In going over my notes, I think there are only a hand-
ful of guzzlers in the West Mojave that I have not visited
and mapped in this newsletter, and on a recent hunt with
Andy McCormick of Turner’s Outdoorsman and guide Har-
old Horner (who I mentioned in the last issue), I was able
to find two more — one we could see from a distance
and the other a little more up-close and personal.
I also happened to shoot
a chukar, so the day was par-
ticularly memorable.
Andy had been telling me
that he’d been having some
good hunts with Horner, who
hunts a combination of pri-
vate land where he’s gained
permission to take hunters
and the adjoining Bureau of Land Management parcels.
Outside of the OHV play areas, there are now vast
areas of the BLM ground that have road closures to
— ostensibly — to protect desert tortoises. In all my
years of banging around the Mojave, I’ve never seen a
tortoise hit on any road. The road-closed areas are get-
ing less and less hunting pressure because sometimes
long walks are required to get into good chukar habitat.
Guzzlers A-36 and A-100 shown on the map on
page 5 are two that are in BLM road closure areas, but
they are not unbearable walks from decent access roads.

This area is located on
page 82 of your DeLorme
map book at roughly the
C-3 coordinates, east of Ord
Mountain and north of East
Ord Mountain. The pipeline
that shows going between
these two mountains is actu-
ally the road that is shown
cutting across the upper left
hand portion of our map.
This road and all of the
roads south and west of Camp
Rock Mine Road on the Page
5 map are closed to everyone
but BLM employees and the
cattle rancher has limited use.
So the roads over to the two
guzzlers strictly a foot-only
proposition.
This is one of the areas
that Horner hunts, and I was
surprised that he did not know
about the two guzzlers, especially since they are marked
on the USGS maps (Ord Mountain for A-36 and Camp
Rock Mine for A-100). We walked up to look at A-36
and it had been refurbished by Quail Unlimited just
a few years ago. The reworking took place about the
same time as the work done on the A-78 guzzler by
Camp Rock Mine covered in the March 1999 issue of
the newsletter. It was full of water when we were there,
but that was just after a good fall rain.
McCormick and I looked at the other guzzler from
(Continued on Page 4, See “Chukar....”)
Commentary

Lies or Ignorance?

In the Sierra Club’s December, 2002, “Desert Report,” a quarterly publication of the California/Nevada Desert Committee, there is a story by Elden Hughes entitled “Drowning in Guzzlers.” The short piece ends with this sentence: “The Sierra Club must fight against their [guzzlers] inclusion in the [BLM management] plans and fight them period.”

Hughes makes outright misstatements and provides only half-truths in arguing that the Sierra Club should try to eliminate the construction of new big game and small game guzzlers throughout the desert — and get rid of the old ones.

He starts by saying that “the goal of guzzlers is game farming” and that “a natural diversity is skewed to favor animals to be hunted.” While it’s true that hunters have been the major builders of guzzlers, the reality is that guzzlers are no different than a natural spring in the diversity of wildlife that visits the site. If anything, guzzlers increase the diversity of wildlife that can live in the desert, just like a natural spring. A smaller number of wildlife species can live without daily water than those that can survive if they have a place to drink, and the idea that guzzlers are somehow different than natural water is both ludicrous and ignorant.

Hughes also says that “neither the BLM nor the California Department of Fish and Game have a single scientific study that demonstrates that guzzlers for bighorn sheep either improve herd health or herd numbers.” Wrong! It is a well-known fact that Old Dad Mountain once held only a handful of transient bighorn sheep because there were no permanent water sources. Once big game guzzlers were added to the mountains, the sheep population grew and it is now one of the healthiest and largest desert sheep herds.

That sort of data is available from throughout California, Nevada, and Arizona, where water has been added to benefit sheep herds and other wildlife. In fact, the positive correlation is far stronger proof than the weak “science” the Sierra Club touts for closing roads to protect tortoises.

Lastly, in a short sidebar “Why Guzzlers Don’t Work,” Hughes opens with the line “Guzzlers Kill!” He then proceeds to talk about tortoises and other wildlife that crawls into guzzlers and drowns. While this is true, there is no evidence that more wildlife dies in guzzlers than natural springs and tanks. In fact, because guzzlers are designed so wildlife can get out of the water, it is likely that less wildlife is killed at guzzlers than natural water sources, especially natural tanks. He goes on to cite an incident where 38 bighorn sheep died on Old Dad Mountain because a guzzler collapsed and two sheep fell into the water, poisoning the other sheep. Hughes suggests this was the fault of the guzzler, failing to mention the national park service refused to grant the Department of Fish and Game access to the site to repair the guzzler when the satellite data showed it was not functioning properly. The sheep could smell the water in the tank, and broke through the fiberglass to drink. This served them well until two small animals, which could not reach the water, fell into the tank, drown and poisoned the rest of the sheep. The NPS could have prevented the problem if they’d have granted access when the problem was first noticed more than a month before the sheep deaths, as required under a memorandum of understanding they had with the DFG.

Hughes’ lack of knowledge regarding guzzler facts and his failure to understand the importance of guzzlers in replacing natural water sources that have been lost in the desert is either ignorance or calculated misrepresentation. People who are interested in wildlife — all wildlife — should know that guzzlers are a valuable form of mitigation for changes in the desert over the past 100 years.

I don’t have a problem with groups like the Sierra Club that don’t believe guzzlers should not be part of management of public lands because they are “unnatural.” That is a valid opinion. But I do have a problem when they are ignorant, misrepresent facts, or simply lie to support that position.
Quail Unlimited guzzler above Big John Flat

Back in the December, 1997 issue of this newsletter, I wrote about a spot near Wrightwood I’d discovered called Big John Flat. On a winter trip I had jumped both mountain quail and valley quail, and it was a place I visited several times for the next two falls, usually late in the season after snow moved mountain quail down out of the thickets of manzanita. My parting line in that story was that it would be a perfect location for a guzzler.

Well apparently I wasn’t the only one who thought so. Quail Unlimited built a combination big game-small game guzzler on the ridge above Big John Flat last year. The guzzler has a galvanized apron on a steel platform above the fiberglass tank and then a pipe from the tank down to a small drinker box down below the tank. The whole works is tucked just down off the road and in some brush so it is not visible from the road and there is good cover for game moving to and from the water source.

This area is located on page 94 of your DeLorme map book at roughly at A-2 coordinates. From Wrightwood, take Highway 2 west to its junction with N4 or Big Pines Highway. Travel west on N4 past Jackson Lake to forest road 4N07 or Rollin N Ranch Road, which is what the sign on N4 says. As you can see by the map on this page, this road leaves N4 at the top of a big switchback.

From the pavement it is about 1.6 miles to the bottom of the hill where the road forks into Rollin N Ranch. The main road then runs nearly due east up through some wonderfully birdy country on Big John Flat and then climbs up a small canyon to a saddle where you can look out into the desert. At this saddle, the forks north and south. The road to the left (north) goes up the sidehill to the ridge above Big John Flat. While the road to the right (south) is really a motorcycle trail that winds back to Ball Flat.

Take the left fork at the saddle and go to the top of the ridge. There the road forks again, going east and west along the ridge. To reach the guzzler take the left fork and travel west 1/10th of a mile and then park. The guzzler is located north of the road right at the edge of the hill.

The original map showed the road ending on Big John Flat, but I have added the roads that go to the ridge and Ball Flat.

(Continued on Page 4)
Field Updates

Big John Flat guzzler....

(Continued from Page 3)

You can take a four-wheel drive from Ball Flat Road down to the saddle at the far east end of Big John Flat, but this road is a little narrow and breathtaking at a couple of places, and my brother-in-law R.G. Fann and I decided we’d leave it for the motorcycles in the future.

In the times I’d hunted this area in the past I’d never come up on the ridge, always staying down in Big John Flat. But I suspect the guzzler will attract both mountain and valley quail that will live on the ridge and out to the north on the desert-facing slope. Based on what I’ve seen on Baldy Mesa, I suspect the birds down in the flat will not use this guzzler, and I’d like to see Quail Unlimited and the Forest Service conspire to put one or two more guzzlers on the ridge and at least one down on Big John Flat itself.

I’m convinced that each water source serves from one to four coveys of quail, and that if you spread the water sources out about 1/2-mile apart you simply increase the number of coveys that will use any given area, increasing overall bird numbers. Even if birds use more than one of the guzzlers, you give them more than a single source, which is better from both a predation standpoint and offers a safeguard in case a source dries up or becomes damaged.

I doubt that valley quail move more than a mile from where they are hatched, and I suspect that many birds live their whole lives within 1/4 to 1/2-mile radius. The more water we have, the better, and I think this area is a good place to add additional water because it is public land and good quail habitat.

Chukar....

(Continued from Page 1)

the top of a ridge above it, and it also was gleeming white, which suggested it also had been refurbished and was in good shape.

From Camp Rock Mine Road, it’s only about two miles to the A-100 guzzler, but hunting up the ridgeline from the main road to A-36 and then on up to the peak above A-100 would make for about a five- or six-mile round trip, depending on how many loops and side trips into saddles and canyons you made. In other words, it would be a pretty typical day-long chukar hike.

Do avoid the private property. There is a corral and frequently cattle are in the area to feed and water. The rancher in this area has taken to posting much of his land because of problems caused by careless hunters who’ve shot and panicked his stock. Chukar frequently use the private ground shown on the map, but come off of it to the public ground as soon as they have watered.

The number of holdover birds is pretty fair in this area, and with all of the rain we are having this fall and the forecast for more, next year should be awesome.
This map is made up of the Ord Mountain (left half) and Camp Rock Mine (right half) USGS 7 1/2 minute quad maps.
This map is a portion of the USGS 7 1/2-minute *Little Piute Mountain* quad located on page 86 of your DeLorme map book.
Three guzzlers southeast of Essex in East Mojave

Until the last couple of years, I had focused most of my East Mojave hunting and scouting north of Interstate 40 in the Mojave National Preserve. When all of the controversy over guzzlers and cattle water erupted in the preserve, I began looking for places where we could hedge our bets just in case all the water sources were removed and the hunting went to pot.

While I don’t think we’ll lose either the man-made water or our hunting rights in the preserve, I’m glad I started looking in the desert south of the national park service ground. It’s just more of the same kind of habitat without all the problems.

The area covered on our map on the opposite page is located on page 86 of your DeLorme map book at roughly the C-2 coordinates.

To reach this area, take Interstate 40 east from Barstow and exit south at Essex Road. Take this road into Essex at old Highway 66, and then continue southeast on Sunflower Springs Road. In previous issues we’ve mapped a number of guzzlers and springs off of this road. The guzzlers on this map are to the east of Sunflower Springs Road.

South of Essex, you can see where this road crosses a series of east-west pipeline roads out on the desert flats. The first of these is just below the C coordinate on the margin of the page (a black-dashed line), and then there is a dirt road that heads east (and a little north) into the Piute Mountains. This is the road that takes you to guzzler B-101 shown on our map. Just off the edge of our map to the west, there is a north-south road shown on your DeLorme that joins the B-101 road and the main pipeline roads (that converge going over a low pass in the Piute Mountains). There is a spur road off this north-south road that goes to guzzler B-103. You access guzzler B-104 by taking one of the main pipeline road off of Sunflower Springs Road, over the low pass, and then take the pipeline road that runs in the northeast direction. There is a spur road (not shown) that takes you fairly close to B-104. All three were in fairly decent condition this winter and held water.

### Locations of six guzzlers mapped in this issue of Western Birds

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<tr>
<th>Guzzler</th>
<th>Lat/Lon:</th>
<th>UTM: Zone 11, Easting:</th>
<th>Northing:</th>
<th>USGS quad:</th>
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<td>Mescal Creek</td>
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</table>
In this Issue:

- Sierra Club Slates Attacks on Guzzlers
- Springleaf Road Covered in Map Special
- Three Guzzlers South of Essex Off Sunflower Lane
- Two More Guzzlers Mapped in the West Mojave off Camp Rock Mine Road
- Big John Flat on Angeles National Forest Land
- Quail Unlimited Builds a New Guzzler Near

To: