

Sulphur Springs HMA Camping Trip.
Charlie Harper

I will try to take you on a chronological tour of the Sulphur Springs HMA.
We start on Sunday Afternoon June 20 2004 and will finish on Tuesday evening June 22 2004.

Climb aboard and lets go looking for horses.

Sunday June 20 2004

A group of SHR members and friends went to the Sulphur Springs HMA for a 3-day 2-night campout. Members were Ken and Tera Benefiel, Kansas, Krista Lee, Oregon, Charles Harper, Ca., Jared and Naylene Nield our guides and camp cook, Cedar City, Utah, Friends Ben Shorty and his daughter Kristin, St. George, Utah.

We left Cedar City about noon on Sunday and drove to the HMA. Jim and Verlyn Nielson, who had driven up ahead, met us at the Wah Wah Mt's.

I was riding with Jared, and he was leading us into the HMA, just before we got to camp on the northern edge of the Mt. Home Reseeding project, we encountered our first wild horses at the spring at the beginning of the Mt. Home Reseeding project. Two Horses near the road appeared to be bachelor stallions on their way down the hill. One a Black the other a Sorrel or Red Dun, I couldn't see stripes or a dorsal the way they were standing. They stayed for a little bit then went back up into the woods. I didn't get them on camera. These two horses were my very first horses I had seen in the wild.

We went on to our campsite and set up camp, and then all but Ben, piled into Jared's Pickup and off we went up to Mt. Home. Rode his Quad. Jim and Verlyn followed in their truck. We wound along the road to the top of Mt. Home. From up on top of Mt. Home Peak and a little further on we could see a band of horses away across the valley, they were but mere specks but thru the glasses we could count 6 or 8 horses. The second band we were to see.

We said goodbye to Verlynn and Jim up here, as they had to return home. We hope they can stay longer next year and hope they had a safe trip home.

We saw a small band of 3 horses lead by Bay stallion that was out of our sight behind a ridge to the left, later he would peek around the ridge and see us, gather the other two and trot off. We saw a couple of Cow Elk and I spooked them, a cardinal sin, by shouting LOOK! ELK! And of course they vanished into the brush. I felt really stupid for doing that as no one got a picture of them. After driving around Mt. Home for an hour or so we returned to camp.

Jared and Ben went out to hoorah us with wild animal calls and it might have worked if his first call wasn't just a bit messed up. However He did call in an Elk (we Think) and it was close enough to them that they beat feet back to camp. ("A trip to the HMA \$XXX.XX, Meals for the campout \$XX.XX, the look on Ben and Jared's Faces.... PRICLESS!!!")

After the meal of Venison Stew we all turned in ready for sleep and another day on the HMA.

Monday June 21 2004

Vern Condie, his wife Carol and their Grandson Branden joined us on Monday. Vern reported on a couple or 3 bands of horses they had seen coming in. We all piled in Krista's Suburban, Jared and Ben on the Quad, and off we went looking for horses.

As luck would have it we hadn't cleared the reseeding area when we found a band of horses led by a Zebra Dun. He is a very nice Zebra Dun with a beautiful mane and tail. We would end up seeing this band several times then next two days. The horses we saw first at the spring could have been two of his mares.

After a short stay here to take pictures of this band we traveled on, checking out springs and we came upon this cabin that has a tradition. Business cards are put on the walls and gathered every so often. Names are written on the walls also. This was a neat one room cabin just my size...wish I'd have gotten a shot of the exterior.

On our way back to the campsite we found the Zebra Dun's band still in the reseeding area now just a ways off the road.

Back in Camp Naylene started Dinner. Try as we might we could not get the Condie's to stay for dinner. We said Goodbye to them. Tonight's Fare, Dutch oven Chicken and Dutch oven Potato's. Yummy! Naylene is a great camp cook!

Monday evening June 21 2004

While we were waiting to cook the meal, we built the campfire and were setting around it talking and waiting on Jared and Ben, who were out scouting for horses and elk. All of a sudden Kristin Shorty punched me on the arm and said softly "LOOK! A Horse! Sure enough a horse had come down the hill and was about 100yards from camp. I could see it was a Bay or Dun stallion with at least one white sock and a blaze face. The light was waning and the sun reflected off him so as not to be able to tell for sure. He saw the fire and heard us talking and trotted off up the rise to the southeast of our camp.

I thought that he might come out in the draw away from camp and continue eating. I grabbed my camera from my tent and took off through the woods to end up in the middle of that draw, but shielded by the woods. I had a black hooded sweater on and my blue jean overalls.

The Stallion did come out into the draw where I thought he might. I stepped out of the woods toward him. I had the woods behind me and he couldn't tell if I was a horse or not. He stepped toward me. We moved to about 100 yards from each other, one step at a time. I stood very still, about 100 yards into the reseeding area, camera ready, for all the good it would do. My batteries were all but gone, and though it flashed 3 times, the Stallion held his ground. I took another step towards him, and he stepped towards me. I stepped forward again and so did he. This game of horse and people "Chicken" ended when I decided that he was close enough. I raised spread my arms as wide as I could. He stopped in mid step. I turned and headed back to camp, as it was really getting dark by now. He turned around and moseyed off to the cover of the trees. I turned and tried one last time to get picture. It worked this time but with no flash. We were about 300 yds. apart by then. I did get one picture but it is very hard to make him out, it is on my website. <http://home.earthlink.net/~csquaredranch/id2.html>

This is one moment that I will never forget. One on one with a wild Stallion.

I said a little prayer of thanksgiving for this wonderful moment in time. Thank you Kristin for seeing him first.

Tuesday Morning June 22 2004

It got down to about freezing last night, but I slept like a bug in a rug.

Naylene fixed Breakfast Burritos for breakfast. After we had eaten it was time to break camp and pack up for the trip out.

On the trip out of the HMA we went north and came out on State Road 22. On the trip out we saw more horses and one, a black Stallion raced our truck about 100 yards off the road and really did some stallion antics. He was wonderful to watch and I did get some pictures of him as I laid in the back seat of Ben's truck and snapped away.

In all we saw only about 28-30 wild horses, but that is pretty good considering the acreage of the HMA is over 422,000 acres.

This was one of the highlights of my life, a near religious experience, to walk on the same ground that the Wild Ones do here in the Sulphur Springs HMA.

I highly recommend this trip to anyone.