Tracking backcountry data in Tahoe region

By Reno Gazette-Journal

TAHOE CITY — Alpenglow Sports, a 30-year North Lake Tahoe backcountry ski and outdoor retailer, has partnered with industry-leading outdoor manufacturers Black Diamond, Dynafit North America, Patagonia and Marmot to create an unprecedented challenge for the region's backcountry skiing community.

"Tahoe's consistently deep snowpack, long spring season and copious bluebird powder days have spawned a tremendously motivated backcountry user group that cumulatively put in an astounding amount of human-powered vertical each winter," Alpenglow Sports General Manager Brendan Madigan said.

This free, "earn-your-turns" event starts with a simple online form at www.TahoeVertical.com, where participants can enter their daily vertical feet collected on skis, snowboard and snowshoe or simply hiking. The challenge will collect data from all participants through May 1.

Read the whole story

UNR professor battles alien species at Lake Tahoe

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Don't call him a fish guy.

It’s not that he doesn’t know a lot about fish. He does. He knows about big ones and little ones. He knows a lot about ones that are swimming where they should be and those that are living where they should not.

But as a professor of limnology at University of Nevada, Reno, Sudeep Chandra’s knowledge of inland water systems – lakes, rivers, streams and estuaries – extends far beyond its scaled denizens.

“You can say it’s inland oceanography,” Chandra said of a specialty that involves biology, physics, geology and chemistry, among other things.

“You have to study a little bit of everything,” said Chandra, 36. “We focus a little bit on all of these things.”

Chandra’s work takes him to many faraway locations – places like Mongolia and Bhutan, Guatemala and the Siberian Arctic.

But in 2010, much of Chandra’s attention was focused close to home – to Lake Tahoe, a national treasure threatened by a frightening invasion of non-native fish and shellfish that could profoundly impact the landmark alpine lake. Chandra’s work at Tahoe and other Nevada lakes this year earned him an award of excellence from the American Fisheries Society, the group’s highest honor.

Read the whole story

Ski report: Clear and cold



It’s looking like another gorgeous day to hit the slopes. Check out the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Sparks ski manufacturer turns hobby into international business

By Kara Lapoint, Reno Gazette-Journal

Casey Hakansson learned how to build skis in a snowboard manufacturing shop.

It was not the conventional route for starting a ski company, but it’s where the journey began for the 32-year-old founder and president of Sparks-based Moment Skis.

“My friend was making snowboards over at Sentury Snowboards (in Reno),” Hakansson said. “Through bugging him and seeing how he did it, and just asking a bunch of questions, is how the first Moment Skis were built.”

The Gardnerville native, who grew up with a passion for skiing but began his career by running his family’s Gardnerville masonry after college, said making skis started out as something “super hobby-ish.”

“I definitely had no plan of being where we are now,” he said.

And just where is Hakansson’s company?

Read the whole story

Pro skier from Squaw creates reality show

By Charles Bethea, ESPN Action Sports

Coming to a network near you: the gnarly evolution of “Nitro Circus.” Over the past year, Squaw Valley-based pro skier Mike Wilson, with the help of sponsors and partners, has raised and spent an estimated $1 million filming six episodes of what the 24-year-old calls an “action-sports-based-adventure-travel show.” The pilot, now complete, will be shopped around major networks next week.

“I basically dreamed up a bunch of the gnarliest things in some of the most dangerous sports I could come up with,” says Wilson, from his parents home in Squaw Valley, after a mid-December day on the slopes, “and my friends and I set out to do them all.” So far he and a revolving crew of action sports accomplices – including Byron Wells and Jesse Hall – have been heli-skiing, BASE-jumping, wing-suiting, snowmobiling, sky diving, snowboarding, rope swinging and zip-lining around the world.

Wilson’s full-time partners on the project are Patrick Rivelli, owner of the website unofficialsquaw.com, and Johnny DeCesare, filmmaker and founder of action film company Poor Boyz Productions. Rivelli, who had the original idea for the show, has contributed capital – as have a few of Wilson’s skiing sponsors – while DeCesare has contributed filmmaking know-how and equipment. Wilson, who is an executive producer and the show’s de facto star, has been responsible for

rounding up the talent, and creating the game plan, which amounts to “going to some of the most beautiful places in the world with incredible backdrops and stuff to do something crazy or gnarly.”

Read the whole story

Exploring the southern Sierra on snowshoes

By Marek Warszawski, Fresno Bee

There’s a simple reason why snowshoeing is the fastest-growing of all winter sports. Ease.



Unlike downhill skiing, snowboarding or even cross-country skiing, snowshoeing doesn’t have a steep learning curve or require any special skills. Just step in, fasten a few buckles and go. Even poles are optional (at least on easy jaunts).

Snowshoeing can be a relaxing stroll through snow-hushed woods, or it can be a demanding physical activity that burns up to 800 calories per hour. It all depends on where you go — and how hard.

Oh, and it’s inexpensive, too. Rental equipment costs about $20 per day (compared to $50-$60 for other winter sports) and there’s no need to buy a lift ticket or even stand in line. Ever.

Now you just need to know where to go. With that in mind, here are my five favorite snowshoe treks in the Southern Sierra,

from Yosemite National Park to Sequoia.

Read the whole story

Ski report: Sunny skies



Although it’s starting off a little chilly, a gorgeous day in the forecast. Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Trails day unites rookies with wonders of outdoors in winter

By Susan Wood

When people allow nature to take its course, they often like the path it takes.

That’s just the suggestive nudging winter sports enthusiasts from New England to Lake Tahoe are making on Jan. 8 – National Winter Trails Day. This event is designed to teach first-timers to snowshoes and cross country skis the wonders of human travel in the snow.

The day shows novices the ease, the preparation, the beauty and the importance of appreciating trail systems and tracks – whether they're set by an early riser that morning, the Olympic Games a half century ago or hundreds of years ago by Native American tribal members.



Kirkwood is in its seventh year participating in National Winter Trails Day.
Photo/Provided

"I think that, especially in the (Lake Tahoe) basin, we do have a history of being outside and enjoying our snow sports. We have carried on a tradition of paying homage to our heritage," said Jaime Souza, director of trail use for the Tahoe Rim Trail Association. She was pointing to the Washoe Tribe's use of Tahoe trails. The same could be said for the early settlers such as John Fremont, the cartographer.

The TRTA is organizing a few free, guided snowshoe walks Saturday. On the North Shore it starts at 10am at Tahoe Meadows at the south side of the Mount Rose Highway where the American Red Cross will provide a presentation on winter safety. Tahoe Mountain Sports will bring out its demonstration gear. Interested parties are asked to call Tom at (775) 298.0238.

The association is also partnering with Explore Tahoe on the South Shore at 9am where modern-day explorers will head to Castle Rock from the Kingsbury North trailhead near Heavenly Mountain Resort. To participate and discover where to pick up snowshoes, call Lauren Thomaselli at the Explore Tahoe visitors center adjacent to Heavenly Village at (530) 542.4637.

The hikes are intended to introduce the trail that circumvents Lake Tahoe in a winter wonderland backdrop.

“This is a way to inspire people to get outdoors and share this with family and friends,” said Thomaselli, who’s glad to have the South Shore taking part. The Rim Trail Association has staged events the last handful of years on the North Shore. Thomaselli sees more of a role from South Lake Tahoe in the future – especially given the nation’s first bi-state park named after the Van Sickle family is set to open behind the South Shore casino corridor within the year.

A winter safety talk will touch on knowing when to fuel your body with food to the importance of hydrating.

In addition, tips will be given for how to blaze snow-covered trails in the winter. For example, the Rim Trail has a baseball-sized, easily identifiable logo on trees and posts. For some, freshly limbed trees allow for easy navigation. Others like to put out “hunters” tape on tree limbs, with the idea of removing the pieces upon the return.

Three guides will be on hand.

“I hope we look back at this National Winter Trails Day as a great event when we broke ground for having the South Shore make the national scene. I foresee this event getting bigger and better,” Thomaselli said.

The guided walks will join Kirkwood Cross Country Ski Area and Snowshoe Center’s annual event from 10am to 3pm, in

coordination with REI of Sacramento and the El Dorado Nordic Ski Patrol.

“I think it’s a great way for people to get out into snow sports,” said Debi Waldear, who runs the ski center located on Highway 88 between Pickett’s Junction and Silver Lake. If pre-arranged by calling (209) 258.7248, one can sign up to get a beginning lesson on methods of snow travel with Waldear – a guru of winter sports in these parts.

Talks, tips, free demos and discounted trail passes will be offered at Kirkwood as one of 80 sanctioned locations for National Winter Trails Day, which is co-organized by the American Hiking Society and Snowsports Industry of America.

Waldear said she’s surprised by how many people – even locals – don’t venture out in nature in winter.

Expanding the market and reach of winter human travel is the precise aim of the snow sports industry.

“If you can walk, you can snowshoe,” Snowsports Industry spokesman Reese Brown said from his home in Woodstock, Vt. The trade organization created the day 15 years ago to introduce the activities to people with barriers to snow sports. More than 11,000 people take part each year.

“This is a free opportunity to try it,” he said. “So many people in so many climates don’t like winter.”

And there’s a reason for that. They either don’t know what clothes to wear or what footwear to bring. They have no idea how many calories they can burn while cross country skiing or snowshoeing, Brown mentioned. For example, a 190-pound adult has the opportunity to burn 690 calories an hour while snowshoeing. As Americans recover from their holiday food coma, this activity may prove to be another option to the gym.

For more information, go online.

Banzai Tour give racers chance to ski against Olympian Rahlves

By Jill Oberly, Reno Gazette-Journal

In Japanese culture, banzai is a joyous cheer of enthusiasm that loosely means, “May you live 10,000 years.”

This winter, on the slopes of three Tahoe resorts, skiers and snowboarders will be shouting banzai – with hopes of capturing $10,000 and more in prize money as part of the first-ever Rahlves Banzai Tour.

The tour is the brainchild of Daron Rahlves, a four-time Olympian as a member of the U.S. Alpine Ski Team and current Sugar Bowl Ski Ambassador. Rahlves retired from World Cup ski racing in 2006, but soon returned to high-level competition when he made the transition to the budding sport of skicross.

Skicross, which features four skiers navigating the same terrain at the same time, made its Olympic debut at the 2010 Winter Games, where Rahlves was a hopeful but did not medal.

Read the whole story

Ski report: Clear skies ahead



It’s looking like a great week to be out on the slopes. Sunny weather is in the forecast starting later today through Friday. Check out the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.