

Air Mail

Volume 1 Number 1

Utah Back Country Pilots

June 2001

Who's In Charge

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Treasurer	Kent Bond	(801) 295-5302
Board Member	Mark Swint	(702) 616-0020
Board Member	Rob Hunter	(801) 583-5705
Board Member	Mike Mladejovsky	(801) 484-0450
Newsletter Editor	Brent Watson	(801) 298-3680

Web Address: www.UtahBackCountryPilots.org

FLIGHT PLAN (Upcoming Events)

Regular monthly meetings of the Utah Back Country Pilots Association are held on the fourth Wednesday of each month at Sky Park Airport. They begin at 7:00 pm. The meetings are an informal coordination and informational meeting for all members. Come talk about what's new in the back country. Besides, there is free soda and sometimes pizza!

SMILEY CREEK FLY-IN

The third annual Bountiful Sky Park Smiley Creek Fly-In is set for July 13-14 at Smiley Creek, Idaho (of course). There will be a chuck wagon dinner on the 14th for the modest fee of \$15. UBCP meeting at 5:30. Social hour begins at 6:30 with dinner at 7:00. Float trips and horseback rides can be arranged both days. Camp on the grass, or call the lodge for a room (very limited space.) The phone number for the lodge is (208) 774-3547. Please RSVP to Kent Bond (801) 295-5302 for the fly-in.

FIRST ANNUAL UBCP FLY-IN

Our first annual UBCP fly-in is scheduled for October 12-14. The location for this event is the Mineral Canyon airstrip. This strip was graded and widened in 1998. Field elevation is 3940 and the strip measures 2450X120. Most aircraft can operate from this strip, but as usual, land at your own risk. GPS coordinates are 38d31.871N, 109d59.701W. More details will be forthcoming in the September issue of Air Mail.

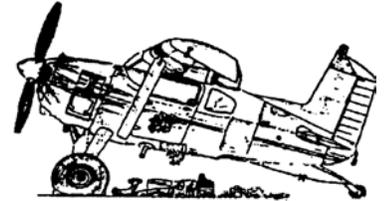
ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS

Do you have a back country experience you'd like to share? Write it up and submit it in Word format to Brent Watson, watsonbj@qwest.net, to be considered for publication in the next issue of Air Mail.

Directions

-Steve Durtschi

Thanks to you, the Utah Back Country Pilots are on sound footing. Since the call went out to create an "official organization," The UBCP has nearly 100 charter members and is growing steadily.



Some have asked why is necessary to pay \$30 to join an organization, since we have been coming and going at "our" remote Utah landing strips unopposed now for many years. The answer is simple: nothing in the world is static. The Utah back country landing strips will not remain as they have forever. There is a concerted effort to close many of them. Without defenders, this resource will slip away.

If you have visited Idaho, you know that there are many beautiful recreational landing strips. Virtually every aviation publication contains a feature article on these Idaho landing strips once or twice a year. And for good reason. These strips are a treasured resource to pilots as valuable as any national park. These landing strips were "given" to the public by far-sighted Idaho folks many years ago. The IAA (Idaho Aviation Association) and its 750 members now keep them safe and protected for everyone. The situation is different in virtually every other western state. Montana, Colorado and California once had the same resource – now you can count the wilderness landing strips in those states on one hand. Environmental pressures have closed many remote landing strips, Aviation organizations in these states are now fighting back, but they have a long, uncertain road.

That brings us to Utah. Our state is at a crossroad. Our landing strips are not protected like Idaho's, yet they are not officially closed like Montana's. The rules have not yet been written. This situation is quickly changing. After an appeal to adopt the landing strip at Browns Park on the Green River by Daggett County, the BLM bladed trenches across it, defending the action by stating the "loss of 4.4 acres of sage brush was unacceptable." When it was determined that the landing strip at Mineral Canyon posed no danger to wildlife or the ecosystem of the area and should be opened for public use, a well-funded environmental extremist group kept the final decision in limbo for over a year in the courts. The BLM has a memo on file listing eight Southeast Utah landing strips as "Officially Abandoned." We don't know exactly what this

means, but the handwriting is on the wall: if we don't get involved, soon the rules will be written and they will eliminate airplanes from what we once thought were "our own" secret landing strips.

That's why we asked for \$30. That's why we asked you to join the Utah Back Country Pilots. Already, through the efforts of some folks willing to get involved, some of our landing strips have been "saved." When the owner of the Fry Canyon Lodge put the BLM on notice that they were relinquishing their right of way to the Fry Canyon Landing Strip, UBCP member Karl Spielman got involved. In an incredible display of diplomacy, Karl was able to transfer the right of way to Arrow West Flying Service, and the beautiful strip at Fry Canyon was saved. In another instance, Rich Carlstad noted the landing strip at Happy Canyon was on state land. Rich got involved. Through his efforts, the UBCP was able to lease the strip from the state. The landing strip is open to everyone. (Please get some local knowledge or check out by an experienced Happy Canyon pilot before venturing here for the first time, as this strip has a few peculiar hazards.)

We have participated in the first two meetings of what may become a western states organization dedicated to defending recreational landing strips. They are supported by pilots' groups from Utah, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. The "Back Country Airstrip Foundation" may evolve into a powerful force to defend the remote landing strips of the West.

The goals of the UBCP are first, to promote flying safety. We will do this by publishing how-to features from experts. We will also maintain a current, complete database of Utah's back country airstrips. This is available on the UBCP web site. Second, the UBCP will strive to "legitimize" a handful of remote Utah landing strips. Our goal is not to fight the federal or state government. In order to legitimize a landing strip, it must be officially recognized by the controlling agency, be it state or federal, which administers the land on which the strip lies. There are several ways to do this and we will be detailing plans for several strips in the near future. The UBCP practices "leave no trace" camping. These are fragile lands and we wish to leave them undisturbed. If these goals are your goals, then we are both at the right place.

I hope you enjoy the UBCP inaugural newsletter. A quarterly newsletter will arrive in June, September, December, and March. We have a great group of volunteers whom you will meet in this issue. Like Star Trek's "Borg," we are effective only if we work together.

Fly Safely –

Members and Bucks

-Kent Bond

I would first like to thank Cathy Durtschi for keeping Steve under some kind of control in not spending all of Cathy's

household money on the UBCP needs, and for keeping the books for the first five years.

We now have 103 members who have paid their dues. They come from fourteen different states. Our budget includes the following:

<u>Income</u>	
Beginning balance	\$ 8
Member dues	\$3090
Stickers ordered	\$ 371
Donations	<u>\$2019</u>
Total	\$5488
<u>Expenses</u>	
Stamps	\$ 201
Printing	\$ 27
Envelopes	\$ 18
Happy Canyon lease	\$1113
Right of way application	\$ 375
SUWA membership	\$ 45
Sticker printing	<u>\$ 548</u>
Total	\$2327
Ending Balance	\$3161

Thanks to all members for your help in saving the UBCP strips. A special thanks for all the extra donations.

-The Jungle Rules Treasurer

THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF ROGERSBERG

-Steve Durtschi

Lest you think the UBCP has an uphill battle, consider Tom Jensen and Rogersberg. Tom is a member of the Washington Pilots Association and the Washington Air Search and Rescue and does not know the meaning of the word quit.

Tom has been working as a one man army the past few years in convincing the BLM to allow public use of the long-closed landing strip at Rogersberg, in Hells Canyon along the Washington / Idaho border. His saga would fill a book. For instance, he was required to design, fabricate, and deliver to the strip a "spill kit" capable of containing any aircraft fluid spills.

On May 16th of this year, the strip was formally opened for public use by the Washington State BLM. On May 19th a volunteer crew arrived with a lawn mower to mow field grass covering the strip. On the first pull the lawn mower caught fire! The fire quickly spread to the grass on the strip. The men attempted to put out the fire, but to no avail and were forced to retreat. Overhead, a Cessna 172 who had come with the group attempted to land on the short strip to help and promptly departed the runway, bending the wing, nose gear and firewall!

The fire continued to burn for several days, consuming over 700 acres according to the BLM. The 172 was trucked out. The BLM is looking for an address to send the bill (\$50,000)

for fire suppression. In the mean time, they have rescinded the approval for the strip. After several years work, Rogersberg was open for four days.

Did I mention that Tom Jensen is not a quitter? As we speak, he is smoothing things over with the BLM. Rogersberg is closed but I wouldn't place any bets on how long it will be closed.

More information on Rogersberg is available from: <http://www.eskimo.com/~c180tom/open.html>

BRUSH PILOT REPORT

-Hal Hilburn

Hal Hilburn is a very enthusiastic back country pilot. A resident of St. George, Hal has completed an inventory of the remote landing strips in Southern Utah and the Arizona Strip in a very short time. He will report on some of these in upcoming issues. We asked Hal to keep us informed on Southern Utah activities and introduce himself in this first issue of the UBCP newsletter. I think his essay is exactly what we're all about. -SD.

I knew him when he was a kid on his first flight. It was with his father in the bright yellow Cub. He was trying to be so cool, but his dad saw the excitement and smiled as his son squirmed under the seat belt, asking so many questions and was always looking out through the little side window almost too high for him.

The kid remembered well the first strange noise of the engine spinning a propeller he couldn't see, the squirrely run down the runway, and the glorious exhilaration of the ground falling beneath him. He thrilled over the shrinking cars and house roofs.

Was this the moment when the kid became an airman? Or was the moment when, with his fresh certificate, he flew his very own new-but-old tri-pacer? Maybe the revelation came in 1999 at Yellowstone. By now he had a totally refurbished Mooney shining with fresh paint. He thought it as beautiful as the expensive Mooney Eagle tied down off his right wing. "I am," he thought, "a consummate pilot. My Mooney and I cross the country in a single day. Mountains, freeways, rivers of concrete, square green fields of corn slip beneath our wings. We can fly through clouds and rain and dark just like the big boys." He must be a genuine aviator now.

There at the Yellowstone Mountain Flying Seminar, fate focused his sight down the ramp past the shiny Mooney to a lineup of tail draggers, their noses pointed proudly up to the sky. Those old fashioned flying machines seemed on the verge of leaping into the sky at any moment. Maybe for just that instant this established family man heard the excited voice of the kid in the bright yellow Cub.

The Mooney man absorbed most of Ed Huber's Destinations in Idaho. Then, while shaking hands with Sparky Imerson, he announced with unexpected conviction, a desire to join the elite group of back country pilots. Was that a promise to become a real pilot?

With a knowing smile Sparky chuckled, "Sure you are, just like everyone that sees the slides." Sparky didn't know he was talking to the man, the kid from the Cub, and a latent bush pilot drawn to the quiet adventure on mostly hidden and ignored narrow tracks scraped into a narrow valley or across a desert mesa.

Soon, with a sadness, he deserted his beautiful Mooney to a student pilot on the East Coast who, he believed, would not take care of it as he had, and might even wreck it. Too much airplane for a student. Still, he had a pocket full of dollars and the back country voice called him to come closer.

The Maule he originally wanted didn't come to his hanger, but a beautiful old 185 named N-185FA did. With it came a challenge and several kilograms of frustration. "Boy, I thought the Mooney was too much for a student pilot. I didn't know about trying to handle this tail wheeled monster. What have I done?" He spent hours learning to taxi without a ground loop finale. He learned the ground was a hard enemy. Fuel bills were like throwing \$100 bills out from the side window. He was so puckered by those early tail dragger experiences that he began to walk funny.

By the kindness of fate, a particularly good and patient instructor, and some skill, this airman matured. He will not forget Beryl Junction where he intentionally landed his craft on what seemed an impossibly short, narrow, dirt strip. No emergency, but an intentional OFF FIELD LANDING. It worked. He walked on air. He began to tame the beastly 185 into a docile craft which could take him, his friends, camping gear, food, bicycles, and the dishwasher so very many new places.

The conventional gear sign-off made him a novice back country pilot. His circle expanded to include local back country guys. Included in the circle too were scraped strips he had never before noticed. Practice into narrow strips in tight canyons prepared him for the intimidating Indian Creek, Idaho strip with Steve Durtschi. He bounced from novice to intermediate back country pilot. He was so grateful to survive the arrival he wanted to kiss the ground, or Steve. He settled by kissing the 185.

Maybe you don't know this airman's name. The name doesn't matter because he is all of us. We grow together sharing experiences and convictions. He and we realize that for the back country flying experience to continue for us and for upcoming novices we each have a debt. To fellow back country flyers we need to offer experiences, safety tips, and information such as location and condition of back country strips. Perhaps as a united group we can catalog strips along

with a difficulty rating for approach/departure so that each of us might make best informed judgments.

Most importantly, we have a debt to those back country strips themselves. Many need immediate work party attention just to survive. Others need more routine maintaining. All should benefit from our presence.

More later.

Document That Landing!

The Back Country Airstrip Foundation is documenting emergency uses of back country airstrips throughout the West. Emergency uses could include landings due to mechanical problems with an airplane, weather related, or for medical reasons, including evacuations of persons on the ground. We are also interested in reports of vandalism and sabotage to back country airstrips. Search and Rescue uses are also requested.

It is the belief of the Foundation members that back country airstrips in the West offer not only recreational opportunities for pilots, but also legitimate landing areas in a time of need. As public land managers make policies concerning back country airstrips, it is important for us to be able to show evidence of these other critical uses. So, please let us know if you have an instance to report.

Dan Lilja
Backcountry Airstrip Foundation
pln3083@blackfoot.net

If you don't have email, contact one of the UBCP officers.

FLY UTAH!

Author Galen Hanselman has agreed to continue his excellent series of guide books by researching and writing about our Utah back country. Needless to say, this is a VERY large work. He estimates it will take him two years to complete.

The guide will be in the same format as his three other successful handbooks, *Fly Idaho*, *Air Baja*, and *Fly the Big Sky*. He will include all the features that make his works classics. Among these features are his Relative Hazard Index, the great photographs of each strip, and a bit of the history of the area. The documentation of hazards is essential, and the historical section makes our visits to these strips much more meaningful. Who among us has not spent hours studying these invaluable books?

How can you help? Galen is soliciting photographs, written or oral histories, or anything else we can gather for information to be included. Scour those old newspapers. Talk to your relatives and friends from the areas near the back country strips. Although this history is not yet more than 50 years old in many cases, it is already being forgotten. Here is a chance to preserve the memory and purpose of these spots we value

so highly. The information may even be useful background to help preserve them.

Please send any information you have to:

Galen Hanselman
QEI Publishing
Box 1236
Hailey, ID 83333

Greetings Utah Back Country Pilots!

I have met a few of you already, but for those of you who don't know me, I'm Laurie Tyler. My airplane is a 1993 Aviat Husky named Taz. We live in Arizona but spend as much time as we can flying to Utah and enjoying the beautiful back country recreational airstrips. I also work for *Pilot Getaways* magazine as a sales executive.

Pilot Getaways magazine would like to offer you a special discounted subscription rate as part of their support of your organization. We will be printing articles to promote Utah's back country airstrips and the UBCP. Look for the first one in our upcoming Fall issue, coming out August 1st.

Taz & I hope to see all of you out there playing in the dirt!

Laurie

Special UBCP Subscription Rates:

\$14.95 per year (regular rate \$16.75)
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Hidden Splendor

15 nm from the Hanksville VOR (HVE) on the 295 radial
Coordinates: N38° 34.12', W110° 57.40'
Elevation: 4810 (North end 30 feet higher)
Length: 1,800 feet
Surface: Packed dirt and gravel
Orientation: North/South
CTAF: 122.9
Windsock: none

Hazards: On a summer day the density altitude can easily be 8000 feet or more. There is rising terrain in every direction. To the north (upstream) the terrain rises subtly but significantly. To the south the river cuts a narrow, winding path through high cliffs. An experienced, local pilot says he always

lands upstream to the north and departs downstream to the south. This requires flying inside the narrow canyon, close to the cliff walls. The airstrip gets narrow in the middle with a substantial drop off on either side, so stay in the center. Watch for cows, campers, and cars.

There is room to turn around at each end of the airstrip. There is also a large circular area just west of the strip that makes a good, out-of-the-way parking area.

There are great views and hikes in all directions. The Delta Mine is visible to the south of the airstrip and is just a short walk. A few miles northwest of the strip is the remarkably preserved Little Susan mine. Several buildings there are still in excellent condition. Three books referencing this area are: *Canyoneering 2* by Steve Allen, *Canyon Hiking Guide to the Colorado Plateau* by Michael Kelsey, and *Hiking and Exploring Utah's San Rafael Swell*, by Michael Kelsey.



Hidden Splendor Airstrip from the Delta Mine

The Deluxe DeLorme Deal

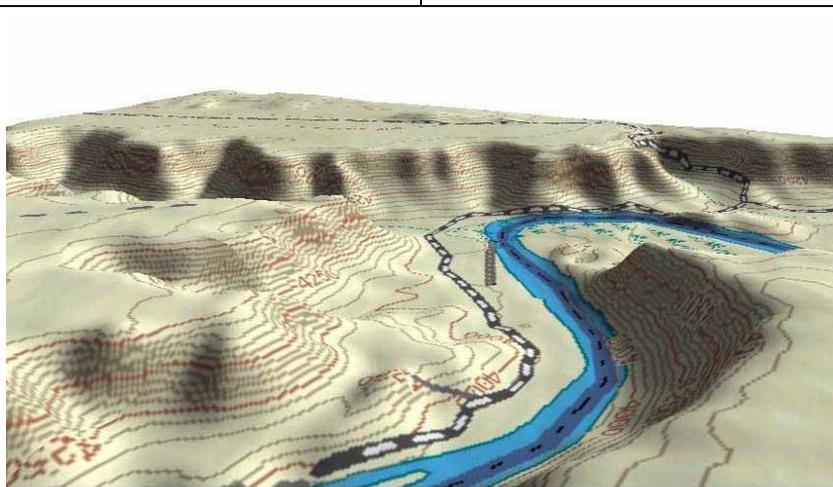
Would you like to have a detailed topo map of the entire United States with all of Utah's back country airstrips marked on it? Well you can! DeLorme makes a program called *Topo USA 3.0* that comes on one DVD or on 7 CD's. It is only available for PCs not Macs. You can find detailed system requirements at www.delorme.com but it should run fine on

any PC purchased in the past few years. With *Topo USA* you can print detailed color maps of any area you are interested in. You can also view and print 3-D maps that simulate a final approach view. The program retails for about \$100 plus tax and shipping, but UBCP has arranged for a special price for members: \$85 includes tax and shipping. There is also a regional version that only includes Utah, Colorado, Montana,

Idaho, and Wyoming for \$45. If you want to take advantage of this great opportunity send a check with your request to UBCP. Be sure to specify whether you want the DVD, CD, or regional CD version. UBCP will furnish all members with a floppy disk containing a way point file containing all of Utah's back country airstrips. E-mail your request for the way point file and the version number of your software (2.0 or 3.0) to ubcp-rob@home.com and Rob will e-mail the file to you.

UGAA

The Utah General Aviation very actively represent the interests of Utah pilots. Among their accomplishments to date are working with local and state government to make changes to tax law, benefiting Utah airports, giving input to the FAA for airspace changes relating to capacity and the 2002 Winter Olympics, and support of all efforts to maintain back country airstrips. This is a great organization and deserves our support. They meet quarterly. For more information, visit their web site at www.ugaa.org.



Mineral Canyon 3D View from DeLorme *Topo USA 3.0*

The Stealth Driver

I have asked this author to contribute a regular article to Air Mail. Although he/she is a regular at our Utah back country strips, his/her identity will remain a mystery. Maybe you can guess his/her identity, but are you really sure? -Ed.

Friday

I'm going nuts. The fly-in at Ibex is tomorrow and the crappy weather of the past couple days has gone completely into the dumper today. It's raining hard and the mountains are obscured. The outlook for tomorrow afternoon is great but who knows when it will actually break up. At least I'll be packed, fueled, and pre-flighted for **whenever** I get to go.

Saturday

It looks like I'll be waiting another year for a fly-in at Ibex. The weather has finally improved enough to make it through the mountains but it didn't clear early enough to make the trip to Ibex worthwhile. I hope everyone is having a great time without me. Sigh. Can't let this (finally) exceptional weather go to waste.

A smooth trip through the mountains is followed by a quick dash above the desert flats to Moab. A look down at the wind arrow on Bud Tangren's place and I setup to land at one of the newest backcountry strips in Utah. Twelve hundred feet of rail-dragged pasture at Karl Spielman's place gets only its second airplane visitor. Boy, am I fickle. I was bummed about Ibex just a couple of hours ago and now, mood forgotten, I am completely satisfied to be right here.

After lunch with Melinda and Karl, we decide that putting up a new windsock at Fry Canyon will provide an adequate excuse to fly (as though we need a reason to fly!). On the way, we circle over the Middle Point strip near Dark Canyon (it looks great) and then do a fast drag of Dark Canyon South Rim (it doesn't look so great) before landing at Fry Canyon. It's actually gotten quite hot and we pledge to get ice cream at the lodge when we are done. But first, we need to deal with the windsock. The pole doesn't have a mechanism to lay down so I break out some slings to climb the pole. The sock we have with us is too small to fit the main hoop, but some jury rigging on the narrow end allows the sock to be attached, and me to return to the ground. A not-too-long walk gets us the promised

ice cream at the lodge. After a breezy stroll back, we check the *new windsock*, and fly away.

The return trip is made as a big loopy route that takes us over the airstrips at Bullseye Canyon, Blue Canyon (southeast of the Happy Jack Mine), Hite, below Buckacre Point (in Hatch Canyon), and Happy Canyon. Karl guides me around to several lovely arches and pouroffs near Happy Canyon before I follow him across Canyonlands to Moab. If all this wasn't perfect enough, the full moon makes a brilliant entrance over

the La Sals in the middle of our patio dinner.

Sunday

The Spielmans have business in town today and I am determined to spend some time doing work on a needy airstrip project. My choice today will be some cleanup work on the crosswind strip at Happy Canyon. On the way over, I take a close look at the remains of the strip at Flint Flat. It wouldn't take much to rehabilitate this beautiful airport at the top of the Flint Trail except that it's inside the National Recreation Area. Someday soon, we'll just have to ask to restore the strip and see what happens. Gordon Flats is a designated airport in the NRA (just up the road), but Flint Flat is a much nicer "destination". Maybe there is a trade to be had.

At Happy Canyon, I realize that someone else has already taken out many of the largest bushes on

the crosswind runway (Rich, was that you?). My plan is to make the center twenty feet of the strip be completely free of woody plants (and their roots). Swinging the mattock high over head, the digging begins. Three and a half hours later, I can't make a fist, but 800 feet of the north-south runway is cleared and ready for use. After that work, I've got to be the first to use it. By pressing into some brush on the south end for extra length, I am able to blast off from the new work with only a few pieces of brush in the gear. A couple of man-afternoons on the remaining length would complete the work to the same standard as the east-west runway. Any takers?

As hot as I am, I've only been thinking of one place for the last hour. Downstream to the Dirty Devil, turn right, and there it is. The bleached white wind sock shows that a south landing is favored and I head upstream to turn around. Two minutes later and I'm on the ground at Dirty Devil for the expressed purpose of taking a swim.

Refreshed from the dip, with a few rock samples in my pocket, and a few more pictures in the camera, I take off for Moab.

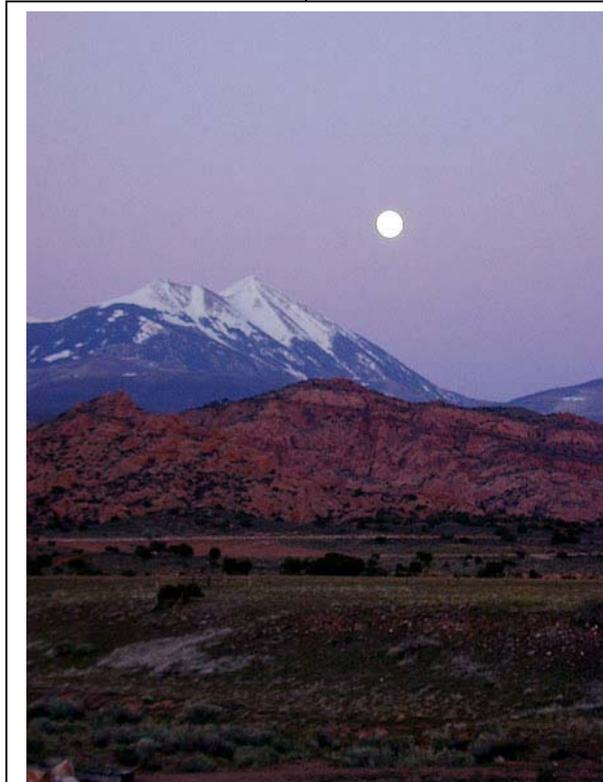


Figure 1 - The moon over the La Sals

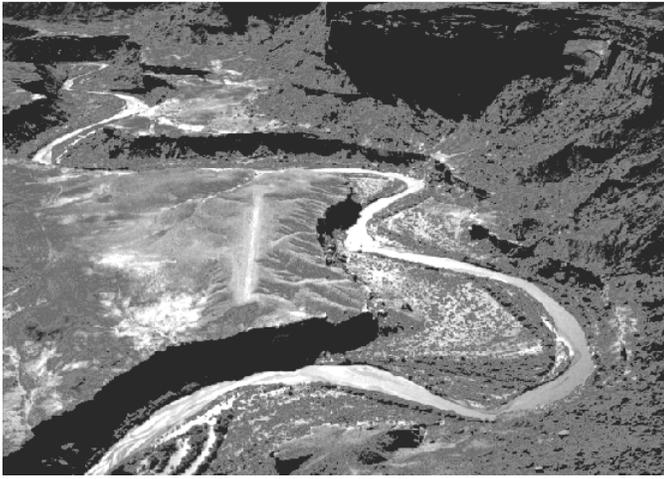


Figure 4 - Dirty Devil airstrip from the north.

Monday

The plan for today is to take a road trip to visit some Anasazi ruins and maybe get the Dark Canyon South Rim strip into good enough shape to accept a plane (and more workers).



Figure 3 - Swimming hole on the Dirty Devil River.

This past winter, Karl charted a cluster of ruins in Cottonwood Wash from his plane. Following his map, we drive to a point above one of them to begin hiking. In less than half a mile, we are at the base of a large cave with a small, three room dwelling at the mouth. Behind it there is a seep which was dug out to make a sizable pond. And, a little way around the bend is a wall of pictographs that includes *foot prints* almost twenty feet above me. Almost as if we were transported into the past, it is not at all difficult to imagine life in this lovely alcove so many centuries ago.

Higher up in the Ponderosa forests below the Abajo Mountains the BLM map shows a runway that Karl couldn't find from the air. A small Jeep trail leads from the main road in about the right place and turns sharply right. The road gets



Figure 2 - Artifacts seen in Cottonwood Wash. (left in place)

straighter and smoother until we realize we are on the strip. It is well constructed, level, and perhaps eighty feet wide. The only problem is that we are driving through twenty-five year old trees! In a few hundred feet, the trees disappear, and we can see the true character of the airstrip. On the rim overlooking Hammond Canyon with flowered meadows and pine forest, this is a fantastic destination! I sure would like to see this place maintained and open for aircraft use.

On around Woodenshoe Canyon and across Lower Horse Flats we finally arrive at the south rim of Dark Canyon. A test drive down the runway has to be abandoned because of the terrible roughness. On top of that, there is no way that ten



Figure 5 - Hammond Canyon airstrip.

people are going to make a dent in the brush cover. We have only three. We had such high hopes for this place that the mood is somber. Lunch on the canyon rim while imagining new adventures in the depths below, renews my spirit. Maybe we will be able to do something with this runway in time. For now, it's time to make our way home and remember where we've been.

Got Water?

-Rob Hunter

My wife and I recently flew to the Hidden Splendor Airstrip for an overnight backpacking trip. We arrived in the early afternoon. It was a spring day and only in the mid 70's but it still felt hot in the sun. We had planned on hiking about eight miles through the desert to some springs that I had read about. We started our hike with three quarts of water each but after hiking four hours in the sun were down to about one quart and we were both thirsty. After an hour's search for the promised springs we found only an intermittent trickle of water in a mostly dry streambed. I picked out the biggest of the stagnant puddles and pumped the water through our water filter into a bottle and took a drink. It was the nastiest tasting stuff I had ever put in my mouth! Then I remembered stories I had heard of people dying from drinking arsenic laced water.



Hidden Splendor

The next morning we decided to call off the rest of our adventure and head for home.

Later, I did some research. The BLM recommends bringing your own water for any hikes in the San Rafael Swell area.

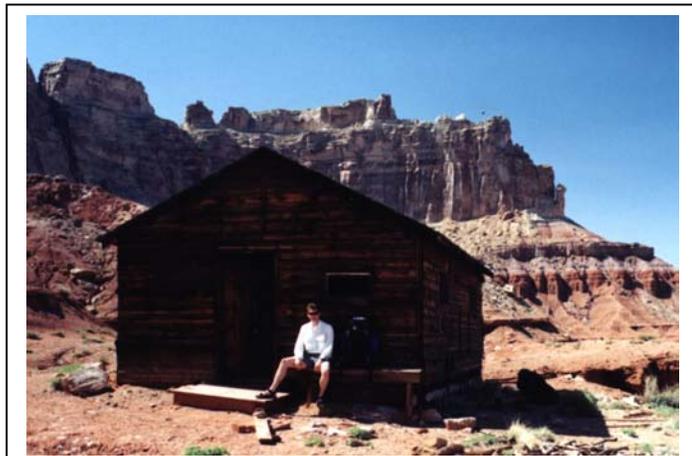
The level of dissolved solids is so high that drinking much of it overwhelms your kidneys. It's like trying to drink sea water. There are also severe problems with bacterial contamination in the San Rafael River. At times the river is so contaminated that it is not safe to even touch the water. Other rivers in Southern Utah such as the Green river and Colorado River don't have the same mineralization

problems but have so much silt that they quickly clog water filters and taste bad without filtering.

So what did I learn? First, that I should bring my own water when traveling to Utah's back country airstrips. Second, if I ever had to make a forced landing or even just stay an unplanned night in the back country that two quarts would not be enough. I now have a sturdy five gallon water container that I take when ever flying through Utah's back country. Five gallons of water weighs forty pounds, which is a significant part of my useful load, but after my experience I'd rather carry less gear, or make another fuel stop than risk being without water. The third thing I learned is that that the time of day you hike makes a huge difference in how much water you need. If I'm ever stranded in the desert I'll just hang out in the shade during the heat of the day.

But what do you do if you are stuck in the desert without water? Let's say that after your day of hiking and exploring you return to a plane with a dead battery and you're nearly out of water. Certainly traveling with another plane and pilot that can give you a ride or send help your way would be the best option. Having a handheld transceiver might be another option for summoning help. A cell phone would be useless in most of Utah's canyon country.

Obviously any water you find is fair game. Drinking unpurified water might make you so sick you wish you were dead but bacteria and protozoans like Giardia take anywhere from several days to a few weeks to make you sick and with out water you will die in a few days anyway. Boiling or using halogens such as Potable Aqua iodine tablets can purify water.



The Little Susan Mine – Hidden Splendor

We reluctantly decided to hike back to the airplane where we had three quarts of water, and then fly out in the morning to get more. We filled our empty water bottles with the bitter water in case things got desperate. Most of the hike out was in the dark, and it was much cooler. We didn't get nearly as thirsty. Back at the plane we enjoyed the sleep of the dead.

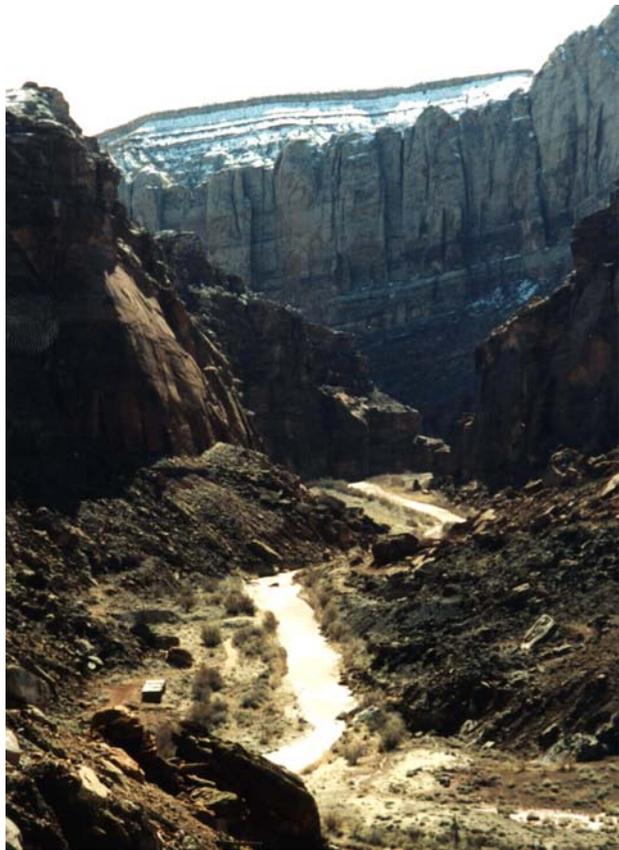
Places to look for water include streambeds, or anywhere you find cottonwood trees and potholes in the slick-rock. Even if you don't find any water in a streambed it is worth digging a hole in the lowest and dampest spot you can find to see if it fills up with water.

Another source of water is dew. You can wipe the early morning dew off your wings or vegetation with a piece of absorbent cloth and then wring it out directly into your mouth or into a container for later. One more possible source of water that I have read about but never tried is mashing the pulp of a cactus in a piece of cloth and wringing the moisture out into your mouth. Unfortunately during the dry summer in the desert you are unlikely to find much water in any of these ways.

There is another way to get emergency water, and the hotter and sunnier it is, the better it works. A solar still is relatively easy to make (see drawing). It requires two essential components: a piece of clear plastic about 6x6 ft and a container to catch the water. The solar still is constructed by digging a hole about 40 inches wide and 20 inches deep. The hole should be in a location that is likely to have moisture in the soil such as a wash or dry stream bed and should be in a location that receives sun throughout most of the day. Put the container in the center of the hole. Then stretch the plastic sheet over the hole and anchor the edges with dirt. Next push down on the center of the plastic sheet until it forms a cone shape with the tip directly over your container. The plastic should run two to four inches from the dirt walls and must not touch the walls

except for on the rim. Place a small stone in the tip of the cone to hold the shape. Finally pile more dirt or rocks on the edges of the plastic to completely block off all air. Within an hour or two the sun heats the soil, evaporating the moisture in

it which then condenses on the plastic and drips into your container.



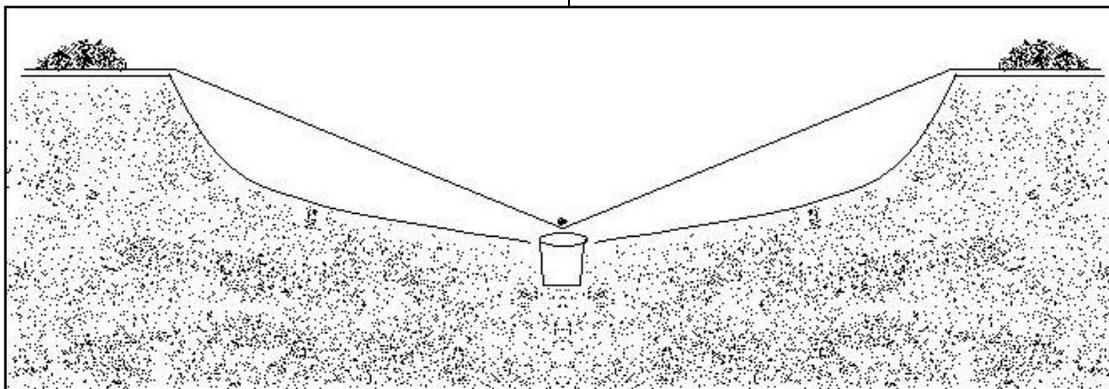
Departure Downstream – Hidden Splendor

Here are some tips on materials and techniques that will make your still more effective. The container could be a plastic bag, a cup, or some part of the airplane. It needs to be wide enough to catch any drops of water that don't fall off the very bottom of the plastic sheet. A plastic container may be better than metal to minimize re-evaporation. The plastic sheet probably can't be improvised, so carry it as a part of your survival kit. Some types of plastic are so slick that the water drops tend to fall off before they get to the bottom of your still, and into the container. If you notice this, scuff the plastic with sand or rocks. Be careful not to wear holes in the plastic, as this will drastically reduce the efficiency of your still.

One way to increase the yield of the still is to add moisture to the hole. Seawater, contaminated river water, and urine can all be converted to safe drinking water

with a solar still. The moisture from plants can also be used. Sliced open cactus such as prickly pear is best but other vegetation will work too.

One final hint on optimizing your solar still. Add a piece of plastic tubing that reaches from the container to the outside of the still. You can drink the collected water with out having to take the still apart.



If making a solar still, trying to collect dew, or drinking horribly bitter, mineralized water do not sound like fun to you, I suggest you take at least a

gallon of fresh water per person in unbreakable containers. You can get by with less if you manage to stay in the shade during the day and move about only at night. With an emergency stash of water in your plane you can relax and enjoy the beautiful Southeast Utah desert landscape.

UTAH BACK COUNTRY PILOTS
Skypark Airport
1887 South Redwood Road #16
Woods Cross, UT 84087

Air Mail To Master Pilot:



WARNING

The Mexican Mountain airstrip has been vandalized twice this spring. The first time logs had been placed across the runway. Most recently, large rocks have been placed at random locations on the runway. A UBCP member avoided one of these by only one inch! Please use extreme caution, overfly the strip multiple times, and carefully examine its condition. As always, land at your own risk. Please report any unsafe conditions on the email list, or to one of the UBCP officers.

UBCP WEB SITE

Rob Hunter has graciously accepted webmaster responsibility for the UBCP web site. The address of the new site is

www.UtahBackCountryPilots.org . The searchable database of Utah's back country airstrips is now fully functional. If you have corrections, additions, photos, (JPEG, about 80,000 pixels, i.e. 200x400) or additional comments on the airstrips, please e-mail them to Rob at ubcp-rob@home.com. He will add them to the database. Many other great features are planned, including a bulletin board where we can share up to the minute information about our back country airstrips

Did you know UBPC has an e-mail list? There are currently 65 people subscribed to the list. It is a good way to get questions answered quickly. If your question has to do with back country flying in Utah there is a good chance that someone on the list knows the answer and will post a response before the day is over. Some of the questions that have been addressed on the list include: What kind of tie-downs work best? What's the current condition of Mexican Mountain? What's the best back country airplane? To sign up, send an e-mail to majordomo@lists.xmission.com . In the body of the e-mail type "subscribe ubcp" (don't use the quotes). You can leave the subject line blank and shouldn't add any other words. You will then be sent an e-mail with an authorization code. Then you need to send another e-mail to majordomo@lists.xmission.com with that authorization code line in the body of your message. That's all. When you sign up, send a note to the group letting everyone know you are there and maybe we can finally figure out what the ideal back country airplane is!