Insect infestation destroying Nevada’s pinyon pines

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

For some time, it’s been clear to Melinda Cash that something was wrong with her trees.

Many of the pinyon pines on Cash’s Mound House property east of Carson City looked sick and scraggly, their branches largely devoid of needles.

“You can see right through them. Usually you can’t see through a pinyon,” said Cash, 56. “I have a lot of trees dying with their needles falling off. It’s crazy.”

It wasn’t until Cash attended a meeting of the Nevada Fire Safe Council last summer, when Gail Durham of the Nevada Division of Forestry spoke of a growing threat posed across much of Nevada by a tiny insect, that Cash realized what is killing her trees.

Read the whole story

Avalanche forecasts to be color coded

By Dana M. Nichols, Stockton Record

SAN ANDREAS – Avalanche season is here, and it’s in color for the first time.

The snow will stay white, but avalanche forecasts in the

United States this year are color coded, somewhat like the terrorism threat alerts issued by the federal Department of Homeland Security.

“In the last five to six years, we’ve seen different avalanche forecast centers expand the amount of information they are putting out to the public,” said Sarah Carpenter, co-chairwoman of the education committee for the American Avalanche Association and owner of a Jackson, Wyo., business that does avalanche education.

The Sierra Avalanche Center operated by the Tahoe National Forest, for example, serves mountains in Northern California.

On Monday, the avalanche forecast for Sierra regions from Bear Valley to Lake Tahoe was moderate, signaled by the yellow danger level.

The scale ranges from green, for low danger, to black at the extreme danger level. Orange is considerable danger, and red is high danger.

Read the whole story

Ski report: Plenty of snow to be thankful for



Happy Thanksgiving skiers and riders.

Here is today’s ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from

Unforgettable lines – on a board, by foot

By Alyssa Roenigk, ESPN

He has come here to complete his journey. It's taken almost two years to reach this place, hidden deep within the backcountry of California's Sierra Nevada mountain range, and even deeper within himself. But it's taken Jeremy Jones a lifetime – 35 years – to accumulate the knowledge, skill and desire to find it.

It's shortly before 5 a.m. on the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend, a day most people begin by incapacitating their alarm clocks. Jones, on the other hand, needs only anticipation to stir him from his sleeping bag. He dresses in the deep dark of the great outdoors: well-worn yellow snowboard pants, a sky-blue jacket and a white beanie he pulls tightly over unruly auburn waves. He laces into his snowboard boots and calls out to his crew – a photographer, a videographer and up-and-coming big-mountain snowboarder Ralph Backstrom – to make sure each is awake and vertical. Once they are, the men gather around the camp's makeshift kitchen and fill their bellies with warm coffee and oatmeal.



Jeremy Jones

As Jones lays out the day's objective, his voice – which is deep, paced by long, thoughtful "um"s and almost indistinguishable from movie star Christian Slater's – is the only sound echoing through the canyon. But as the time comes for the crew to depart base camp, even that sound disappears. Later, at dinner, Jones will be animated and chatty, as he toggles between conversations about the lack of role models in pro sports and the vacation he's taking to Disneyland on Monday with his wife, Tiffany, and their two kids, Mia, 5, and Cass, 2. But this morning, as he fills his daypack with food and water, he becomes intensely and inwardly focused.

A few moments later, Jones sets out on the day's hike, urging Backstrom and the crew to stick close behind. Then he offers an observation: "I woke up last night thinking the snow might be soft in areas because it warmed up during the day and got cold last night." The 27-year-old Backstrom nods, but doesn't appear to grasp the seriousness of his mentor's message. "I know the avalanche danger is low, but we need to be careful up there," Jones says. "I know I'm obsessing, but I can't shut off my mind on days like these."

You need to spend only a short time around Jones, the most accomplished big-mountain snowboarder in the world, to understand that his mind never shuts off. In the weeks leading up to a trip, he spends hours each day worrying over every imaginable detail. He watches the weather and monitors snowfall using apps on his iPhone. He consults avalanche websites and checks in repeatedly with local guides. He analyzes maps of the mountains to select the safest area to

set up camp. He also spends weeks each year tuning up his avalanche and first-aid training. In the off-season, roughly July through October, the 5’8″, 145-pound Jones maintains his fitness by “playing in the mountains,” which includes hiking, climbing, biking, yoga and Pilates.

Read the whole story

Ski report: Cold, with lots of fresh powder

It’s a great day to be on the mountain, but dress warm – it’s bitter cold out there.



More resorts are open – Kirkwood today. Sierra is open top to bottom. Heavenly plans to have more lifts and runs in California open.

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

Dreaming of a new kind of ski area

By Devon O’Neil, ESPN

“I want to partner with the United Nations,” says Jamie Schectman. “I want to have a family that’s currently in Afghanistan come to one of our ski areas and see how we’re running things and then go back to Afghanistan and start one of their own [ski areas] in collaboration with us. How’s that for ambitious?”

Yes, it’s ambitious. But he’s not without a plan. Schectman recently co-founded the Mountain Riders Alliance, a group whose mission is to develop environmentally-friendly, rider-owned ski areas throughout the world. And sure, they have some abstract ideals, but it’s key to remember that MRA was formed in response to a larger phenomenon, the big-business ski industry.

“We feel like the sport has taken a turn and forgotten about us. We’re skiers first,” says Schectman. “Some ski resorts come into a town, don’t embrace the community, and drive out the locals and soul. We don’t want to be like that.”

Schectman, 41, and five partners are within a month of announcing their purchase of a North American ski area, which they plan to transform into a “ski-energy center” and operate on minimalist terms and with a mix of old-school, community-focused strategies as well as innovative, modern energy solutions.

Read the whole story

Ski report: Wind may be a

problem, roads are nasty

It’s one of those days in the Lake Tahoe area where if you don’t have to go out, don’t go out.



Blowing snow is more of a problem than the amount of snow on the road. One commuter said Highway 50 through South Lake Tahoe was so bad about 7:30am that she was sure no plow had been on the road. Ruts and an uneven surface made the drive nasty. Of course across the state line things were smoother in Nevada – but not as good as usual. Visibility on Spooner Summit is sketchy.

Heavenly is starting the day on wind hold. Check with your ski resort of choice before making the trek to the mountain today to make sure lifts are running. Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

A winter storm warning remains in effect until 4pm Tuesday. The National Weather Service in Reno is calling for the brunt of the storm to hit late morning.

Roads are a mess, as already mentioned. Closures are always possible. Chain controls are a definite. The state icons on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News* will get you the road information you need.

This storm is a cold one, too. Single digits and below zero temps overnight Tuesday.

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday are expected to have sun in the forecast. More snow on tap for Saturday.

– Kathryn Reed

Sierra open for half day Tuesday, top-bottom on Wednesday

Thanks to a generous La Niña storm over the weekend, Sierra-at-Tahoe Resort is looking forward to Tuesday – the earliest opening in six years.

More than 6 feet of snow fell at Sierra.

Easy Rider Express, Nob Hill and Rock Garden will begin turning at noon on Tuesday, accessing beginner, intermediate, and expert terrain and a medium-sized terrain park on Broadway.

Lift tickets will be $5 for kids, $20 for adults, with all proceeds going to local sports teams.

Sierra Resort will open top to bottom on Wednesday morning.

Beginner group and private lessons will be available for children and adults. Easy Street, Sierra Resort's new beginner terrain featuring two carpet conveyor lifts and 11 acres of sculpted Smart Terrain, is projected to open Thursday for ski and snowboard lessons.

Meetings about Martis Creek Dam scheduled

By Barbara Barte Osborn, Sacramento Bee

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has scheduled public meetings Dec. 1 and 2 to discuss Martis Creek Dam with Truckee and Reno residents.

The Truckee meeting is scheduled from 6 to 8pm Dec. 1 at Tahoe-Truckee High School, 11723 Donner Pass Road.

The Reno meeting is planned from 6 to 8pm Dec. 2 at Horseman's Park Clubhouse, 2800 Pioneer Drive.

A draft baseline risk assessment for the dam, in the Martis Valley near Truckee, is expected to be completed Nov. 30.

Read the whole story

Ski report: Wind, snow, cold – then repeat

It's a powder day on the slopes. Sierra-at-Tahoe expects to makes its debut Tuesday.



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

Wind – yes, again – will be the issue for today. A wind advisory has been issued for Lake Tahoe by the National Weather Service in Reno.

A winter storm warning has been issued from 10pm Monday to 4pm Tuesday. Lots of blowing snow is expected, along with frigid temperatures as the Arctic blast drops into the basin as well as lower area like Reno and the Carson Valley.

There could be 8-14 inches at the lake, and 2 feet above 7,000 feet when you wake up Tuesday.

“Whiteout conditions are likely over the ridges and passes becoming widespread for a one- to three-hour period Tuesday morning. Travel delays will occur Tuesday morning,” the NWS forecasts.