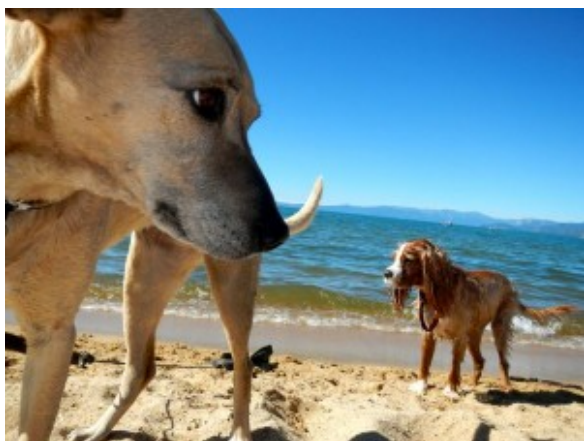


Upper Truckee Marsh dog ban over; leashes mandatory

By Kathryn Reed

It's over. That would be the temporary dog ban in the Upper Truckee Marsh.

This popular meadow area that leads to a beach along Lake Tahoe and to the edge of Trout Creek had a three-month (May 1-July 31) dog ban imposed for the last two years. The reason is so many people were allowing their dogs off leash that it was impacting the wildlife in the area.



AJ and Rusty romp in the sand after a swim in Lake Tahoe. Photos/Kathryn Reed

This time period was picked because it's when birds are breeding, with the peak time, at least in 2011, being June 22-July 19. Studies continue to be conducted as to what the effects are on birds, if more are in the area without dogs and how many little ones are born.

Dogs were stressing out birds by chasing them, sniffing at nests – some of which are on ground level in bushes.

While there was a time when cows used this as pasture land,

the area has returned to a more natural look with native species calling it home.

A survey in summer 2011 found that two willow flycatchers were in this marsh area as well as neighboring Cove East. This songbird was put on the federal endangered species list in 1997.

AECOM of Sacramento compiled the data for CTC that was presented to the board at its June meeting. Will Richardson with the Tahoe Institute for Natural Sciences based in Truckee collected point count data of avian species.



Rusty and AJ are thrilled to be in the Upper Truckee Marsh.

“We believe the very high waters, and perhaps more importantly the late timing of the peak water level, were actually quite problematic for the nesting of many species that do not regularly suspend their nests in emergent vegetation,” Richardson wrote in his report from the 2011 survey. “Among these are the ducks, coots, shorebirds, and terns. We suspect that many species and individuals either nested elsewhere, possibly further (sic) upstream, or simply vacated the area completely in 2011.



Dogs on leashes are allowed in the Upper Truckee Marsh.

He went on to say the number of shorebirds in the surveys done by AECOM will be below normal because they skipped the beachfront because of how wet everything was and how high the water was a year ago.

“We cannot stress enough that the effects of 2011’s high water on shorebird distribution will completely overshadow any apparent effects of the seasonal dog closure, and thus 2011 will surely be a low outlier with regards to shorebird use at the site,” Richardson wrote.

Data from the most recent closure won’t be available for several months.

A slew of birds call this marsh home – from Canada goose to bald eagles to mourning doves to spotted sandpipers.

It’s possible the seasonal dog ban will be permanent. That’s up to the CTC board. It will occur every year until they vote to do something else.

Several dogs of all sizes and breeds were enjoying the 80-plus degree weather on Aug. 1 – the first day the ban was lifted.

Even though dogs are allowed on this acreage owned by the California Tahoe Conservancy, leashes are mandatory.

Of the nearly 5,000 CTC properties in the basin, this South Lake Tahoe parcel is the only one with this type of closure. The 311 acres were purchased about 11 years ago for \$10 million. It is considered one of the most sensitive areas in the basin.

“It is the singular and most unique habitat in the Lake Tahoe Basin,” CTC Deputy Director Ray Lacey has told *Lake Tahoe News*.