

GMUG – Above Mailbox and Massey Canyons Trip Report – 7/29/2017

Who: Janice Shepherd (and 6 other hikers)

Where: Mailbox Trail (#619) to Mailbox Cutoff (#630) to off-trail mostly following old two-tracks to point above Mailbox Trail and Massey Branch Trail (#618) intersection. These 3 trails all have write-ups on GJhikes.com

Trip Stats: 7.4 miles 4:40

Observations:

Awesome views into Mailbox Branch Canyon, Blue Creek Canyon and Massey Branch Canyon. Great views of the La Sal Mountains.

Old two-track made for easy hiking when we were following it.

We saw no one else during hike but found fresh motorcycle tracks on Mailbox Cutoff (#630) when we returned to it. This hike was on a Saturday but the area is very quiet.

Range improvements for water: Fiberglass (?) cover for water improvement is either disintegrating or being chewed on by animals at: 700837 4279928 (see photo). Standing pipe is secure and protected at: 700796 4279937 (see photo). Spring enclosure is functioning but some vegetation present at: 700733 4279948 (see photos).

A few remnants of an eaten skunk noted along Mailbox Cutoff, fortunately not much of a lingering smell.

Pond (1) near Mailbox Cutoff with salamanders present. Nice setting. Small snake slid into water to swim to far shore. **One salamander was on its side turning slowly in a circle – stressed.** See photos. At: 699336 4279480

Pond (2) about 1/3 mile from Mailbox Cutoff. Nice setting. Thicker grasses around edge and vegetation in water. **Giant water bug present** (aka “toe-biter”). See photos. At: 698992 4279033

Left two-track to locate a view point. Delightful rock ledge found at: 699070 4278709. Perfect location for a hiking trail to pass-by. Angle and exposure not recommended for other modes of travel. See photos.

Continued mostly along edge with lots of thick traversing of manzanita plants. A hiking trail would reduce damage to plants and hikers legs.

Grand lunch spot on rock ledge at: 698217 4277276

During lunch we spotted a mama **bear and two cubs** down by the pond (3) at 697614 4277117. Mama showed cubs how to use **Mailbox Trail sign as scratching post** (circling posts with 4 foot circle of ragged rocks might discourage such post abuse). Pond (3) looks pretty **boggy and overgrown.**

There are trails in the area targeting horseback riders (#634), mtn bikers (#620), motorcycle riders (#618, #643), ATVers (#619, #630) and 4x4 riders(#404, #414, #410). **A trail for hikers along this mesa top would round out the trail variety in the area.** The bulk of the trail could follow the old two-track with some sections along the rim for viewpoints.

Wildlife:female bear and 2 cubs, salamanders (one stressed), giant water bug, small snake, horned lizard.



Top is disintegrating or being chewed on. 700837 4279928 Pipe is in good condition and well protected.



Trough in good shape and holding water. At: 700733 4279948



Vegetation starting to thicken in trough at spring.



Pond (1) at 699336 4279480 dir: N



Pond (1) at 699336 4279480 Dir: W



Snake crossing pond (1).



Pond (2) more vegetation growing in pond but still lots of water. At: 698992 4279033 dir: NW



Pond (2) 698992 4279033 dir: W



View looking into Mailbox Branch canyon from spot that is best approached on foot. 699070 4278709 dir:S



Looking back at view point. Hiker was standing at approximately the red X.



View from lunch spot looking into Blue Creek Canyon. La Sals are in the clouds.



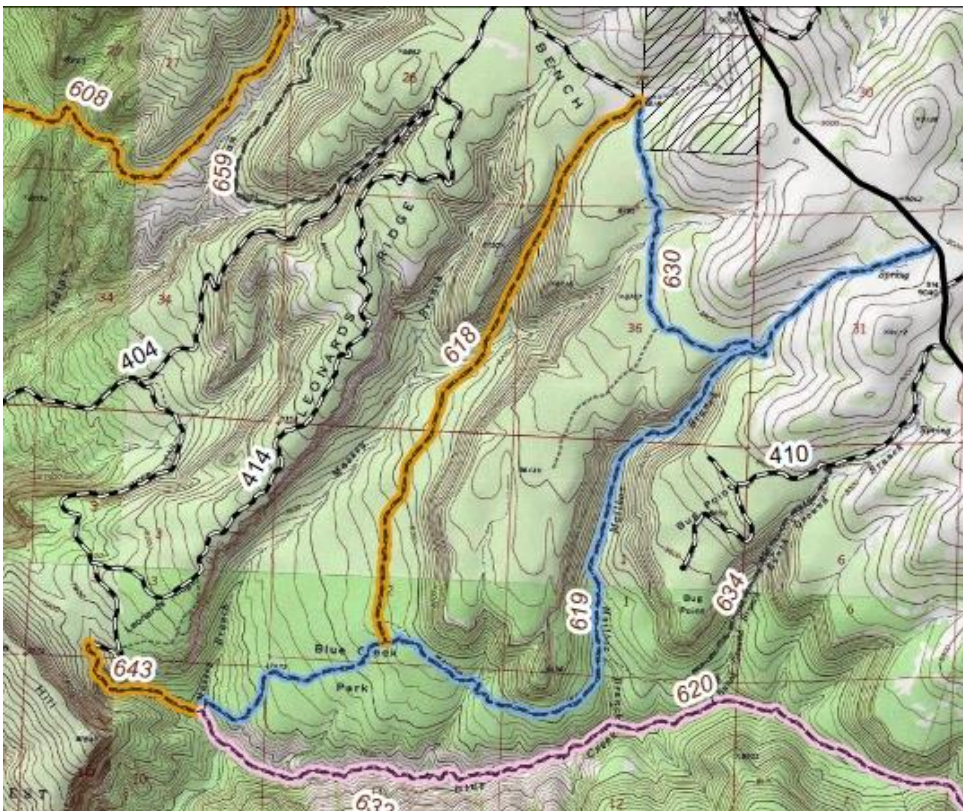
Pond (3) viewed from mesa rim. Bears in bottom right corner of photo. Pond at: 697614 4277117



Horned lizard



Our track is in blue for the off-trail portion. The red is the visible remains of an old track.



GMUG map for area. Hike started on #619, then #630 and then was on mesa between #618 and #619.