

Fishin' for furry trout

Tips From the Posse

By Mark Rackay

I overheard my grandfather ask my grandmother if it would be ok for me to miss school the upcoming Friday. He said, "The river is running cold and deep, and I wanted to give it a shot before the runoff started, maybe take the boy."

After a bit, my grandmother agreed. The upcoming Friday was April 1, and to my grandfather, it was a national holiday. I couldn't believe he would actually take me out of school to go fishing, so I went along, but had all my radars up. He was a natural prankster, and I half expected to be fixing fence for the day.

Friday morning arrived, clear and cold, and found us drinking coffee from a Thermos, eating a sweet roll, and bouncing along in his old pickup truck into the mountains, with the sunrise not here yet.

He took me to a place on the Colorado River where in ran through Gore Canyon. We would park at the entrance area and walk along railroad tracks deep into the canyon. Whenever a train would come by, we would have to step down

to the riverbank to avoid being struck. It made the trip interesting, and a little excitement thrown in for good measure.

He liked this area because the water moved at a steady pace, and ran very deep, with holes that often exceed 10 feet in depth. He always said the biggest trout would live longer in big water like this because there was so much food for them. We never went home without a brace of fine brown trout back then.

An hour into our fishing, I hooked up with what felt like a pretty good fish. As I worked the brute to the shore, I finally caught a glimpse of him and couldn't believe what I was seeing. The fish looked like it was wearing a coat of fur, from the head and gills back. The fur was an off-white color and about an inch thick. I hollered for my grandfather to come over and help.

"Land sakes boy, you got you a furry trout, and a whopper of one too. We don't usually see them this far south, but the cold winter and spring must have brought him out," my grandfather said in an excited tone. "We're gonna get him mounted up for ya to hang in your room, just don't tell your granny."

My grandfather went on for over an hour talking about the furry trout.

They are a species of trout that possesses a thick coat of fur to keep itself warm in the extremely cold waters of Canada, Montana, Wyoming, and sometimes Colorado. This species is sometimes referred to as the beaver trout, furry fish, and sometimes incorrectly as the sabled salmon.

Several researchers suggest the fur bearing trout evolved its thick coat of fur to protect itself from the extreme cold of the northern winters. They claim the trout does not grow fur during the average winter, only during the very harsh ones. It is further believed the trout will shed its fur during the spring runoff as the waters warm, only to regrow the next very harsh winter.

As the legend goes, the fur bearing trout was first encountered by Europeans when Scottish settlers settled in Canada during the 17th Century. One letter from a settler described an abundance of "furred animals and fish" in the new land. Perhaps the earliest recorded documentation can be found in the May of 1929 issue of Montana Wildlife, the Official Publication of the Montana State Game and Fish



This is the same style mount my grandfather had done for me when I caught my furry trout. It hung in my room for years before it walked away. (Photo/wikimediacommons/Samantha Marx)

Department, authored by J. H. Hicken.

In November of 1938, a story in the Puebloan Cheiftan recounted the furry trout history, and stated that, "Old timers living along the Arkansas River near Salida have told tales for many years of the fur bearing trout indigenous to the waters of the Arkansas near there."

Apparently, the fur bearing trout has been reported in Maine, as the state has a "catch and release" policy enforced by wardens, where only a certain slot-size limit may be kept. The wardens carry a Brannock Device with them, and any caught fish would be measured against the fisher's foot. If the fish's length matches the foot size of the angler foot

size, the fish could be eaten, and the pelt could be made into a pair of furry slippers.

My grandfather was true to his word. When we got back to town, we went straight to the local taxidermist and had the furry trout mounted. The taxidermist did a nice job, stating he had to tan the fur separately and reattach it to the body of the mounted fish and it would be quite a process.

About six months later, my grandfather brought home my fur bearing trout. We ceremoniously hung it on the wall in my room, while my grandmother blurted out a series of objections. My grandfather won, and the furry trout hung in my room for many years. When I moved out, years

later, I left it hanging in my room. When I came home for Christmas, I asked my grandmother where it went. She told me, "It walked away."

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State restoring 12 summit trails on Colorado 14ers, investing in more outdoor recreation opportunities for Coloradans

\$2.4 million recently awarded to 26 non-motorized trail projects

SPECIAL TO THE MDP

Governor Jared Polis and Colorado Parks and Wildlife announced this week that the Non-Motorized Trail Grant Program recently awarded \$2,438,000 for 26 projects that will connect Coloradans and visitors to the outdoors with new and improved opportunities to get outside, including restoring trails on 12 of Colorado's 14ers. The Parks and Wildlife Commission unanimously approved the grants during the March 2025 PWC meeting.

"Our iconic 14ers will now be even more accessible and safe to summit! In Colorado, we are focused on expanding outdoor recreational opportunities for all Coloradans, while protecting our natural resources and public lands. This funding will help Coloradans have fun, get outside, and be active while protecting

our awe-inspiring natural landscapes, keeping Colorado beautiful for generations to come," said Governor Polis.

The Non-Motorized Trails Grant Program is a multi-agency partnership that includes CPW, Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), Colorado Lottery, and the Federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP).

"We're excited to announce these Non-Motorized Trail Grants that will empower local agencies to create and maintain accessible trails while prioritizing wildlife conservation," said CPW Director Jeff Davis. "Our agency is tasked with providing wildlife management and world-class outdoor recreation opportunities. To deliver on this mission, we recognize that recreation and conservation goals can often support each other, and that funding partnerships with other organizations and

agencies across the state are critical to accomplish those goals.

Last year, a new Trail Stewardship pilot program with additional support from Great Outdoors Colorado was launched. This program provides funding specifically to support trail stewardship crews hired by land managers and nonprofits who focus on maintenance work throughout Colorado. This year, the State Trails Program received \$1,500,000 in funding from Great Outdoors Colorado.

"As we continue to see increased use and natural disasters impact our outdoor spaces, we are fortunate to partner with Great Outdoors Colorado to launch a new opportunity to fund stewardship crews who are caring for trails across the state," said CPW Assistant Director of Outdoor Recreation and Lands, Fletcher Jacobs. "These increased

'boots on the ground' trail crews will help support the Governor's Wildly Important Goals to balance conservation and recreation by increasing the number of trail crew hours funded by the State Trails Program."

2025 Grant Stats	
Construction	3 grants totaling \$575,000
Maintenance	10 grants totaling \$1,089,281
Planning/Support	8 grants totaling \$280,023
Trail Stewardship	5 grant totaling \$493,710

Some of the highlights from this year's awarded projects include:

Statewide 14ers Trail Maintenance 2025 (Maintenance grant)

The Colorado Fourteeners Initiative was awarded a \$250,000 grant to reconstruct and restore 12 summit trails on 14,000-foot peaks. The will include

basic maintenance, intensive trail reconstruction and thousands of feet of closure/restoration. Reconstruction will include boardwalk repair, back-wall supporting tundra beds, installation of timer check and rock steps.

The 12 summit trails included in the maintenance plan include:

- Mt. Bierstadt
- Mt. Blue Sky
- Quandary Peak
- Mt. Democrat
- Mt. Princeton
- Mt. Massive
- Capitol Peak
- Mt. Columbia
- San Luis Peak
- Redcloud Peak
- Wetterhorn Peak
- Mt. Sneffels

Countywide Trail Maintenance Crew (Trail Stewardship grant)

Headwaters Trails Alliance was awarded an \$89,040 grant to fund a four-to-six-person trail crew to maintain the 450 miles of trail in Grand County. This project will

focus on assessing and addressing issues (deadfall and drainage), trail planning, drainage clearing and repair, and vegetation management. Work includes structure repair, replacement, and/or new construction (turnpikes, boardwalks, etc.), retreat, regrading, outcropping, decommissioning, restoration and hazard tree clearing.

Trail Conservation Services (Trail Stewardship grant)

A \$150,000 grant was awarded to the Colorado Mountain Bike Association to fund a trail stewardship crew of five to seven seasonal workers focused on addressing the backlog of maintenance of natural surface area trails, primarily in the recreation areas of the national forests that serve residents and visitors of the central Front Range. Work will focus on

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