get to showcase skiing and snowboarding to people who aren’t familiar with it, or at least not familiar with it at that level,” said professional skier and South Lake Tahoe local Kyle Smaine. He will be part of the snowsports demonstration for the third year.

He told *Lake Tahoe News* he views it as a cool way to showcase local talent and give concert-goers a taste of the true Tahoe

atmosphere: being outside and having fun.

Situated off to the side of the main stage, the setup consists of elevated scaffolding from which riders start their runs. They drop down about 35 feet to the jump takeoff, then fly over a 30-foot gap before the landing.

Besides sheer visual entertainment, part of their job is to distract the crowd in between music sets. When the music ends, instead of everyone immediately rushing to the next stage, some will stay to take in the air show, a rather ingenious form of crowd control.

South Lake Tahoe local David Rodriguez has been part of the SnowGlobe crowd twice and thought the Big Air demonstration was cool, but seemed a little out of place.

“I felt like it was kind of a side note just because we’re a mountain town,” he said. His wife said she barely noticed it.

An avid snowboarder himself, Rodriguez would like to see the snowboarding become an even bigger part of the festival. That, however, is unlikely since Giustina said it was never intended to be a main attraction, more of just a filler between events. But this doesn’t stop the riders from putting on the best show they can.



Local athletes give flatlanders a taste of what Tahoe is about.

Snowboarder Nathan Owen will be part of the Big Air for the second year in row and said riders will be treating viewers to a show of high-flying acrobatics with a variety of flips, twists, turns and spins. He said the crowd will also be seeing a lot of smiles “because we’re all out there just having a good time.”

Owen believes the demonstration really brings everything together.

“Music is a huge part of snowboarding. It’s only fitting to have the two together, especially in Tahoe,” he said.

So while most people are really there for the music, smaller events like the Big Air Demonstration give a little hometown flair to the SnowGlobe Music Festival. Plus, as Giustina put it: “You gotta have snow-related activities inside the snowglobe.”

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# Forecast: Rain at lake, snow on peaks

Cold, wet weather is headed for the Lake Tahoe Basin on Dec. 24.

Rain, including thunderstorms, is in the forecast. The temps will start off warm, keeping the snow level above 7,500 to start with.

Mix in the wind – gusts of 70 mph on ridges – and the drive over mountain passes could be gnarly.

On Dec. 25 there is a slight chance of snow showers in the basin, according to the National Weather Service in Reno.

As the system moves east, the temperatures are going to drop. The low Thursday and Friday nights is expected to be in single digits. The high Wednesday is forecast to be in the 50s, then dropping to about freezing for the next two days.

*– Lake Tahoe News staff report*

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# Casino, hotels once planned for East Shore park



Year-round people can be seen in scuba gear at Divers Cove. Photos/Kathryn Reed

**By Kathryn Reed**

INCLINE VILLAGE – If it weren't for George Whittell's desire to keep out private developers, it is possible Sand Harbor State Park might not exist. In fact, the recluse is the reason much of the East Shore is undeveloped.

That’s not to say he didn’t have grand plans. His vision was to develop a huge casino with several hotels where the park now sits.

But in 1963 per court order Whittell had to sell 5,000 acres for $3 million.

In 1971, it became a state park. Nevada owns 14,000 acres, which encompasses Sand Harbor and Spooner Lake, in what is officially called Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park. Much of the land is in the backcountry.

This history is some of the wisdom that is imparted during ranger led hikes. This is the third December the park has been putting on these free excursions.



In a normal year this boulder field would be under water.

Down the road and visible from the main beach is a corner of Whittell’s Thunderbird Lodge, which is operated by a nonprofit.

Most of the trees are second-generation growth; the original forest was wiped out during the Comstock. Lumber was needed in the silver mines of Virginia City.

The sophisticated flume system with inverted siphons was used to get the wood across the mountain range.

At that time the land was mostly in the hands of the Hobart family, who were lumber barons.

Walking along the footpath, the group of 10 from Incline, San Francisco, Georgia and South Africa, stopped above Divers Cove. Lines on the boulders indicate how low the lake is.



Ranger Allen Wooldridge, center, talks about the history of Sand Harbor.

Fresh water and high elevation divers are often found here – including last Sunday.

“There are some submerged boulder gardens, but not much biology,” Alisa Johansson with state parks said of what’s under the water.

While there are interpretive signs along the path, Johansson and Ranger Allen Wooldridge share more details than what’s written and they can answer visitors’ questions.

For those unfamiliar with Tahoe’s formation – tectonic and glacial – the park employees explain how it came into being and that seismic activity is still very real here.

Wooldridge said a common question he gets asked is if all the sand is natural or if it’s trucked in. He explained how the prevailing southeast winds push sand toward the park. There is a logical reason the park is named Sand Harbor.

While boulders are a common sight on the north side, more areas are becoming exposed as the lake level declines.



Few people visit the beach in winter.

On this chilly, overcast day not many of the park's residents are out. Chipmunks, squirrels, jack rabbits, bobcats, deer, gulls, ducks, magpies, mountain chickadees and bears are some of the critters that call this park home.

But people also heavily use it, with more than 1 million visitors a year.

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**Notes:**

• Dec. 27, 10-11am, Before It Was a Park History Talk, free. Meet at visitors center.

• Dec. 27, 1-2pm, Hike the Point with Rangers, free. Meet at visitors center.

• Dec. 28, 10-11am, Christmas Heritage Talk, free. Meet at visitors center.

• Dec. 28, 1-2pm, Hike the Point with Rangers, free. Meet at visitors center.

• Weekends through Jan. 4 there will be sleigh rides (with wheels if necessary) and the restaurant will be open.

• The park will be open on weekends through March, including the visitors center, which has a fireplace where people may get warm.

• For more info, call 775.831.0494.

• The park is three miles south of Incline Village on Highway 28.

• It costs $8 to park.

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# Beavers may be good for the environment

**By Samantha Clark, Santa Cruz Sentinel**

Californians are crossing their fingers for more rain after three punishing years of drought have left streams, rivers and wetland parched.

One animal has the potential to restore these dry landscapes.

With their industrial buck teeth and flat tails, beavers and their dams offer a defense against drought, a solution to reversing the effects of climate change. The rodents are known as ecosystem engineers. And they once populated most of California (and the Bay Area) until fur traders nearly wiped them out in the 19th century,

“This state has lost more of its wetlands than all other states, and beavers can rebuild those wetlands,” said Rick Lanman of the Institute for Historical Ecology in Los Altos.

“Knowing that it is native should help guide restoration efforts.”

Beaver dams bestow benefits to the environment that we humans can’t easily copy. They turn land into a sponge for water. Their gnawing and nesting promotes richer soil and slows down water, improving imperiled fish habitat. Their dams raise water tables, nourishing shrubbery alongside streams that stabilize eroding banks and add habitat for birds and deer. They also help the endangered California Red-legged frog.

**Read the whole story**

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# Feds reject Nevada plan to refill Incline Lake

**By Associated Press**

RENO – The U.S. Forest Service has rejected a proposal by Nevada state wildlife officials to refill a drained lake in the mountains above Lake Tahoe and restore the scenic spot as a recreational fishery.

The agency says it intends to stick with its plan to leave Incline Lake empty, remove its dam and return the area to its more natural wet meadows near Mount Rose.

Deputy Regional Forester Ronald Ketter upheld a forest supervisor’s earlier decision, the *Reno Gazette-Journal* reported last week.

“The desired condition for this project is to remedy the existing conditions of a high-hazard dam and provide a sustainable hydrological system that supports groundwater and

riparian ecosystems," Ketter wrote in a Dec. 2 letter to the Nevada Department of Wildlife.

State wildlife officials are reviewing the Forest Service's response and considering further action, including a possible appeal, department spokesman Chris Healy said.

"We are definitely weighing our options," Healy said. "The local area is losing the opportunity to develop a valuable fishery and recreational resource if this decision stands."

The federal government in 2008 spent $43.5 million for the once-private property that includes Incline Lake and 777 acres of surrounding land on a forested ridge between Reno and Lake Tahoe.

The lake was drained after inspectors determined its dam could fail during an earthquake and flood areas of nearby Incline Village.

Ketter agreed with the state that a much safer dam could be built, but he said it wouldn't completely eliminate possible danger. The Forest Service would return most of the $5.5 million in funding secured through the South Nevada Public Land Management Act for possible reconstruction of the dam, Ketter said.

He also rejected arguments that the public's recreational needs were being ignored.

"While the Forest Service appreciates the public's desire and need for recreational opportunities, the primary purpose and objectives of this project are to provide for public safety and the restoration of an altered aquatic/riparian system," Ketter wrote.