# Sierra Cup mountain bike competition at Northstar

The Sierra Cup Mountain Bike Racing Series wraps up the 2011 season on Oct. 2 with the Sawtooth Ridge Challenge at Northstar-at-Tahoe.

The Sierra Cup is a seven race point series to determine the USA Cycling cross-country mountain bike champions for the Northern California/Nevada region.

The Sawtooth Ridge Challenge, like the other Sierra Cup events, is donating event proceeds to bicycle related causes. Benefiting from this race will be the Truckee Trails Foundation and the Northstar/Giant development team. The series events have also partnered with Waste Not in Incline Village to meet or exceed zero-waste standards.

Racers will ride a 7-mile course that was developed by Northstar Resort for last year's Collegiate National Championships. Racers will complete multiple laps of the course depending on their ability category. The course will have a mix of trails that include small features like jumps, berms and technical descents. The climbs are spread out to allow time for riders to recover.

There are age and ability categories for all levels of riders. Custom recycled medals are awarded to the top finishers in each category as well as series points. After the race awards, there will be a podium ceremony for the overall series winners. Besides the regional championship medals from USA Cycling, there is also a $1,500 series purse for top riders.

Online registration is available.

# Wet conditions push back start of warterfowl hunting season

**By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee**

The start of waterfowl hunting on public lands in the Sacramento Valley has been delayed by a week because of the lingering effects of a wet winter.

The state Department of Fish and Game announced that hunting on wildlife refuge lands will start Oct. 29, a week later than usual. The reason highlights a complex relationship between refuge operations and rice farming.

**Read the whole story**

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# Should one owl be killed to save another?

**By Francesca Lyman, Sacramento Bee**

It’s a warm sunny day in early August and wildlife biologist Eric Forsman heads up to the Willamette National Forest in Oregon’s Cascades mountains to climb trees. In this land of 200-foot Douglas firs, Forsman will hoist himself up in a harness to check the nests of red tree-voles, a staple of the northern spotted owl’s diet.

From the large tree cavities where spotted owls nest to the decaying logs where they hunt for prey, these birds depend on the lush, old-growth forests of the Pacific Northwest. They are among dozens of species in these ancient forests threatened with extinction, mostly as a result of habitat loss.

But Forsman and his crew of wildlife researchers are reckoning with another threat to the spotted owl: A rival bird getting a critical claw-hold in nesting areas. The barred owl, a larger, brasher, faster-breeding transplant from the East Coast, has invaded the spotted owl's territory, which ranges from Northern California to Washington.

"If you asked me 30 or 40 years ago, I'd tell you that if we just did a good job of protecting old-growth forests, spotted owls would do just fine," Forsman says.

Neglected for years, the northern spotted owl was listed as a threatened species in 1990, after decades of clear-cut logging reduced 90 percent of its old-growth habitat. A landmark 1991 federal ruling forced cutbacks of timber harvests, and the charismatic spotted owl became an icon in a bitter fight between the logging industry and environmentalists.

Lumber mills closed, and thousands of loggers lost jobs in the timber wars, as the Northwest Forest Plan cut harvests on federal lands by 80 percent.

Just as the northern spotted owl seemed spared, it has faced competition from the barred owl, its closely-related cousin. As spotted owl populations have plummeted – by up to 50 percent in Washington in the last 15 years – the number of barred owls has boomed. In some places, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, barred owls may have doubled and tripled within 30 years or less.

"The barred owl is throwing a huge monkey wrench into everything – our research and our management of the forests,"

Forsman says.

**Read the whole story**

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# ‘Back yard’ camping trip opens up new terrain

**By Kathryn Reed**

MARKLEEVILLE – Hiking into Thornburg Canyon I kept wondering why it had taken me so long to even know this area about an hour from South Lake Tahoe even exists.

Thank goodness for the recommendation from the Grover Hot Springs State Park employee that we explore this gorgeous area with its expansive view into Pleasant Valley and foreboding rock structure above it.



Pleasant Valley from the Markleeville side. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Discovering new territory and revisiting a favorite waterfall

were part of our annual girls' camping weekend in August. With the nights spent at the campground neighboring the hot springs, we spent our days on foot seeing what Mother Nature had in store for us.

Sue and I arrived first. With our campsite occupied, we drove around checking out the other 75 campsites until we stumbled upon a U.S. Forest Service presentation about fire safety that involved Smokey Bear and the advice not to try to run from a bear.

That afternoon the four of us stretched our legs along the nature trail. Unfortunately it's one of those trails the state park plans to do away with, but you don't that while you're on it. You just keep wondering what the 26 numbers mean and why it leads you into a marshy area.

On Sunday we head for the waterfalls.

Instead of stopping at the pools above the first falls, Darla leads us farther up the path. That is, if you can call crossing the stream multiple times, following the trail.

Despite our circuitous route, it was beautiful. Less than a handful of people were seen this whole hike – adding to the tranquility of the day.

Even a month ago the water was flowing rapidly – a reminder of the abundance of snow the Sierra received last winter.

Later that day we soak in the hot springs that are walking distance from the campground. We get in free because they are closing early since no lifeguard is on duty. (With the state parks' financial situation a bit precarious, I'd call before making the trek for a day at the springs.)

Something about camping makes things like spaghetti, a taco bar, pancakes, and eggs all taste better. Maybe it's all that fresh air mixed in instead of the normal stale indoor air.

Fortunately, we brought plenty of wood with us – at 5,800 feet this area cools off at night and stays that way well into the morning.

On Monday we hop in Pam's truck for a short ride to the trailhead the parks employee recommended. We head toward the town of Markleeville, turn right on Pleasant Valley Road and make another right on Sawmill Road. We park before we need four-wheel drive, but before the gate for the trail.

A steady climb along what is clearly a road takes us to the trailhead for Thornburg Canyon.

This is all part of the Mokelumne Wilderness. Had we completed the entire 7-plus miles, we would have ended up in the Blue Lakes area. We didn't know that at the time.

It's a forest of mostly pine and hemlock. Beyond the overlook into Pleasant Valley it's a single-track trail that is some places has waist-high Manzanita on either side.

Sagebrush and tall grass consume other portions of the trail.

Looking into that valley it seemed like cattle and cowboys should be rustling there. Trails go through there, making me want to explore the area again and find out a little history about this land.

In the distance the peaks still have snow – which at this rate is likely to be there until the white stuff starts falling again.

We trek up farther, thinking we'll reach the rock formations we had seen from the overlook. But they are never around the next bend. Instead, with no markers on the trail telling us how far we've gone or how far we have to go, we decide cocktail hour is approaching.

It's time to enjoy the campsite.

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# Kokanee Trail Run registration open

Run with the salmon at Taylor Creek on a trail run in the colorful aspen groves at Fallen Leaf Lake.

The half marathon is Oct. 2 at 9am,Tadpole Trot kids run at 9:15am, and the 5K and 10K begin at 10am.

Save $5 by registering before Sept. 30, at Race360.com or on the Tahoe Mountain Milers website.

All Kokanee Trail Run proceeds are donated to Tahoe Heritage Foundation to support local school environmental programs. The event is put on by the Tahoe Mountain Milers Running club in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and Camp Richardson Resort.

For more info or to volunteer, contact Renee or Mark Gorevin at (530) 318.0516.

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# Pretty flower stimulating bike tire repair business

**By Jackie Green, Reno Gazette-Journal**

The little yellow flowers that sprouted after our wet spring

have few, if any, fans in Northern Nevada.

Bicyclist Bruce Ruana wants to send them to Iraq.

“It’s a minefield” riding through them, he said.



Goathead flowers have a thorn that is flattening tires in the Sierra.

Walt Dorman, manager at Great Basin Bicycles in Reno, said they have caused a 200 percent increase in tire flats at his shop during the past few weeks.

“That beautiful little flower turns into that nasty goathead,” said Bill Carlos, horticulturist for Washoe County.

Anyone who has biked or hiked in Northern Nevada or California has run into the goatheads, also called puncturevine, and found the thorns stuck in their dog’s fur or in a flat bicycle tire.

“Why are there goatheads? What do they do?” Ruana, an avid cyclist and baseball/alpine ski manager at Scheels in Sparks, said in frustration.

Puncturevine is a summer annual with yellow flowers.

Each flower produces a spiky seed, so in each seed, there are five seedlets, “each of which seems to be capable of

puncturing tires, getting through flip-flops, etc.” said Sue Donaldson of the University of Nevada, Reno Cooperative Extension.

From the time it starts growing, puncturevine will flower within a few weeks and keep flowering, producing seeds the entire time it is growing.

**Read the whole story**

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# Bike event is all about kids

Nevada State Parks in cooperation with the Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park Backcounrty Patrol, the Reno Wheelmen, and the Tahoe Area Mountain Biking Association will host young riders, ages 6 to 16, for a youth mountain biking event. The ride is part of a nationwide celebration known as Take a Kid Mountain Biking Day, supported by the International Mountain Bicycling Association.

The event is Oct. 1 beginning at 9:30am at the Spooner Lake entrance of Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park. Participants must bring a bike and helmet and a parent or guardian to sign the participation form. Parents and friends are welcome and encouraged to ride, too. There is no fee for the event, however there is an entrance fee to access the state park.

There will be safe riding information, bike safety checks, riding tips, and informal skill clinics. Groups of kids with similar skills will then be taken on the beginner trail around Spooner Lake by experienced bike patrol members. Goodie bags will be given to the first 50 kids to show up.

IMBA’s International Take a Kid Mountain Biking Day celebrates

the life of Jack Doub, an avid teenage mountain biker from North Carolina who had a true passion for the sport from an early age to the time when he passed away in 2002.

For additional information, email info@tahoebikepatrol.org

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# Youth mountain bike races at Northstar

The Sierra Nevada High School Racing Series comes to Northstar-at-Tahoe for three events this fall starting Saturday.

Originally formed in the foothills around Folsom Lake, the Northstar-at-Tahoe venue is being added to make it easier for youth in the Tahoe-Reno area to participate.

The first race at Northstar is the Tara Llanes Classic cross country event Sept. 24. The series returns to Northstar on Oct. 8-9 for a weekend of racing. That weekend will have a spectator friendly short-track race on Saturday and the longer cross-country event on Sunday.

The series has age and ability categories for riders age 18 or younger. Although it is geared toward high school and middle school students, there are also categories for those 12 and younger. Riders may form a team from their school to accumulate team points in the series or race independently.

The Northstar events are presented by the Reno Wheelmen and sanctioned by USA Cycling. Online registration is open. For more information,  email mtb11@renowheelmen.org.

# Workers needed to help on mountain bike trails

This weekend TAMBA is having two trail days in honor of National Public Lands Day.

The first is Sept. 24 on Mr. Toads-Saxon Creek Trail in South Lake Tahoe. The Sept. 25 event is on the East Shore near the Flume Trail on the new Marlette-Hobart Connector.

Work will primarily be on the main rock sections of upper Toads. The existing technical alignments will be kept intact. The main goals are to stabilize these lines and more clearly define them by removing some alternate lines and side trails that have appeared.

Everyone should ride their bikes to the work area and then ride down afterward. The U.S. Forest Service will drop off all tools beforehand.

Bring water, long sleeves, sunglasses, gloves, and your bike. Lunch and snacks will be provided.

Meet at the rock sections at 9:30am – this is about a half mile down from the intersection of Saxon Creek and the Tahoe Rim Trail. The workday ends about 3:30pm, with a then ride down to the bottom parking lot for a free barbecue and beers.

TAMBA, the bike patrol, Muscle Powered Carson City, and Nevada State Parks will be working on the Marlette-Hobart Connector Trail. Bring long pants, long sleeves, sturdy shoes, gloves, water and a lunch.

Meet at 8am at the Lakeview Gate (4500 Hobart Road, Carson City) for 4WD carpool up to the work site. Work will end about

3pm, being back at the gate around 4pm.

For more info, email trails@mountainbiketahoe.org.

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# Seasonal dog ban intact for Upper Truckee Marsh

**By Kathryn Reed**

Dogs are allowed in the Upper Truckee Marsh area – for now.

Unless the California Tahoe Conservancy board suspends the summer seasonal ban, it will remain in effect indefinitely. For now, that appears to be what will happen.

Blame it on locals.



Dogs like AJ are allowed in the Upper Truckee Marsh area if on leash. Photo/LTN file

"Eighty-five percent of citations and warnings issued by law enforcement were issued to local residents, with local being

defined as a resident in the South Lake Tahoe-Stateline area," Dana Dapolito, associate environmental planner with the CTC, told the board last week.

The Conservancy owns the 311 acres in South Lake Tahoe. Trout Creek, which flows into Lake Tahoe, runs through the property. This is prime habitat for wildlife, mainly birds.

Dogs off-leash are the problem. They ruin habitat, destroy nests, kill birds and stress out the birds. To protect the area, the CTC board in July 2010 approved the temporary dog ban from May 1-July 31.

While this has caused much controversy with people in the Al Tahoe neighborhood and others who access the land, no one from the public spoke at the meeting.

With winter lingering into June this year, about six weeks of data was collected. In that time period, El Dorado County sheriff's deputies issued 86 warnings or citations and the county's Animal Control officers handed out 21 citations.

Even though dogs are now allowed to be on the property, all must be on leash. That is not happening, according to Dapolito.

She told the board that in August the agency's land stewards said 75 percent of dog walkers were complying with the law, with locals accounting for nearly 100 percent of those violating the rule.

The Conservancy wants multiple years of data on avian counts in the marsh and to study shorebirds to know if fewer (ideally no) dogs in the habitat area help the birds. About three years is also the time period law enforcement says it takes to change human behavior – as in following the rules or going elsewhere.

This was an informational item for the board, with no action

proposed.