

## South Fooses Creek - Ski / Snowshoe

by Dave Cooper



*Following the blue diamonds on an untracked trail-small.JPG*

The area around Monarch Pass often seems to be blessed with more than it's fair share of snowfall. This week's tour takes us to a section of the Colorado Trail that is nestled under the lee slopes of the peaks surrounding the Pass.

If you enjoy long ski tours through the forest on gentle trails, probably making your own track for some part of the day, then this is a must do. This trail was so pleasant we skied it twice within a few days, catching fresh powder on both occasions.

In winter, the Forest Service recommends this trail primarily for skiers and snowshoers. In fact, after you turn onto the South Fooses Trail at mile 2.0, the trail is closed to motorized vehicles, so you should enjoy a peaceful outing for the balance of the tour.

It can be a bit of a challenge to follow the trail the whole way, so bring along your route-finding skills, and don't forget friends to help break trail.

### Hike Description

After signing in at the trail register, climb the short hill and head west past Fooses Reservoir. In a tenth of a mile you'll pass an outhouse and more trail signage. Continue along the roadbed (County Road 225) to mile 2.0, where the Colorado Trail and South Fooses Creek Trail (225C) take off to the left.

In one tenth of a mile you'll reach the summer trailhead. Continue on the well signed trail and quickly cross the first of many footbridges, following a variety of trail markers - blue diamonds, Colorado Trail signs and old blazes. Eventually there will only be the blazes, but that doesn't happen until mile 4.1. Enjoy easy skiing through the forest, reaching a small meadow at mile 3.1. Openings in the trees afford views of Mount Aetna, Taylor Mountain and fourteeners Shavano and Tabeguache.

**Getting to the Trailhead:** Drive to the intersection of Highway 50 and County Road 225, 2.9 miles east of the Monarch Lodge in Garfield and 9.0 miles west of the intersection of Highways 50 and 285 in Poncha Springs.

Turn south on County Road 225 and follow it downhill. Stay left at the bottom of the hill. Cross a single lane bridge 0.2 mile from Highway 50, stay left at the next junction then cross another bridge at mile 0.4. Turn right at a road junction at mile 0.5, signed to the Colorado Trail and Fooses Creek. Drive to the trailhead at the end of the plowed road, 0.8 mile from Highway 50. There is limited parking at the right side of the road and a larger parking area on the left. There are currently no-parking signs in this larger parking area, but according to the Forest Service it is legal to park there and they are working with the county to have the signs removed (apparently the signs are there to control summer traffic).

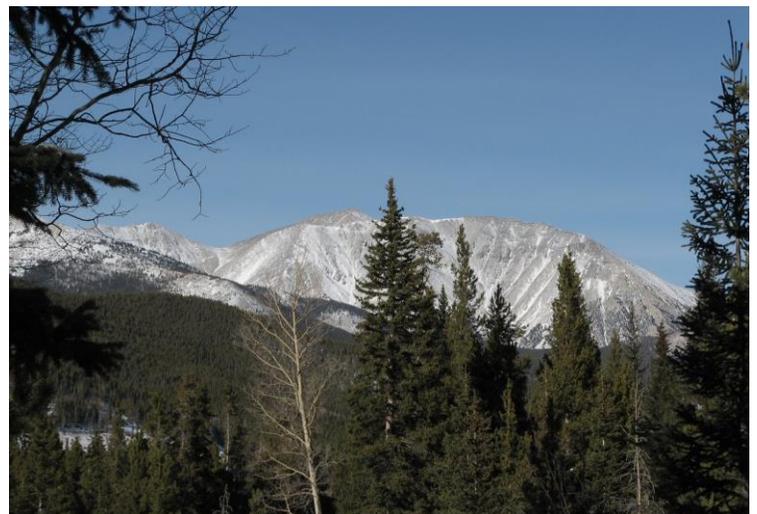
**Hike Statistics:** From the parking area to the end of the tour described here (10,500 feet) you'll gain 1560 feet in 6.2 miles one way.

**Difficulty:** A pleasant ski/snowshoe which is suitable for all levels of ability. If the trail is untracked you will need good trail-finding skills to stay on route.

**USGS Quad:** Pahlone Peak, CO; Garfield, CO and marginally Maysville, CO.



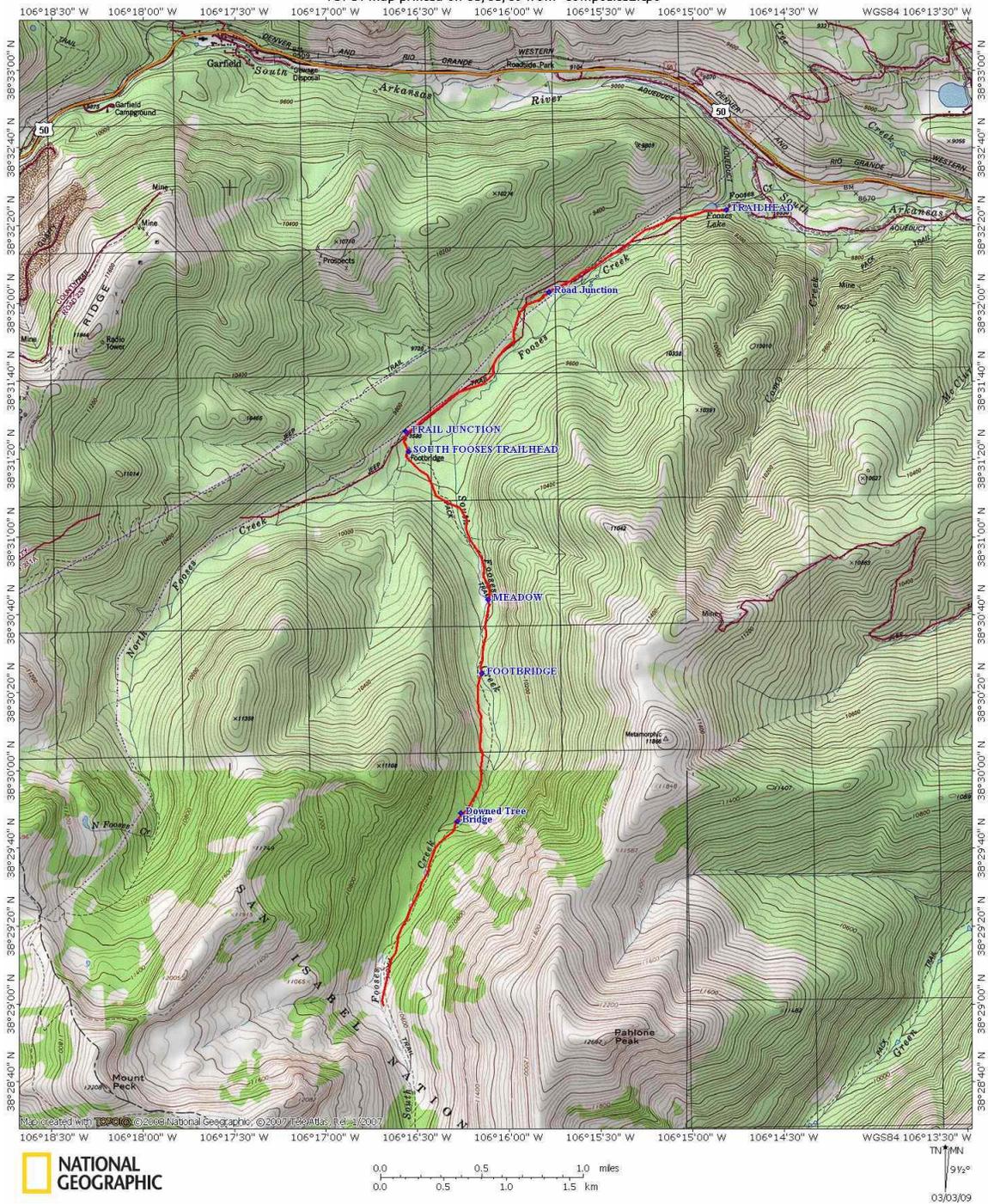
*Mount Aetna at left and Taylor Peak, seen from the small Meadow at mile 3.1-small.JPG*



*Shavano and Tabeguache-small .JPG*

At mile 3.4 look for another footbridge that takes you to the west side of South Fooses Creek. This bridge can be tricky to find. Continue south to mile 4.1, where the trail appears to end. We found no more blue diamonds beyond this point. Luckily there's a good landmark to help find the trail - a large, downed tree that appears to almost have fallen across the trail. Drop down towards the creek along the left side of this tree and follow the creek for a little less than 100 yards until you reach a bridge. Cross the bridge and regain the trail, well defined as an obvious cut through the trees and marked occasionally by old blazes. Unfortunately some of these blazes may be below the snow.

The trail continues, generally staying close to the creek on its east bank, and reaches an open area at mile 5.2, a good place to end the tour, since beyond this point the sides of the canyon close in and create terrain traps where the avalanche potential rises considerably. Wait for stable conditions later in the spring if you want to go farther. This point is located approximately along a line drawn between Pahlone Peak and Mount Peck. After lunch, enjoy the run back down the trail.



0.0 0.5 1.0 miles  
0.0 0.5 1.0 1.5 km

9 1/2°  
03/03/09

GPS Latitude / Longitude NAD83 (Deg., Min., Sec.)  
 TRAILHEAD,38,32,24,-106,14,49,8970 feet  
 Road Junction,38,32,3,-106,15,47,9304 feet  
 TRAIL JUNCTION,38,31,27,-106,16,34,9616 feet  
 SOUTH FOOSSES TRAILHEAD,38,31,22,-106,16,33,9610 feet  
 MEADOW,38,30,44,-106,16,7,9843 feet  
 FOOTBRIDGE,38,30,25,-106,16,9,9898 feet  
 Downed Tree,38,29,49,-106,16,16,10243 feet  
 Bridge,38,29,47,-106,16,17,10184 feet

