

TRAILS & TALES

April 2005

GEAR GRINDERS 4WD CLUB, INC.

Volume XIX, No.4

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

George Graham
760-375-7390

VICE-PRESIDENT

Warner Fellows
760-375-5091

RECORDING SECRETARY

Mary Kus
760-446-4115

CORRESPONDING SECRETARY

Mary Grimsley
760-446-3458

TREASURER

Jim Kenney
760-371-2458

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Andy Couch
760-384-4010
Bill Maddux
760-375-2756

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

BLM STEERING COMMITTEE

Bill Maddux
Mary Grimsley, alternate
EMERGENCY SERVICES

Gary Bartlett

HDMUC REPRESENTATIVE

Mary Grimsley

HISTORIAN

Karen Schortzmann

SAFETY

Dan Burkhart

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Mary Grimsley

CLUB ADDRESS

P.O. BOX 32
Ridgecrest, CA 93556

IN THIS ISSUE

Nightmare Gulch
Mapping Project #3
Racetrack Valley
March Meeting Hillites

NIGHTMARE GULCH *By: Bill "Maddog" Maddux*

The following members: Warner & Pamela Fellows; George & Linda Graham; Jerry & Mary Grimsley; Jim & Donna Kenney; Gary Luckeroth; Bill & Lynne Maddux; Curtis Martin; and guests: Bill Dorey; and Randy Banis, the webmaster of DV Talk.com, toured Nightmare Gulch on the last legal Saturday, 30 January, before the annual closure.

As expected, the rains had changed the gulch significantly. Almost everyone had minor problems and needed guidance and/or a few rocks getting place under wheels. But, the trail boss, Maddog, was the first one to get really hung up good, and had to submit to a tow strap. Part of the gulch wall caved in at one point and we had to resort to climbing over a previous cave-in, rather than the usual go around. The clay hill where we normally climbed out had its usual holes, which presented problems for most and none required a strap nor a winch cable. (I think that is a correct statement, been so long I can't remember.)

There was a fairly strong wind blowing, but we found shelter at the old talc mine for a leisurely lunch. Shortly after lunch, Randy had to depart and he headed down hill toward Garlock road. We continued north and then cut back to arrive at Cudahay camp in Last Chance Canyon.

We went down the canyon to the Vee notch where Curtis demonstrated how to come thru the notch. How he survived without getting damage is unknown. He really slipped one time and we all thought that he did in his drivers side. Just before the notch, Jerry found a rock which high centered him and he had to get towed off by Maddog. From there, it was an easy trip down to Garlock Road and home.

Since it has been a month and a half, I hope that I remembered everything that happened and if someone else had to submit to a tow strap, well you got off easy in this trip report.



NOT THIS WAY! Curtis slipped off the left rock face, and down into the V-notch.



THIS IS HOW YOU DO IT! Staying up on the wall makes it look easy.

GEAR GRINDERS WEB SITE: <http://www.geargrinders.org/>

Mapping Project #3 *By: Warner Fellows*

The third in a series of many trail inventory trips was made on Saturday, March 23, 2005. Our objective on this trip was to finish that part of the El Paso's that is included in our area of responsibility. 10 Gear Grinders in 6 vehicles left from the Albertson's Express and convoyed to the Trailhead at EP15 and Redrock-Inyokern Rd. There, we met Bill Maddux and his guest Scott Wall. This brought attendance up to 11 Gear Grinders and a guest. Participants were: Bill Dorey; Warner & Pamela Fellows; George & Linda Graham; Jerry & Mary Grimsley; Jim & Donna Kenney; Bill Maddux & Scott Wall; and Mark Pahuta.

We aired down, paired off, and headed out. We divided the area to be inventoried into three sections and assigned a section to each of the Scout/Scribe teams and off we went with the intent to return at 3:00pm. Jim and I covered the area north and east of EP15. Bill Maddux and Mark Pahuta covered the area south of EP15 to the Dutch Cleanser Mine. Jerry, George and Bill Dorey covered the area south of the Dutch Cleanser Mine.

We hadn't been out very long when a call came over the CB that Mark was having a bit of difficulty getting his Rubicon out of park. Jim and I set out to assist, but before we could get there, the situation was remedied, so we returned to the task at hand.

Although we have explored the El Paso area pretty extensively, every time we go we manage to find an area we hadn't previously been to. This time was no exception. Jim and I stumbled over mining sites, cabins, and wreckage that we never knew existed. I am sure that the other teams experienced the same.

As the allotted time expired, we gathered at the trailhead to exchange stories and to collect the inventory forms. We then adjourned for the day, only to reconvene later at Nickoletti's for dinner.

I want to thank everyone that turned out for this trip. We got a lot done, inventorying a total of 35.5 miles of trails.

NEXT MAPPING EXPEDITION WILL BE APRIL 17, 2005



Maddog, Mark, Warner, & guest
Scott Wall study the maps.

MARCH MEETING HILITES

We welcomed new guests Kevin & Denise Serpa.

Warner gave his VP report, and asked for run leaders for June, July, & August. Mapping project is going along well.

Bill reported that our side sent 2,587 Faxed comments on the Furnace Creek road closure. He also reported we burned up the Forest Service Fax machine, and probably the BLM's.

Warner reported that we have 1,718 square miles to map for the CA4WD mapping project. The last trip out we mapped 35.5 miles of roads.

Warner suggested he would like to see us sponsor a yearly charity and/or Christmas event.

Mark reported on an upcoming event for the showing of a R/C history video, including interviews with valley residents.

RACETRACK VALLEY in DVNP *By: Warner Fellows*

Pamela and I had planned this trip for months and as the day finally approached, we were nervous about leading our first overnight trip. We poured over as much information as we could find on the area and visited every website and message board that dealt with Death Valley in general and the Racetrack in particular. Much to our dismay the prevailing word on the web was that most of the western civilization would be descending upon the Racetrack for Easter weekend. So we decided to take a vacation day and go up a day early. Jerry & Mary Grimsley graciously offered to lead the group up Lippincott Road to the campsite.

Pamela and I arrived at the campground around 1:00pm and much to our surprise we found the campground completely empty. Once the tent was up and the gear was stowed, I set about "sanitizing" the outhouse, and believe me it needed it. With

camp chores done, we settled in for a peaceful night's sleep. And peaceful it was, at least until about 1:00am. A light shower blew through and was gone as soon as it came, yet we were snug and warm in our tent.

Friday morning Pamela drove the "Wheezer" down Lippincott Road a short way to get pictures and to greet the gang as they arrived. The gang arrived in camp and still the camp was empty. Arriving in the Homestake Campground were George Graham, Jerry & Mary Grimsley, Guy & Kay Kendall, Gary Luckerth, Bill Maddux, Bill & Kathy Martin, Reid Wackermann, along with guests Kevin & Denise Serpa.

Once everyone's tent was up and lunch eaten, we set out for a look at the Racetrack. It has been a pretty busy year for the "Moving Rocks" of the Racetrack Playa, as we saw plenty of rocks with

distinct trails. After everyone had enough pictures of the rocks and several theories as to how the rocks actually move were discussed (Bill claimed it was "Big Foot"), we moved on to the Ubehebe Lead Mine.

There is not much left of the mine structures, but there were a few tunnels for Bill Maddux and the other "young'uns" to explore. Once the Ubehebe was thoroughly explored, we set off for the Lippincott Mine. There were even more tunnels to explore at the Lippincott but the sun was getting low, so we headed back to camp, while Bill, Gary, Reid and Kevin continued to explore tunnels on the upper level. With dinner prepared and enjoyed we settled around our "campfire" for some pleasant conversation. A little after six that evening the full moon rose over the mountains to the east and it shined like a search light over the valley. It was quite a sight. The hour was getting late and we turned in.

Saturday we were joined by Brooks Gilbert from the High Desert 4-wheelers of Lancaster. We planned a pretty busy day and got a 9:00am start. Our first stop was at Teakettle Junction for a ceremonial placing of a teapot. That done, we set off through Lost Burro Gap to the Lost Burro Mine. The Lost Burro site still has several structures standing, including a "Cousin Jack" cabin. We explored the cabins, the millworks and the mines. The Lost Burro is a pretty extensive ruin with plenty to see. From there we crossed Hunter Mountain Road and headed for the Whitetop Mountain Road.

As we drove through the "Andy Hills" we saw rusted sections of pipe line that ran water from the Rest and Burro Springs to the mill at the Lost Burro Mine. We stopped for lunch in "Leaning Rock Canyon" and saw our first "Hoodooos". Always wondered what a Hoodoo was and now we know!

Along the way we stopped at the Huntley Mine cabin and site. Time and weather have taken their toll on the cabin, as the roof and two of the walls had caved in. We continued up the road to the top where we were promised a spectacular view by the Grimsley's, who had first explored this area several years ago. According to Pamela's "Purple" Book, visible to the far east was the dry lake beds of the Bonnie Claire Playa and Sarcobatus Flat in Nevada. We were not disappointed. What a view! The road to the top was quite narrow, so we had to pull out onto the point to turn around. Amazing enough, we all had phone signals at this point, so the cell phones all came out to phone home. Then we were on our way down.

Since we had a lot of miles planned for the weekend, gas was a concern for some of our group, so we sent Reid, Brooks, and the Serpas off to Scotty's Castle to top off some cans. They wanted to see the

Castle anyway. The rest of the group returned to camp for dinner and relaxation.

The Kendall's had a family obligation and left our happy group Saturday evening, but we were joined by Mike and De ette Johnston of the Mammoth 4WD Club. Upon their return we learned that Kevin had a flat tire on his way back, but Reid wasn't with them. It seems that he was having a bit of trouble with some of his auxiliary lights and stopped to troubleshoot. Soon we heard Reid on the CB reporting that we were soon to be visited by a Park Ranger.

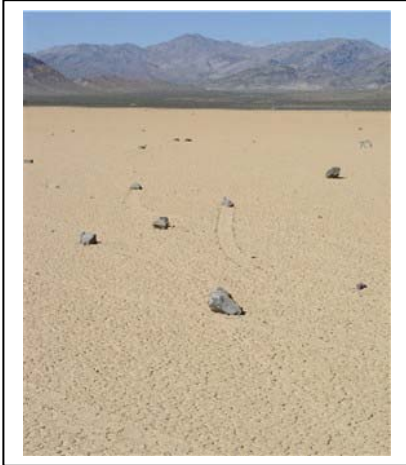
George thought that he'd be neighborly and greeted the Ranger as he was getting out of his vehicle. **BIG MISTAKE!** The Ranger was unpleasantly surprised and was quite taken aback. We thought for a moment that we would have to take up a collection for George's bail, but all ended well enough and no one went to jail.

Sunday being our last day of the weekend, we had planned to go into Hidden Valley, explore some mines, then up Hunter Mountain Road and out onto the Saline Valley Road. Our plans were spoiled when the Ranger told us that Hunter Mountain Road was blocked with a vehicle stuck in the mud. **HIS VEHICLE!**

With that unhappy news we amended our plans to leave on the Lippincott Road, then went south on Saline Valley Road. Our amended plans included a short trip up Hunter Mountain Road from the South Pass side. We went in knowing that we wouldn't get very far but we made it through the washout at Jackass Spring. We continued up until we encountered snow across the road and still we pressed on. We made it to the summit and decided to turn around once the road began its long descent towards Goldbelt Spring. On our way back to pavement and civilization we stopped for lunch at the Boxcar Cabin.

We aired up our tires near the end of the trail, with some headed for home while the others headed for Lone Pine. In Lone Pine we showed some of our favorite places to the Martins, Reid and the Serpas. We stopped for dinner at the Mt. Whitney Restaurant before starting the long drive home. While the Martins headed home after dinner, we took Reid and the Serpas to "Frog Rock" in the Alabama Hills and introduced them to some of our favorite "rocks".

We enjoyed taking our friends into one of our new favorite places (since we are relatively new to the west everywhere tends to be "our new favorite place") and I hope that everyone had as much fun as we did. We are already planning another trip to the area, but this time we plan to camp off White Top Mountain Road. So much to explore and never enough time!



The Racetracks sliding rocks.



The north end... "is 1.5 inches higher than the south end." "Playas are among the flattest and smoothest landforms on earth."

"Mud cracks cover most of The Racetrack's surface. The mud cracks are old, semi-permanent features outlining polygons 3 to 4 inches in diameter & about an inch deep. They form as the playa's mud surface dries & shrinks, radiating from regularly spaced centers, usually in sets of three cracks at 120 degrees to each other. The cracks intersect with other cracks from other centers to form polygons. Polygons on The Racetrack are mostly irregular shapes."

From: *Geology Underfoot In Death Valley and Owens Valley*, By Robert P. Sharp & Allen F. Glazner, Pages 162 & 164

GEAR GRINDERS 4WD
CLUB
P.O. BOX 32
RIDGECREST, CA 93556