

Alpine County trails lead to dry lakebeds



Views along the Curtz Lake interpretive trail in Alpine County. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

MARKLEEVILLE – Bring water because despite the destination being to a couple lakes there is no water to be found.

Dust bowls. That's what Curtz and Summit lakes are. Lake is a bit of a misnomer. A ring outlines both. A muddy patch, at least two weeks ago, was at the center of them.

Multiple signs explain things about the land, wildlife and history of the area. One explains how it is not unusual by mid-summer for the lakebed to be dry. This year it was dry before the calendar even said summer.



Summit Lake without any water.

The nonprofit Alpine Trails Association recently completed the 1.1-mile interpretive loop around Curtz Lake.

These trails are in the Indian Creek Recreation Area. Indian Creek Reservoir does have water.

Rural and remote define Alpine County. The trails underline this. What's nice is that the trails are so close to Lake Tahoe, but provide such a different experience.

Pinyon pines dot the landscape, along with Jeffrey and ponderosa.



An interpretive sign above a dry Curtz Lake.

More volcanic rock than granite is prevalent. Signs say

volcanic eruptions 10 million years ago created the rock mounds. Other rocks are strewn about as though it might have once been a lava field.

The views are varied – from the lakebeds to distant Sierra peaks with splotches of snow to mounds of rock to grassy areas.

Both lakes are easy hikes. Even in the middle of the day in late June the temperature wasn't that bad. The interpretive route is a mix of shade and sun, with the trek to Summit Lake much more exposed.

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Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, go west on Highway 50. Turn left on Highway 89 in Meyers. Turn left onto Highway 88 at Picketts Junction. Turn right onto Highway 89 toward Markleeville. Turn left onto Airport Road. (If you pass Turtle Rock Park, turn around.) The trailhead is the first left. There is no sign.