



Sierra Wildlife Coalition

Promoting Humane & Practical Solutions for Living
With Beaver, Coyotes and all our local Wildlife

Winter-Spring Newsletter - 2020

Spring is here! We hope everyone is staying safe and well at home during this dangerous global pandemic.

We had a busier winter than usual, maybe because we had less than average snow coverage, and the beavers kept us busy! We had to adjust or modify our Pond Levelers at the US Forest Service Visitor Center at Taylor Creek, and also the one we just installed last fall in the SE 'corner' of Lake Tahoe, at Rabe Meadows/Jennings Pond, off Kahle Drive for those who know the area.

At Taylor Creek, the Forest Service helped clear the weeds that had grown into the Leveler pipes in the outflow channel from their Stream Display, and we built two new inlet protection cages for the two pipes to keep them clear and flowing. Since that is a small man-made channel, the cages could be seen from the pedestrian bridge over the channel during the Fish Festival in October. The Forest Service put up signs to let everyone know that the cages were to protect the pipes (and the beavers), and were NOT traps.



Sherry & inlet protection cages →

← Toogee working thru ice



At Jennings Pond the beavers built several small, stepped dams *below* the outlets to our Leveler pipes, as they often do to have water and ponds deep enough to swim to their food sources. However, this was causing more water to back-up and overflow onto the trail and even down the slope toward Kahle Drive. It's a difficult site, as Jennings Pond was built above the existing trail as part of a road project, and the pond overflows during high flows, even without the beavers' "help". The Forest Service installed a line of sand-bags (and has since dug a small ditch) to help divert water back into the stream channel. In December, we broke thru ice to add two longer sections of pipe to our existing ones, down thru the new dams, which kept most of the water off the trail. Toogee had to go back twice to add weights to hold the new sections of pipe underwater, so that they would continue to flow and carry water back to the stream channel.

Our big event this spring was attending *and* presenting at the inaugural East Coast Beaver conference, for scientists, advocates, and volunteers dealing with beaver issues and/or stream restoration. BeaverCON was held March 3-5, just outside Baltimore, near the large wetlands surrounding Chesapeake Bay. This conference, to be held on even years, will complement the State of the Beaver Conference held on odd years in Oregon since 2009. (Note – both are open to anyone interested!) Authors, filmmakers, agencies, and practitioners in the field came from all over the U.S., Canada and Europe. We heard inspiring talks about the many benefits of re-establishing beavers to restore watersheds – from providing habitat for endangered Salmon in Oregon and Washington to helping prevent flooding and erosion in Great Britain and Germany. Most hopeful were discussions of how beaver dams/ponds can provide refuge and even slow down wildfires, and also help mitigate the effects of climate change, especially in our dry west, by slowing water, keeping it on the landscape for plants and animals, and restoring ground-water levels. And we heard about all the latest in effective tools we can all use to alleviate any problems with beaver flooding or chewing.



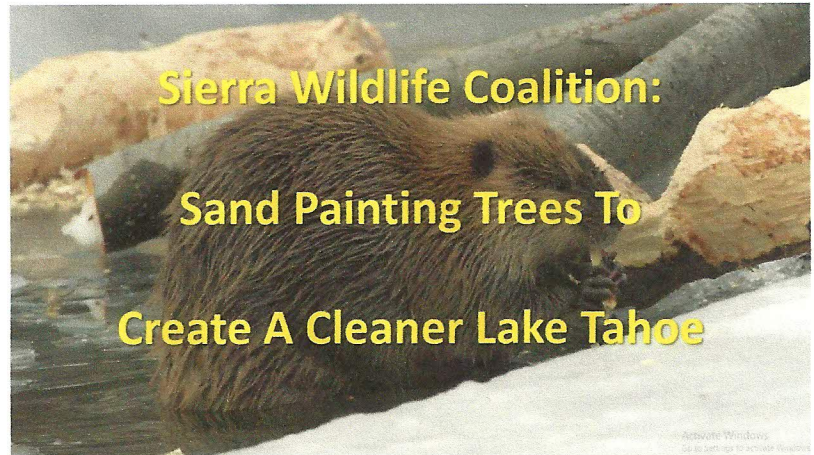
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Our Co-Director Toogee Sielsch put together a great presentation for us – see photo at right → Protecting trees with a gritty mixture of sand and paint prevents beavers from chewing trees, a major complaint in our area. We've protected dozens of aspens for local agencies, State Parks, the Forest Service and homeowners around Tahoe and Truckee; it's easy and quick.

And as Toogee's presentation concludes: Sand-painting = Co-existence = Lake Tahoe Clarity, since beaver dams also filter sediment and pollutants out of creeks, and thus out of the Lake. It's a win-win!



We'll see what this summer holds. Festivals we usually attend have been postponed or cancelled. Earth Day Festival at Squaw Valley has been cancelled, very unfortunately since this is the 50th anniversary of the first Earth Day, and we were looking forward to many events planned around that anniversary. At this point State and Forest Service areas are closed, so we don't yet know if usual events will be held – check our Facebook page for updates!

We will be keeping busy however! Beavers have returned to the small pond in Tahoe Vista, where we installed a Pond Leveler with the CA Tahoe Conservancy back in the fall of 2012. The Leveler had continued to work, but beavers had not been seen there since 2014. These new beavers built a new dam, just like their cousins in South Lake Tahoe, below the outlet to our existing Leveler, and water was beginning to rise. The Conservancy took out the small new dam, and water levels stayed at acceptable levels for several weeks. But the beavers are continuing to repair their dam, and the Conservancy took out the new dam again, but again water levels remain OK for both beavers and CalTrans (who are always worried needlessly about flooding). We'll be working with the Conservancy this summer to extend the existing pipe down thru the new dam.

As usual the beavers at Taylor Creek have been busy all fall and winter. They built a series of dams on the opposite side of the Rainbow Trail loop – over near the parking area – including a new, long channel from their new dams back over to the outflow channel from the Stream Display! We will be working with the Forest Service to install another Pond Leveler to keep water off that side of the trail, as well as replacing the existing Leveler pipes near the Stream Display.

It will be an interesting spring and summer, to say the least. Again, we hope you are all safe and healthy, and we look forward to seeing you at any future booths (or maybe even helping sand-paint trees to protect them from beaver chewing). Take care, and as always, please let us know of any beaver activity in your own neighborhoods, and don't hesitate to call or email if you have questions or concerns. *Thanks!*