

Trout Creek transports paddlers to oasis by Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

It's easy not to want to paddle in Trout Creek. Listening and watching are the preferred activities. If only the binoculars were in the canoe.

A cackle of chirping birds makes it seem like we've entered an aviary. Unfamiliar calls fill the air. Flitting about are species we don't recognize.

Later, Tom Millham from Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care identifies the yellow-headed blackbird.

"We have had them in the past, but not for a very long time. You will see a lot more of them in the Carson Valley," Millham enlightens me.



Sandy paddles in a field of lilies in Trout Creek.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

On this Sunday in June the lilies are starting to bloom a vibrant yellow. The balls on the end of the green stem are like round lemons. Green and red lily pads dot the surface; at times making it so there is more plant life than water

visible.

Instead of being in the middle of South Lake Tahoe, not far from a busy neighborhood and state highway, it feels like we are paddling in a remote nature preserve. This feeling, in part, has to do with the dog ban in the Upper Truckee Marsh – allowing for more birds to make their home here.

Five of us started the day at Baldwin Beach after having left a car in the homeowners' association parking lot at Tahoe Keys. (It costs \$7 per vehicle to park at Baldwin.) [*Editors update:* The Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association's parking lot is private and not open to the public, according to Greg Feet, general manager of the association.]

Trish, Sandy and Pat are in kayaks, while Sue and I are in a canoe.

We opt to begin by going up Taylor Creek. Several inlets have us guessing which way to head. U-turns in a 17-foot canoe can be interesting.

Up another arm we think will lead to where the salmon spawn in the fall and people see the creek from the Rainbow Trail. We don't make it. A substantial beaver dam blocks our route.

Knowing our ultimate destination is more than four miles away we choose to make another 180-degree turn.

Back onto Lake Tahoe we head toward Camp Richardson. Wakeboarders are to our left, jumping the boat's wake in the otherwise tranquil waters. Too early to stop for a Rum Runner at the Beacon.

It's nice to be on the lake early before the boaters and personal watercraft are creating obnoxious noise pollution and making it a bit scary for human powered watercraft.

We take our time, chatting along the way. Then we hit the Keys and it's time to gawk at the opulence and varied architecture

of the gated Lighthouse Shores area that seldom seems to have people occupying these mini-mansions.

On we go.

Entering Trout Creek we have several choices. The water has a mind of its own and no longer is a single body of water through the Upper Truckee Marsh. We head right, away from the houses.

Mount Tallac is like the alter of the outdoors with the snow cross still visible. We are blessed to live and play in this oasis of Mother Nature's.

To get there:

From South Lake Tahoe, head north on Highway 89. Go past Camp Richardson. On the right will be a sign for Baldwin Beach. Beyond the payment kiosk park to the left where the road makes a Y.

To leave a vehicle at the Keys, go down Tahoe Keys Boulevard (of Highway 50). Follow this until you see the lake; parking on the left.

Paddling – from the beach, go right. At the Keys, you will pass the channel for the houses, then the channel for the marina. Next right is the Upper Truckee River. Keep going on Lake Tahoe. The next inlet is Trout Creek. The creek goes under Highway 50 and to Lake Tahoe Community College. We stayed in the marsh area.

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