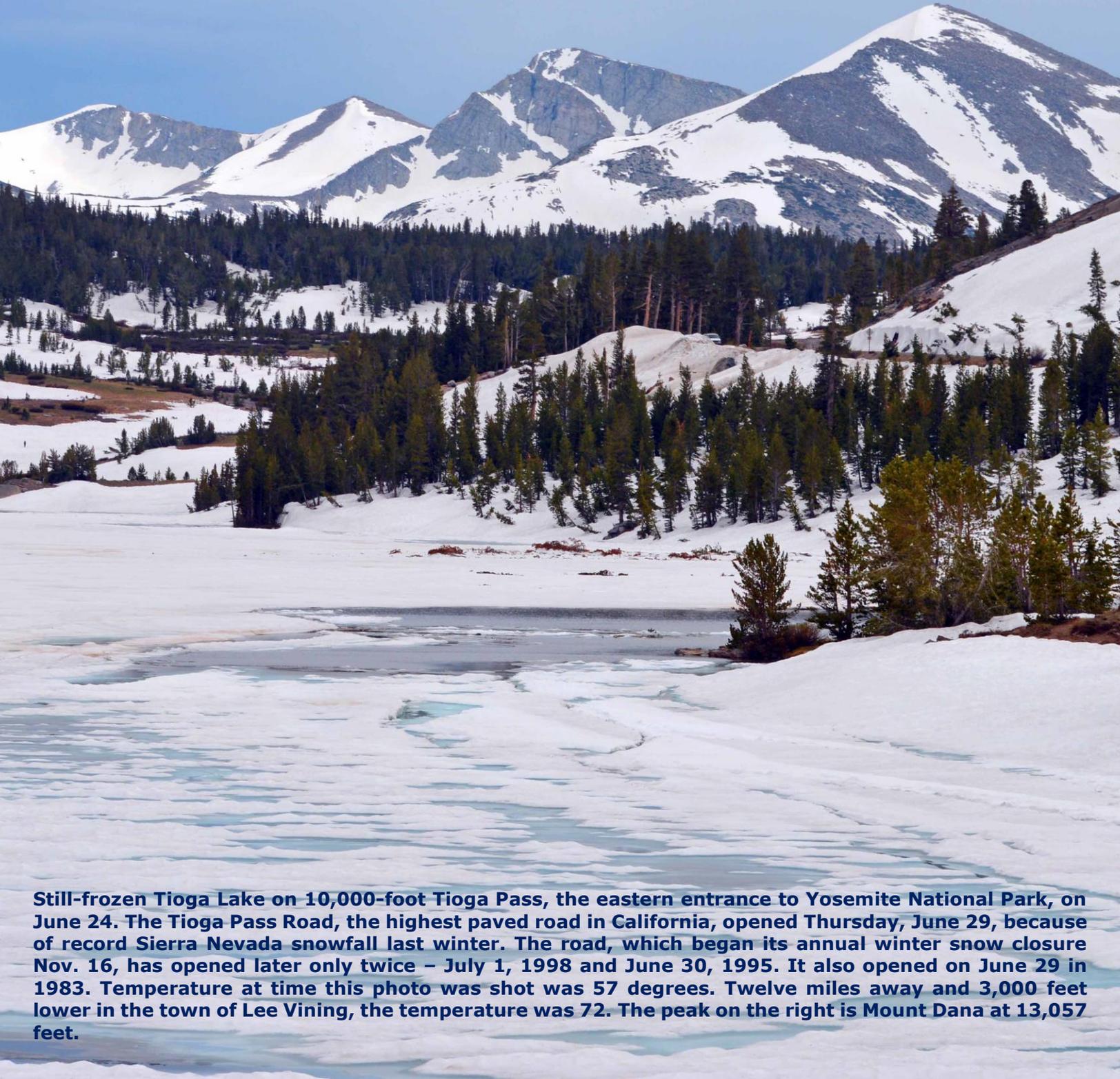


The Yosemite Delp

Yosemite National Park and the eastern Sierra

24, 25 and 28 June 2017

Happy Fourth of July

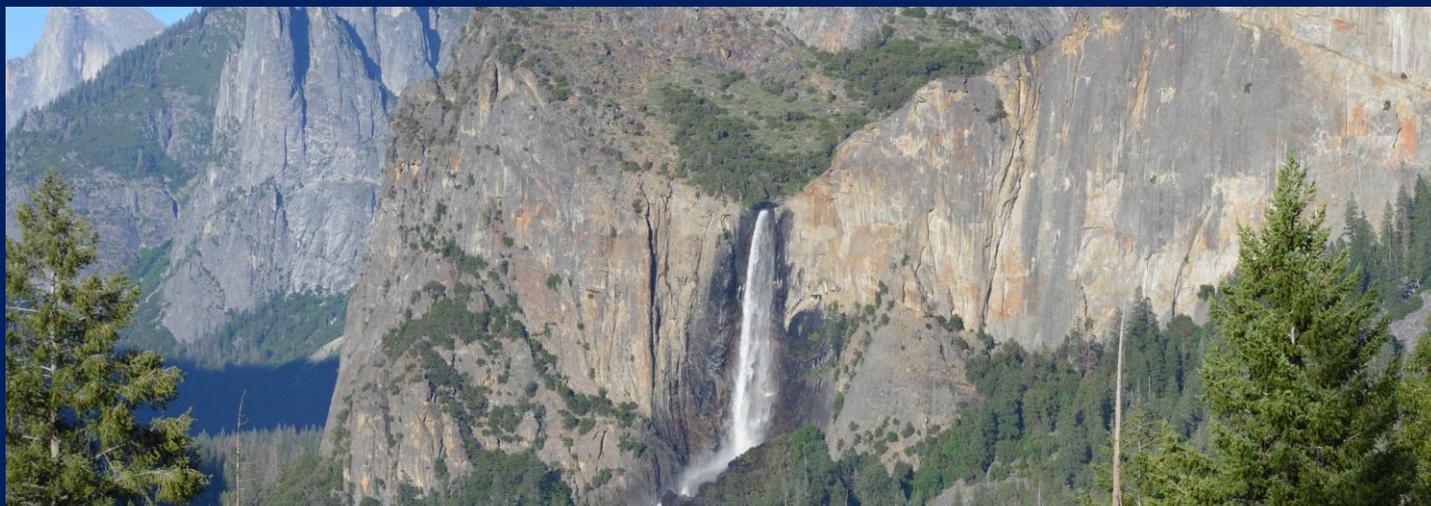


Still-frozen Tioga Lake on 10,000-foot Tioga Pass, the eastern entrance to Yosemite National Park, on June 24. The Tioga Pass Road, the highest paved road in California, opened Thursday, June 29, because of record Sierra Nevada snowfall last winter. The road, which began its annual winter snow closure Nov. 16, has opened later only twice – July 1, 1998 and June 30, 1995. It also opened on June 29 in 1983. Temperature at time this photo was shot was 57 degrees. Twelve miles away and 3,000 feet lower in the town of Lee Vining, the temperature was 72. The peak on the right is Mount Dana at 13,057 feet.



A couple of weeks after snowplows finally got through Sonora Pass, Emily and I stopped at the top to give you an idea how much snow is still up there. Last Saturday, the pass – an hour's drive east and 9,000 higher than the town of Sonora. In town it was 100 degrees; on the pass it was 70.

Winter's reluctant departure



See a video of this newsletter on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/fq3cZpSYADO>

For generations of Californians, especially those from the Bay Area, the Fourth of July is about the Yosemite National Park.

The Fourth is a lazy float down the Merced River in a rubber raft through Yosemite Valley. It's hot dogs and a camp fire, chilly nights in a tent, hiking through big trees and up steep climbs.

Sheer cliffs. Waterfalls. Snow in the high country.

From Kit Carson Pass near Lake Tahoe to the Sierra's southern end at Walker Pass is a 200-plus-mile stretch of mountain ridge that includes the tallest mountains in the 48 contiguous states and only three road crossings, all of them blocked by snow in winter.

The highest, Tioga Pass – Yosemite's eastern gate at 9,943 feet, the highest paved road in California – reopened a couple of days ago. The last measurable snowfall was nearly a foot three weeks ago.

But when Emily and I visited last weekend, the Tioga Road through Yosemite was still closed. To cross the Sierra and approach Yosemite from the

east, we used recently opened Sonora Pass, the state's second highest at 9,624 feet, to get there. As you can see here, winter is just ending at the five-digit altitudes. As it does, water is pouring down both sides of the Sierra even as some lakes remain partly frozen.

More than 40 feet of snow fell on Tioga Pass between November and April as recorded by park rangers Laura and Rob Pilewski, whose job is to live up there all winter and patrol that stretch of Uncle Sam's real estate on skis.

They spent much of that time with no electricity and two months without seeing another soul.

Because the snowfall was wet, it yielded the equivalent of more than 51 inches of water at Yosemite's Tuolumne Meadows, the most on record.

In Yosemite Valley, where it has been summer for weeks, the waterfalls are roaring with billions of gallons of snow melt rushing to get down from the mountains and into San Francisco Bay.

It makes for a grand American birthday locale.



The Tioga Pass entrance station at Yosemite National Park is still snowed in.



Velvet still covering its antlers, a young deer walks among the trees on the floor of Yosemite Valley.



617-foot Bridalveil Falls tumbles out of its hanging valley and into a rainbow generated by spray.

Happy Fourth of July



Looking southwest from Bridgeport, California, population about 600, on the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada, across Big Meadows and into the Hoover Wilderness of Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. The town is at 6,500 feet. The top of the ridge line, including Sawtooth Ridge on the right, goes to more than 12,000 feet and is the northeastern border of Yosemite National Park.