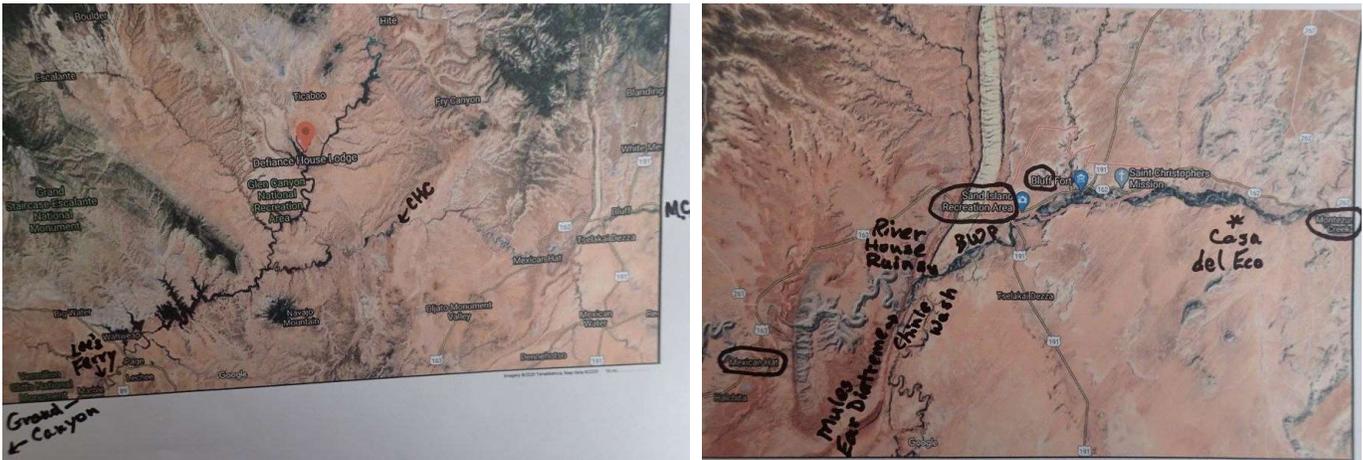


Southern Corridor - Ruins and Rock Art

Overview:
Mutz

by Karen Amundson, with Kathryn

I was inspired to put together this report in preparation for a Zoom presentation to the RMCC and others in January, 2021. Kathryn Mutz was looking for someone to join her in this, and by the time I pulled together a selective 150+ photos for Indian ruins and rock art from river trips that I have done, I decided to break this into 2 parts based on geography. So... this report is focused on the San Juan River heading west from Montezuma Creek (18 miles east of Bluff, UT), continuing into Lake Powell, then below the dam and into the Grand Canyon to the Diamond Creek takeout. A few photos from the Escalante River tributary are included. We start with an overview map - best if you read this going downstream from right to left, and a more localized San Juan River map:



San Juan River:

Again doing down river from right to left, we will first focus on the 17 room Casa del Eco ruin that is midway between Montezuma Creek and Bluff. Then we will see the series of petroglyph panels found at the Sand Island Recreation Area which can be accessed by car and is the usual put-in for San Juan river trips. From there, you can see many impressive Indian artifacts in rapid succession at the Butler Wash Panel, River House Ruin, and Chinle Wash. I am not aware of any more rock art or structures downstream until you get to the Great Bend which is in Lake Powell and midway between Clay Hills Crossing and the confluence of the San Juan and Colorado Rivers. That will likely be part of a future trip.

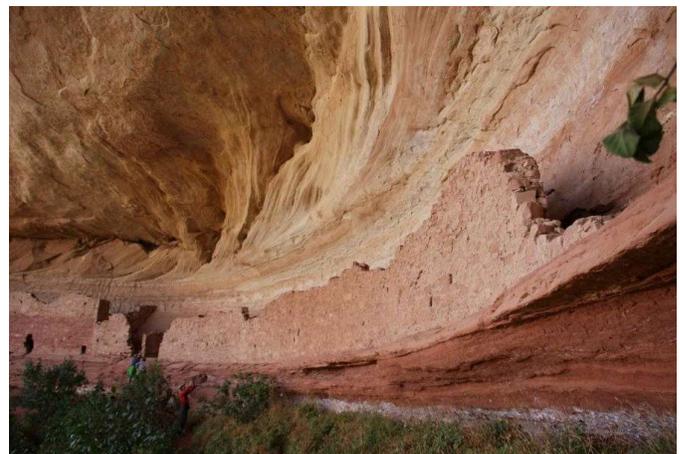
San Juan - Casa del Eco:

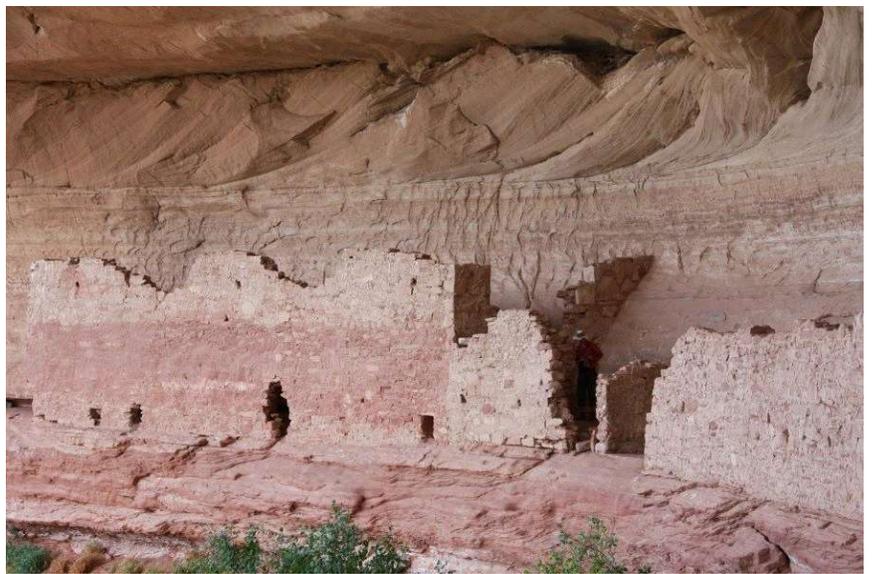
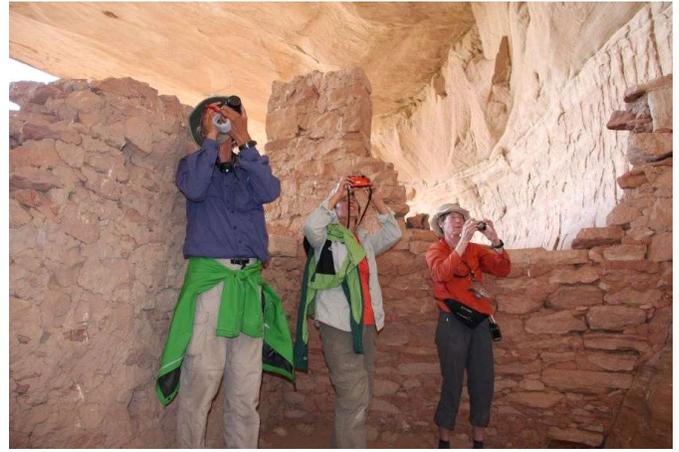
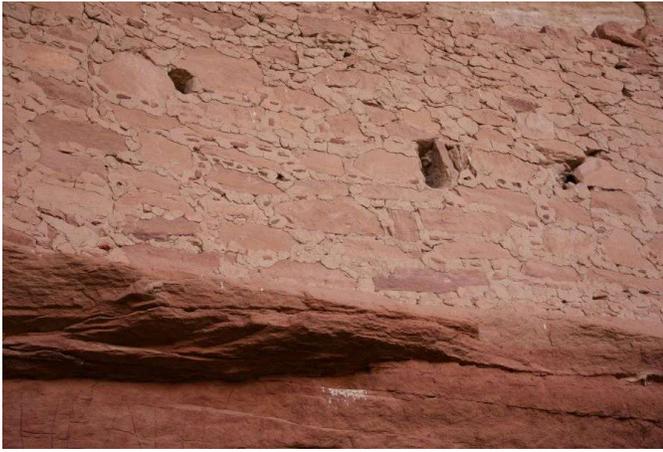
I had often wondered what the San Juan was like upriver from Sand Island, and when I

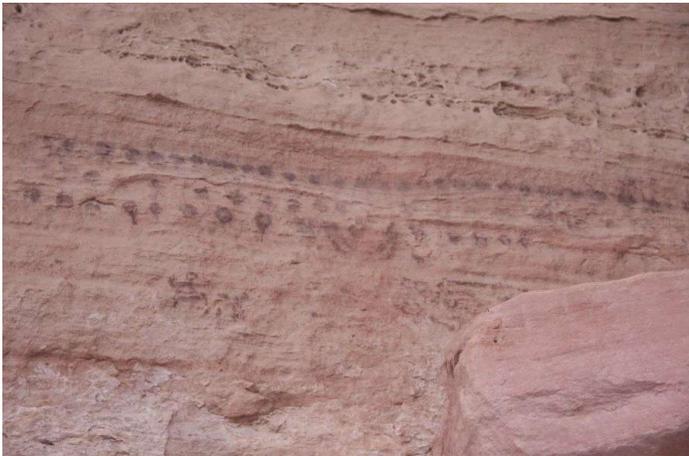
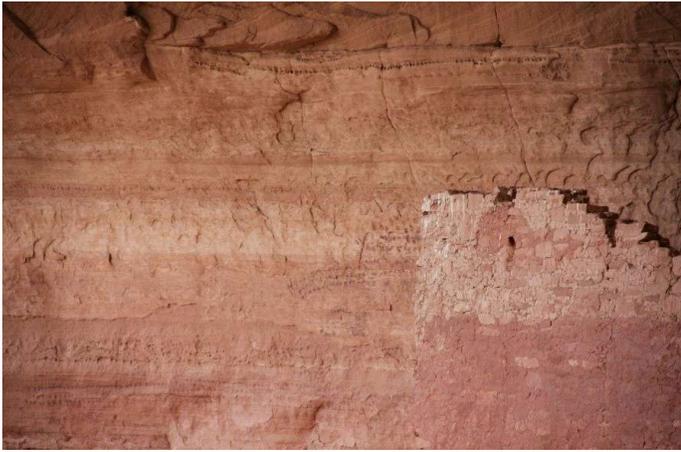
found out there was a sizable ruin midway between Montezuma Creek and Bluff, I lined up 3 friends to do an overnight trip and explore the ruin. We arrived, and setting up shuttle at Sand Island, found out from the rangers that both firepan and toilet are required and they loaned us 1 of those items. We put on the river at the highway 262 bridge and left 1 vehicle there. I recently found on a blog that you should submit a request for a hiking/camping permit – <http://www.navajonationparks.org/permits.htm> – whether you drive or boat in.

The flow and scenery along the river were pleasant, with a couple of alcoves along the short river right canyon wall that begged to be explored; but we didn't. It is about 18 river miles from Montezuma Creek to Sand Island, and perhaps 7 or 8 miles to where an old swinging footbridge used to exist until a high spring runoff wiped it out. We barely saw the base of it looking back on river left, pulled over and got out there. We camped on a flat 2 track turnaround area near the missing bridge. A friendly Navajo in a pickup truck stopped by before sunset to scout for a cottonwood tree that they would cut down and use for a ceremony. I do not see roads on Google Maps though we did see vehicles and lightly used roads when we were there in September of 2013.

The next morning we headed out for the ruins. We had to go either east or west to get to the road near the ruin without walking through farm fields. It was just over a mile from the river to the ruin. This ruin is unusual in that it is facing north. It was inhabited around the 1200's, and sometimes it is called the 17 Room Ruin. We took many pictures:

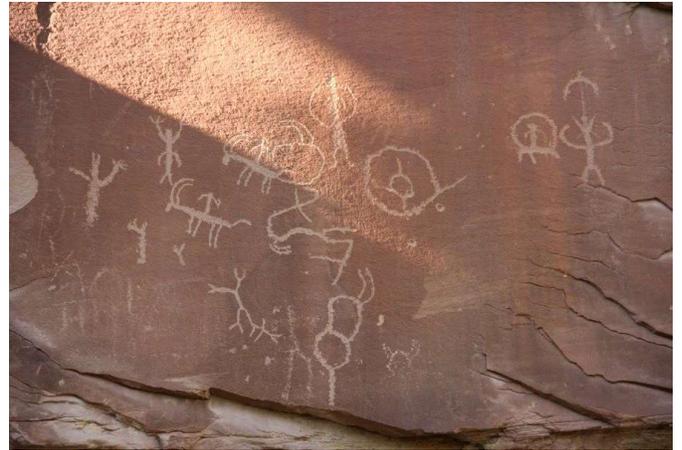
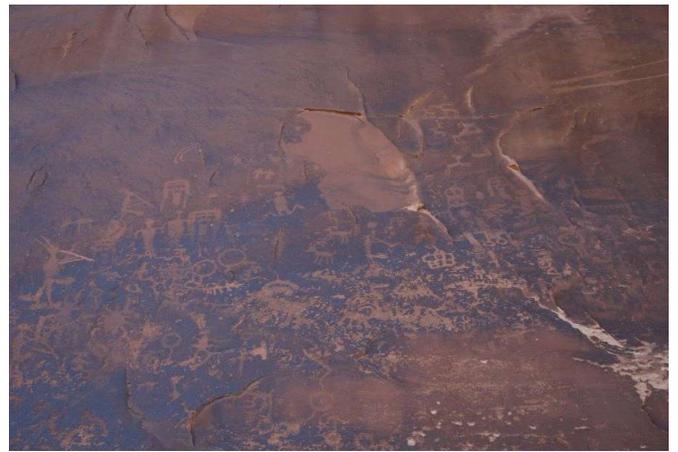
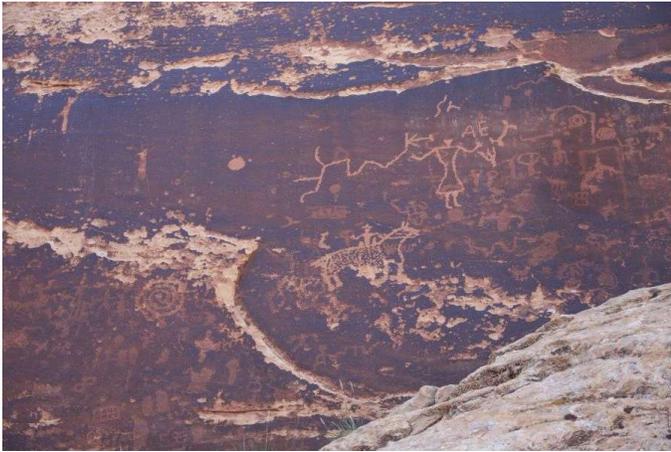


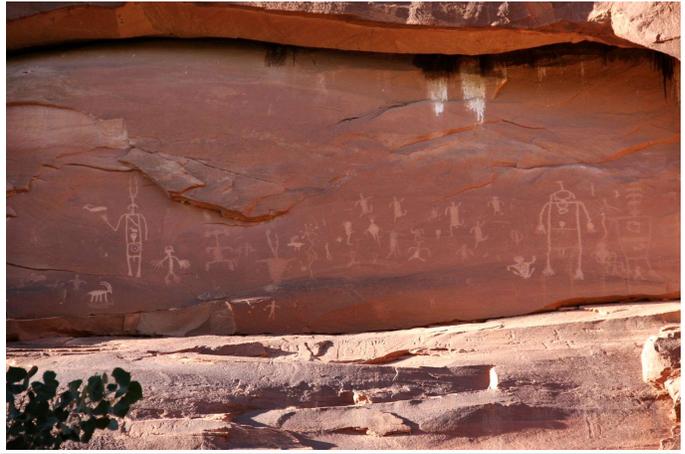
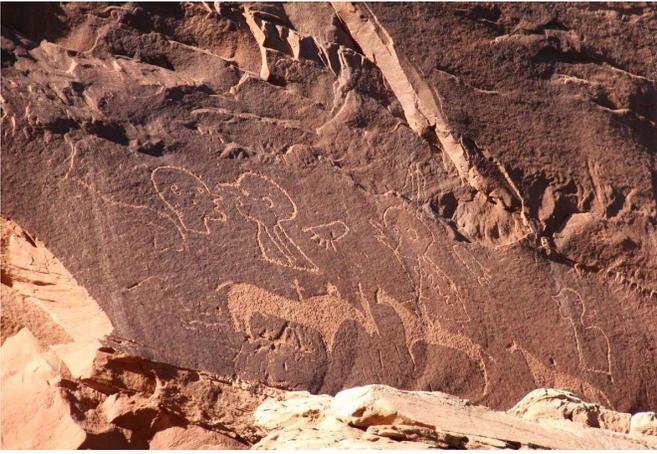




San Juan - Sand Island:

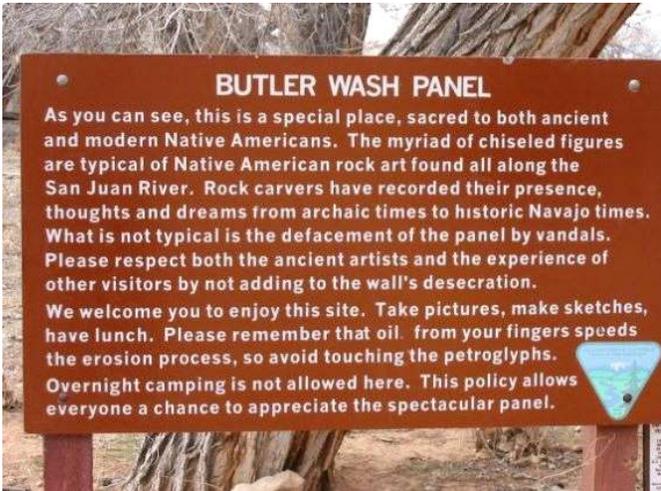
The Sand Island Recreation area is the put-in if you have a permit to go to Mexican Hat or to Clay Hills Crossing. It is also a very good location for seeing numerous petroglyph panels. The area with the most rock art is toward the highway 191 bridge and on the northern road below the cliffs. It is marked with a blue camera symbol on the map. Photos were taken there and then just north of our camp on the furthest upstream end of the campground. We followed that cliff upstream and found 6 or 8 panels, though they were not as big and busy as the publicized area. Here is a map of the Sand Island area along with many good petroglyph panel photos:



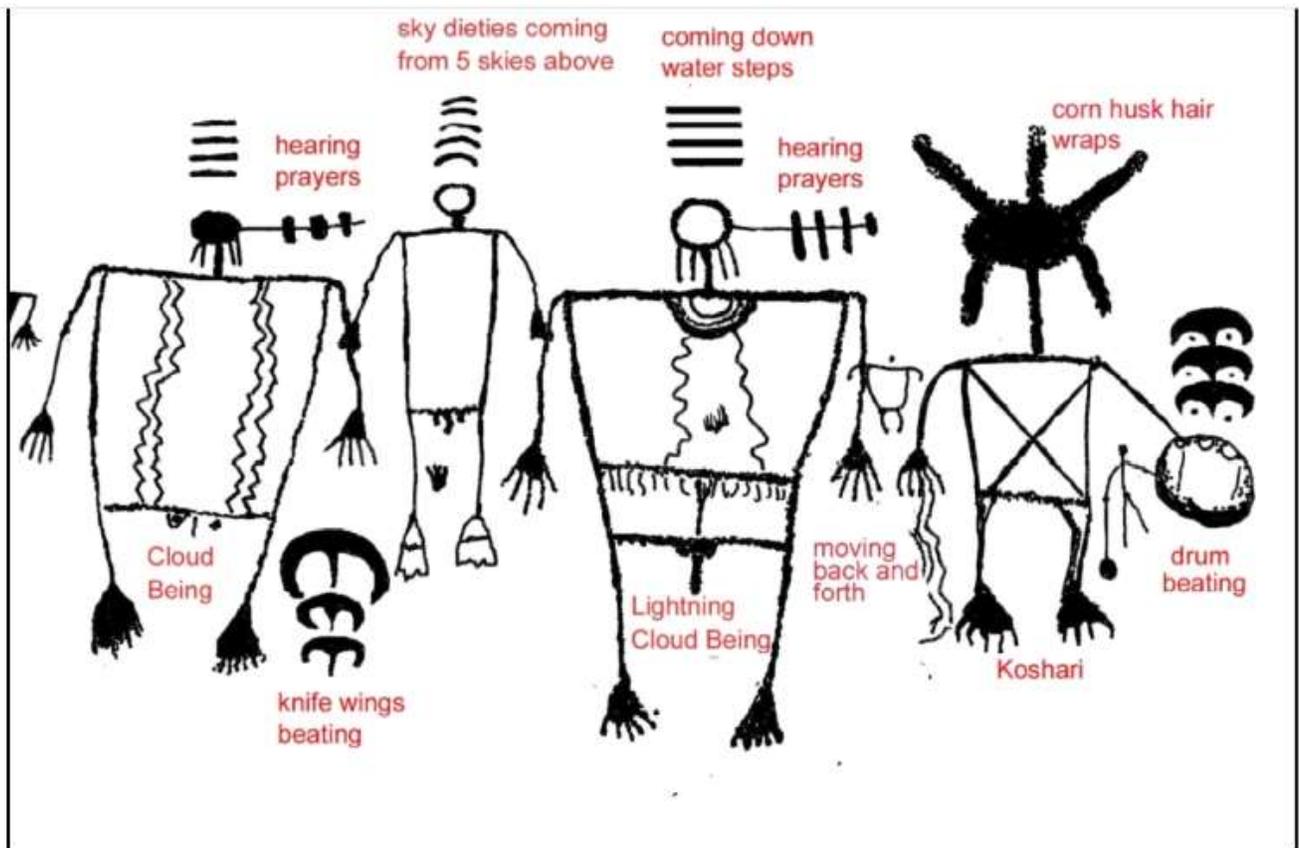


San Juan - Butler Wash Panel:

About 3.5 miles down from the highway 191 bridge you will find the Butler Wash Panel on river right a bit after the Butler Wash drainage. This is my favorite of all the river rock art that I have seen. Note that it is occasionally seen on maps as Big Kachina Panel and as Kachina Petroglyph Panel. Kachina, in traditional religions of the Pueblo Indians of North America (Hopi and Zuni), any of more than 500 divine and ancestral spirit beings who interact with humans.

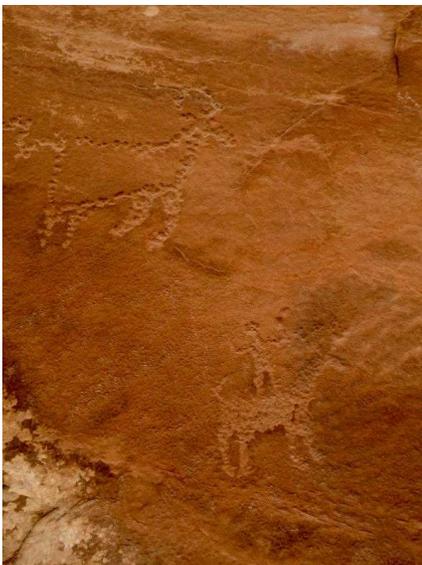


This main panel has been studied by many experts, and perhaps the best description of the meaning and activity in the panel is given by Carol Patterson of Montrose and now Bluff in her paper named "Cultural Affiliation of the Western Basketmaker II Style Petroglyphs of American Southwest". Here is the sketch of 4 of the main figures along with the meaning of some of the items:



Figure_10_Right section of the panel. Koshari is created. Secondary figure is 'messenger Katsina' who is bringing forth the Primary rain clouds with lighting on their chests. They have come down the water steps called *Ke'tchin* shown above their heads. Drum beats from Koshare are rising and *kawispäts* motion from his arm to end the dance. Prayers going into the Katsina's ears.

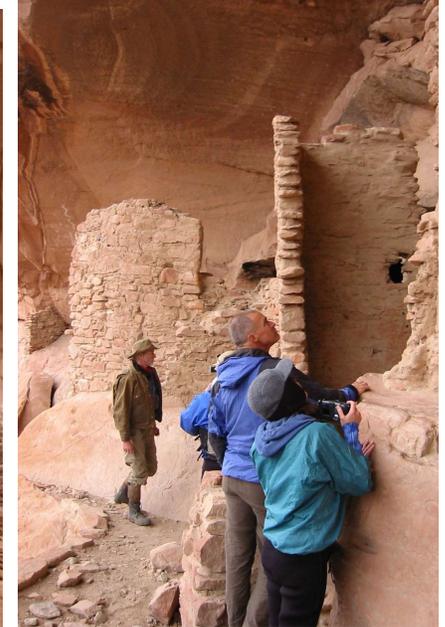
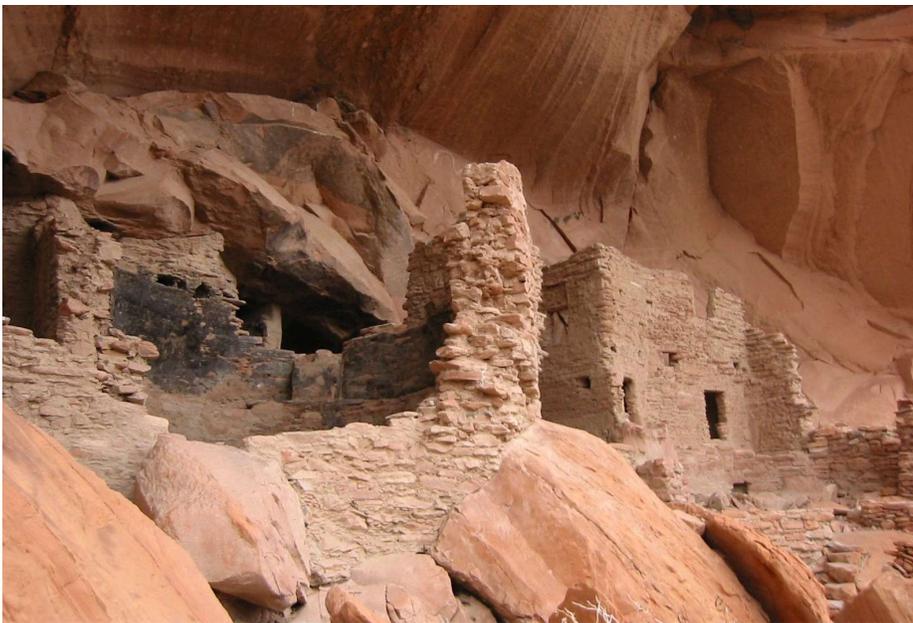
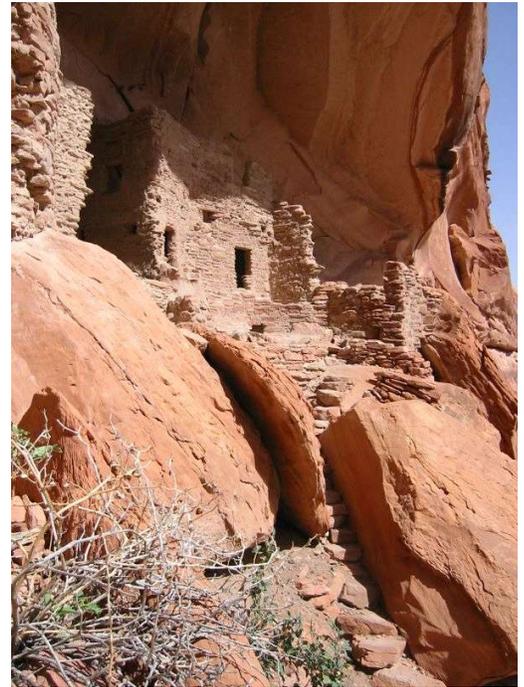
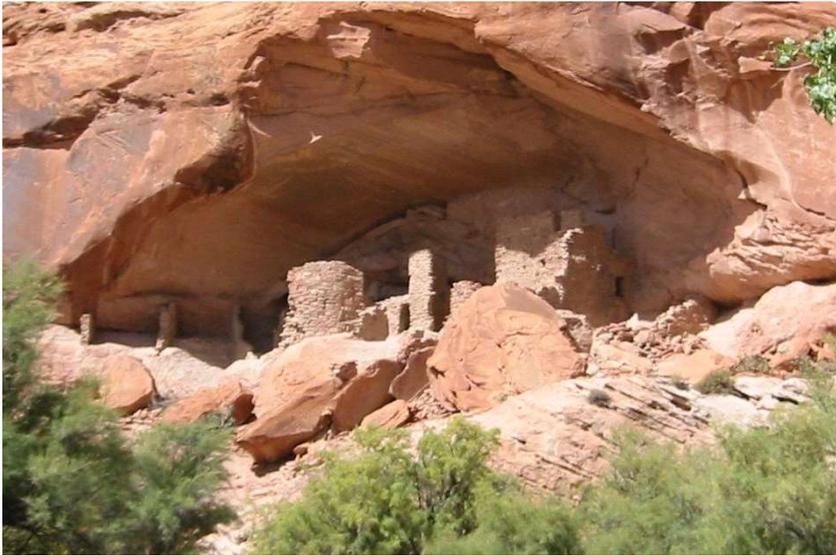
And the yucca blooms pictured below right were a sacred item to the Indians as their stalks were used as prayer sticks.

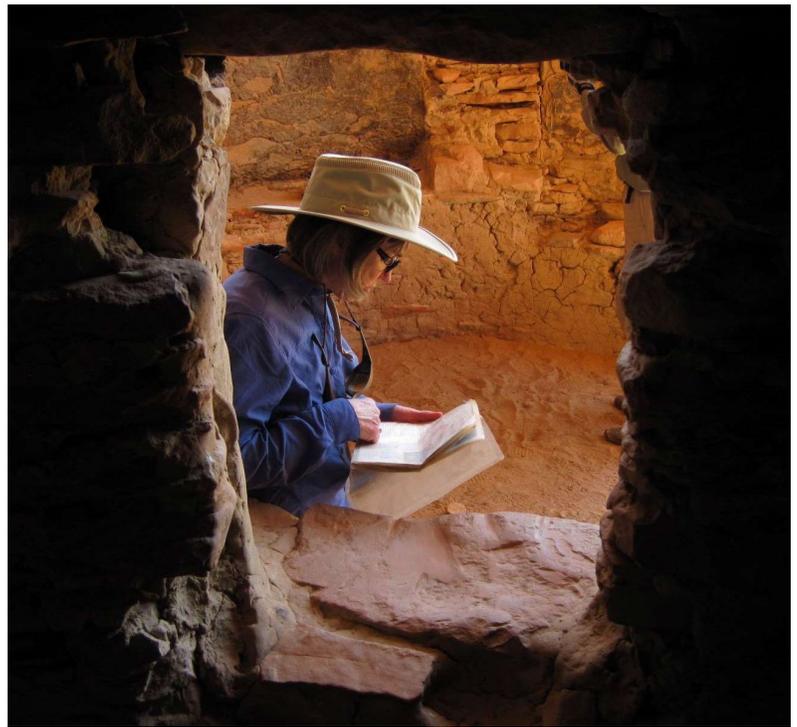
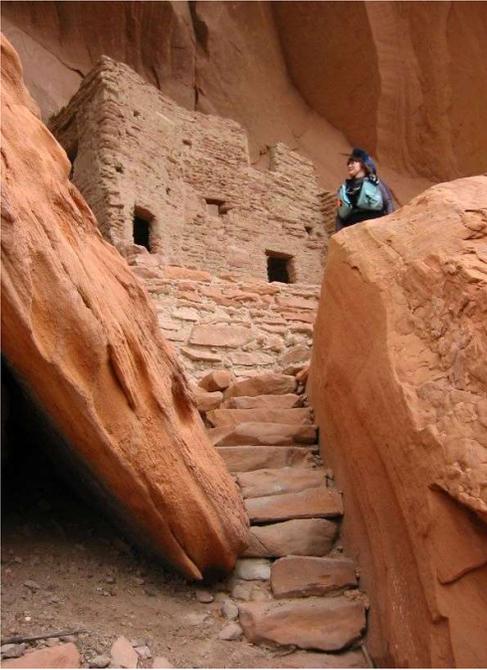


San Juan - River House Ruin:

About 1.5 miles further down stream on river right is the River House Ruin. It is set back

from the river a couple of hundred yards, in a south facing cliff face made of red sandstone. You must find it, as it is beautiful and well preserved. There is even a small storage cube that has 3 corn cobs in it. Now I do not know how old the cobs are, but it is interesting. These photos will whet your appetite:

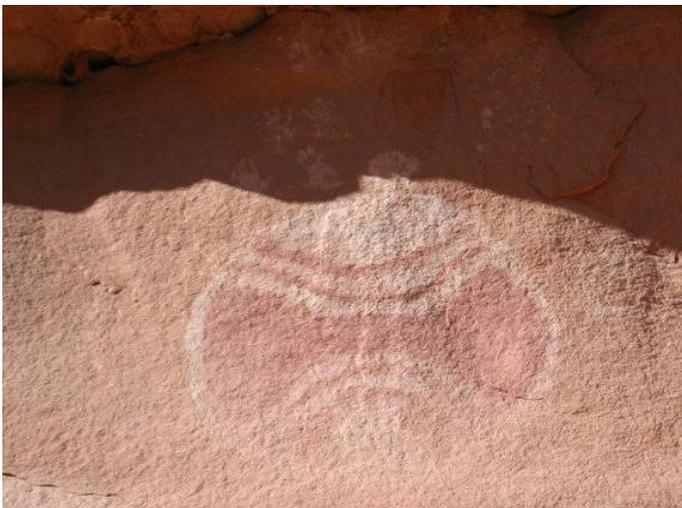




San Juan - Chinle Wash and Mule's Ear Diatreme:

From the ruins, you will want to go about 2 miles, sticking to the left bank and landing before you get to the Wash if you are planning to camp here. Best to catch it fairly early in the day to insure you can get a spot and have time to explore up the canyon. You first are headed to the east, and as the wash turns towards south you will see a large number of pottery shards. This area has been populated for many years. A mile or more from the river you come to the Baseball Man Petroglyph on the right side wall which I have shown

below. According to 1 blogger, the baseball is a hex sign painted over an older glyph of a man to remove his power. Also note the hand prints and the 2 triangular figures. The photo of ruins with large pieces of wood stacked in back are called the Baseball Man Ruins. You can climb around to see other ruins, but they are too hard to get near without a rope. Here are the photos:



The garnets in Bill Ashworth's hand were found in the Mule's Ear Diatreme area on river left about a mile downstream from the mouth of Chinle Wash. It is a "Mega-geo-fart" with many interesting rocks to be found near it. A Diatreme is described as a breccia filled volcanic vent formed by a gaseous explosion. Temperatures were estimated at 300 to 500 degrees Celcius. More information can be found in the article "The Mule Ear Diatreme: Just a Blov of Cookie Dough" by Anne Egger.

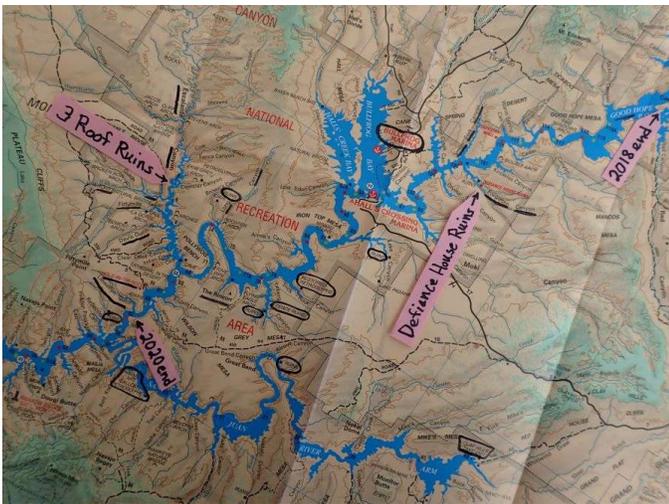
Lake Powell Overview:

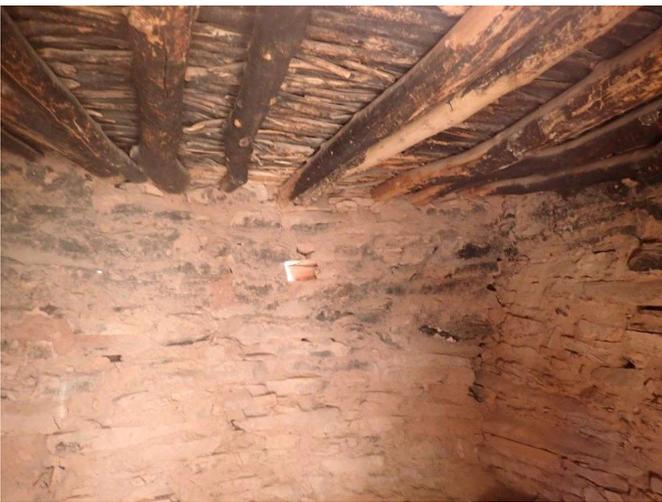
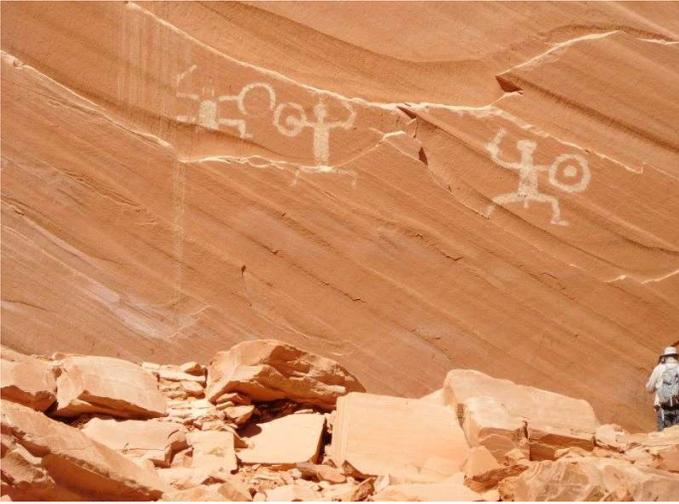
The 2018 Houseboat/seakayak trip that went up-lake out of Bullfrog Marina included a hike up Forgotten Canyon to the Defiance House Ruin and petroglyph. And then a similar trip down-lake to the Escalante Arm in 2020 also found a ruin and petroglyphs. To round

this out, Kathryn Mutz did a recent Escalante River trip where rock art was spotted, and after our Houseboat 101 training in 2018, 4 of us took our sea kayaks into the section of Colorado River that is between the Powell Dam and Lee's Ferry. Note that in the 1st map that is shown below, there are a good number of ruins and petroglyphs down-lake from Bullfrog and in the San Juan Arm as well; so we may need to explore those on future trips.

Lake Powell Up from Bullfrog:

The Forgotten Canyon was less than a mile long due to fairly low lake levels, so we had to hike more than a mile to the Defiance House Ruins. The kiva was nice as some restoration work had been done. The "Defiance" name was given due to the strong nature of the men in the pictographs there. Here are photos:

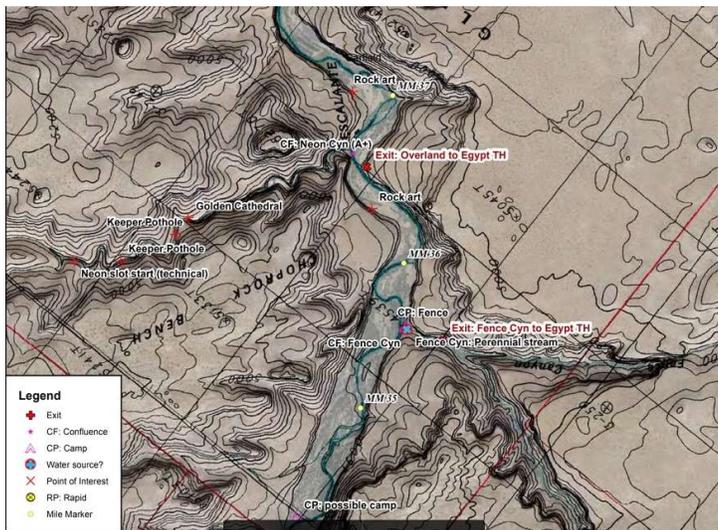




Powell Tributary --> Escalante River:

The rock art in the following photos are on the east side of the Escalante River at about river mile 36.5 (measured from the bridge at Escalante, UT). This is south of Fence Canyon which is the junction of the Egypt Trail and the Escalante River. Four late April 2016 packraft trippers, led by Lynne Carpenter, back-packed overland to the river (about 3.5

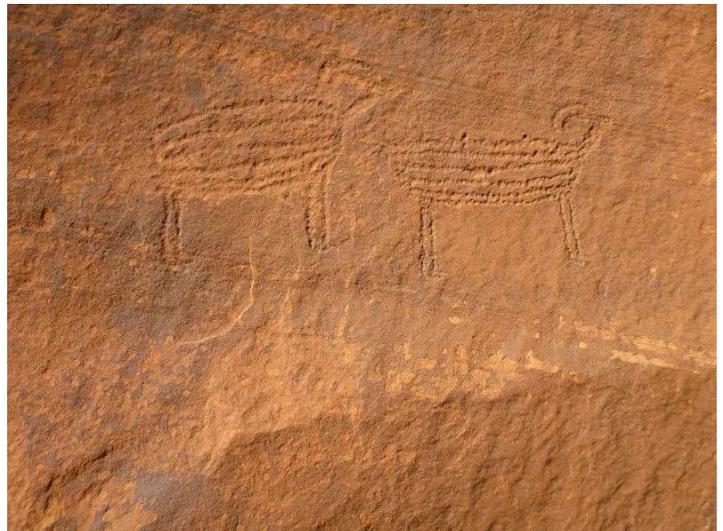
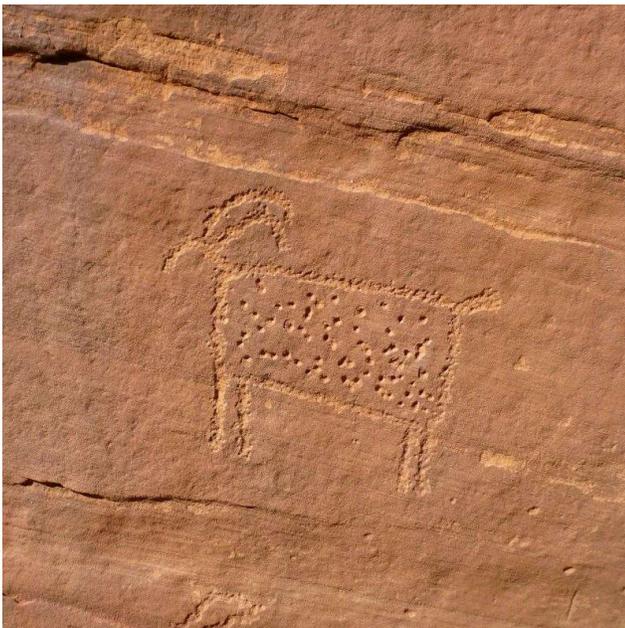
miles in 3 hours), camped at the base of Neon Canyon, and hiked up river about half mile to the rock art in the morning. If hiking in on the Egypt Trail, the rock art would be about 1 mile downstream of the junction of the trail and river. Based on recollection and the photo of the cliff and Lynne, the rock art panel covers +/- 100 linear feet and at least 20 feet vertical. The height of the panel, differences in patina/fading, and differences in styles, including dates from the 1880s, suggest that the panel was used over a long period of time. We did not hike downstream to the other rock art site indicated on the map.

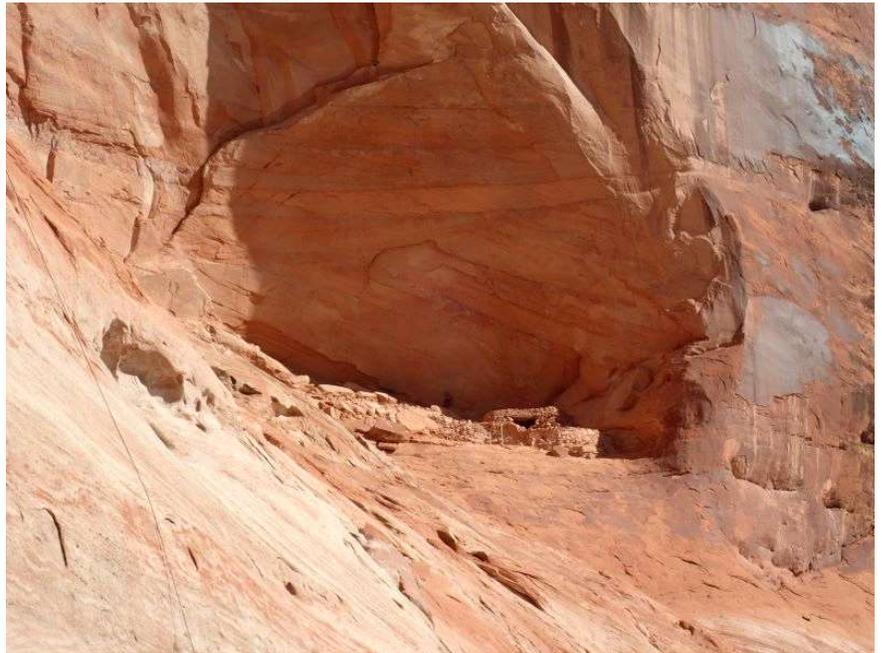




Lake Powell Down from Bullfrog:

The 2020 houseboat trip explored the Escalante Arm as well as Long Canyon, Llewellyn Canyon, and El Rincon. Petroglyphs were found at the end of long hikes on Llewellyn and 1 of the Escalante feeders. 3 Roof Ruins are above me in the photo where I have landed the kayak on a nice sandy beach. The buoys say "Closed", but only experts would make it up that vertical cliff wall. When the lake is almost full, the ruin is probably accessible. I did include 1 non-RMCC photo off of the internet to show how they have restored a kiva in that ruin. They let you walk in at ground level instead of climbing down and up the ladder. There are Moqui steps in the final photo. See them all here:





Powell Dam to Lee's Ferry:

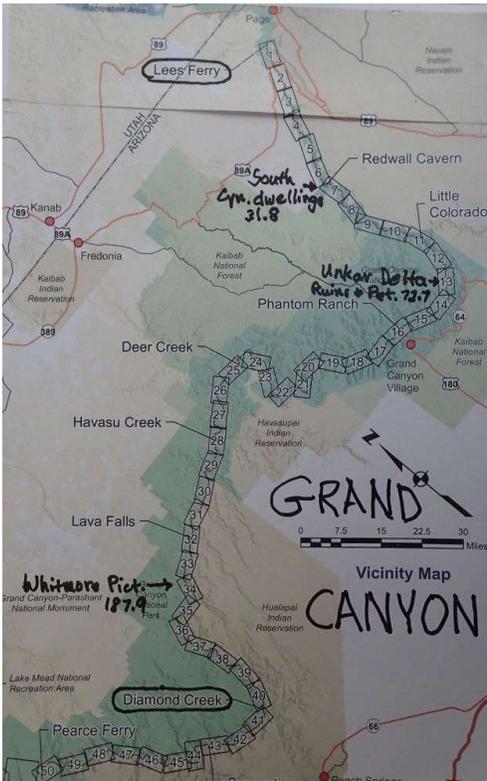
Tracy Hayes planted the seed, and so the 4 of us Houseboat 101 students lined up a boat to transport us and our 4 sea kayaks from Lee's Ferry to a beach shortly below the Powell Dam. We then spent a day and a half cruising, camping and hiking back to Lee's Ferry. A highlight of this section is the petroglyph panel on river left perhaps 3 miles below the dam. You cannot miss it as there are 3 large restrooms that get used by tours which start at the top of the dam and ride in a tour bus through the inside of it to get to the base by the river. There is another panel behind the camp that is closest to the dam, but we did

not try to climb up that steep bank. Another time. Here are photos of the popular panel:



Grand Canyon:

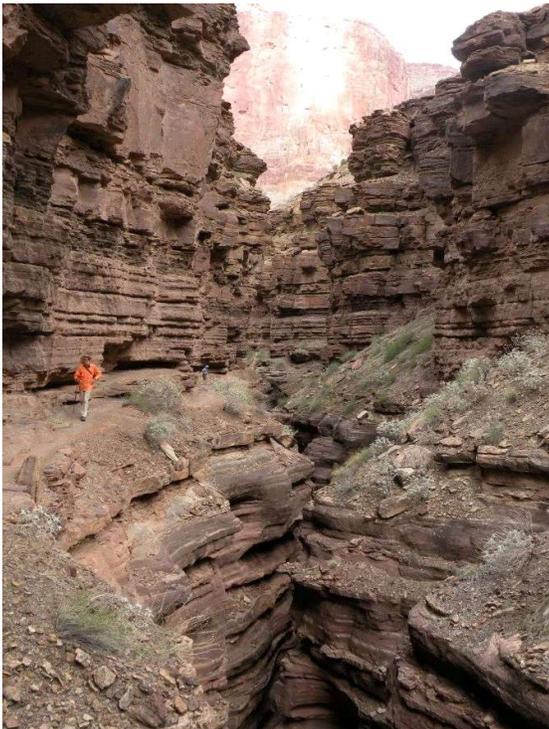
My 2015 trip of 226 miles from Lee's Ferry to Diamond Creek had 3 stops that involved Indian ruins and/or rock art, and all were on river right. The 1st was on day 3 and mile 31.8 on a trail up the South Canyon. The rock structures did not appear to have any mortar or fine workmanship, but they had awesome views.



The petroglyph laz-y-boy chair is demoed by Bob, our best oarsman. This is day 7 at mile 72.7 where we stopped at the Unkar Delta and hiked up a trail to this item and an old structure with a great view. Here are the view and 5 pottery shards:



Meanwhile, but probably in some other year, Kathryn Mutz enjoyed Deer Creek Canyon and they found a couple of handprint pictographs there.



And finally on day 19 (back to Karen's trip in 2015) we stopped at mile 187.9 and went up a trail to the Whitmore pictographs which are pictured here:



Searching for rock art are the 8 of us RMCC small boaters from the post Phantom Ranch section of the trip: Bill and Kathy Ashworth, Bill Rivers, Werner and Carol Duecker, Jeanne Willson, and Tom Jacklin. Not shown from pre-Phantom are Scott and Wendy, Mat, and Louisiana Chris. The other 8 are oars(wo)men and spouses.

The area that we have covered is still home to many Ute, Navajo, Hopi, Hualapai, and Indians of other tribes today. The rock art and structures that we have toured here are many hundreds of years old; some more than a thousand. It is hard to imagine what their life was like without the conveniences that we have grown accustomed to in the 20th and 21st centuries. But we know that they had enough time and interest to produce these peckings and paintings, and I, for one, am happy that I have been able to enjoy the examples of what was important to them.

Photos are mostly mine, but Kathryn Mutz, Werner Duecker, Doug Hurcomb, Bill Ashworth, and Eric Niles have also contributed some of them. And here is a list of resources if you want to look into the rock art subjects in more depth:

Resources:

- Utah Rock Art Research Association (URARA); go to urara.wildapricot.org ; Kathryn's pick of their articles:
 - Butler wash — symposium presentation
[http://www.utahrockart2.org/pubs/proceedings/papers/36-11-Hyder and Bohntinsky Basketmaker Ceremonies B.pdf](http://www.utahrockart2.org/pubs/proceedings/papers/36-11-Hyder%20and%20Bohtinsky%20Basketmaker%20Ceremonies%20B.pdf)
 - Poetry and Ceremony -
[http://www.utahrockart2.org/pubs/proceedings/papers/18-02 Warner - Boats In The Desert - Part II.pdf](http://www.utahrockart2.org/pubs/proceedings/papers/18-02_Warner_-_Boats%20In%20The%20Desert%20-%20Part%20II.pdf)
 - Patina section of their website —
[http://www.utahrockart2.org/wa//patina all.html](http://www.utahrockart2.org/wa//patina_all.html)
 - Sand Island -
[http://www.utahrockart2.org/pubs/patina/Paleoindian Petroglyphs San Juan River Bluff Utah.pdf](http://www.utahrockart2.org/pubs/patina/Paleoindian_Petroglyphs_San_Juan_River_Bluff_Utah.pdf)
 - youtube videos are great! —
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrjaGbAwfFPJcKyrUpLsAtQ>
- Go to <https://www.alltrails.com/us/colorado> and search on petroglyphs or pictographs