Sierra Cup mountain bike series starts Saturday

The Sierra Cup Regional Championship Mountain Biking Series for 2011 begins May 21 in Gardnerville.

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. Top finishers at the first three events will also qualify to compete at the Mountain Bike National Championships in Sun Valley on July 14-17.

The Sierra Cup events are the Pine Nut Cracker on May 21 in Gardnerville; Peavine Challenge on June 5 in Reno; Skyline Park Mountain Bike Race on June 12 in Napa; Kirkwood Mountain Classic on July 30 at Kirkwood; Sky Tavern Classic on Aug. 14 in Reno; Great Tahoe Flume Race on Sept. 10 at Spooner Lake; and Sawtooth Ridge Challenge on Oct. 2 at Northstar-at-Tahoe.

Online pre-registration is available for all events.

These events take riders through some of best trails in the West and challenge them with heart pounding climbs and fun, technical descents. There are age and ability categories for all levels of riders. Race distances vary with each event and are often based on the ability categories.

The Sierra Cup is unique in that all of the participating races donate their proceeds to various nonprofit organizations that give back to the trails where mountain bikers ride. For more information, go online or email mtb11@renowheelmen.org.

Tahoe Bike Challenge gets people out of their cars

The 6th annual Tahoe Bike Challenge is scheduled to run from May 23 to June 3. This is Tahoe's effort to participate in Bike to Work Month – a national public awareness campaign.

It is a two wee promotion challenging everyone in the Lake Tahoe Basin to ride their bicycle instead of using an automobile while traveling to work, school, recreational sites or running daily errands.

Individuals and groups of friends or co-workers can organize together to build a team and participate.

In 2009, 700 individuals, 87 company teams and six schools registered online to track their daily trips and miles for a total of 23,000 miles. To participate, as an individual or team, go online to register.

Each day, participants can input their number of riding trips and miles for the day and the online system keeps a running tally of all individuals and teams progress. Also on a daily basis are random drawings for valuable prizes that include, but are not limited to, lift tickets to Kirkwood and Northstar Bike Parks, bicycle lights, and more.

The Tahoe Bike Challenge is collaboration between the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, the Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition (LTBC) and others in their effort to bring attention to the need for reducing dependence on the automobile for bio-region health and sustainability.

In addition to the Bike Challenge is a new fund-raising program called Bucks 4 Bikes. It is a program designed to raise dollars for the purchasing of bicycles and helmets for Tahoe's youth who would otherwise not have the opportunity for

independent mobility, a fitness activity, positive socialization with family and friends, and a deepening appreciation for the outdoors.

North Shore ready to welcome summer Memorial Day weekend

Summer officially kicks off in North Lake Tahoe on Memorial Day Weekend with the 5th Annual Opening Day at the Lake.

This four-day special event is May 27-30, and is comprised of celebrations and festivities along the West Shore and in downtown Tahoe City.

Opening Day at the Lake events include deck opening celebrations at Sunnyside Resort, West Shore Café, Chambers Landing Bar & Restaurant and Bridgetender; West Shore Clean Up Day; Granlibakken Resort's Contractors Home Improvement/Repair Fair; Spirit of the West Shore Cocktail Competition at West Shore Café; the opening of Meeks Bay Resort & Marina; the opening of Tahoe City's Tahoe Gal (Mississippi paddlewheeler), as well as Tahoe Sailing Charters; McBride's Nursery (Tahoe Tree Company) annual Truck Load Sale of perennials and shrubs; openings and tours of the historical Vikingsholm Castle and Ehrman Mansion; guided museum tours, with admission, of the Tahoe Maritime Museum; Preview Center Open House at Homewood Mountain Resort; open house at the Rideout Community Center; historic walking tour at Tahoe City's Gatekeeper's Museum; as well as the popular Mike Brown Seaplane Splash-In and barbecue at Obexer's General Store.

North Lake Tahoe's paved bike trails are also open, accessible and cleared of snow.

For more information about Opening Day at the Lake (including a complete calendar of events), recreational activities, lodging and Cool Deals, social media sites, videos and images in North Lake Tahoe, go online.

Sugar pine planting in Truckee

The Sugar Pine Foundation will be planting healthy, fungus-resistant sugar pine seedlings in Truckee on June 4 starting at 10am to restore the Alder Creek area. Seedlings, tools, instruction and refreshments will be provided.

Meet at the intersection of Alder Creek Road and Schussing Way in Truckee.

For more information, call (650) 814.9565.

Non-competitive bike ride in Diamond Valley

There is a new ride coming to town on June 11 that challenges kids and families alike. It will be quite different than the other big rides for hardcore cyclists in the area.

As part of this year's "Alta Alpina Challenge: Riding the Wild Sierra" cycling event, the Alta Alpina Cycling Club is organizing a fun, non-competitive ride for people of all ages.

Designed to accommodate cyclists of all abilities, the course will allow riders to experience the scenic beauty of the Sierra foothills along the popular road riding area of Diamond Valley. Options for the ride range from 15 to 20 miles.

For more information, go to the website or call 877.845.2453.

The Alta Alpina Challenge: Riding the Wild Sierra is a cycling event which encompasses five distinct rides: The Family Fun Ride is a ride aimed at local individuals and families along with the companions of cyclists participating in one of the other rides. There is also a metric century, century, five pass challenge and “The World’s Toughest Double Century”, the eight-pass challenge.

Snow expected to stick overnight in Tahoe

With flurries in the air this afternoon, it’s merely a precursor to what will amount to a few inches, according to the National Weather Service in Reno.

A winter weather advisory is in effect from 5pm Tuesday to 11am Wednesday.

Forecasters are calling for 2 to 6 inches at lake level and in the Carson Valley, with 5 to 8 inches above 7,000 feet, and 10 inches or more near the Sierra crest.

Visibility is expected to be poor. Chain controls will likely be in place.

Highs will be in the low 40s for the next couple days, returning to the 50s Thursday. Thursday and Friday are likely

to be dry, with rain in the forecast for Saturday.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Common sense approach to staying safe in outdoors

By Tri-County Newspapers

The California Department of Fish and Game reminds campers, anglers and hikers enjoying the outdoors to take precautions to limit black bear encounters. A key element to safe camping and recreating in bear country is to limit food odors that attract bears.

“Bears are constantly in search of easily obtainable food sources,”said Marc Kenyon, DFG statewide bear program coordinator. “A bear’s fate is almost always sealed once it associates human activity with potential food. It’s always unfortunate when a bear has to be killed because people either haven’t learned how to appropriately store food and trash, or simply don’t care.”

California’s growing black bear population is now estimated at more than 40,000. Black bears are located in most of the state where suitable habitat exists and bear/human encounters are not isolated to wilderness settings. For example, last year black bears stirred up trouble in one of California’s premier tourist destinations, as DFG staff logged more than 5,200 hours handling black bear nuisance issues in the Lake Tahoe region alone.

Read the whole story

Wild sprint to the finish of ‘first’ stage of Amgen bike race

By John Schumacher and Ed Fletcher, Sacramento Bee

Sky Procycling’s team surged to the front with one two-mile circuit left in Monday’s second stage of the Amgen Tour of California, then delivered sprinter Ben Swift to a narrow victory.

“It was my opportunity to go for the win,” the 23-year-old British cyclist said after donning the leader’s yellow jersey. “Everybody did their job 100 percent.”

Swift grabbed his fifth stage victory of the year in a stage shortened from 133.2 miles to 76.3 miles. The start was moved from Squaw Valley to Nevada City because of concerns over potential bad weather and road conditions on Donner Summit.

Swift sprinted past runner-up Peter Sagan of Liquigas-Cannondale and third-place finisher Matt Goss of HTC-Highroad in the closing yards approaching the finish line at 11th and L Streets.

Read the whole story

USFS plans weekend of outdoor activities at Taylor Creek

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit and its partners invite residents and visitors to the first Wild Tahoe Weekend with fun, free events for the whole family.

Based at the Forest Service's Taylor Creek Visitor Center, located three miles north of the Hwy 89/50 junction in South Lake Tahoe, this "wild weekend" offers the opportunity to experience Lake Tahoe's natural world.

The weekend kicks off June 4 with the second annual Lake Tahoe Bird Festival, sponsored by Forest Service and the Tahoe Institute for Natural Science. Learn about migratory birds and how local scientists are working to protect them.

Bring children to the special "Kids' Zone" where they can learn to hoot like an owl, find out why birds have so many feathers, make bird "feeding sticks" out of peanut butter and birdseed and create bird nests.

Adults can find out how proper feeding and landscaping can attract desirable bird species, and learn from Cabela's about binoculars and spotting scopes to make bird watching more enjoyable. Visitors of all ages can learn through talks about owls and migration, including a presentation by a falconer with live birds of prey.

Bird walks will take place every hour from 10:30am until 1:30pm at Taylor Creek. Bird walks are also scheduled for other locations around the lake. All walks are free, but space for the off-site walks is limited and preregistration is required.

To register, call Will Richardson at (530) 587.6895 or email will@tinsweb.org. To join a walk at Taylor Creek, just show

up.

June 5 will mark the debut of the Festival of Native Species. Events will include planting native Tahoe yellow cress, a native fish release, a play and parade by the Lake Tahoe Environmental Science Magnet School, nature walks, games and crafts.

Events both days will run from 10am-4pm. Food will be available for purchase.

For a complete list of activities (all free), go online.

Wooden boats revving up engines for summer show

Classic boats from a classic era. That’s what guests will discover at the 2011 South Tahoe Wooden Boat Classic July 29-30 at the Tahoe Keys Marina & Yacht Club.

The STWBC is one of the West’s largest classic boat shows, and this year the headliner will be White Smoke which was originally delivered to South Lake Tahoe’s Pope Estate and is currently part of the Tahoe Maritime Museum’s collection. White Smoke is a 1930, 30-foot Sea Lyon, model 45 triple cockpit runabout. The George A. Pope family enjoyed their home and the boat on Lake Tahoe for years before finally gifting the estate to the U.S. Forest Service.



Wooden boats will return to the Tahoe Keys Marina in July. Photo/LTN file

While White Smoke will command center stage at the STWBC, it will have plenty of company. More than 65 antique and classic boats will be on display at the Tahoe Keys Marina & Yacht Club.

A new attraction this year will be a kit boat, newly built by Tahoe City Boy Scout Troop No. 266 which will be on display in the sponsor tent area. The boat is a project being built by the Scouts and their fathers with guidance and support from ACBS member John Lahti of Tahoe City.

Throughout Friday afternoon and all day Saturday, guests at the Wooden Boat Classic will hear the thunder of these classic beauties while having the opportunity to stroll through the sponsor and charity booths and buy a memento of the day in the Antique & Classic Boat Society’s Ships Store. Snacks, drinks and a barbecue lunch will be available at gourmet refreshment booths. The Tahoe Maritime Museum will also have their boat in the marina and will be giving rides to families who join the museum at the boat show.