

Then and now: Seaplanes make a splash



The first seaplane at Lake Tahoe.
Photo/Lake Tahoe Historical Society

The oldest-known presence of an “airship” at Tahoe was photographed at Lucky Baldwin’s estate on the South Shore in the early 1900s. Over the years, there have been various seaplanes based around Lake Tahoe.



Republic RC-3 Seabee

In the mid-1940s, Republic Aircraft Corporation built 1,060 RC-3 amphibious planes, popularly called SeaBees. They could operate on land or water. The engine was mounted above and behind the pilot and passengers, as if to have the “backward propeller” push the plane.



Wes Stetson on
KTHO. Photo/Bill
Kingman

At Lake Tahoe, Wes Stetson offered passenger flights on his Seabee for more than 30 years, mostly from Emerald Bay in the 1940s and 1950s.



Wes Stetson's SeaBee at
Tahoe Keys in 1969.
Photo/Rich Jamieson

In 1969, Stetson perched his yellow SeaBee at the Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association pier. He would broadcast on KTHO while flying until his passing in the late 1970s.



Tahoe Keys Pier in 2015.
Photo/Bill Kingman

The Tahoe Keys pier was rebuilt a few years ago, but today it stands high and dry because of the drought.

– *Bill Kingman*