Drought could increase tree beetle problem

By Associated Press

RENO – Scientists say there's been a significant reduction in the amount of Nevada forest under assault from bark beetles and similar bugs, but they fear lingering drought will further weaken trees and make them more susceptible to future attacks.

Nevada Division of Forestry forest health specialist Gene Phillips says aerial surveys show populations of the tree-killing insects plummeted across the state last year compared to 2012 – from 500,000 acres to only about 50,000.

"These are some pretty dramatic decreases," Phillips told the *Reno Gazette-Journal*.

The trend was seen with the Pinyon Engraver beetle, also called the Ips, which infested some 12,000 acres of forest across Nevada in 2012. Last year, surveys concluded only about 2,500 acres were infested, a drop of more than 80 percent.

Infestation by mountain pine beetles – which have decimated forests in Colorado, Idaho, Montana and British Columbia – also dropped significantly in Nevada, down from 3,650 acres to 1,100, Phillips said.

The most dramatic reduction, nearly 90 percent, came in the amount of land under assault by the Pinyon needle scale, a pinhead-sized critter shaped like a bean. That infestation fell from an estimated 487,000 acres to only 49,000.

Phillips said it's most likely part of a normal cycle that produces booms and busts in insect populations.

Significant overpopulation of an insect species is often followed by a crash in numbers, he said. Big beetle

populations can result in spikes in the number of natural predators like wasps, which then whittle down beetle numbers.

“Insect outbreaks are very cyclical,” Phillips said. “They increase dramatically and they decrease dramatically. They increase and then they crash.”

The biggest concern is that a 3-year-old drought may continue, stressing already-stressed trees to make them more susceptible to insect attack.

“It doesn’t mean we might not see a dramatic increase this year,” Phillips said. “If this drought continues, all tree species in Nevada are going to continue to be stressed and bark beetles sense that. That’s when they get going.”

Healthy trees can easily fend off attacks by a limited number of bark beetles by secreting resin and essentially booting the bugs out of their bark. But when trees are stressed by drought, their defense mechanisms are weakened. Beetles can then attack successfully and while doing so, secrete perfume-like pheromones that attract hordes of more aggressive beetles than can overwhelm trees relatively quickly.

Drought has resulted in huge spikes in beetle populations and widespread tree die-offs before, said Gary Blomquist, a biochemist at UNR who has studied beetle pheromones.

The extensive drought the Reno-Tahoe area experienced from 1987 to 1994 resulted in nearly a third of the trees in the Lake Tahoe Basin being killed by beetles, Blomquist said.

That beetle infestation didn’t peak until the drought had lasted four to five years, he said.

“We’ve actually been very fortunate in this area. We haven’t seen that much in the Sierra yet,” Blomquist said. “We’re going to see more of them.”

Tennis mixer at Zephyr Cove

Zephyr Cove Tennis Club will host its last tennis mixer of the season on Sept. 3.

FAN-tastic Hump Day participants are encouraged to dress representing their favorite sports team, with a prize going to the best dressed.

Play starts at 5:30pm. The doubles mixer is for adult players of all abilities.

Cost is $10 for club members, $15 for non-members, and $5 for the meal only. The fun includes a barbecue, raffle prizes and tennis.

Participants of Hump Day events are encouraged to bring a side dish or dessert, as well as beverage of choice that does not come in a glass container. No advance sign-up is required.

Are women better athletes than men?

By Amanda MacMillan, Outdoors

Without launching a full-out battle-of-the-sexes competition between you and your wife, it’s hard to say exactly who is the better athlete. But it is true that she may have some ingrained sex-based advantage over you. Specifically, it seems that members of the fairer sex are better at pacing themselves

on long runs, at least according to one new study.

Researchers from Marquette and Grand Valley State Universities and the Mayo Clinic looked at nearly 92,000 marathon performances that took place in 2011 and discovered that women were only about a third as likely as their male counterparts to slow dramatically (by 30 percent or more) during the second half of a race.

On average, men ran the last 13 miles 15.6 percent slower than they did the first 13, while women only slowed by 11.7 percent. The difference held across all age groups and experience levels, and remained even after adjusting women's times to address men's greater oxygen intake and typically faster performances.

Read the whole story

Government agencies to poison Alpine creek

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service plans to chemically treat Silver King Creek in Alpine County in an attempt to restore native Paiute cutthroat trout.

Retenone will be used along 11 miles of the stream from Llewellyn Falls downstream to Silver King Canyon. The lower reaches of three tributaries – Tamarack Creek, Tamarack Lake Creek and Coyote Valley Creek – will also be treated.

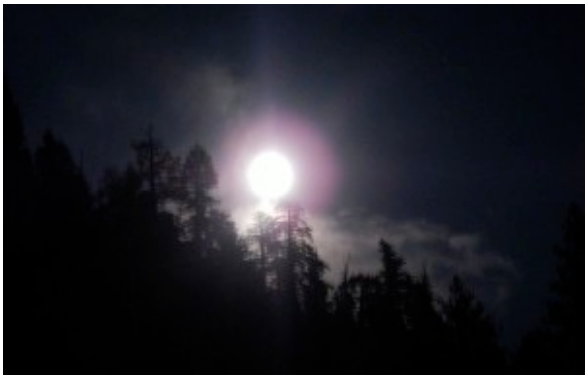
The goal is to have the Paiute cutthroat trout be the only trout species in the creek. The rotenone will kill off the other fish. Then the creek will be restocked with the Paiute.

Plans are for all of this to occur in late August.

Also participating in this fish kill/restocking are the U.S. Forest Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife. This is not the first time the agencies have done this.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Super moon illuminates night sky



The super moon on Aug. 9. Photo/LTN

The super moon has been filling the night sky.

This moon, which is the closest to Earth compared to any other time of year, will be at its fullest on Sunday night. This will be the biggest and brightest full moon of the year.

The moon rise is expected at 8:12pm Aug. 10.

The big ball in the sky is obscuring the Perseid meteors. However, the meteor shower is expected to peak Aug. 11, so it’s possible it can be seen in the Tahoe sky as the moon diminishes.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Tahoe paddle exposes lakefront architecture



Sue and AJ paddle from Cave Rock to Zephyr Cove. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

GLENBROOK – While normally it's the natural beauty that is so captivating when paddling on Lake Tahoe, last weekend was a bit of an architectural tour.

What I didn't know until last Sunday is that Lake Tahoe has dinosaurs. There are two of them calling a stretch of beach between Cave Rock and Zephyr Cove home. I have pictures to prove it.

Some of the houses are obscenely sprawling and a bit garish,

while others are exquisite and fit into the natural environment. A couple that jutted out on the rocks had such low decks that in a normal or high water year it would seem like the lake would be practically inside the structure.

Many come with their own beaches. Nevada and California have different rules about what is public property. In California, the public has the right to be on the land up to the high water mark. Not so in the Silver State. That is why paddlers must be cognizant not to stop unless they have permission.

Some people had erected little light posts on the rocks as indicators for boaters navigating at night.

While plenty of people want to regulate piers, buoys, what can built on the shoreline and the windows in a home that can be seen from the lake, we thoroughly enjoyed the view of these houses, their docks, boats bouncing in the water, and chairs with perfect views of Mount Tallac and the gorgeous sunsets we've been having.

It's good to see people enjoying their part of Tahoe. And from our vantage point, they were taking care of their property. The only thing I wouldn't like if I lived there is how close the houses are to one another.

I had to wonder if this stretch of Tahoe water is more pristine than in South Lake Tahoe, where I spend the bulk of my time, because there aren't as many people in the water. All those swimmers at public beaches aren't running to the rest rooms. Could that problem mixed with the continual warming of Tahoe be adding to the murkiness of water by public beaches? Plus, there aren't as many regulatory agencies in Nevada. This stretch of Tahoe water was so pristine it reminded me of what the South Shore was in the late 1980s.

An advantage of the low water level at Lake Tahoe is boats are less likely to be near the shore, which makes for an even more enjoyable paddle.

Most of the activity we saw was from people playing on shore or in the water. So many rocks are exposed or barely submerged that at times it looked like people were standing on the water as they stood on a boulder.

Even in a canoe we needed to have our eyes peeled for rocks more than 100 yards from shore. The lake is that low. Other times we could see at least 20 feet to the bottom.

The overcast sky made for interesting lighting on the lake, causing the water's colors to change from cobalt to teal to aqua.

AJ was happy to finally get out at Zephyr Cove. This was her first time in the canoe. We already bought her a lifejacket since now we know she has no problem being paddled around the lake like a princess.

While she enjoyed the lake water, we imbibed on a Zephyr Zombie. Good, strong, but definitely didn't duplicate the original Rum Runner of Camp Rich.

When we started the lot at Cave Rock was full, but they let us launch. Paddlers do so at the beach, not the boat ramp. Had we parked there it would have cost $10 being from California. Nevada residents pay $8. Sue could park the truck on Highway 50. We had to pay $1 each as walk-ins.

By car it is 2.2 miles from Cave Rock to Zephyr Cove.

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Popularity of golf on the decline

By Alanna Petroff, CNNMoney

Golf’s popularity is waning and the industry is getting whacked.

Adidas, which owns the popular TaylorMade brand, is the latest company to warn about the decline of the sport. Sales at its golf division dropped by nearly 20 percent in the second quarter, leading the sportswear company to slash earnings forecasts for the year.

Callaway Golf reported a 7 percent decline in sales for the second quarter and predicted market conditions would remain “challenging” throughout the year. Even Nike’s golf division is underperforming. Sales stagnated over the last year as nearly every other division reported growth.

Read the whole story

Frog comes before fuel thinning at Echo Lakes

The U.S. Forest Service won’t be thinning fuels near Echo Lakes anytime soon.

This is because a judge this week agreed more time is needed to determine the impacts to the yellow-legged frog.

The USFS has agreed not to thin trees in this area on Echo

Summit until at least after Oct. 15. Consultations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will continue until then to determine the effects on the threatened frog.

Dennis Murphy, a UNR research professor who helped draft the Lake Tahoe Watershed Assessment for the federal government, filed a lawsuit against the USFS last fall claiming the Forest Service did not adequately consider the environmental impacts of the project.

No trees have been cut this year.

The court order is that no trees will be cut prior to Labor Day to protect the endangered frog.

Here is a copy of the latest court document.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Hiker close to setting record for PCT

By Geoff Baker, Seattle Times

MCKENZIE PASS, Ore. – Seattle native Joe McConaughy smiles as he bounds into a wooded clearing and spots the familiar green truck.

When you've speed-hiked 55 miles per day for six weeks over mountains, boulders and creeks, dodging the odd bear and rattlesnake, that dirt-covered Honda Pilot had better be there before the sun sets. On this late afternoon, already 38 miles into his daily effort, the SUV's presence means McConaughy is guaranteed a 20-minute respite for his battered feet and a

coveted peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

The vehicle, dubbed “carne asada,” contains his support crew of three close friends shadowing his attempt to cover the 2,663-mile Pacific Crest Trail in a record-setting 59 days or fewer.

“I need my PB and J right now or I might pass out,” McConaughy, 23, said with a grin as he collapsed into a folding chair set up for him in the grass alongside this part of the trail, about 20 miles from Sisters, Ore.

Missing such crucial checkpoints has posed the biggest threat to McConaughy’s record quest, which began June 18 in Campo, about 15 feet from the Mexican border. Now, some 2,155 miles later, he crossed the Columbia River into Washington at 2:30pm last Friday at least 15 pounds lighter, somewhat beaten up, but with the finish line in sight. Earlier in the week, while still in Oregon, he was optimistic about breaking the record.

“You never want to say the worst is over with because you never know what can happen at any given moment,” McConaughy said as he removed his shoes and socks to pick at his dirt-blackened, callused toes. “But I’m hoping that whatever happens from here on, it’s something I can manage.”

McConaughy expects to reach the trail’s end at the Canadian border near Manning Park, B.C., by Aug. 9 or 10, with a record-smashing completion time of 53 or 54 days. Records are unofficial and reported by those who hike this storied trail on somewhat of an honor system, though McConaughy is carrying a satellite phone that tracks time and progress.

Read the whole story

Tahoe distance swimmer relives historic event

Publisher's note: ***Erline Christopherson, the first woman to complete a length-wise swim of Lake Tahoe, will talk about her experience Aug. 20 at 6pm at the South Lake Tahoe Library.***

By Erline Christopherson

As a young child, I always wanted to be in the water and by age 4 I could swim. As soon as possible, mom had me in swimming lessons. Around age 10, I was race swimming at Robbie's Olympic Club. I did pretty well, but my love was distance swimming.

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Thurman lived across the street from us in Lodi and we sort of considered them our grandparents. They took my sister, Francine, and me to their cabin at Lake Tahoe when we were ages 8 and 9. The first time I saw the Lake, I told Mr. Thurman I would someday swim across it. He laughed and said, "OK." When we came home, I told my father what a beautiful lake it was and my dream. He laughed and said, "OK. When you're ready, just tell me."

Little did they realize I was serious.



Erline Christopherson, right, with her mother, Elizabeth. Photo/Provided

When I was 14, I told dad I was ready to start training for distance instead of racing. I read any book I could find on distance swimming, but nothing told what to eat or grease with, or how to train. I was pretty frustrated, but determined. I started swimming laps for hours at a time at the pool, then going to the Mokelumne River and swimming against the current. It was so strong I stayed in one spot for hours.

Mom came up with broth and sugar water. She would cook a roast for hours and then pour off the pure broth. We decided on a Honey Bear squeeze bottle as my drink dispenser.

About a month before each swim, the Thurmans would let Fran, my friend Mary DeMartini and me stay at the cabin. This way I could adjust to the altitude and practice in the lake. I would swim to the mouth of Emerald Bay and then go around the island and back down each morning. Fran and Mary would row the little boat beside me. At that time, there was no traffic on the lake like today.

Dad did not tell me the exact day I was going to swim because he was afraid I wouldn’t sleep. I knew, sort of, because I would swim the width a few days before trying the length to see if I was ready. Dad had decided that we could use the grease he used on the wheel hubs of his hay baler, so that was that. Now, getting it off was another story.

Walt Little, editor of *Lake Tahoe News* (which was a print publication with no affiliation to the online *LTN*), interviewed me for his column Little Quotes and KHVR-FM radio (located with the newspaper office). He was very nice to us, as was everyone. We went to the Coast Guard station to ask permission to swim, as we didn’t know if there were rules against it. The people there were very kind, saying they

couldn’t give us permission, but the lake is so big they wouldn’t look for me.

My first attempt was Aug. 30, 1961 at age 15. We started at Bijou Beach straight up the state line to Cal-Neva Lodge. Just one mile from shore the Coast Guard came out to get me. We had been fighting storms for five hours and dad’s boat was swamped. They were bailing water. I had been in the water 18 hours, being pushed backward with waves hitting me in the face and over my head. There were times I was down in the slough of a wave so high dad couldn’t see me. It was getting dangerous for everyone. Dad said, “This great lake really gave us a beating.”

So, at age 16 we did all the same practices, but decided to go north to south and come in at Tahoe Keys, which was just being built. We hit storms again. About 3 miles out I was battling waves and swimming straight up and down. Colette, my sister, dived in and coaxed me out. I had been swimming 16 hours and mom was seasick.

Three weeks later, dad decided he had the answer – we would start earlier. It was now or never. On July 29, 1962, we started at 2am to beat the storms. It was scary to swim in the dark all alone. Dad tried to keep a spotlight on me. We were all anxious for dawn to break. Fran sang songs, making up words that were about me. Her voice was so beautiful, echoing over the lake in the stillness of the morning. She gave me comfort in the darkness of the night.

Wes Stetson, Thurmans’ neighbor at Tahoe, had a seaplane and gave tours over the lake to tourists. His daughter, Sierra and I were friends. He flew over and landed, telling dad he was following the shoreline and I was swimming farther than I had to, also telling us when I was in a current and going backward so I could change my stroke.

This time our goal was North Shore. The storms started rolling

in around 3pm, so we headed for Dollar Point. The water was so clear I could see the bottom; 30 feet down. Finally, after 13 hours, 37 minutes, I was on the shore. The waves were so rough dad had to bring the boat in a quarter mile down shore. I walked to the boat with everyone beside me. It was a wonderful feeling.

Sacramento sportscaster Stu Nahan came a few days earlier and took pictures of us playing and training in Lake Tahoe. After the swim, he interviewed me. It aired on the 11pm news so I never got to see it – it was past my bedtime and I was not allowed to stay up. I was treated no differently than my sisters – there were chores to do on the ranch and mine were still mine.

I love Lake Tahoe – the most beautiful lake in the world, in my opinion. Its waters comfort me, like being covered in silk. I love to stand and just look at its beauty.