

Footprints

The Newsletter of the Grand Canyon Hikers and Backpackers Association

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From the President

By Doug Nering

Last year a small group of members was motivated to exchange views on wilderness management issues at Grand Canyon by email and telephone.

We formed a Wilderness Committee made up of members: myself, Tom Martin, Bob Holland, Dick Matthews, Pat Davis, Mimi Morris, and John Eyles. From this, we printed several articles in an earlier issue of our newsletter on the wilderness plan, campground impacts, overflights, and river use.

Just before the last board meeting I received an email contact from a group that was doing interviews of interested parties, and planning for meetings to work on resolving the air tours and overflights controversy. This particular subject has gone on for years with various attempts to regulate air tours over the Park. Some progress has been made but congressional legislation to restore natural quiet to Grand Canyon has never been fully implemented. Because of our previous discussion of this issue I felt confident that I could summarize the concerns of the hiking community.

I spoke with a representative by phone and told them that I felt confident in saying that nearly all backcountry hikers at Grand Canyon have a dislike for overflights to various degrees. Although there are different feelings about this, the most common complaint is noise, which is much more noticeable in the quiet and isolation of the inner canyon. I explained that there are some areas where aircraft noise is nearly continuous throughout the daylight hours.

I also mentioned the Whitmore Wash helicopter landing site associated with raft trips as the type of commercial aircraft activity that hikers feel is inappropriate for wilderness. Hikers do understand that some aircraft operations are necessary for maintenance functions, and for search and rescue. It wouldn't make much sense for hikers to be opposed to people being rescued when there is an injury or

emergency -- and it could be one of us.

At the October meeting I summarized this interview for the board and we discussed the overflights statement, made a few changes, and adopted this as a GCHBA position statement. The board has also appointed me to attend future meetings and to represent GCHBA. The next meeting occurs February 10th.

I anticipate there will be many more chances like this for GCHBA participation in defining Grand Canyon management policy. Without such involvement policy issues will be decided without our voice, so I hope we will continue hear the unique views of hikers on various subjects.

And there are no limitations or qualifications for becoming an active participant in any aspect of GCHBA other than being motivated to act and willing to coordinate with the group. I continue to encourage members to be involved in leading or supporting GCHBA by committee meetings and discussions, making outside contacts on behalf of GCHBA, offering recommendations or suggestions that the board can implement, helping with elections, membership, service projects and more. Writing articles for the newsletter is another opportunity for any member to share experiences with others.

I am very interested in more ways that these things can be done by internet, chat, or teleconference. These opportunities are especially suited to members who have a desire to see GCHBA develop, but cannot attend board meetings. As a volunteer organization, GCHBA can become whatever members commit to do, and there is no limit on the number of participants to contribute growing GCHBA as an organization that represents hikers -- anyone who has the motivation to get something done can add to our success.



A Wet Winter!

By Cliff Beck, Editor

Springs should be flowing when the season for most hikers arrives at the canyon this year. While the

monsoon season of 2004 wasn't a terribly big deal, the fall and winter storms have been significant. I got a preview at the end of October, 2004 when I weathered an all-night rain storm on Horseshoe Mesa, then hiked up and through new snow above 6,000 feet on my ascent the next day. At the rim the parking lot was socked in with 8 inches of the white stuff and the view was socked in with one of those below-rim fogs (inversion?)

This was the storm that clogged the South Kaibab Trail with boulders. Later, at the beginning of January the sodden ground gave way more than once to close the Bright Angel Trail from Cinch-up to Indian Garden. In addition, a recent trip report posted by Sally Underwood cited plenty of snow pack, three feet or so, on the North Rim, with a ranger suggesting that it could be much more if the temperatures had been lower during key storms.

There hasn't been much news from the Association this winter, however, I hope you have visited the web site recently to see the new features. A special thanks to Gene Fowler for his effort.

President Doug Nering has been busy with some excellent hiking this year. Check out his trip report in this issue. Don't forget to plan a visit to the canyon that gets you to the semiannual GCHBA meeting. The spring meeting will be May 8, 2005 at 10:00 am at the Albright Rec Center. Stick around and bullshoot over lunch at Maswik Cafeteria immediately following the meeting. Volunteers for the Cottonwood Service Project will gather at Cottonwood during the following week for several days of campground repair, hiking, and quality time with fellow hikers and local rangers.

I start my hiking year early for me, in April. Hope to see you on the trail. The special annual issue of Footprints is running late, thanks to this editor, but I will get it to you before I set foot on the trail. Hope your Winter has been a good one and that you have trained well for the upcoming season.



The Fall 2004 Service Project at Indian Garden

By Mike Coltrin
Service Project Manager

The October 2004 Service Project was at Indian Garden. After the GCHBA annual meeting on the 17th, nine of the volunteers hiked down the Bright Angel trail with park ranger Bryan Wisher. The volunteers were: Mary and Robert Simpson, Pat and Lynn Davis, Gene Fowler, Melvin Weber, Bob Marley, Susan Groth and Mike Coltrin. (Anna Galentine, our

tenth volunteer, hiked in the next morning.) On arrival at the Garden, Bryan conducted a quick orientation tour before dinner.

After breakfast Monday morning we had a safety talk then the tools were handed out. The major project for the next two days was reclaiming an overgrown area between the BA trail and the SAR Cache. Brush and bucked cottonwood logs were moved out of the area and the ground was lightly terraced. French drains were installed to help with a drainage problem caused by the many small springs nearby. As soon as the workers finished one patch of ground and moved on to the next day hikers immediately began using these new day-use areas.

A secondary project was rehabilitating a broken water fountain. Before the pipes could be changed out it was necessary to find the cut-off valve to the fixture. This proved to be a major source of entertainment for those of the workers involved in the other project! Several trial holes were dug before the valve was located.

Due to the nature of the work, wet ground and a continuous drizzle from the skies, the workers got plenty dirty. It was nice to be able to shower and do laundry at the end of each of the two days of work.

Wednesday was scheduled as a lay-over day. Most of the volunteers did short hikes while others just hung out at the Garden. Thursday morning most of us hiked up to the South Rim but Anna and Melvin took off to explore the miner's route from the Tonto to the River before they too headed home.

In the spring of 2005 GCHBA will be at Cottonwood Campground to help with renovations to get ready for the 2005 hiking season, a one-day project in August on the South Rim, and a return to Indian Garden in October.

The spring project filled the 10 volunteer spots within a few hours of being announced at the Grand Canyon Hikers website. Contact me early if you have an interest in joining the group for one of these worthwhile and enjoyable projects.



Shinumo and Hakatai Revisited

A Trip Report by Doug Nering

In 1990 I went around Powell Plateau with George Steck and Gary Ladd, some other experienced Grand Canyon hikers, and some who were hiking here for the first time. This turned into even more of an adventure than anticipated when our camp was washed out in a flash-flood the first night of the trip.

Nevertheless, we pressed on and completed the loop around the periphery of Powell Plateau. The last stages of this trip were passing through Hakatai Canyon where W.W. Bass mined asbestos, and following his old trail from there to his permanent encampment along Shinumo Creek. There is no name for this trail and most of it never was on any map. The name I like for it is Waltenberg Trail, after John Waltenberg who was a partner to the Bass Empire, at least in works if not by ownership. I wanted to go back, but it's a long way just to get to the North Rim trailhead, and the North Bass Trail is one of the longest in Grand Canyon, and that just gets to the start of where we want to go. The group for this hike is Danny Weimer, Gene Fowler, and myself.

Drive to Swamp Point with my 4x4.

We pass another group that got stuck off the road trying to get around a really big downed log. Fortunately for us, the log has been cut through now and the road is open all the way to the end. We had planned to take Danny's truck to the trailhead, but snowfall the day before we arrived means you need a 4x4, and chains would help (which we don't have). I planned this trip late in the season to be sure we would not get into trouble making the considerable distance planned for extending the trip upriver. For future reference, chains, and a come-along, a saw, and an axe should be taken for any travel onto the Kaibab Plateau back road system. Accustomed to off-road conditions in the desert, I hadn't anticipated the potential difficulties, but a small amount of luck is with us.

Start down the trail with small patches of snow on the shady side. A brief visit to Teddy's Cabin on the west slope of Muav Saddle. Turn east into Muav Canyon, contouring a short distance and then starting the steep descent. Recent rains have eroded the trail and made some parts slippery, but this section has always been difficult since the original trail was overgrown and lost. As the slope levels, a flow of water from the rim above appears in the next ravine. The trail leaves the slope and follows the streambed at an easy grade.

A cairn to the west marks where the streambed cuts deep into the Redwall and the track turns away to cross the 3 ravines along the Redwall rim. The old trailbed is lost and the track goes down and up the ridiculously steep sides of each ravine. Years ago this part of the route could be lost in the brush, but there is enough travel here now. Finally, where the trail goes over the shoulder of the last ravine and around onto a ledge in the Redwall cliff, there is a spiked retainer log and it's clear this was once a constructed trail. The Redwall descent is steep and eroded, as are most sections of un-maintained trail like this. There is a really great view from the switchback off the ledge, and a convenient (and secure) campsite just above the streambed.

Follow the streambed channel to where the flow is restored by a spring from the east bank, where a bypass trail goes for a short way and then returns to streamside. A long section of Muav bedrock provides water and numerous places to camp if there is no reason to be concerned about flooding.

Camp 1

With more daylight, an earlier start and a faster pace, there is a good chance to make the distance to Shinumo Creek in a single day, not easy, and that was not our plan.

In the morning we go down a short distance to where the canyon opens up and take the west-side bypass around the lower Muav falls. Another bypass goes around the next falls to the east. Mostly, just walk the streambed. We meet another party, Josh Case and 2 comrades going up. They were held back by high flows in Shinumo Creek the day before. Almost before expected, we arrive at the Tapeats pouroff into the lower White Creek gorge. Wanting to see where the original trail goes along the bench to the west, I make a pitch to my 2 hiking partners that this could be a good way to go. So we scout around on the west side. Eventually, remembering a cairn on a boulder, we backtrack up the streambed and find more cairns and signs of a trail going up onto the Tapeats. We start up, but soon lose any sign of the trail and turn back. This old section of trail appears to be completely abandoned now. About this time a clatter of boulders comes from the opposite slope where a big rock has lost a grip on the damp soil. We go back down and then bypass the Tapeats pouroff with the picturesque boulders hanging in the crack and climb down to follow White Creek to Shinumo. Easy walking.



Shinumo Camp Display.

We arrive at Shinumo Camp early in the day with time remaining to explore. Everything seems the same as it was from my last visit. We had a rainy night then with 3 of us under a tarp pitched between the bushes nearby – me and Mike from Virginia, and George in the middle since his tarp was taken by the flash-flood. Having more curiosity about the immediate area this

time, I go across to investigate the Shinumo Garden site on the opposite bank. Danny and Gene come along as well. There is more to discover here than I had anticipated. Some rock foundations and rusty cans are not unusual, but there is an excavated water basin with more rock-work.



Shinumu Garden Catch Basin.

The really interesting find is the rock border of the ditch laid for the water basin. The story from Bass's son, Bill, is that they restored an Anasazi ditch system for the garden, so this rockwork should be much older than the Bass era. This continues up along the bottom of the slope to where a ravine cuts through the bank from the west. Here, we can see the remains of walls constructed to support an aqueduct across this ravine.

On the other side, the ditch-line continues in the same way until the upper end of the garden area. Barbwire hangers from the cliff above suggest that there must have been support for a pipe crossing the stream to deliver water into the ditch, then over the aqueduct and into the water basin. It's hard to guess exactly how far the water system went or the location where the diversion from the stream was made. And there is no indication today of any type of plant or tree that was grown.

Camp 2.

Today we are heading west along the old trail through Burro Canyon to Hakatai. When we came over, years ago, from Hakatai Canyon we descended the first access down a ravine to streamside. But George insisted we had missed a section of trail beyond, so I was interested to re-discover all of the trail, including the part reported to be at the upper end of Hakatai Canyon, which would have been a pack-burro access to the mine. We start by traveling downstream past a big rock with an inscription, and divert from the obvious trail going up over Shinumo Divide to the Bass Ferry and riverside beach camps. Cross over the stream to the west bank at the next bend. Going up on the slope above the riverbank on the downstream side of the ridge from the west, there is a good view of the ravine I remember we came down, and a good access nearby up onto the ridge. Map study shows that the original trail was upstream from

the end of this ridge, descending onto the west bank and continuing toward Shinumo Camp.

Go upslope onto the ridge looking for sign of the trail; nothing definite here. Follow the ridgeline to the saddle below the slope; passable but no evidence of a trail. Go up above the saddle and across the slope toward Burro Canyon; remains are evident of a trailbed, but the slope ahead appears difficult. The narrow track along a ledge in the slope persists. The trailbed is split by the ravine and this is an awkward place to get across and back up onto the slope. Here, the access is obvious enough but the surface is resistant to any sign of travel. Continue around to the high point overlooking Burro Canyon.

Stop here to scan the opposite slope of Burro Canyon for the route up the other side to reach the Tonto Platform elevation above the Shinumo cliffs. It's obvious this is going to be rough terrain. The angle of the cliffs of the Supergroup formation is critical to making an access. The best guess is the upper ramp immediately under the highest cliff. Easy descent to reach the streambed of Burro Creek with a trickle of water here. Take a liter and start upward again. Initially, this is a gradual slope with possible sign of an old trail bed, which then turns toward the section of really large boulders at the base of the steeper slope above. Go up over these big blocks with difficult but stable footing to about mid-elevation of the slope. At this point, Danny and I are moving along and Gene is still far below us. Guessing this is the place to turn across the slope, we make a stop near some bushes to regroup.

When we start again, just a few steps brings us onto a trail bed angling upward, and assurance that we are on the right track for Hakatai. There are some really wonderful views upriver overlooking Shinumo Divide to the slope above Hotauta, where the plan is to climb up onto the Tonto level there and go on to reach Monadnock, Crystal, Trinity, Phantom and to Bright Angel. Also a nice view downriver toward Copper Canyon on the other side. Midway along the shelf Danny spots a rock wall overhead with some faint inscriptions. This evidence resolves any possible doubts about regular use for a connection between Shinumo Camp and the asbestos mine.

The shelf in the Shinumo cliff runs directly out onto the top of the Tonto platform and we continue west toward Hakatai. Light clouds make for a good hiking day without much demand on our water supply. Danny and I continue to travel quite a bit faster than Gene, which is quite a surprise because I have been hiking with Gene a few times and I know he is a strong guy.

Eventually, we turn the corner into Hakatai and approach the first major ravine. The fault here makes an impressive break down through the Tapeats cliff, the upper slopes looking quite unstable and difficult to

cross. The site of the asbestos mine is visible near the streambed below – if you know where to look. No point in descending here with packs and finding we can't get down it, so I go down to scout first. The upper slopes are steep but passable. Many small downclimbs in ledges along the bed – nothing very difficult or risky. At a broad shelf low in the Tapeats I find the real obstacle, which I expected, but no apparent safe climb or bypass, which I did not expect. Scouting along the shelf away from the drainage also seems a dead-end. Return to the top with the news that I can't see a way down. We could try for the trail access up the canyon, but this could make it a longer trip than we had planned, and we are not moving all that fast as it is.

To shorten the trip back, we work directly up the slope above the low cliff in the upper Tonto formation. This move brings back familiar memories, and moving east along the upper level goes so quickly that in a few minutes we have returned above a section we spent more than an hour to cross on the slope below. What a mistake not to remember this was the way we went last time I was here.

Back along the Quartzite shelf above Burro Canyon and then down the rubble slope below. When the track runs out we all take on different ideas where to go. Danny continues across the slope. I turn back to the route we came up. Gene ends up stuck somewhere between us. Spread over the land like this we disturb a young bighorn, sending it bounding up the hillside to watch us from a safe overlook. It's reassuring to see they are here. After many encounters in the Bass and Copper Canyon areas on the south side, this is the first time I have seen one on the north side of the river. Not just here, but anywhere on the north. We all meet again at the crossing of Burro Creek where there is water and a stop for the night.

Camp 3.

Along with regrets for not making our target today, I have a more serious problem to deal with. Namely, we are just not moving fast enough to make the distances required for the adventure planned for the coming week – going upriver toward Crystal by piecing together parts of Steck Loop hikes along the river corridor to reach Bright Angel.

The difficulty isn't whether Gene is a strong and capable hiker. I know that he is from previous trips, and he has carried some very heavy loads for our GCHBA service projects. Gene has spent as many days as I have hiking Grand Canyon, and, from his recent hikes I can be sure he is well-prepared for this. But all of his experience is hiking the trail system and what he carrying is simply too heavy for off-trail conditions, with steep slopes and unstable footing.

Plenty of time when I'm awake during the night for thinking things over. In the morning, I compare

observations with Danny, who is heading out for the rim at the end of the day anyway. Then I have to give Gene my decision that he either turns back with Danny or we all abandon our plans. Gene takes this in rather quietly and I hope I haven't offended him, but there is really nothing else to do.

We take the easier part of the route back to Shinumo Creek, scout the upstream section of the old trail (not much there), set aside our packs, and then take off over Shinumo Divide to visit the beach area and the Bass Tram site. This is Danny's first time here and a good opportunity to pick up as many historic references as we can visit. I've been on either side before, but not to the tram anchor here. Coming back over the divide, I push the pace and soon drop Gene far behind. It's partly for the fun of pushing my own limit, and partly to push home a point.

Meanwhile, a river group has landed and gone over the divide ahead of us to see Shinumo Camp. With some people already on the return trip we run almost on top of Dick and Joan Gladson coming up the trail. What a surprise visit!

Arriving back at Shinumo Camp we find that Bob Hostetler has come down to join us as promised. Bob's gear, even in contrast to my own, is astonishingly light, down to his trail-runner footwear. Meanwhile, Danny has come forward with an offer to pack out some of Gene's extra gear to let us both go on with the trip with Bob. Gene has strap-on pack compartments and the extra stuff comes out of his pack and into these pockets. Heavy sandals, day-pack, egg containers (empty now), big headlamp (keep the small one); not knowing what-all he gives up, the pockets look heavy enough themselves, and together his pack is at least 10 pounds lighter afterward. It's still a very heavy pack. Still with the GPS that I agreed to let him carry to auto-trace our route, as long as I don't have to look at it until we are done.

Danny shoulders his load to head upstream and we shoulder ours going the other way. Goodbye, and we are off on another adventure.

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I can only hope that, not knowing him personally, Mr. George Steck would have appreciated this story and the stories to come in future issues. Thank you, Don Mattox! Editor

A Steck Story – Unique “Water” Bottles
From the Memories and Pen of Hiking Partner
Don Mattox

Those of you who have only done GC hiking for a decade or two don't know that three or four decades ago the question of how to carry water on a back pack was a big subject. The goal was to find a light, CHEAP (preferably free) container that would not make the water taste like swamp water after a number of trips.

George Steck's container of choice was an empty Prestone antifreeze container. I told George of my concerns about using the container but he said that he had washed it out thoroughly. George used this container for many years and Gary Ladd said that it spoiled many of his camp pictures.

My choice was a pair of empty, plastic, long-necked vodka bottles that I carried in the outside pocket of my pack. A problem with my choice was that a bottle cap could be lost when going through thick brush. This meant that I had to carry a spare cap and empty a

new bottle every once in a while. The vodka bottles did get me an invitation to party one time by two girls that I passed on the trail.



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