



THE SIERRA CLUB NEWSLETTER FROM CLAIR TAPPAAN LODGE (CTL)

GOODBYE AND GOOD LUCK PETER!

We bid a fond farewell to long-time General Manager of the lodge, Peter Lehmkuhl. After 14 years of service, Peter is moving on to experience new horizons and travel the world. He'll be rock climbing in the desert, visiting family on the East Coast, skiing in Japan's powder mecca of the world, and hiking in the Himalayas.

Peter began his association with the Sierra Club in 1998 as a Grants Assistant. Between 1999 and 2002, he served as Research Trip Assistant and Finance Coordinator. He started at CTL in 2002 as Kitchen Assistant, becoming the Assistant Manager in 2003-2004 and General Manager in 2004-2013 and 2016-2018.

We appreciate Peter's talents, dedication, goodwill, and good heart. We will miss him greatly. Peter irrevocably

impacted the lives of thousands of visitors and visiting school groups through his hard work, good cheer, and guidance. We wish him well in his endeavors and will always appreciate the legacy he leaves behind.

ALICE HARTEN, CTL GENERAL MANAGER

Peter said Alice was perfect for this job, as is clear from her letter in response to the job posting, partially excerpted here. We welcome your passion, Alice!

"I was immediately attracted to the General Manager position for Clair Tappaan Lodge when I saw the posting. Although year-round and much less remote and rustic, the lodge reminds me of the Yosemite High Sierra Camps I managed for many years." She described how much she enjoyed "...providing the base and framework for the fond memories the guests of the camps took home with them." She imagines Clair Tappaan has the same effect.

Alice has spent much of her career in remote mountain environments and enjoys an active lifestyle which fits with Donner Pass and surrounding region. She has a natural talent working with people, understands the intensity and challenge of forging a dynamic team, works well in a demanding environment, and brings strong operational expertise. In her previous job at the High Sierra Camp, she had to use extensive financial, strategic, and resort management skills.

"I direct with passion and heart, truly striving to provide remarkable guest service. I value integrity, aim to instill a calm, organized approach in all situations, and work to communicate the vision and build the team at all times."



ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FUNDRAISER

Our September fundraiser to support environmental education at CTL resulted in \$17,600 in donations. Thank you to all who came to enjoy the weekend, participated in the raffle and silent auction, and gave generous donations. We had Celtic music, great hikes, wonderful food, good companionship, and an instructive, inspirational talk by SC Executive Director Michael Brune in his first visit to the lodge. Michael spoke of growing up on the New Jersey shore where beaches were closed due to water pollution, which included hospital and chemical factory waste. Rallies and marches woke up the town to the problem, showing that a few can inspire dozens and then thousands and make a difference. Michael's work with Green Peace to stop clear-cutting in the British Columbia rain forest showed that companies can be part of the solution through economic and

indignation. Michael said, "Don't give up," noting that it is OK to feel sad and hopeless sometimes, but there are always a few people finding a few more people and not giving up!



Group hike to Flora Lake. At least two folks went swimming!



Michael Brune talking to a packed room



Celtic Joy was the evening entertainment

social pressure. He then spoke of the world's biggest threat, climate change, presenting clear goals to stop the use of all fossil fuels and nuclear power by 2030. He noted that while we are in a challenging time, tens of millions are engaged, giving money, and volunteering, with the young showing their righteous



Art auction, put together by local artist Susan Barry



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ROCK CLIMBING WITH PETER MAYFIELD

By Leslie Kerns

During the Environmental Education fundraiser weekend, our group (two moms and three kids 8-10 years old) was presented with the opportunity to rock climb. When asked, the kids politely said, "No thanks." I've never been one to look at the vertical wall of a mountain and think, I must climb! So instead, we decided on a gentle hike with ample time to explore and little chance of broken bones. At breakfast, Hike Leader Rick Ramos suggested we reconsider this amazing opportunity for a lesson with Peter Mayfield. This time the answer was, "Yes! Let's do it!" The day after our first rock climb, I asked the kids what they thought of their experience and then recorded their responses. It spontaneously turned into a thank you video to Peter for making what seemed scary into an empowering and fun activity. I completely agree with the kids. And next time, I'm determined to climb at least as high as the four-year-old who clambered past me.



Peter Mayfield, Executive Director of [Gateway Mountain Center](#), gave a presentation and showed a video at the fundraiser. He talked about his place-based learning and adventure program for youth, often held at CTL. Peter advocates for getting people outdoors. He often uses mountain climbing to help teenagers and young adults overcome traumatic events.



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AND THIS IS WHY WE HAVE THE FUNDRAISER

Here is a slightly abridged letter from Laura Young, teacher at Urban Promise Academy, Oakland, to Jane Risk, Review Team member for the CTL Environmental Education Foundation.

Hi Jane,

I thank you so much for giving us the opportunity to stay at Clair Tappaan Lodge. For most students it was their first time seeing snow, and for all students it was their first time snowshoeing and staying in a lodge. As part of our weekend, we had a snowshoeing trip planned that would combine a day trip for newcomers (students recently arrived in the US) with an overnight trip of our Girls Outdoor Club. Lodge staff gave the newcomer students a chance to experience warming up by the fireplace of the lodge great room for lunch before heading back to Oakland.

Even though the lodge is only a few hours away from our school in East Oakland, it felt a world apart. At school, the girls who went on the trip still talk about the experience this year, of all the joys they experienced for the first time in this beautiful place—seeing their first snow stacked as tall as a building, sledding, making snowballs, playing card games by the light of the indoor fireplace, staying in extra-tall three-bed-high bunk beds, and getting in a hot tub. Half of our girls ignored the cold and stayed out sledding and rolling in the snow until it was time for dinner.

But as important as fun in the snow, was the experience of being part of a new and different community at the lodge. They loved signing up for chores and taking responsibility for this beautiful place. Interactions they had with the staff during meal set-up and clean-up went



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a long way in making them feel comfortable and a part of the space.

This trip also gave our girls the opportunity to push their limits, challenge themselves, engage in experiential environmental learning, and develop group solidarity. For a few girls, the challenge was



simply in spending their first night away from home. Others pushed their physical limits in the cold and on the snowshoe hike.

We did three lessons during the weekend that I hope to develop further this year. Before we went snowshoeing, we had a lesson in the lodge on snowshoeing history and design that we adapted from a Snowshoe Hike curriculum created by the National Park Service. We looked at four different snowshoe styles, made up names based on the design, voted on winning names, and discussed what might be the advantages and disadvantages based on the design. We discussed the history of snowshoes, the different theories behind their origins, and the role of North American Indians in developing and popularizing the snowshoes we use today. We used visual thinking strategies to examine artwork and discuss the different uses of snowshoes as conveyed through different pieces of artwork and photographs from the 18th century to today.



We then went over snowshoe hiking safety and important rules of “leave no trace” in the winter/snow environment. During the snowshoe hike (with a break for sledding near the chair lifts) it was cold and windy, so the forest ecology



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lesson was changed to a post-hike "awards ceremony." Girls nominated each other for awards that celebrated their accomplishments and also taught them facts about the environment. Each award was a laminated photo of an animal or plant that live in the Sierra Nevada, with students nominating each other when they saw connections between their fellow student's strengths and the adaptations that let the plant or animal thrive in this environment.

Finally, we had a lesson on climate change and the Sierra snowpack. After looking at videos of snow surveys from the past year and comparing them to the present year, we examined UCLA's graphic and visual data from the report *Climate Change in the Sierra Nevada: California's Water Future*, and discussed the connection between the rise in greenhouse gas emissions, the rise in temperature in the Sierra, the drop in snowpack volume, and the effect that this would have on California's fresh water supplies. After talking about how these environmental changes matter to all living things, us included, we ended by making personal commitments of ways we would reduce our energy usage.

My co-leader and I agree that our trip to Clair Tappaan Lodge was our most powerful learning experience of the year and that it also played an integral part in developing students' group cohesion, challenge-seeking mindsets, and sense of environmental awareness and stewardship. An important part of why we started the Girls Outdoors Club was to give girls the opportunity to develop their leadership, independence, confidence, and awareness of the world beyond their homes by engaging in outdoor activities and going to outdoor places where they are traditionally underrepresented. I want to thank you so much for this truly memorable experience.

All my best, Laura Young



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PAINTING ALONG SIERRA TRAILS

By Susan Barry, Nevada City Artist

<https://susanbarry.us/>

As in the past, participants in "Painting Along Sierra Trails," a Sierra Club National Outing based at Clair Tappaan Lodge, are showing off their stick paintings in the group photo to the right from 2019. A favorite ice-breaker begs for some fun photos as everyone gets to know each other.

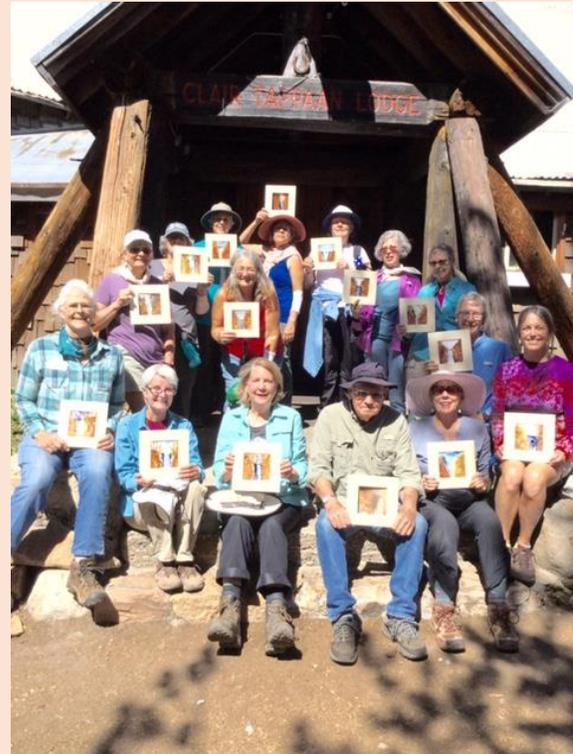
This trip is different from other lodge outings as it combines sauntering up Sierra trails to beautiful lakes and vistas with instructions on how to watercolor, paint, or draw what one sees. I instruct all levels of artists. Many participants have never done art of any kind, while other experienced artists use the time to observe the beauty around them, as all begin to describe their surroundings with nature's color palette.

As the week progresses, the group travels to different locations to paint, swim, and saunter along different elevations and terrains. The lodge offers sleeping accommodations and hearty meals. Often the evenings are filled with light-hearted critiques and mini technique lessons. The lodge is in a perfect area for exploring excellent views and subjects to paint.

Many participants return each year to create a family of friends. It is so rewarding to know that we have bonded in just a week. This brings hikers and backpackers closer to nature. As John Muir once said, "I am in the mountains and the mountains are in me."

Most leave at the end of the week remarking that they see everything in the woods with different eyes, observing the beauty, colors, and details. Personally, I feel that the lodge is the Sierra Club's best kept secret. We are fortunate to have

those members who came before us, to create such a terrific place on top of Donner Summit. It is an excellent symbol of the Sierra Club's purpose.



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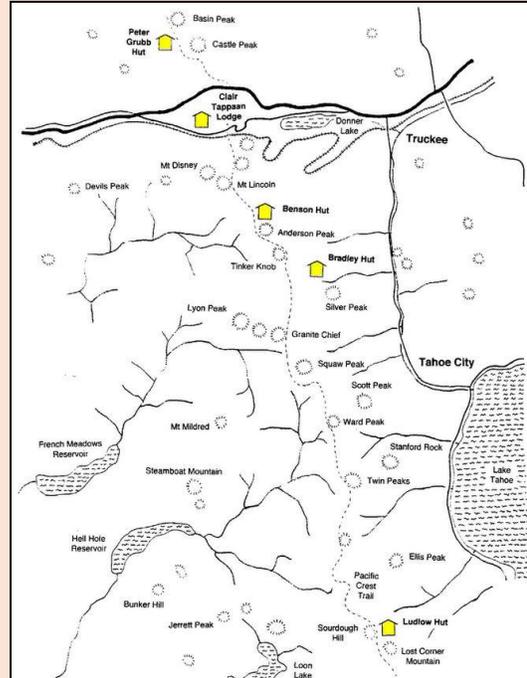
REPORT ON THE SIERRA CLUB HUTS IN THE DONNER/TAHOE REGION

By Dick Simpson, Hut Committee Chair

The Sierra Club owns and maintains four cabins in the Lake Tahoe/Donner area for the use of its members and others. Each cabin provides rustic sleeping accommodations for about fifteen people. Visitors must bring their own food, sleeping bags and pads, utensils, candles, personal equipment, etc. The huts remain an attractive choice for people interested in rustic shelter at a reasonable price. Hut users then reciprocate by providing most of the labor for hut maintenance and preparation for the next winter season.

The 2018-19 winter season was a good one for winter sports in the Donner Summit/Lake Tahoe region. Snow began before Christmas and, contrary to many years, simply kept falling through late March with especially heavy storms starting in mid-February. This had a downside. There was so much snow by early March that the Sno-Park next to Boreal Ski Area could not be cleared, and Sugar Pine Point State Park closed its winter camping area, both for several weeks. Those closures impacted access to Peter Grubb and Ludlow Huts, though the reservation figures remained surprisingly firm through the winter. Total use-level by hut for 2018-19, based on reservations, was 3,993, setting a new winter record.

Hut Maintenance: The huts are maintained by work parties of volunteers, usually on weekends between late spring and early fall. In 2019 we had six weekend work parties which attracted 120 volunteers who contributed 236 person-days of labor. There were important repairs at Benson and Peter Grubb. Otherwise the work was primarily cutting, hauling, and stacking firewood. Peter Grubb, Benson, and Ludlow now have



firewood reserves that represent a substantial head start on firewood collection for 2020-21. For Bradley, we purchase firewood which is delivered to the hut's front door and only has to be stacked inside.



Bradley Hut, March 2019, with snow up to the second-floor balcony.



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September Peter Grubb work party. A couple inches of snow fell during the weekend



October Ludlow Hut work party (photo by Ryan Corley).



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October Benson Hut work party.



One party arrives as another departs, Peter Grubb Hut, late January 2019

For more information on reservations, availability, etc., contact the Hut Reservations Coordinator at Clair Tappaan Lodge, P.O. Box 36, Norden, CA 95724
Phone: 1-530-426-3632
Email: reservations@clairtappaanlodge.com

For general hut issues, the Hut Committee Chair is Dick Simpson, 3326 Kipling St, Palo Alto, CA 94306
Phone 1-650-494-9272
Email: hut.coord@yahoo.com
See also: <http://clairtappaanlodge.com/backcountry-huts>



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