Ski report: Bluebird day in Tahoe



Lather on the sunscreen, it’s a gorgeous day at the lake.

Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Film explores epic Pacific Crest Trail

The Pacific Crest Trail and Tahoe Rim Trail associations are showing the National Geographic film, “America’s Wild Spaces: The Pacific Crest Trail” on May 31 at 6pm.

This hourlong film chronicles the peaks and valleys of the epic 2,650-mile-long Pacific Crest Trail. This trail stretches from Mexico to Canada, cutting through seven national parks and 24 national forests.

The PCT and TRT run concurrently for approximately 50 miles along the West Short of Lake Tahoe.

The film will be show at Explore Tahoe: An Urban Trailhead, located at 4114 Lake Tahoe Blvd. near the Heavenly Village.

Parking is available in the public garage for a flat rate of $5 after 4pm. Space is limited, so make your reservation

early.

For more information, contact Max Baker at (775) 298.0239, or Lauren Thomaselli at (530) 542.4637.

Fishing season in Lake Tahoe lures locals and tourists

By Susan Wood

With a whale of a fish already caught in Emerald Bay this spring, the 2011 fishing season may turn out to be a memorable one for Lake Tahoe enthusiasts and guides.

The little tykes and younger set have received a boost from the state and the El Dorado County community because Sawmill Pond will be stocked with plenty of fish. The formal season for the popular family fishing hole where Lake Tahoe Boulevard and Sawmill Road intersect starts April 30, though people were out there April 10.

Last year, California was unable to contribute to stocking the pond, sending the community scrambling to secure private funds for the venture.



Fishing is free and only

for those 14 and younger at Sawmill Pond on the South Shore. Photo/Kathryn Reed

This spring, the California Department of Fish & Game intends to supply the pond with 250 pounds of Lahontan cutthroat trout – the native fish that is mandated, but was unavailable to the state in great numbers from hatcheries last year.

Private groups already came through this winter with their donations – including two Tahoe rotary clubs contributing $8,500 for the effort. About $15,000 is needed to get the pond up to par for the annual Sawmill Pond Kid's Fishing Derby put on by the Optimist Club on June 11, El Dorado County Fish and Game Commissioner Victor Babbitt indicated. The derby is open to children ages 14 and younger.

Babbitt, who runs Tahoe Fly Fishing Outfitters in South Lake Tahoe, predicts 2011 to be a good year for fishing in the rivers and lakes.

During drought years, it's tougher for fish to survive with less flow in the waterways. They won't have that problem with the high flows and phenomenal runoff expected this year. Whitewater blankets the American River.

However, it may be harder early on for those who fish to negotiate their spots.

"We'll still have high flows right up to the opener," Babbitt said.

Even ice fishing may last longer with the big winter in the Sierra Nevada.

Among other places, Babbitt sends fishing enthusiasts to Indian Creek Reservoir and Cave Rock if they're venturing onto Lake Tahoe. The limit on the lake is five, with no more than two Mackinaw trout, according to California Fish & Game regulations.

On the Carson River, the East Fork is always closed to fishing above Carson Falls. Below them, it is allowed all year.

All the tributaries leading into the lake remain closed until July 1. For the season opener, one may fish 1,000 feet below the Lake Tahoe outlet dam on the Truckee River. The minimum size requirement is 14 inches. Only artificial lures with barbless hooks may be used.

Winter is fair game on the lake



Gene St. Denis holds an 11-pound, 4-ounce German brown trout caught in Lake Tahoe. Photo/Provided

Chuck Lane got a jump on the fishing season by braving 29-degree, blustery weather a few weeks ago to catch a mega German brown trout in Emerald Bay with his Lake Tahoe guide Gene St. Denis of Blue Ribbon Fishing.

"We were the only boat out there. Emerald Bay was howling," said St. Denis, who logs at least 200 days on the water. The

trout they hauled in St. Denis considered “rare.”

The fish weighing 11 pounds, 4 ounces and measuring 32 inches took a lot of fishing line from the Morgan Hill man, but he expected a longer fight.

“He didn’t fight that much in the cold. If I had caught him in the summertime, I don’t how long it would have taken,” Lane said. He agreed with his wife, Barbara, who called it a “bucket list” venture.

“I’ve always had a big desire to catch a German brown. I’ve become enamored with it. It’s a beautiful fish, and it tastes really good,” Lane said while at Harrah’s Reno for a bowling tournament. The fish meat is considered rich.

Lane took the fish to the casino kitchen to cook it. He got one serving and treated the cooking staff to the rest.

As a decade-long ritual, Lane comes up to Tahoe from the Bay Area to fish and ski. With his luck, some may wonder if he should hit the tables.

Pyramid Lake trying to get handle on invasive species

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Potential danger to Pyramid Lake from invading mollusks has the attention of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, which is taking steps to avoid a problem that could come with dire environmental and economic damage.

The Tribal Council recently approved regulatory changes which,

among other things, will begin a boater education program and the voluntary inspection of some boats launching into the desert lake.

The effort is designed to avoid the possible infestation of quagga mussels, which tribal officials acknowledge would be a disaster.

“These mussels could absolutely destroy all the hard work that’s been done,” said Scott Carey, tribal planner.

Read the whole story

Ski report: Make sure you have the correct wax



Spring has sprung on the slopes of Tahoe. Time to reapply the wax to get through the slow spots.

Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Myriad events lead up to

Amgen bike race in Tahoe

Lake Tahoe is hosting a 10-day celebration as a countdown before May's Amgen Tour of California starts in Stateline.



May 5: Hard Rock Cafe at Harveys Lake Tahoe is hosting the official Amgen Tour of California kick-off party, with a percentage of the evening's proceeds donated to Amgen's title sponsor, Breakaway from Cancer, an initiative that helps empower people affected by cancer.

May 6: Sammy Hagar and the Wabos will be playing at Harrah's South Shore Room on Friday and Saturday, while the historic Bar of America in Truckee will host DJ Zeb Early.

May 7: Tahoe's nightclubs will be stocked and ready for weekend partiers. Opal, Vex and Crystal Bay Club, along with the Village at Squaw Valley, will keep the beats bumping May 6-7 and 13-14.

May 8-10: At South Shore casinos throughout the week, visitors and locals can view One Voice Starring Bethany Owen at the Horizon, The Improv at Harveys with host and emcee Howie Nave, and the Party with Arty at Harrah's Lake Tahoe.

May 11: The Biking for a Better World Winemaker Dinner is at PlumpJack Squaw Valley Inn. Dinner will support an organization that brings accessibility to communities in need around the world.

May 12: The Slow Rollers Bicycle Club presents the Spirit Bike Parade where all types of bikes and costumes are encouraged – almost mandatory. Bikes will be rolling from the Y in South Tahoe to MontBleu in Stateline.

In North Lake Tahoe, the Squaw Valley Institute hosts Soulcycler, Around the World Bike Tour with South Tahoe

photographer/cycling enthusiast Rick Gunn.

Barton Health 2011 Lecture Series features topics ranging from nutrition, preventing injuries, maximizing performance and more at Embassy Suites from 6–8pm.

May 13: The Opening Gala and Official Team Introduction at MontBleu Resort Casino & Spa. For a black tie evening.

The Village at Squaw Valley will hosts a free outdoor cycling movie, “Breaking Away “(1979), directed by Peter Yates and starring Dennis Quaid.

The Crystal Bay Club will have Jackie Greene and Band until the early morning hours.

May 14: The inaugural Start at the Top – Lake Tahoe Legends Ride, allows cycling enthusiasts to ride the Stage 1 first lap

The North Lake Tahoe Bike Swap, the Tahoe City Street Dance and the 3rd Annual Wellness Weekend at the Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe.

Eric Burdon & the Animals will be playing at Harrah’s South Shore Room on the eve of the Stage 1 start.

Ski report: Party at the resorts



Special events today at many resorts.

Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Napa Valley isn’t just about wine – it’s good for camping

By Kathryn Reed

CALISTOGA – Camping at Bothe-Napa Valley State Park almost had us forgetting about all the nearby vineyards.

This 2,000-acre park is quiet despite its proximity to Highway 29, the main artery through the Wine Country. Tucked into the hills, the vegetation – and tents – reminds us why we are here. It’s our annual girls camping weekend.

We barely got a campsite last June. Such are the hazards of being in snow country; you can forget June is the heart of summer for most of California and that recreation sites fill up. In fact, campsites can be booked up to seven months in advance.

(We learned from last year and already have reservations for this year.)



Pam Valentine relaxes during the annual girls camping trip. Photos/Kathryn Reed

But I'm not much of a camper – that's why I picked this particular park. I would prefer wine tasting and spa treatments as a girls' get-away. A little wine tasting with our camping made it my kind of roughing it.

Still, the park is magnificent with redwoods sprouting near Ritchey Creek. Douglas fir, tanoak and madrone make up most of the flora.

Although 10 miles of trail exist in the park, we didn't just stretch our legs there. We drove through the town of Calistoga, along the windy section of Highway 20 to Robert Louis Stevenson State Park.

The author used his diary from his days of honeymooning at the site to create "Silverado Squatters."

Parking is on both sides of the highway. The trail leads to the top of Mount St. Helena. Much of it is wide because it becomes a fire road. (Bikes are allowed on this section.)

It is one of those hikes to do early in the day because of the heat of the sun is baking. Shade is scarce.

Once at the top we realize it's really two peaks. We stop at

the south peak – elevation 4,003 feet and 4.1 miles from the truck. The north peak – elevation 4,343 feet – is another 1.7 miles up the road.

From our perch we look down into the verdant Napa Valley. On clear days Mt. Diablo and Mt. Tamalpais are visible.

Back at the park we spend part of a day walking along the 1.2-mile History Trail that starts in the picnic area and ends at the historic Bale Grist Mill.

Along the dry, hot trail (bring water) is the site of the first church built in Napa County in 1853. Tombstones fill a cemetery. Oh, the stories that must be associated with them.

At the mill we are treated to a tour of what is still an actual working grist mill. It was built in 1846. Grain is ground into flour just like it was 150 years ago.

The end product is for sale. But the packages say “not for human consumption” because the site doesn’t meet 21st century health codes. Nonetheless, there are women buying up the various mixtures – saying this is their annual trip to do so.

We leave with pastry flour and a recipe for Bale Mill Pancakes. Bisquick could take some pointers from this mill.

The history of the area is worth a side trip next time you are in the Napa Valley – and certainly worth a camping trip away from the Sierra. This state park is on Highway 89 between St. Helena and Calistoga on west side.

More information about California State Parks is on the agency’s website. The camping page is here.

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Record snowfall may mean summer skiing in Tahoe



Kirkwood Mountain Resort staffers had to often dig out this winter. Photo/Provided

The king of deep snow – Kirkwood Mountain Resort – plans to not only stay open until May 1. It's very "likely" the Alpine County ski resort will reopen for the Memorial Day and July 4 weekends. Bonus days are also slated for May 7 and 8.

"We've had an enormous amount of snow," Kirkwood spokesman Michael Dalzell told Lake Tahoe News, referring to a recorded 729 inches in snowfall. Kirkwood's record was set in 1982, an El Nino year, with 775 inches. "These are mid February conditions now."

On Saturday, Kirkwood hosts its annual Spring Jammin', with a pond skim, ice bar and live music. Other upcoming events include a ho-downhill and barbecue on Saturday, a ladies' clinic on April 16 and a sunset ski and wine tasting event on

April 30 with Northwest Magnum running through 7:30 p.m. and wine and appetizers in the Timbers Bar.

Upcoming events include a ho-downhill and barbecue on Saturday, a ladies' clinic on April 16 and a sunset ski and wine tasting event on April 30 with Northwest Magnum running through 7:30 p.m. and wine and appetizers in the Timbers Bar.

Alpine Meadows, like most Lake Tahoe resorts, will extend its ski season thanks to the history-making, late-season windfall the region received in 2011. More than 61 feet of snow has fallen in the Sierra high country so far, second to the 1950-51 season, when a total of 65 feet fell. A set of stairs that guides Alpine Meadows visitors up to the resort's second-story sun deck had vanished last weekend, buried under record amounts of snowfall.

Alpine, which received more than 48 feet of total snowfall at mid-mountain, will continue full operations until April 24. Select lifts will be running Fridays through Sundays until May 15.

"With this much snow, Squaw Valley will have great coverage through May 30 and possibly even longer," said Andy Wirth, Squaw Valley's chief executive officer. "We will certainly be examining the possibility of opening for July 4, conditions permitting."

And Squaw touted a record Friday of their own in hitting a 700-inch cumulative snowfall mark – the first time in the resort's history. The resort has floated being open over the Fourth of July. If it reaches the holiday, it would be the fifth time in history that it has hosted skiing on that date.

After May 8, Squaw moves to Friday-Sunday operations, offering skiing and riding May 13-16, May 20-22 and May 27-30. Additional days of operation include May 16, the Stage 2 start of the Amgen Tour of California; and May 30, the Memorial Day holiday. Through the end of May, Squaw's High Camp Swimming

Lagoon and Hot Tub will host pool parties at the top of the mountain.

On Saturday, join Olympic gold medalist Julia Mancuso at the Julia Mancuso Kiss My Tiara Pool Party followed by a free outdoor concert by Donavan Frankenreiter on the KT Sundeck. On Easter Sunday, ski with the Easter Bunny and participate in the on-mountain egg hunt.

With a April 24 closing scheduled, Heavenly is celebrating a 100-inch base, marking one of its best snowfall seasons in a quarter of a century. The ideal conditions will help with the annual Gunbarrel 25 slated Saturday morning at the South Shore ski resort. The homespun event is just what the name implies. Participants try to barrel down the ominous face dotted with Volkswagen-sized moguls as many times as they can in the allotted time.

Adding to the event lineup, Heavenly is hosting "Springloaded 2011," a giant marathon party scheduled for April 8 through 23 with music and entertainment such as the wild and wacky "pond-skimming" event.

"This year's winter storms gave us an outstanding base for spring skiing, and I am thrilled with the incredible snow conditions at Heavenly," Vice President of Sales and Marketing John Wagnon said.

Sierra-at-Tahoe has lined up a slew of events of its own to commemorate some of its best conditions ever for its later closing – April 24. It boasts 712 inches of snowfall as of April 1, with 40 powder days. Only 11 winters have surpassed 500 inches of snowfall there.

Here is more information on resort closures and events:
-Mt. Rose Ski Tahoe: Season extended through May 6 for the general public.

-Mammoth Mountain: The ski area south of Lake Tahoe but

situated at high elevation, also has hinted on its website that it's shooting for a Fourth of July finale. The resort's Red Bull Schlittentag is today, and its annual Season Pass Party is April 16. The Ice Bar Spring Bash is April 17, and the the Beacon and Eggs beacon search contest is April 24.

-Boreal Mountain Resort: The resort extended its season until April 24. Boreal also reports on its website that it will be open on weekends during May, conditions and business levels permitting.

-Diamond Peak Ski Resort: The Incline Village-owned and operated resort closes April 24, a week after its originally scheduled closing date.

– Donner Ski Ranch: The family owned resort will be open daily through the end this month. Starting May 1, it will go to Saturdays and Sundays through the end of May.

– Homewood Mountain Resort: The resort will remain open through Monday, then transition to a spring schedule that include skiing April 15-18 from 9am to 2pm and April 22-24 from 9am to 2pm. The South Lodge base area will be closed during the two additional weekends. Homewood will offer live music on its North Lodge patio April 16, 23 and 24. April 16 also is Super Hero Day – wear your Batman suit on the hill.

– Northstar-at-Tahoe Resort: Northstar reports it will close April 24. The resort is offering discounted daily lift tickets (for $61) available at participating outlets in Reno, Sacramento and San Francisco. Visit www.northstarattahoe.com for more information and a full calendar of events.

– Sugar Bowl: The Donner Summit resort this week extended its season through May 1. Easter weekend festivities include a Golden Egg Hunt and live music on the Mt. Judah Lodge deck.

-Tahoe Donner: The Truckee resort extended its season through April 17. The End-of-Season Party still is planned for Sunday.

The event includes a downhill dummy, food and beverage specials, a bounce house, local ski and board shop exhibit, and the second Boxing Match Rail Jam. All-day lift tickets will be discounted to the half-day rates.

A number of resorts are offering discounted spring season passes. Prices can be found on each resort's website.

–Lake Tahoe News and Reno Gazette-Journal staff reports

Ski report: Expect the unexpected



Layer up! It looks like another day of shifting skies with sun, cloud cover, and scattered snow showers in the mix. Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.