

DESERT

The Desert, Various Activity. In Canyonlands National Park two new routes were established in the remote Dabneyland. Says Steve “Crusher” Bartlett, “These towers are named after Walt Dabney, the park superintendent who instigated the strict climbing regulations in Canyonlands in 1995.” One of the new routes, Chocolate Starfish, was aided solo by Bartlett in the spring. The route traverses a 120-foot, A1+ horizontal roof crack—perhaps the longest roof crack in the U.S., surpassing the popular 80-foot Crackhouse in the Gemini Bridges area near Moab. The other route, Northern Frights (5.11), was climbed by Bartlett, Ralph Ferrara, and Eve Tallman in March. The tower is located south of the various captain formations, about halfway between Monument Basin and White Crack Campground.

On the north face of Zeus in Taylor Canyon, Jason Jones and Nick Branscomb established a four-pitch new route, Seraphim (5.9 C2), which was mostly aid, probably during the year 2000. In April 2001 Jim Beyer soloed Cult of Suicidal (VI A6a 5.9) on the west face of Outlaw Spire. Three bolts were placed on the four-pitch route, which sports a 90-foot runout with ground-fall danger on the crux second pitch.

In remote Crips Hole west of the Gemini Bridges on the Island-in-the-Sky, Andrey’s Tower was climbed in July by Jimmy Dunn, Hellen Heaven, Billy Rothstein, and Danny McCann. The 250-foot spire was named in honor of Andrey Barbashinov, a mountain guide from Kazakhstan, who was visiting the U.S. on the Anatoli Boukreev exchange program. Andrey, the first person to summit Denali in 2001, was so excited about climbing in Canyonlands that he rescheduled his flight home in order to meet Jimmy Dunn in Moab. While driving south from Wyoming on a motorcycle, he was killed when a truck hit him. The Russians Are Coming was climbed free at 5.10+.

A dramatic tyrollean traverse was made on Frog on a Lily Pad—from the frog to the lily pad. The frog and the lily pad are landforms that tower over the west edge of Moab Valley just above where the Colorado River leaves the Moab Valley and enters the canyons. The first ascent was made by Chris Kelly and Lee Kelly in March.

On the Island in the Sky Paul Ross and Colin Downer established Keswick Lads’ Day Out on the 280-foot Tombstone. The 5.10, C3 route ascends the tower’s east face, one crack system left of Family Plot. Both climbers come from the town of Keswick in the English Lake District. In June, in the same area, Ross and Jeff Pheasant put up Pearly Gates (250’ 5.5 C1) on Lost World Butte. The route faces south and is located right of Gateway to the Lost World. Ross says, “One of the easiest climbs in the desert, and it takes one to the top of a beautiful butte with excellent views.” Lost World Butte is just over one mile north of the Tombstone. Also on the butte, in November, Ross and Layne Potter established If (named for a Rudyard Kipling poem). The route ascends an east-facing crack system at the west end of the butte (260’ 5.9 C3). Paradise Lost (a.k.a. Kipling Groove) was established on the butte between Mirage Crack and Gateway to the Lost World (320’ 5.7 C2), by Ross and Layne Potter in October. A final route, Road Not Taken, was established on the butte in November and ascends cracks right of If. The route, named for a Robert Frost poem, is a 300-foot climb rated 5.10.

On Castleton Tower Paul Ross and Jeff Pheasant introduced girdle traversing to the Colorado Plateau when they established the Bjørnstad Traverse (a.k.a. Girdle Traverse of Castleton Tower) April 13-14. The route is 900 feet long (9 pitches, IV 5.10 C2). The climb begins and ends at the

Kor-Ingalls south face route and uses four pitches from established routes and five new pitches.

On the Ruminator Tower in the Lake Powell area, Eve Tallman and Ralph Ferrara established Captain Piggly Wiggly (5.10+R) in September. The tower is 200 feet high and is climbed from the north side. Its location is approximately three-fourths of a mile east of the Hite Marina turnoff from Utah 95.

In the North San Rafael Swell, Mallory's Mountain Marmalade (a.k.a. 3M) was established on Outhouse Tower in April 2001 by James Garrett and Sheridan Potter. The route ascends the 200-foot spire left of Chopped Sand, climbing the middle of the south face at 5.9 A1+. On James' Tower (a.k.a. The Light Bulb) Chris Andrews and Mark Rosbrook established Sheepish Stair (310', 4 pitches, 5.10 A2+). The route begins opposite the original ascent line. The team also climbed a 5.9 one-pitch variation they dubbed No Name Woman, which begins one crack system left of Sheepish Stair. The spire is obvious high on the west Wingate buttress 0.8 mile up Buckhorn Wash from the San Rafael River BLM campground.

On Towers of the Virgin in Zion National Park in April, Craig Luebben and Mark Beardsley established a major new line up the Towers of the Virgin: Chainsaw (1600', 11 pitches, V 5.11R). Attempts had been made on the route by Luebben with Paul Midkiff in 1985, with Beardsley in 1992, and with Sylvia Luebben in 1997. To reach it, park near the maintenance facility behind the old visitors' center and walk to the end of the road. Follow Oak Creek upstream, taking the right fork. Pass waterfalls on the right and continue up a sandy, brushy hill to the right for about 500 feet to the start of the climb. This is an area left of Nu Gah's Wall. In May Ammon McNeely soloed Space Shot (V 5.10 C2) in 3 hours and 57 minutes, likely the fastest solo.

COMPILED PRIMARILY BY ERIC BJØRNSTAD, AAC

Canyonlands, San Rafael Slabs. Located 15 miles west of Green River, Utah, just south of I-70, a new climbing area has been opened on the Eastern Reef of the San Rafael Swell. Paul Ross and Layne Potter have made four new routes, ranging from 1,200 to 1,800 feet in length, up to 5.9 in difficulty. For those who need a change from strenuous vertical cracks, these open slabs provide fine situations, a feel of mountaineering, and great views toward the La Sal Mountains and Canyonlands. The rock is sandstone and surprisingly sound. The quality of these slab routes, in particular Surfing the Swell (1400' 5.9R) and Reefer Madness (1800' 5.9R), is comparable to the best granite slab routes of Whitehorse Ledge in New Hampshire. Protection, however, is sparse and confidence on slabs is a benefit. The descents from the routes climbed so far have been back down the ascent route, as the summits of these slabs overhang the canyons behind by about 400 feet.

PAUL ROSS

San Rafael Swell, Cinquenta Tower. On November 3, the day after my 50th birthday, Tim Toula and I made the first ascent of this tower. Paul Ross and I had climbed the first two pitches the day before. The flat-topped tower is located on the north side of the San Rafael River, across from Mexican Mountain and El Sombrero, and can be reached by hiking the closed, unimproved road for about two miles from the gate (before the abandoned airstrip). The four-pitch route (III /IV 5.10 A1) ascends the left side of the south face to bolted belay ledges. The final pitch is an overhanging hand crack that spit out Texas Tower Tim Toula, giving it the A1 rating. A great tower summit with views in all directions!

JAMES GARRETT, AAC