Free fishing Saturday in Nevada

Nevada’s Division of State Parks is granting free fishing access to its state parks on June 9.

State parks with fishing opportunities include:

• Washoe Lake

• Sand Harbor and the Lake Tahoe Backcountry (Spooner and Hobart)

• Dayton

• Rye Patch

• Lahontan

• Fort Churchill

• South Fork

• Wild Horse

• Cave Lake

• Ward Charcoal Ovens

• Spring Valley

• Echo Canyon

• Beaver Dam

• Big Bend of the Colorado.

N. Nevada starting to worry about possible drought

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Joe Ricci was worrying by January. Now he knows he’s in trouble.

With drought conditions worsening day by day and the Carson River dropping steadily, the Dayton-area rancher expects he may be out of water in a couple of weeks or so. He’s still hoping to harvest one good crop of hay, but once irrigation is halted and his cattle and sheep eat the last of the green grass, “it’s gone.”

Ricci’s family has ranched the land for 100 years and he’s seen wet and dry years come and go. This one stands out.

“I don’t remember having to worry about water this early in the year. It’s already tough to get water,” said Ricci, 42. “I can’t remember it ever drying up this soon.”

Stories like Ricci’s are now being sought out by experts trying to gauge the severity of a drought impacting each of Nevada’s 17 counties to some degree.

How severe this drought becomes over the summer and how this drought year stacks up in comparison to others remains to be seen. Experts, however, agree the situation appears serious.

Cities like Reno, Sparks and Carson City are expected to make it through the summer with sufficient water supplies for municipal uses, with the Truckee Meadows prepared to weather a drought lasting years in duration.

Read the whole story

Average age of national park visitors on the rise

By Gabe Gutierrez, NBC News

ESTES PARK, Colo. — At Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, rangers are seeing more than green this spring. They're also noticing a little more gray.

The average visitor to national parks is getting older.

Cyclist John O'Malley, 61, of Summit County, Colo., has enjoyed the trails for almost half a century.

"You do get close to nature," Malley said.

But apparently, not everyone shares that fondness anymore.

Back in 1996, at Death Valley National Park, almost a third of visitors were in their 20s. But in the last few years, that number has dropped to just 11 percent at Yosemite and six percent at Yellowstone, according to a University of Idaho analysis of Park Service attendance figures.

At Rocky Mountain National Park, the average age of visitors has risen to 46.

"Right now, we see a lot of youth not coming to the parks," said Larry Frederick, a park ranger for more than 15 years who has noticed the changing demographics. "I think there a lot of distractions right now for young people."

Frederick said the average age of visitors used to be late 20s

and early 30s.

Read the whole story

Prescribed burn in South Lake Tahoe

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews are burning today near the corner of Al Tahoe Boulevard and Pioneer Trail in South Lake Tahoe.

Residents and visitors can expect to see smoke from this prescribed fire project area on June 6.

Forest Service staff will post road signs around areas affected by prescribed fire, and update the local fire information line at (530) 543-2600, No. 6.

Tahoe’s water level about to start declining

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Lake Tahoe likely reached its maximum level for the year Tuesday and will now start a steady drop in further evidence of a dry year.

Nudged up incrementally by Monday’s rain and snow showers, Tahoe reached a level of 6,227.66 feet above sea level

Tuesday. That’s probably as high as it’s going to get.

“This very well may be the peak,” said Chad Blanchard, chief deputy water master.



Lake Tahoe is at its peak this week in regards to the amount of water. Photo/LTN

The lake likely will stay at its current level for a few days or so as inflow from melting snow roughly equals the amount of water evaporating from the lake.

Once evaporation rates exceed inflow – and that could happen quickly, particularly under hot and windy conditions – things will change.

“Then it will drop,” Blanchard said. “The lake will start its long descent through the summer.”

The lake reached its pivot point nearly two months earlier than last year. An epic winter of 2010-11 layered the Sierra in drifts of snow that stuck around under the influence of a cool spring.

Tahoe didn’t stop rising until Aug. 1, topping out at 6,228.42 feet in what was its sixth most impressive rise in over a

century.

As stands to reason, the lake reaches its maximum level early during dry years such as 1992, when it topped out May 17 at 6,221.87 feet. During particularly wet years, rising doesn't stop until much later. In 1965, it didn't stop rising until Aug. 17 at 6,228.87 feet.

This year is definitely on the drier side. A sub-par winter ended with an April 1 snowpack at only a little more than half of where it should have been for that time of year. The snow's been melting since, and "there's very little left," Blanchard said.

The contrast to last year is dramatic.

"Last year was close to the latest I've ever seen it," Blanchard said. "Last year was about as late as it gets and this year was pretty darned early."

How much the lake drops over the course of the summer will be determined by weather conditions, but the lake will probably go down 2 feet or so, still staying roughly 2 feet above its natural rim.

When full to the maximum legal limit, 6 feet of water above the rim are stored by the dam at Tahoe City for downstream use by Reno-Sparks and Nevada agriculture.

That means there is plenty of water for municipal use, said Bill Hauck, water supply coordinator of the Truckee Meadows Water Authority. The area's primary water purveyor serves about 93,000 homes and businesses across the greater Reno-Sparks area.

"Our water supply is in really good shape," Hauck said. "We should have full river flows throughout the year and into next year."

Tahoe and Boca reservoirs, which combined store the bulk of

water that flows down the Truckee River for local use, are still at roughly 75 percent of capacity because of the strong winter of a year ago, Hauck said.

“It’s not anything like last year,” Hauck said of current conditions. “The snowpack and runoff are pretty meager compared to last year, but those reservoirs really save our bacon.”

Summer basketball camp for ages 6-18

Coach Gil Llewellyn and some of his top staff of world-renowned Advantage Basketball Camps is returning to the Kahle Community Center in Stateline.

Summer ball handling and shooting camp is June 25-28, Monday-Thursday, 9am to 4pm. Camp is available in two- and four-day sessions. Tuition is $145 to $225.

The camp is open to boys and girls ages 6-18 of all ability levels.

To register or for more information, call (310) 903.6473 or (425) 670.8877 or email CoachGil@advantagebasketball.com.

Rattlesnake season puts pets at risk

By Andrea Gallo, Sacramento Bee

Less than a day after a baby rattlesnake struck him, Bowser – a mixed Labrador and heeler puppy – pranced to his car, waited for his swelling to go down and relished tummy rubs from his owner, Nick Delgado.

Bowser is one of the luckier animals bitten by rattlesnakes in Sacramento, Placer, El Dorado and Amador counties recently. Some didn't survive their bites.

Delgado and Jessica Cobian said they were walking Tuesday near the American River in Rancho Cordova when Bowser, who was on a leash in front of them, lunged forward and sniffed the ground. When the nearly 1-year-old dog perked his head up, a 10-inch-long baby rattlesnake bit his snout.

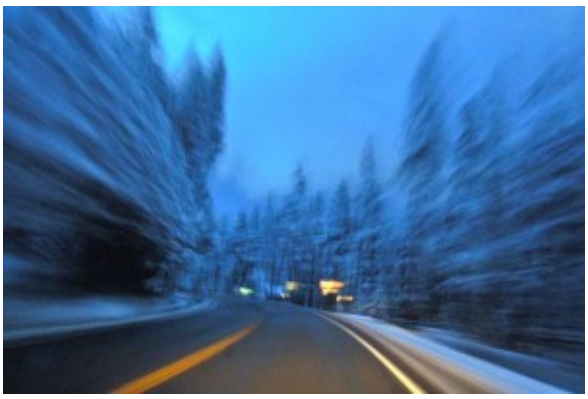
"He was a step ahead of me," Delgado said Wednesday. "If he didn't get bitten, I would have or she would have."

Animal advocates and veterinarians have issued warnings to pet owners to take extra precautions because of the number of dogs being bitten.

Read the whole story

Snow falls in Lake Tahoe;

summer in the forecast



It looks like winter on June 4 near Sierra-at-Tahoe on Highway 50. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Driving by Sierra-at-Tahoe on Monday at dusk it looked like there was enough snow to ski on.

A bitter cold storm blew through Northern California and Northern Nevada on June 4, dumping measurable snow on Echo Summit, which at times necessitated Caltrans to post chain control requirements.

The commute Monday night over Spooner Summit into the Lake Tahoe Basin was windy, with snow at the crest.

Snow was also at lake level.

The National Weather Service in Reno is calling for a 20 percent chance of rain-snow on Tuesday in Tahoe. The overnight lows for Monday and Tuesday will be in the 20s.

Summer-like weather returns Thursday, as the temps will be close to 70 degrees.

– Kathryn Reed

Learn about invasive weeds and then help pull them

The Truckee River Watershed Council's Weed Warriors will be leading two weed walks and three weed pulls.

The walks are June 30 and Aug. 11, and the pulls are June 20, June 23 and July 14.

The Weed Warriors are hoping to bring awareness to the public about invasive weeds in the area and the proper ways to dispose of them.

Weed walks, led by Jeannette Halderman and volunteer weed warriors Annaliese Miller and Kathy Welch, will be in locations where infestations have been confirmed in order to learn about what plants are invasive to this area.

The weed pulls, led by Jeannette Halderman, program manager for the Truckee River Watershed Council and botanist Susan Urie of the U.S. Forest Service, at Boca Hill on June 20 and 23 and Stampede on July 14 will show how to properly remove weeds as well as help with the infestation at locations in the Tahoe National Forest.

Invasive weeds are aggressive plants that have been introduced into an area outside of their native range and are dangerous because they out-compete native and other desirable plants. As a result, they reduce land and recreational values, damage water quality, contribute to soil erosion, degrade plant and animal habitat and increase the risk of wildland fire.

For more information, call (530) 550.8760, ext.3.

South Shore pond stocked for fishing derby

Sawmill Pond continues to be stocked with fish and will be full for the June 9 annual Kids Fishing Derby.

Look for some big cutthroat trout to be on the lines.

This pond on the edge of South Lake Tahoe at Sawmill Road and Lake Tahoe Boulevard is only for kids 14 and younger. No one older is allowed to fish there.



June 9 is the annual Fishing Derby at Sawmill Pond. Photo/LTN file

The pond has been stocked since April and will continue to get new fish through September. The Rotary Club of South Lake Tahoe is helping make that possible. Optimist Club and Raley's are primary sponsors of the event.

The Department of Fish and Game is bringing in the trout from Heenan Lake for the derby, which is from 8am-noon.

Victor Babbitt with the El Dorado County Fish and Game Commission has these tips, "Some of the best ways to catch

fish at the pond are to use power bait or worms. Lures and flies work well, but should not be used when it is crowded.”

Babbitt added that the U.S. Forest Service is working on an interpretive sign project to give information on the local area as well as the native fish, flora and fauna.