



THE SIERRA CLUB NEWSLETTER FROM CLAIR TAPPAAN LODGE

Welcome to the winter edition of Goshawk, the newsletter of Clair Tappaan Lodge (CTL) and Sierra Club at Donner Summit. It's a little late in coming, as the days are getting longer and we can already sense the approach of spring in the Sierra. Our aim is to publish the Goshawk quarterly, but this edition comes more than six months after the last one landed in your inbox. Thanks for your patience and interest.

Following a momentous year of changes at CTL, the relaxing of many Covid restrictions, and the recent deluge of moisture deposited on the Sierra, we have a lot to report, as we usher in the year of the rabbit.

THE LODGES AND HUTS

Clair Tappaan Lodge, Hutchinson Lodge and backcountry huts are all open and operating.

The main lodge is operating at full capacity. Covid restrictions have been lifted, but social distancing between groups, and face masks are encouraged. All huts are now single group reservations, and mostly booked up into late March and April. To check availability and make reservations at the lodges and huts, go to the Book Now link on the CTL website : <https://www.clairtappaanlodge.com/>



LODGE OPERATIONS INTERRUPTED

Since CTL re-opened in April 2022, it has been operating continuously, except for the period of September 10-23, when smoke from the Mosquito Fire, which originated on September 6, near Foresthill, California, caused CTL to close. Otherwise, guests have continued to visit the lodge and its surrounding with no disruptions.

MAINTENANCE AND UPGRADES AT CTL

Many improvements to aging systems at CTL have been completed, including plumbing, electrical, and propane line upgrades. The place has been spruced up too, thanks to the efforts of multiple work parties over the course of 2022. CTL is looking good, and ready for you and your group to pay a visit.

KEY STAFF POSITIONS FILLED

Assistant Manager, Mark Gaines, and Head Chef, Mark Ilk, were hired in the fall by General Manager Topher Marlatte. These positions are key to delivering the exceptional experience guests can expect when they visit Clair Tappaan Lodge.

FUNDRAISING

Friends of Clair Tappaan Lodge donated \$9850 to the Environmental Education fund during the summer 2022 annual appeal. This amount, added to the existing balance, provided funds for the volunteer grant team to consider multiple applications from various youth groups. Funds donated not only provide environmental education opportunities for youth but also increase lodge occupancy during slower periods.

Six group applications were funded for two-night stays at the lodge totaling 216 people who were immersed in environmental education in the wonders of nature at our historic location and learned how they could be the next generation of environmentalists to help preserve our world.

Four additional applications were turned down due to lack of funds. Donations may be made to the environmental education fund by check payable to "Sierra Club Foundation/Clair Tappaan Lodge" and mailed to the lodge at PO Box 36, Norden CA 95724 or directly to the Sierra Club Foundation at 2101 Webster St., Suite 1250, Oakland CA 94612. "Clair Tappaan Lodge" MUST be noted on the check for proper identification.

Thank you to our donors for helping to educate our youth and to support our lodge.



WINTER CONDITIONS AT DONNER SUMMIT AND THE LODGE

The Tahoe Donner area, like most of the California Sierra, received a lot of snow during the succession of storms that began December 26. The Central Sierra Snow Lab reports that Donner Summit has received 360 inches of snow this season, as of January 23. This puts the area at 250% of average snowfall to-date. Recent visitors to the lodge report deep snow along roads and pathways to the lodge, with very deep and relatively powdery snow in the surrounding forests and meadows. Be prepared to navigate winter conditions and to enjoy abundant pristine snow, if you are planning a visit to the area in the near future.

For current conditions check : <https://www.donnersummitca.com/news>



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A glimpse of the snow coverage just outside CTL's doors. Photos courtesy of CTL Advisory Committee member Barbara Berg.

AVALANCHE AWARENESS

Exploring the mountain backcountry and wilderness areas in winter comes with risks. Among those risks is avalanche danger. As of January 23, the Sierra Avalanche Center reports Avalanche Danger in the Central Sierra area to be Moderate, which means potentially dangerous conditions exist, and careful snowpack evaluation, cautious route-finding and conservative decision-making are essential. Reports of wind slab avalanches in the immediate Donner Summit area have been reported as recently as January 19. If you plan to go into the backcountry in winter, assess the risks before you go, and continuously when you are anywhere near slopes holding snow. Assessing risk of avalanche involves consideration of weather, snowpack, and terrain. Wind direction, wind speed, precipitation, cloud cover, and temperature change constantly, which means avalanche danger also changes constantly. Plan your route to avoid traversing through or below terrain

with snowpack that is prone to avalanches. In our region, most avalanches occur on north and east facing slopes that are at an incline between 30° and 55°, where the snowpack is unstable. However, avalanches can occur on slopes facing any direction, particularly during and immediately after major snow storms. Check the Avalanche Danger forecast before you go at <https://www.sierraavalanchecenter.org/>, and have a plan that minimizes your risk.

AN INSPIRING TRIP TO CLAIR TAPPAAN

Story and photos contributed by Mia MacCollin

On August 7th, 3 teenagers from the Angeles Inspiring Connections Outdoors (ICO) chapter and their chaperone arrived at Clair Tappaan lodge for a week of work and comradery. They joined 11 other participants who came from around the country and ranged in age from 15 to 75 to work alongside two volunteer leaders and the CTL staff.



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It's a long way from LA to Truckee, so their trip took two days and encompassed a wide variety of historical, natural and cultural stops. Arriving just in time to join the circle of introductions, they were tired but ready to forge new friendships and participate in some of the many needed work projects around the lodge and grounds.



And what a lot of work they participated in! Every morning found Victor digging and grading the snow removal pull off, working with several others to facilitate the safe parking of essential vehicles this coming winter. Bryan gravitated to the left wing of the lodge, where paths were being built, swales widened and materials moved out from under the building. Lucia worked one on one with both a talented volunteer and one of the CTL staff members on a variety of plumbing projects . . . and still had time at the end of the week to clean and polish the piano and other furniture in the great room. The afternoons found them painting bed boards, organizing the library,

staining the lodge siding and working on the wonderful but overgrown CTL nature trail. And they STILL had the energy to take a short hike on the PCT during their downtime!

Service trips always attract a special sort of person, and these inspiring students added so much to the trip. We learned about Lucia's plan to study orthotics in Germany and Bryan's goal to become a nurse anesthetist. Victor politely listened to the "oldies" that the group played during the tougher part of digging . . . and then introduced us to some "real" music!

As wonderful as our adult trip participants are, to involve the next generation is essential if we are to keep the mission of the Sierra Club alive. The goal of Sierra Club's ICO initiative is to empower youth from communities with limited access to connect and reconnect to the outdoors. The National Outings Service Subcommittee offers a competitive scholarship each year to bring promising students along with a trained ICO leader / chaperone to a select group of service trips both front and backcountry. After our "pandemic pause" this trip was a wonderful - and inspiring - re-introduction to how important and powerful their participation is.

Learn more about ICO at <https://www.sierraclub.org/ico>

And if you are inspired, the ICO Service Subcommittee will again have two trips to CTL in the summer of 2023. Details and signups will be available in early 2023.



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