

DOES BUZZARD'S ROOST EXIST?

By John S. Halbert

At the Very Northwest Corner of Alabama:

Don't address any letters to "Buzzard's Roost, Alabama", because, according to the U.S. Postal Service, there's no such place. And in case you planned to set down your aircraft in "Airplane Hollow", it's advisable to not try that, either.

Strange names, those northwest Alabama localities have. In Colbert County is a place known to the citizens as "Airplane Hollow", near Buzzard's Roost. According to local legend, during World War II, several airplane pilots mistook the body of water at the hollow for the 'Courtland Air Base' at Courtland, near Decatur, Alabama, 30 miles or so to the east. (One could perhaps be forgiven for wondering how we won the war.)

"Training Flights," as they were called, involved nighttime cross-country flying exercises. They say that during wartime, at night, the body of water near Buzzard's Roost looked from the air just like the runway at the Courtland Air Base. Several pilots, it was claimed, had the shock of their lives when the "air base" turned out to be the water of the hollow at Buzzard's Roost! Not the best surface upon which to land a heavy bomber. The outcome of their mistakes they say, still lie on the muddy bottom of the pseudo-landing field---thus the name, "Airplane Hollow."

. Nothing much has changed since the war---the lake, a backwater of the Tennessee River not far from where it flows into southwestern Tennessee, is still mostly surrounded by forests.

Today, one can view the smooth water and find it hard to realize that giant airplanes may be sitting on the bottom out there

Here's a strong piece of advice for pilots: beware landing there, or your unlucky aircraft could join the legend of Airplane Hollow.

As for Buzzard's Roost---it's on the Tennessee River near the airplane graveyard, and is said to be a really good place to go fishing. Judging from the name, the place is a hangout for buzzards. As for the "Roost"---even birds have to rest somewhere.