

“fin” in the Cedar Mesa sandstone, jutting out into the canyon. There is another arch in Fish Creek, but it is hardly visible unless you are directly below it.



**Hiking Conditions:** The road access to the trailhead is one mile south of Kane Gulch Ranger Station on State

Route 261. Turn east and drive approximately five miles on a dirt road to a drill hole which is the parking area. This road is passable to passenger vehicles during good weather. If it rains or snows, this road can become impassable even to 4WD vehicles. There is a kiosk and restrooms at the trailhead.

The recommended route is to enter Owl and exit Fish Canyon. The first three miles of Owl are steep and mostly slickrock, with several large pour-offs to be circumvented. One of the detours involves going into a small side canyon on the north side of the main canyon and scrambling down some rocks. Nevill’s Arch is approximately five miles in Owl Creek. The junction of Fish and Owl is quite wide. Fish is narrower than Owl but is gentle, without impasse in the first five miles. The upper forks of Fish Creek are all blocked by boulders and rock fall. Once you pass this fork of Fish, begin watching to the south. The trail climbs out of the canyon on the steep talus slope approximately 600 feet in a 10 to 12 foot crack which may require passing packs or a short rope to reach the top. The trail then goes through the pinyon and juniper forest and across several small drainages for 1.5 miles back to the trailhead. The main loop is approximately 17 miles long. Three days is recommended to do this hike. The Lower Fish access is from the Comb Wash road.

**Water:** Owl Creek will generally be dry from Nevill’s Arch to the confluence with Fish creek. Fish Creek generally has intermittent water from two miles up canyon from the confluence with Owl Creek to the upper junctions. Owl has three large springs which are generally dependable year round, especially in the spring, but do not count on them for water in the summer months. Top off all water bottles when water sources are available. **Conditions change daily! Filter all water.**

**Wildlife and Flora:** Wildlife is scarce, but tracks of bobcats, mountain lion, ringtail and an occasional bear may be seen in the canyons. Small fish may be found in the pools, including killi fish, chubs, suckers, and shiners or dace. Toads and frogs can be seen and heard, and there is also evidence of beaver activity in the lower reaches of Fish Creek. There are several varieties of wildflowers that bloom, especially after a wet winter or spring. Vetch, penstemon, cacti, and cliffrose are only a few.

**Archaeological Values:** A few cliff dwellings and rock art sites may be visible, but because most of the narrow canyon bottoms were not farmed prehistorically due to lack of large alluvial banks, there are few sites associated with the canyons proper. Please respect these ancient sites wherever you find them as lessened impact preserves them for future enjoyment and study. Be aware of middens (ancient trash heap) and leave artifacts where you find them.

**Stipulations:** All hikers and overnight in-canyon hikers require a permit. Group size is limited to 12 persons. Groups of eight or more persons and parties with stock require an advanced permit. During the high use season (March 1 – June 15 & Sept. 1 – Oct. 31), all overnight permits must be picked up at the Kane Gulch Ranger Station between 8:00 a.m. and noon on the trip start day. Pets must be kept on a leash at all times. Pets must be kept out of springs, pot holes and other natural water sources. Pets are not allowed in ruins. Bicycles and motorized vehicles must stay on designated roads. The use of rock climbing equipment to access archaeological sites is not allowed. Using safety rope as an aid along a hiking route is permissible. Acts of Nature present risks which the permit holder assumes. The permit holder will be held legally and financially responsible for historic, archaeological, cultural or ecological values damaged, destroyed or removed by trip participants. Camping is permitted in well used campsites. No new campsites are to be created. No camping is allowed in ruins. Pack it in – pack it out. The disposal of human waste is not permitted within 200 feet of water source, trail or campsite. Human waste will be deposited in a “cat hole” (6 inches deep) and covered with soil. Used toilet paper must be carried out. **DO NOT BURN TOILET PAPER.** No wood or charcoal fires all allowed.

Permits are available to the Monticello BLM Office 435-587-1510 and at the Kane Gulch Ranger Station.



Photos by Jed Carling, Monticello BLM

## FISH AND OWL CANYON



Fish and Owl Creeks both cut diagonally across the eastern edge of Cedar Mesa, coming together several miles before they enter Comb Wash. They are both deep canyons with an abundance of scenic beauty. Maps needed for this area are either the Trails Illustrated Grand Gulch Plateau map, or the following USGS 7.5 quads: South Long Point, Bluff NW, and Snow Flat Spring Cave.

**Scientific Values:** Fish and Owl Creeks are canyons of outstanding beauty. They differ from the other canyon systems on Cedar Mesa by the depth, relatively narrow canyons, and the pools of water in the spring and fall months. The depth averages 500 feet, with the width varying from several hundred feet to very narrow at the upper reaches of Fish Creek.

Many of the pools in these canyons have extensive hanging gardens, offering a wide variety of vegetation. The rare Kachina Daisy can be found in one of these springs. The vegetation varies from sage flats in the lower ends of the canyons to cottonwood trees and pine stands on the wider benches in the upper forks.

**Scientific Values cont:** Nevill’s Arch is an impressive and prominent feature in Owl Creek, high on a

# Map for Fish and Owl Canyons



Springs



Trail



Intermittent water

NOTE: Fish and Owl Canyons should not be attempted by novice or inexperienced hikers.

