



Ed | #49/#5346

## Rich in history, Crystal Peak Park in Verdi opens Saturday

*By Bob Harmon*

*Washoe County Sheriff's Office*

he next time you get the urge to spend some quality time along the Truckee River, take my advice and go west.

Not too far west. Just out to Verdi to explore the new Verdi Mill Pond and Nature Area at Crystal Peak Park.

The latest addition to Washoe County's park system features just about everything you need to enjoy a beautiful day on the banks of the Truckee River.

Local fishing enthusiasts have already discovered that the restored fishing ponds are perfect for some quality time with rod and reel. But even those who don't fish will find plenty of interesting pursuits among these 20-plus acres, which are brimming with natural wildlife and local history.

"I like everything about this place," county park superintendent Eric Crump said. "The setting is beautiful. It's a perfect spot for families. The history is amazing and there is all sorts of wildlife.

"Whether people come to play by the river, fish in the pond or just learn a little more about local lore, I think they are going to love it here."

The Verdi Pond and Nature Area project began in 2008. It included the restoration of the pond, fishing piers, restroom facilities, benches, picnic tables, parking and a nature loop trail.

The history of this 56-acre area is fascinating.

From the late 1880s until the 1920s, the pond was used by a lumber mill. Unfortunately, the mill was prone to devastating fires, suffering from eight during its years of operation. One of the signs along the area's nature trail displays a timeline of the fires and details the damage each caused.

After the lumber mill pulled out, ambitious plans were laid to turn the area into a resort. Verdi Glen hoped to become one of the more popular travel destinations. Developers' plans for the area would eventually include a fishing lake, dance hall, swimming pool, campground and golf course.

They got off to a good start, and then fire struck again. In the late 1930s, another destructive fire engulfed the resort's main building. All that remains today are parts of the swimming pool and the main building's stone fireplace.

The resort was abandoned and the property purchased by Guy Marsh. Following his death, Guy's wife, Florence, offered to sell the property to Washoe County. In 1993, the county purchased the property and began exploring plans for how to best use the special piece of riverside property.

One of the first thoughts was to restore the pond to a fishing site. There were challenges, but with support for the Nevada Department of Wildlife and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the ponds were

completed, stocked with trout and today are already popular.

Parks staff also decided to create a half-mile nature trail that would provide public access to the river and give visitors a chance to comfortably experience the park's natural beauty and wildlife while learning a little about its history.

The result is an easy and enjoyable loop trail that passes by remnants of the old resort and includes several benches that overlook the river. Informational signs tell you the history, while your eyes and ears take in the sights and sounds of the area's natural habitat. The area is a popular spot for mule deer, birds and a variety of other wildlife.

So bring your fishing pole, or just bring a picnic. Plan on walking the trail then spending time just sitting and enjoying the sweet sounds of the river, cooling your toes in the water under the warmth of our Sierra sun.

— Bob Harmon works for the Washoe County Sheriff's Office and is an advocate for parks, open space and outdoor recreation.

## Additional Facts

Verdi Pond Opening

**WHAT:** The Verdi Pond and Nature Area project began in 2008 and included the restoration of the pond, fishing piers, restroom facilities, benches, picnic tables, parking, interpretive signage and the development of a nature loop trail.

**WHEN:** From 8 a.m. Saturday

**WHERE:** The 56-acre Crystal Peak Park is located just west of Verdi on Old Highway 40, 10 miles west of Reno.

**WHO:** Washoe County, NDOW, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Cabela's

**GRAND OPENING:** Saturday's events include nature-themed crafts, raffle prizes and free fishing for kids. The Lahontan National Fish Hatchery Complex will stock 3,000 native Pilot Peak Lahontan cutthroat trout. Biologists will be on hand to talk about the Pilot Peak program.

---