

Porcupines a rare find in Sierra

By Alex Breitler, Stockton Record

It is one of the most recognizable creatures wandering our woods.

But in more than 50 years exploring the Sierra Nevada, Steve Stocking has spotted the squat, prickly porcupine perhaps three times.

“One was, maybe, 10 or 15 years ago. But I haven’t seen any recently,” said Stocking, an outdoor enthusiast who lives in San Andreas and volunteers at Calaveras Big Trees State Park.

The slow-moving rodent – once despised for snacking on valuable timber – is a rare find in the Sierra Nevada these days, according to an unscientific survey by a Twain Harte-based environmental group.

The group asked thousands of people to report porcupine sightings last year, across millions of acres of public and private land from Lake Tahoe to the southern Sierra.

Only 14 living porcupines were spotted waddling across roads or clinging to trees.

[Read the whole story](#)

Avalanche beacon practice in

Tahoe City

Tahoe Backcountry Women is a recently organized group of regional women who love to backcountry ski. The next gathering will be March 14 from 6:30-8:30pm at Alpenglow Sports in Tahoe City.

This event will be centered on informal avalanche beacon practice. Women of all ages and abilities are welcome to do some practice searches.

Bring a beacon, headlamp, and warm clothes.

For more information, call Alpenglow Sports at (530) 583.6917 or email whitney@alpenglowsports.com.

USFS going after funds for OHV recreation; public input sought

The U.S. Forest Service will be submitting an annual application to the state Department of Parks and Recreation, Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division to request funding to provide trail maintenance, restoration, conservation, patrolling, education and law enforcement for off-highway vehicle trails and areas.

In addition, over snow vehicle funding to support law enforcement, patrol, and public education is also being requested.

These grants will be available online for public review and comment through April 2. Any comments that are submitted to this site will go to the state and to the individual National Forest.

As part of the grant process, the Forest Service proposes to issue a decision memo for the repair and maintenance of these recreation areas identified in the grant proposal.

If you have information that is specific to this proposed action that the Forest Service may not be aware of or information regarding potential environmental effects from work associated with these grants, please submit your comments to Fran Herbst at fterbst@fs.fed.us. Submit these comments in early March. If you have questions, contact Fran Herbst at (530) 478.6852.

Truckee Elementary taking green to a new level

Truckee Elementary is going green. Designated as the flagship school to lead the greening of the Tahoe Truckee Unified School District, the students and staff of Truckee Elementary will be pioneering a path toward an environmentally sustainable future for the entire district.



During the next few years, Truckee Elementary will undergo a green transformation: in the building, in the classrooms, and ultimately, in the minds and hearts of its students. School operations will employ sensible, sustainable practices to reduce carbon footprint and waste. The teaching staff will

inject environmental science and responsibility into educational programs.

In 2011, key pieces started falling into place. The PT0 and TTUSD began tossing around ideas to improve the school's sustainability and reduce consumption. What was missing was the means. Enter the Shane McConkey Foundation.

In September, the McConkey Foundation granted \$20,000 to the TTUSD for the purpose of putting its schools on a path toward sustainability and environmental responsibility.

Inspired by the McConkey Foundation's mission and grant, the Truckee Elementary PT0 stepped up, offering to match the Foundation's grant to the school, dollar for dollar.

The linchpin in bringing green practices and environmental education to the school's students is SWEP, the Sierra Watershed Education Partnerships, a nonprofit dedicated to promoting environmental stewardship in the region's students.

SWEP established the school's Green Team, currently comprised of 27 eager Truckee Elementary fifth-graders, supported and mentored by motivated, environmentally-conscious Truckee High School Envirolution Club student volunteers.

With help from SWEP, the TTUSD and the PT0, Truckee Elementary teachers will be latching on to a wide range of pilot programs designed to integrate environmental awareness and build on the base curriculum. Students will take math and science principles learned in the classroom and apply them in the cafeteria, in the school's gardens and in nearby forests and watersheds. They'll be applying book and chalkboard learning to environmental reality when attending the school's existing Sagehen Creek field-study program (run in conjunction with UC Berkeley).

4 South Tahoe men cited for illegal snowmobiling

While on patrol the night of March 2 officers found fresh snowmobile tracks directly underneath closure signs. One rider fled the scene, abandoning his snowmobile, which was towed and impounded, according the Forest Service officials.

The four snowmobilers, ages 23, 23, 45 and 52, are residents of South Lake Tahoe. They were issued notices to appear before the federal magistrate in Sacramento. Their names have not been released.

If found guilty, each could have to pay a \$5,000 fine and be behind bars for six months.

“Respecting closures helps protect natural resources and reduces conflicts between snowmobilers and other winter users,” Cheva Heck, USFS spokeswoman, said in a press release. “Enforcement of closed areas plays a critical role in the Forest Service winter recreation program in the Lake Tahoe Basin.”

This is the second weekend in a row snowmobilers have been cited for riding in a restricted area.

Free maps explaining snowmobiling opportunities in the Lake Tahoe Basin are available from the Forest Supervisor's Office, 35 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe or by calling (530) 543.2694, or on the LTBMU's website.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Biathlon event for rookies on the West Shore

Strap on your cross country skis and get ready to live the thrill of Olympic competition.

The West Shore Business Association and Turning Point Tahoe are sponsoring a Citizens Against the Clock event which puts skiers of all ages and abilities on a short cross country ski course followed by an electronic rifle shooting range. The idea is to provide a safe and family friendly way to experience this Olympic sport.

State Park volunteers will be on hand for March 11 10am-1pm event at Sugar Pine Point State Park on the West Shore.

Turning Point Tahoe will be providing adaptive skiing options.

Each skier will be electronically timed and the results posted. The event is free. There is an \$8 per vehicle parking fee.

For more information, call (530) 583.3074.

From record hot in Lake Tahoe back to winter white and cold

By Kathryn Reed

TWIN BRIDGES – Sierra-at-Tahoe could have been called Bare-at-Tahoe this weekend based on the amount of skin that was showing. After all, South Lake Tahoe broke a record March 4 with a high of 59. The previous record of 58 was set in 1986.

Truckee at 61 degrees was three degrees shy of tying the record high set in 1914. Minden was 73 on Sunday, tying the record high set in 1925.



The weather station at the top of Grandview at Sierra-at-Tahoe is expected get some action March 6.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

But today will be the complete opposite – or at least more

normal for early March. The high is expected to be 31 degrees in South Lake Tahoe – three degrees warmer than the forecasted overnight low. And tonight the mercury is expected to drop to 10 degrees in South Tahoe.

“Wind is going to be the main problem,” Brian O’Hara, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Reno, said of the cold front that moved into the area last night.

Ski resorts are hoping the on-again, off-again winter the Lake Tahoe Basin has been experiencing is on again.

“There is a direct correlation to the snow we’re getting and the business we are seeing,” Steve Hemphill, spokesman for Sierra, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We are very optimistic about March.”

The parking lot Saturday was definitely more full than the week before. Despite the added people and snow, hardly anyone was enjoying Castle – and it was groomed to perfection.

Last week Sierra added 41 inches to its snowpack, with a couple inches forecast for Tuesday.

Most resorts in the Lake Tahoe area received more than 3 feet of snow in the last week.

Heavenly Mountain Resort opened Mott Canyon, some of its expert terrain, on March 5. But clearly it’s not a normal season when in March only 3,600 of the 4,800 acres are open.

“We are still making snow whenever possible,” Sally Gunter, Heavenly spokeswoman, said.

Homewood Mountain Resort on the West Shore is spinning all its chairlifts.

Kirkwood Mountain Resort is one of the few areas with all of its runs open. They are expecting to get up to 6 inches as this storm comes through.

With the announcement of Vail Resorts buying this resort near the Carson Pass, more people have been making the drive to check it out, according to spokesman Michael Dalzell.

“Kirkwood is doing very well this spring,” Dalzell said.

To keep people driving to Kirkwood the resort has original events lined up like the March 16-18 Freeride Flow Festival. It combines big mountain riding, music and yoga.

Resorts are not releasing closing dates yet. Mid-April is the norm. Most areas like to get through Easter to have the spring break crowd be the last hurrah of the season. That bunny will be bouncing around April 8.

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California tsunami warning system may be disbanded

By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

Less than a year after surging waves from a Japanese earthquake battered the California coast, causing \$58 million in damage and wrecking the Santa Cruz and Crescent City harbors, the Obama administration is moving to reduce funding for the nation's tsunami warning and preparedness programs.

The White House's proposed 2013 budget would cut \$4.6 million from NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, for tsunami programs that were expanded after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami that killed at least 230,000

people.

Among the proposed cuts: a reduction of \$1 million for America's network of 39 high-tech buoys in the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. The buoys confirm if tsunamis are heading toward the

U.S. and provide crucial details such as the height of the waves and when they'll hit land.

Some of the nation's top tsunami scientists say the proposed cuts are too risky.

"Given how little money it is and the concerns about human life, this is a poor place to cut," said John Orcutt, a professor of geophysics at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla.

"It's just like large earthquakes," he said. "The half-life of attention is measured in shorter and shorter periods of time. Our memory isn't very long."

Read the whole story

South Tahoe pedaling toward creating mountain bike park

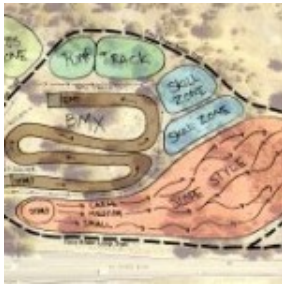
By Kathryn Reed

Strap on a helmet and skip the wilderness, Bijou Community Park may be the place to mountain bike.

About 4 acres of this South Lake Tahoe park off Al Tahoe Boulevard may become home of the Bijou Bike Park. Proponents

would like to build the pump track and kids skill zone this summer, with relocation of the BMX track coming in 2013, and a slope style course built in 2014.

The South Lake Tahoe Parks and Recreation Commission discussed the ideas at its meeting last week, with the City Council expected to vote on the idea at the March 20 meeting.



Proposed
components of
Bijou Bike
Park.

Rendering/Design
Workshop

“It could be a great thing for the community and no cost to the city,” Community Services Director Stan Sherer told *Lake Tahoe News*.

He said with adventure sports growing, the facility would provide an opportunity to draw events that would lure tourists to the area while at the same providing locals with a place to play.

Other than the land and possibly some maintenance and in-kind labor, the city will not put money out for the project.

To-date, conceptual plans have been put together by Design Workshop. South Lake Tahoe BMX and TAMBA, the local mountain biking club, are spearheading the movement.

When TAMBA was resurrected last year many people talked about

creating a pump track on the South Shore.

According to Bikes and Berms, "A pump track is a continuous loop that can be ridden on a bike without pedaling. Tracks consist of a series of rolling bumps (rollers) and banked corners (berms) that allow the rider to gain momentum and reach speeds of up to 20 mph. Basic pump tracks are an oval shape with a berm at each end and rollers in between to make the straights. More advanced pump tracks will be irregular shapes with lots of different lines and sections with several berms in a row or even rollers that can be jumped over."

Having the BMX track in the same area would make for a natural complement for cyclists. Plus, Lake Tahoe Unified School District officials want to have that land back.

"I can tell you that the land where the BMX track sits is identified as part of expanding track and field amenities, specifically a discus course. However, there is no time line set for the move as of now. The BMX Association will continue to operate hosting races and practices on a weekly basis in 2012," Lauren Thomaselli, president of South Lake Tahoe BMX, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

This is the 11th year the track has been open. And it's the only sanctioned BMX track in the country on public school property.

"The BMX track would consist of a series of earth berms, jumps and table tops with a mechanized starting gate and some form of bleachers for spectator seating. The mountain bike skills park would be comprised of more 'built' features that are obviously design[ed] and engineered," according to material supplied by the cycling groups. "The focus of the bike park is to provide skill graded progression for beginner to expert riders by helping to develop a wide range of bike skills including balancing, bike handling and jumping."

The only things likely to be disturbed in Bijou Park are a

couple exercise stations.

Sherer said the cost of the bike park is unknown. But he also said it could be a revenue source for the city if it were to be built.

Bowman on podium for 6th consecutive time

By USSA

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN – Putting pressure aside, after a crash on his first run, David Wise of Reno went huge on his final run and nailed it, scoring a 94.4 for the win at the VISA U.S. Grand Prix, FIS World Cup and platinum AFP event on Sunday.

The win was the third consecutive victory for Wise and also his third major of the season.

On the women's side, Brita Sigourney of Carmel placed her own bookend on the freeskiing series with a top finish. She was also the winner of the first event of the season in Copper Mountain, Colo.

Canada's Rosalind Groenewoud finished second and Maddie Bowman of South Lake Tahoe was third.

Bowman collected her sixth straight podium of the season.

Following Wise was Canada's Noah Bowman with a 92.0 and France's Benoit Valentin with a 90.0.

Yater-Wallace and Wise have been battling for the top position in the Association of Freeskiing Professionals World Ranking lists. The win moves Wise to the top with Yater-Wallace in the second slot.