

## Visiting an old friend - Mount Silverheels by Dave Cooper



*Dramatic light on Mounts Lincoln and Bross - small.jpg*

This week I visited an old friend: one I've neglected for too long.

Mount Silverheels has always been one of my favorite hill walks, but on previous visits I've always used the winter approach from Scott Gulch (Trail Mix, April 2006). I had never explored the standard summer route along the south ridge. On October 10th, with our extended period of mild autumn weather, I took advantage of the fact that the summer trailhead was still accessible by vehicle.

Peaks often present a very different character when approached from various sides, and Silverheels is no exception. While still featuring the familiar gentle, rolling terrain, I was surprised to see dark red sandstone terraces on this south side, not a common rock formation in the area.

**Getting to the Trailhead:** Drive to the town of Fairplay on Highway 9. Turn northeast on 4th. Street and drive 0.3 miles to a T-junction. Turn left at the T on Bogue Street and drive generally northwest on Bogue Street (which becomes Beaver Creek Lane) for 2.5 miles to a junction signed "National Forest Access - Beaver Creek Road". Turn right (east) on this road, passing through an open gate in 0.2 mile (signed FS 659) by the winter parking area. Continue to the junction with Forest Service Road 184, 2.1 miles beyond the winter trailhead. This is the 2WD trailhead. High clearance 4WD vehicles may be able to continue a further 1.1 miles to the 4WD trailhead.

**GPS coordinates for the 2WD trailhead (NAD83):** 39°17'23"N, 106°1'20"W, 10,700 feet.

**Statistics:** From the intersection of Forest Service Road 659 and Forest Service Road 184 to the summit of Mount Silverheels you will gain 3270 feet and lose 150 feet (to be re-climbed on the descent) in 4.5 miles one way. Starting from the 4WD trailhead saves approximately 500 feet of elevation gain and 1.1 miles each way.

**Difficulty:** A relatively easy hike at high altitude, on old roads and faint climbers' trails.

**USGS Quad:** Alma, CO.

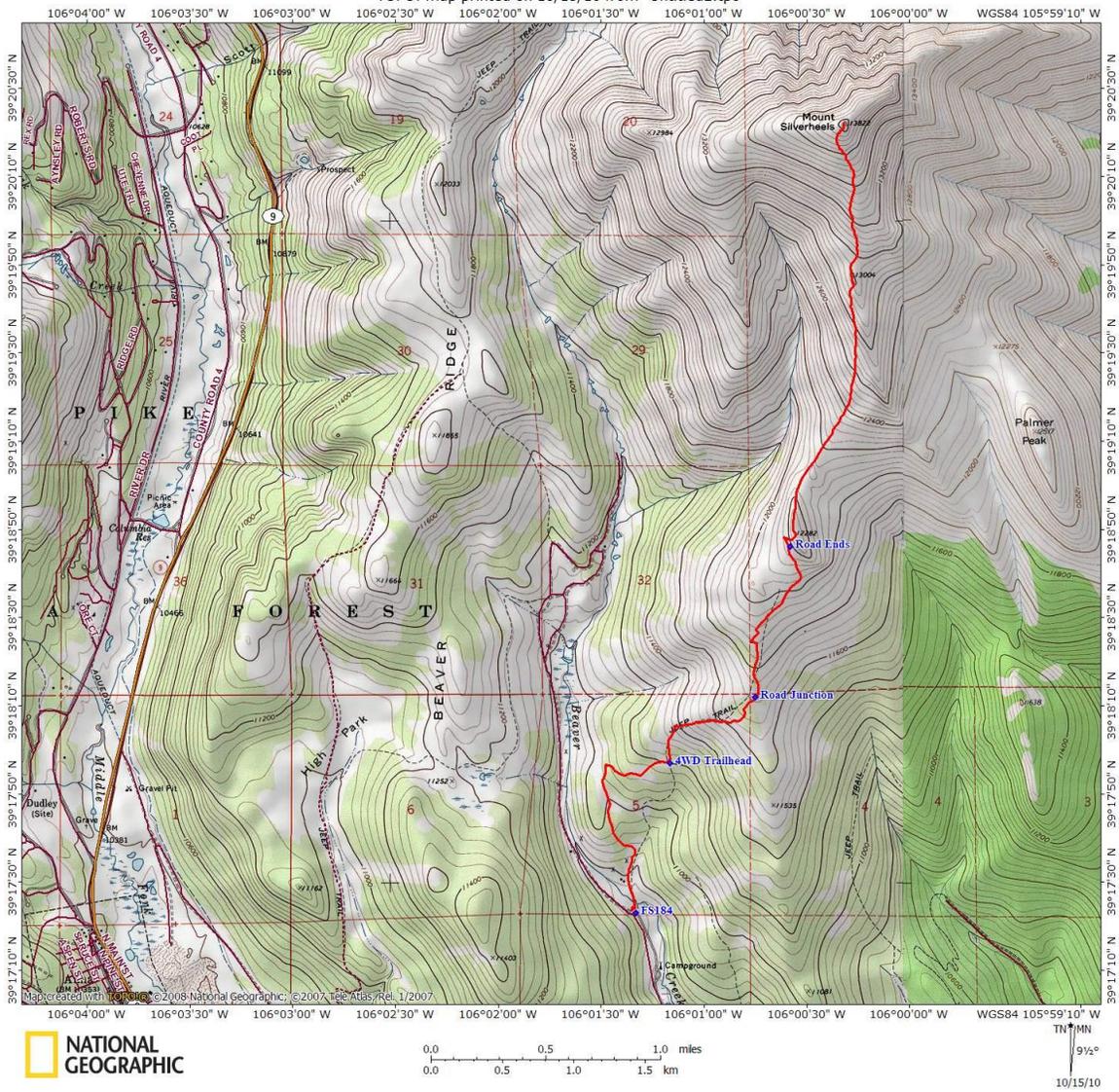
Bristlecone pines dot the slopes near treeline, while across the valley the high peaks of the Mosquito Range dominate the skyline. On this day, passing snow squalls created dramatic lighting on the peaks as dark clouds and sunshine alternated in rapid succession.

During the ascent, the summit of Silverheels was shrouded in cloud, but, as if to greet an old friend, the clouds lifted briefly as I reached the familiar summit. Turning around for a last look at the peak while descending, the clouds had already moved in again.

### **Hike Description**

From the parking area at the junction of Forest Service Road 659 and Forest Service Road 184, take FSR 184 as it crosses Beaver Creek. Continue north then east on the 4WD road for 1.1 miles to the 4WD trailhead at 11,200 feet, a point where an old road, now closed to vehicles, heads north. Follow this old road as it climbs up towards Silverheel's south ridge, reaching a road junction at mile 1.7. Turn left on the road and continue north along the ridge, passing through a stand of bristlecone pines. The road disappears at mile 2.5, just below a minor ridge point (12,282). Scramble up to the top of this point (marked by a couple of large cairns) and continue north, dropping 100 feet to a saddle before starting the gentle climb north to reach another ridge point (13,004) at mile 3.8. A few cairns and a semblance of a trail will guide you along this section. Continue along the gentle ridge to the summit, reached at mile 4.5.

TOPO! map printed on 10/15/10 from "Untitled2.tpo"



GPS Latitude / Longitude NAD83 (Deg., Min., Sec.)  
 FS184 (2WD TH), 39,17,23, -106,1,20,10701 feet  
 4WD Trailhead, 39,17,57, -106,1,10,11227 feet  
 Road Junction, 39,18,12, -106,0,45,11755 feet  
 Road Ends, 39,18,46, -106,0,35,12195 feet

