

# The Grand Mesa Feud — A Hike Through History

The lakes featured on the Ward Lakes hiking trails map have a turbulent history. Islands and Baron Lake trails will take you by sites of the following story:



William Radcliffe as he appeared in the Rocky Mountain News in July, 1901. ~Courtesy of Denver Public Library, Western History Department

Old-time residents felt very strongly about their right to fish ... or maybe it was their disregard for other people's rights to own a lake. Whatever the case, the Grand Mesa Feud became a long battle between fish poachers and private land owners. While most settlers homesteaded in the valley to raise and harvest crops, a few homesteaded on top of Grand Mesa to harvest fish. Some locals did not accept this idea and continued to fish and trespass on private land.



Fish Hatchery on Alexander Lake. ~Courtesy of Delta County Historical Society

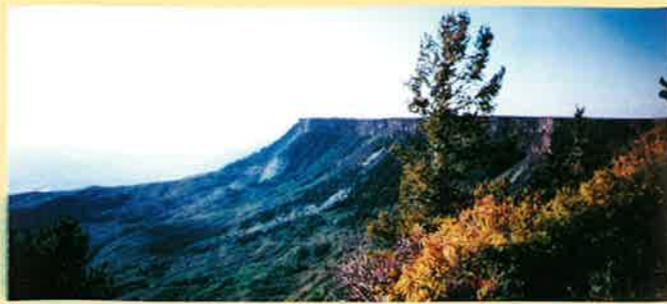
The feud heated in 1896 when English aristocrat, William Radcliffe, arrived on Grand Mesa. He acquired title and fishing rights to the Alexander group of lakes and improved the fish hatchery and hotel on

Alexander Lake. Even though permits to fish could be obtained, trespassers continued to poach fish from his lakes.

As a last resort, Radcliffe posted state game wardens to patrol his lakes. Unfortunately, tragedy struck when W.A. Womack, a local rancher intent on fishing, was shot and killed on Island Lake by Game Warden Frank Mahaney. In response, an outraged mob of over 100 men gathered and burned everything owned by Radcliffe including his hotel while he was away. Defeated, Radcliffe never returned to western Colorado.



Radcliffe Hotel on Alexander Lake, circa 1896-1901. ~Courtesy of Delta County Historical Society



The Grand Mesa. ~Courtesy of Grand Mesa National Scenic & Historic Byway

## Grand Mesa Flat-Top Mountain

The Grand Mesa retains its flat tabletop appearance thanks to a cap of volcanic basalt it acquired over nine million years ago. As the basalt lava flowed from fissures — cracks in the earth's surface, it filled a wide flat valley. Eventually, the soft rock around the basalt valley eroded away, leaving a mesa high in the air. More recently, about 14,000 years ago, ice caps scoured rocky debris into troughs that caught melting snow forming more than 300 lakes across the Mesa top.



View of Cobbett Lake from the Cobbett Lake Trail. ~Courtesy of Grand Mesa National Scenic & Historic Byway

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## Grand Mesa Visitor Center



Grand Mesa Visitor Center. ~Courtesy of Bob Von Normann

The Grand Mesa Visitor Center is open seven days a week, between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM daily, throughout the summer. The Center, operated by the Grand Mesa National Forest, is the perfect place to learn about the area. Exhibits reveal many stories about Grand Mesa and staff is available to answer questions. There is a large selection of books available for purchase. Interpretive programs are offered mid-June through August.



Children of all ages enjoy interpretive programs offered at the Grand Mesa Visitor Center. ~Courtesy of Grand Mesa National Scenic & Historic Byway

For additional information, please call Grand Mesa Visitor Center at (970) 856-4153.

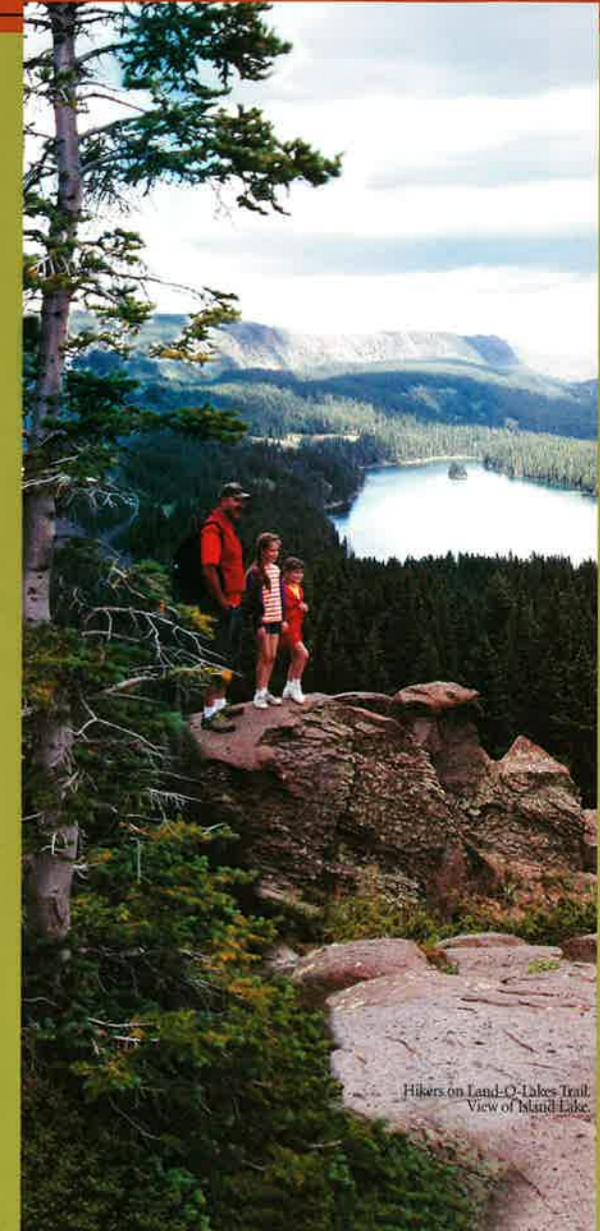
## For More Information

Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests

Grand Valley Ranger District  
2777 Cross Road Blvd. Unit A  
Grand Junction, CO 81506  
(970) 242-8211

Supervisors Office  
2250 Highway 50  
Delta, CO 81416  
(970) 874-6600

# Grand Mesa Short Hikes



Hikers on Land-O-Lakes Trail. View of Island Lake.



Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests



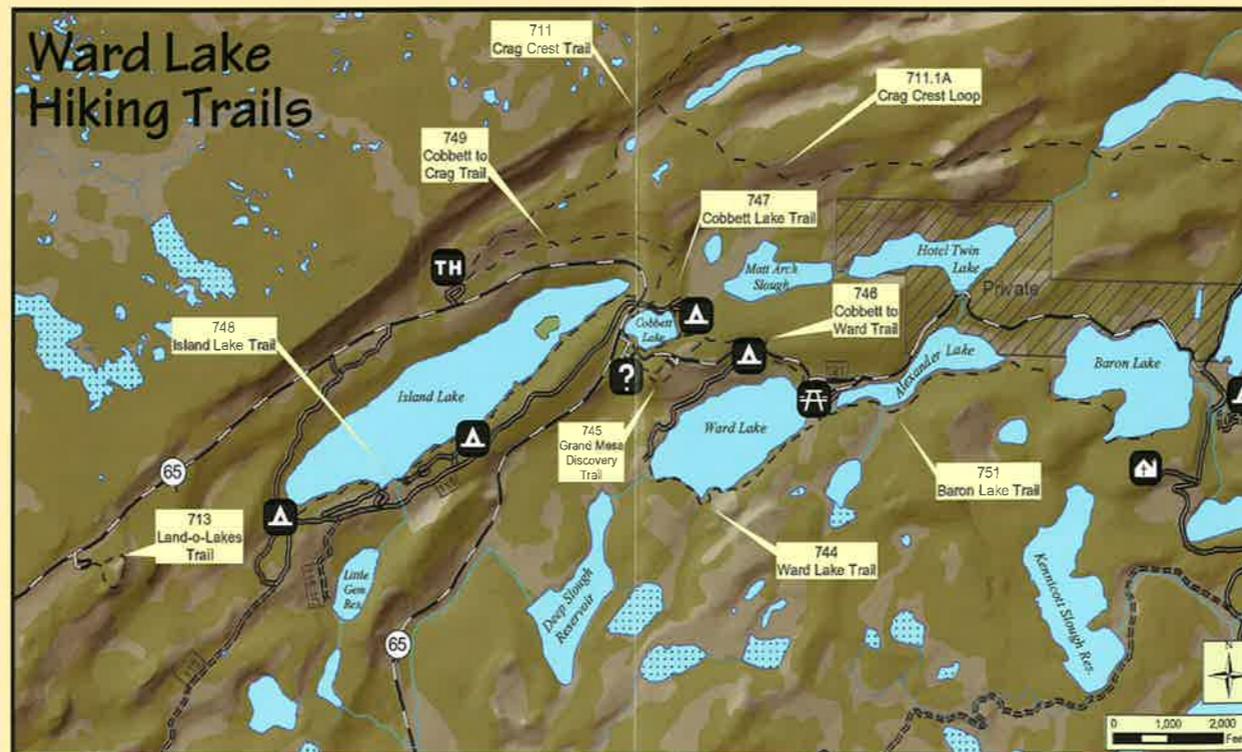
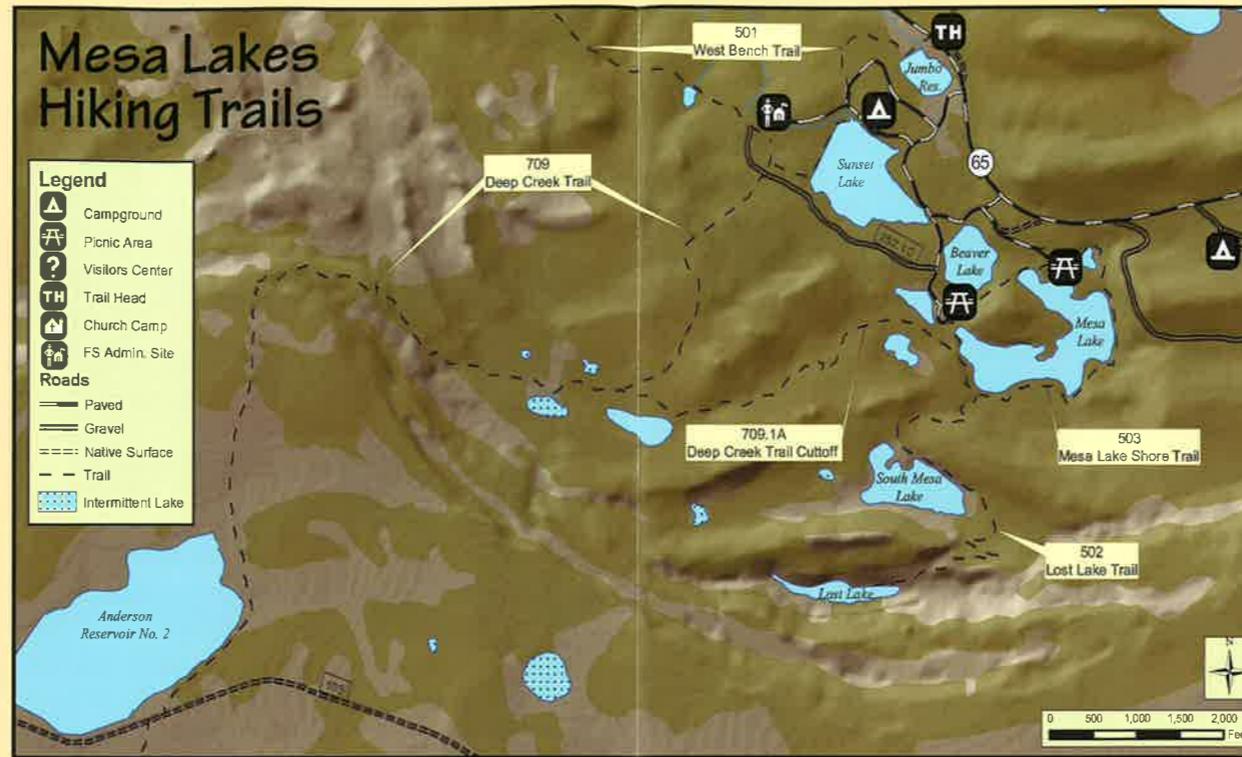


Hiking on the Grand Mesa.  
~Courtesy of Grand Mesa National Scenic & Historic Byway

## Trail Tips

Most trails on Grand Mesa are at elevations of 9,000 to 10,000 feet. Trails are generally snow-free by early July and often close again by mid-October. All trails are open to hiking and most trails are open to mountain bikes and horses. Please check the Grand Mesa National Forest Travel Map for specific restrictions.

- Bring plenty of drinking water and snacks.
- Weather conditions change rapidly on Grand Mesa. Be prepared for cool temperatures, lightning, and afternoon thunderstorms.
- Wear ample amounts of mosquito repellent. Mosquitoes are plentiful from mid-June through August.
- Please maintain control of your pets at all times.
- Signs of altitude sickness are headache, nausea, vomiting, and unusual tiredness. A person exhibiting these symptoms should rest, drink water, eat a high-energy snack, and descend to lower elevations as soon as possible.



## Trail Information

### Mesa Lake Area Trails: Length Difficulty Information

Trail Name	Length	Difficulty	Information
Mesa Lake Shoreline # 503	1.5	E	Accessible, interpretive signs.
Lost Lake # 502	1.5	M	Lakes, forest, and basalt rock fields. Trail climbs several hundred feet in elevation.
Deep Creek # 709	2.0	M	Forest, meadow, two miles to rim of Mesa with views of Mesa Creek. (Trail continues 5 steep miles down to Coal Creek Trail in Kannah Creek Basin.)
Deep Creek Cutoff # 709.1	.5	M	Connects Mesa Lakes Resort to Deep Creek Trail.
West Bench # 501	5.5	M	Ends at the top of Powder Horn Ski Area, near lift #2.

**TH** Parking is available at Jumbo Reservoir, along Highway 65, and at Glacier Springs Picnic Area (south of Beaver Lake) for Mesa Lake Area Trails.

### Ward Lake Area Trails: Length Difficulty Information

Trail Name	Length	Difficulty	Information
Land-O-Lakes # 713	.5	E	Paved trail, four interpretive signs, outstanding views of lakes and mesa from the ridge top.
Ward Lake # 744	1.25	E	Circles Ward Lake, connects campground and picnic area.
GM Discovery # 745	.3	E	Self guiding interpretive trail at Grand Mesa Visitor Center.
Cobbett Lake # 747	.6	E	Circles Cobbett Lake.
Cobbett to Ward # 746	.3	E	Connects Cobbett Campground and Lake to Ward Campground and Lake.
Cobbett to Crag # 749	1.0	M	Connects Cobbett Lake and Campground to Crag Crest Trail.
Island Lake # 748	1.68	E	Trail along the south shore. Connects campgrounds, boat launch, and Grand Mesa Visitor Center. Site of the W. A. Wornack shooting.
Baron Lake # 751	1.3	E	Connects Ward Way Picnic Area to Baron Lake. Passes by Alexander Lake, and the prior site of the Radcliff Hotel and fish hatchery.
Crag Crest # 711 & 711.1A	10.3	D	Loop Trail. Consult Crag Crest Trail Brochure.

**TH** Parking is available at the Grand Mesa Visitor Center for all Ward Lake Area Trails. Land-O-Lakes Trail has its own parking area.