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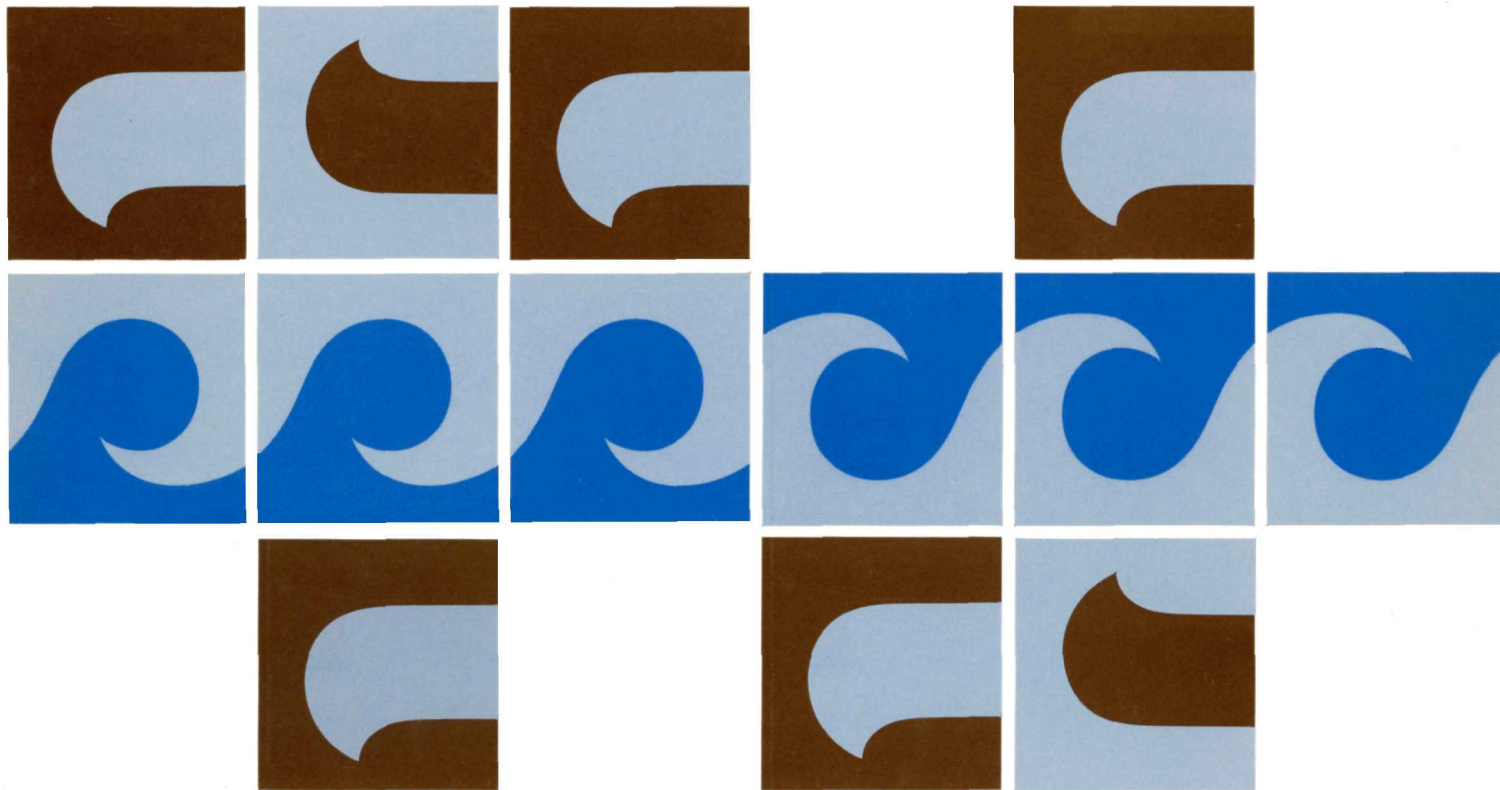
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## Wild Rivers: **Central British Columbia**

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Wild Rivers :  
**Central British Columbia**

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Wild Rivers Survey  
Parks Canada  
ARC Branch Planning Division  
Ottawa, 1978



*Cariboo and Quesnel rivers: Ishpa Mountain from Sandy Lake*



“It is difficult to find in life any event which so effectually condenses intense nervous sensation into the shortest possible space of time as does the work of shooting, or running an immense rapid. There is no toil, no heart breaking labour about it, but as much coolness, dexterity, and skill as man can throw into the work of hand, eye and head; knowledge of when to strike and how to do it; knowledge of water and rock, and of the one hundred combinations which rock and water can assume – for these two things, rock

and water, taken in the abstract, fail as completely to convey any idea of their fierce embracings in the throes of a rapid as the fire burning quietly in a drawing-room fireplace fails to convey the idea of a house wrapped and sheeted in flames.”

Sir William Francis Butler (1872)

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**Metric symbols used in this book**

mm – millimetre(s)  
m – metre(s)  
km – kilometre(s)  
km/h – kilometres per hour  
h – hour(s)  
d – day(s)  
°C – degree Celsius

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## Foreword

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Wild rivers are a priceless part of our natural heritage. These waterways, untouched by the march of man's technological progress, are the arteries of our land, and one of the main elements in its growth to nationhood.

From the copper-coloured waterfalls of the Labrador plateau, to the Canadian Shield's labyrinth of lakes and streams, to the glacial torrents cutting through the western mountains – wild rivers are all that remain unharnessed of those waterways which first made it possible for this huge and varied country to be explored and developed.

Long before Europeans laid eyes on them, these rivers served the native peoples as vital sources of both food and transportation. Later, the rivers were to carry the newly-arrived Europeans on other voyages of exploration and exploitation throughout the vast interior of the continent. And the settlers who followed travelled the same routes.

The waterways were the mainstay of the fur trade; they were the highways to the gold rushes. They did much to provide the economic nourishment through which Canada grew to its present stature.

With the advent of modern technology, some of our rivers were harnessed to serve our new found needs. But thousands of kilometres of waterways, and the land they pass through, remain essentially untouched.

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Today, Canadians are gradually rediscovering these fascinating wild rivers. They are seeing nature on its own terms – enjoying its works from the vantage of its own highways. They are recreating the adventures of the explorers; struggling over the same portages as the heavily-burdened “coureurs de bois”; running rapids which once hurtled “voyageurs” and their precious cargoes towards the markets of Montreal; gently floating down majestic rivers which once carried thousands of anxious prospectors toward the promise of gold.

Parks Canada is promoting these challenging voyages of discovery, which embrace both the past and the present. Wild rivers are important to Canadians as integral components of our founding heritages.

However, a good deal of down-to-earth information about the rivers and their habits is needed before anyone attempts to navigate them. It is for this reason that Parks Canada decided to carry out surveys of wild rivers all across the country. We are publishing the results of these surveys in the present series of booklets, in order to provide a practical guide for the modern “voyageur”.

But there is one other very important point that you must bear in mind. “Wild” really is the correct adjective to describe many of the rivers, and only experienced and well-equipped canoeists should enter these waters. You will find them a tremendous challenge. So it’s up to you. Our land and our rivers are waiting for you to explore and rediscover them.

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## **Introduction**

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The wild rivers of Central British Columbia provide excellent recreation opportunities for canoeists. In most cases the upper reaches are accessible by road and the rivers, while possessing thrilling rapids and mountain scenery, do not generally require long portages. Moreover, although displaying attributes of true wilderness these rivers are not impossibly remote from centres of supply and assistance.

During the high water levels of June and early July the rivers are full, fast and powerful, and extreme caution is necessary to avoid log jams occurring at sharp bends in the river. Conversely, at lower water levels, from mid-July onward, obstacles in the water may be uncovered or lie close to the surface.

## **Climate**

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Central British Columbia is an area of harsh extremes where weather conditions can change dramatically within a few hours. The annual precipitation averages between 23 cm and 51 cm and the summers are short, hot and dry, while the winters are long, cold and wet. The average July temperature is 13°C, but great variations are to be expected and frost can occur in any month. The growing season, the number of days on which the temperature rises above 6°C ranges from 130 to 170 d. However, summer frosts may reduce the effectual growing season to three or four weeks. The rivers usually break up in early April and freeze in mid-November.



## Planning the trip

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In planning a canoe trip, allow 25 km to 30 km per day paddling. Always allow extra time and food for such unforeseen events as being wind-bound or delayed by rain.

If egress is to be made by plan make sure arrangements have been made before you begin the trip.

Be sure to check in with some responsible agency (the R.C.M.P., the British Columbia Ministry of Forests or Ministry of Recreation and Conservation), giving them your route and expected time of arrival. Do not forget to check out with them at the end of the trip.

Permits for fires and fishing may be required. Extreme caution should be exercised in the use of fire. Campfires should be built on rock or sand only;

afterwards they should be extinguished completely with water, smothered with sand or soil and stamped down firmly. All garbage should be packed out with you.

A sturdy canoe capable of handling well in rapids plus equipment for its repair are essential. Aluminum canoes were used throughout the wild rivers surveys and proved most practical.

Since lining and hauling are often necessary, lengths of strong rope are essential. Several pairs of high-cut running shoes or other sturdy footwear, which can take the abuse of rocks and constant wetness are also needed.

In the more isolated regions an emergency survival kit is recommended. The kit should contain high-energy food rations, waterproofed matches, fishhooks and line, and emergency rescue flares for signalling aircraft. These items should be well waterproofed; if the kit is small it can be worn on your belt. Firearms are never necessary.

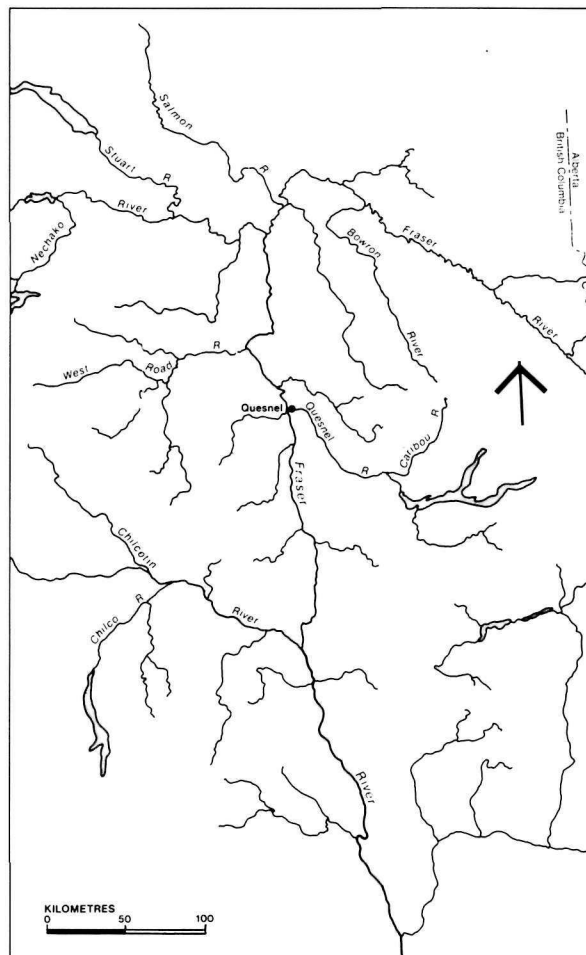
### **Warning**

Sweepers, log jams and some channels are a constant and changing hazard. Unlike permanent hazards, such as rapids and waterfalls, their presence cannot be reliably documented in reports of this type.

Canoeists should be alert to these dangers which are more prevalent during periods of high water.

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The National Topographic maps are  
available from:  
Canada Map Office  
Room 147  
615 Booth Street  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0E9



## **1 Salmon River**

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**Salmon River**

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**Access and egress**

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**Maps required**

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Great Beaver Lake to Salmon  
Valley Bridge

**Length**

5 to 8 d (168 km)

9 to 12 portages

**Date of survey**

July 9 to 13, 1973

Access by road is possible to a point a few kilometres below Great Beaver Lake, by following the Salmon River Road to a wilderness hunting camp on the Salmon River. This same road crosses the Salmon River just above the confluence with the Muskeg River, and provides an access point for three-day trip through the finest portion of the river. Float planes may land on Great Beaver Lake, and this access point is best for a plane base. The best egress point from the Salmon River is the Salmon Valley Bridge, which crosses the river 13 km upstream from the confluence with the Fraser River.

(N.T.S. 1:250 000 scale)  
93 J McLeod Lake

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## About the river

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### Geography

The Salmon River flows through the interior plateau region of British Columbia. The northern segment of the river is a glacial deposition area with extensive drumlin formations and clay-associated tills. The lower portion of the river is thought to have been included in an extensive glacial lake, and stratified layers of clays are visible where the river has eroded high cliffs. From Great Beaver Lake mountains are visible, but once on the river the rather flat tablelands predominate. Occasionally, low glacier-formed ridges may be seen from the river.

Throughout the upper portion of the river the view is rather confined by well-developed meanders and tall spruce rising 20 m on either bank. In the lower segment, the river flows through several channels and there is thus a much broader valley and a better view of the surrounding landscape. Below the Muskeg River there is an almost continuous series of gravel bars, fast water, rapids and high sandy or stratified clay cliffs. The river often forms a braided pattern with narrow and shallow passageways.

### Flora

The Salmon River area lies within the Montane Forest Region of British Columbia. Lodgepole pine, Douglas fir and spruce dominate the higher, well-drained slopes, while at the northern end of the river balsam fir begins to appear. In the lower, poorly drained sections of the river valley, thickets of aspen and willow are common, and along the river banks there are large stands of cottonwood and poplar.

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**Fauna**

All the game fish found in the Salmon River belong to the salmonoid family. The most common member of this family found in these waters is the rainbow trout, although the Dolly Varden is also present. In Great Beaver Lake, lake trout and kokanee, a species of landlocked salmon, are found. The most common birds along the Salmon River are Canada geese, while other waterfowl include mergansers and harlequin ducks. More spectacular are

the golden- and bald-eagles which are numerous in the vicinity of Great Beaver Creek. Osprey can also be seen. The Salmon River valley supports a large population of moose and mule deer. Other large mammals are black- and grizzly-bears.



## The canoe trip

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### Great Beaver Lake to Muskeg River

This 59 km segment of the Salmon River is considerably slower than that below Muskeg River, and there are numerous meanders and many examples of bow lakes and scars. Draining Great Beaver Lake, Great Beaver Creek begins in a weed-clogged bay midway down the east shore at an Indian Reserve. After an initial two kilometres of meanders, Great Beaver Creek straightens out and there are a few riffles on the five-metre wide channel. The width of the Salmon River at the confluence with Great Beaver Creek, is about 15 m, but later varies between 25 m and 10 metres.



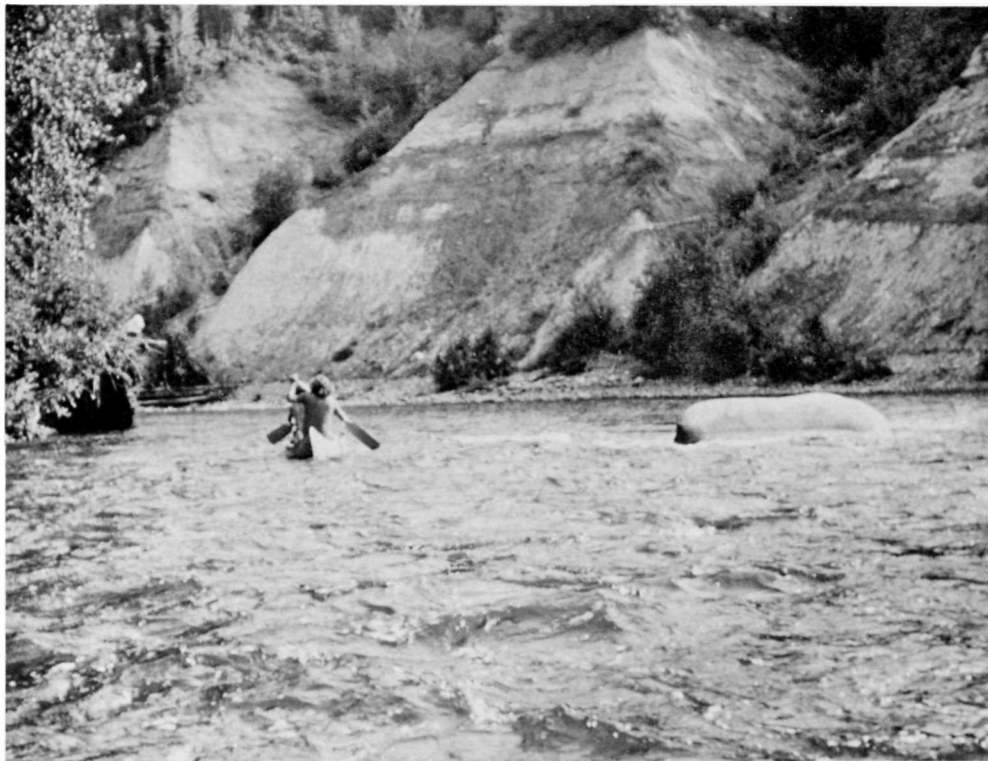
*Salmon River, 16 km above the Muskeg River*

Two point five kilometres below the entrance of Great Beaver Creek is the first log jam of any considerable size. A single log lying across the river, 180 m upstream from the main jam marks the beginning of a 250 m portage on the right bank. By climbing a small hill on the bank, one can follow an old game trail to the end of the jam. Two point five kilometres further, a short carry of 18 m is required to pass a log jam. The carry can be made on either side. One point five kilometres below this small jam is another

short jam of about 14 m in length, but it is bypassed by a brook 23 m upstream on the right. Two kilometres below, yet another jam is encountered, which requires a 36 m carry on the left shore. The fifth jam, requiring a portage, is situated 13 km below Great Beaver Creek at the entrance of a small stream on the left bank. The portage is 80 m long and is located on the left bank. One point five kilometres beyond the mouth of the Boundary River is an outfitter's camp, below which three partial log jams are located at five, 10 and 17 km intervals. The first may be passed on the right and the second and third on the left.

Three kilometres upstream from the entrance of the Muskeg River, the speed of the water increases and more caution is required. A logged-over area, lumber road, and bridge across the Salmon River indicate the approach of the Muskeg River. This can be an alternative starting point for a canoe trip down the Salmon River.

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### **Muskeg River to Salmon Valley Bridge**

Ten kilometres below the Muskeg River, the first major log jam of this section is encountered on a bend in the river. A carry of 160 m along the right shore is the best bypass. During periods of shallow water the carry can be shortened to 90 m for one can then cross an area of sandbars.

Thirteen kilometres downstream is the second log jam of the section, virtually consisting of two separate jams. The first may be bypassed by a 135 m carry along the left bank to a small creek which is actually a small, diverted channel of the river made somewhat difficult by the dense low willow growth.

*Sand cliffs on lower Salmon River*

The channel, one kilometre long, bypasses the second part of the log jam which would otherwise require a 55 m portage. At the entrance of Doc's Creek, the speed of the river increases and the river becomes shallower, causing riffled sections of water. The next log jam is three kilometres below the entrance of Crocker Creek, where the river splits into two channels, both completely jammed. This portage requires scouting for a suitable route. A possible route begins on the right side of the channel on the island: a 415 m carry through a tall cottonwood forest, an open fern area, and a small slough to the far side of the island, will place one in the right channel, which is open. Although a long portage, this carry is quite easy as there is no undergrowth except at the end of the carry.

The channel is free-flowing for the next 275 m where another small log jam demands an 18 m carry. Caution should be exercised in this fast current. Ninety metres below this, the left channel continues unobstructed for seventeen kilometres.

The next log jam begins about 6.5 km below a new logging bridge. The best course to bypass this jam is a 300 m carry on the left to a small creek. Cross this divergent channel and carry for a further 18 m below the jam, and then follow a fast and narrow stream into the main channel. 10 km further down the river, the beginning of the last major log jam is marked by two logs crossing the river about 90 m upstream from the main jam. The best portage is along an old logging road on the left shore, which one should follow for 290 m before placing the

canoe in the left channel and canoeing 90 m to the next jam. A 75 m carry across an island covered with logs brings one to the end of the jam. The river now increases in speed, featuring shallow rapids which can be run when the water level is high enough. In this section there are also a number of potentially hazardous sharp turns, and lining or short carries along the adjacent gravel bars may be necessary. The trip terminates at the Salmon Valley Bridge on the John Hart Highway, less than a kilometre from the community of Salmon Valley.

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## **2 Stuart and Nechako Rivers**

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**Stuart and Nechako rivers**

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**Access and egress**

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**Maps required**

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Fort St. James to Prince George

**Length**

3 to 5 d (192 km)

4 short portages

**Date of survey**

Early July 1973

Fort St. James may be reached by taking Highway 16 from Prince George west to Vanderhoof and then Highway 27 to Fort St. James. Cars may be left with the R.C.M.P. or at the marina in Fort St. James. Prince George is the point of egress.

(N.T.S. 1:250 000 scale)

93 G Prince George

93 J McLeod Lake

93 K Fort Fraser

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## About the river

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### Geography

The Stuart-Nechako River system lies on a rolling plateau, bounded in the east by the Coast Mountains, and on the southeast by the Cariboo Mountains. The Omineca Mountains and Rocky Mountains lie to the north and east. The Interior Plateau attains elevations of 1 200 m at Prince George, but the Nechako River itself flows through a flat-bottomed basin 300 m lower than the surface of the plateau. The basin is believed to have been formed by a glacial lake, which has resulted in deposits of thick layered clays and silts. These materials may have been eroded by the river, and often form bluffs. The surface topography throughout the Stuart-Nechako River region consists of loose

glacial till arranged in rolling ridges and hills. Bedrock is visible only where the river has cut deeply into the till. Terraces bounded by low ridges are present in the initial portion of the Stuart River, while on the lower portion high ridges and v-shaped valleys are predominant. Sand bluffs are common along the upper Stuart occurring on the outside of river bends. As the Stuart approaches the Nechako, several series of rapids are formed, exposing sandstone conglomerates. Large conglomerate boulders have fallen into the river, and low cliffs of clay, sandstone, and conglomerates line the river banks. Low ridges bound the Nechako. Several bluffs up to 60 m high have formed and are typical throughout the Nechako, especially in the lower portion. There are, however, segments of broad valley flats where the Nechako meanders in its lower course.

### Flora

The Stuart and Nechako rivers lie in the Montane Forest Region of the Interior Plateau. The tree cover in this area consists of spruce, lodgepole pine and scattered Douglas fir. In the transition Montane Region there are also some blue fir. A large part of the river is lined with aspen growth, for the area has been burnt. Known as the Northern Aspen Section it provides food and shelter for moose and deer. These thickets are mixed with poplars and a few cottonwoods.

**Fauna**

Rainbow trout and Dolly Varden, inhabit all parts of the system, while lake trout and kokanee are found only in the larger lakes. There is a run of spring salmon and steelhead in late May and June, and a run of sockeye salmon in late July and early August. The carp family includes the so-called 'coarse fish' of the interior – suckers, squawfish and mountain whitefish.

Canada geese, mergansers and harlequin ducks are common sights to the canoeist. Ospreys, kingfishers, golden- and bald-eagles and black terns fish and scavenge the rivers. Cliff swallows and warblers nest on the banks and on the higher ground, back from the river willows and Franklin grouse are common.

The most common large game seen are moose, mule deer, black bear and the occasional grizzly bear. Wolves and coyotes also inhabit the area. Elk are making a slow comeback in the region but are very rare. Furbearing animals are abundant and include beaver, fisher, fox, lynx, marten, mink, muskrat, otter, weasel and wolverine.

**History**

This area was originally inhabited by Carrier Indians, who named the Nechako River 'Incha-khoh' meaning "Big River". In July of 1806, Simon Fraser, accompanied by John Stuart, paddled up the Nechako and Stuart Rivers to Nakazleh, where a few months before James McDougal had been the first white man to set eyes on what is now called Stuart Lake. At this time there was an Indian camp at Beaver Creek on the shore opposite the present site of Fort St. James. Fraser had been instructed by McDougal to build a fort, which, thereafter bore the name of Stuart Lake Post until 1873 when it was renamed Fort St. James after Sir James Douglas, chief trader of Fort Vancouver. For more than 50 years this fort was the centre of administration and the capital of New Caledonia. It is estimated that Stuart Lake was populated by 1 000 Indians at this time.

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## The canoe trip

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### **Stuart Lake to Chinochey Creek**

The Stuart River drains Stuart Lake at Fort St. James. Upon entering the river one must pass under a highway bridge and then pass a lumber mill on the right shore one kilometre below the bridge. A short rapid, 360 m below the mill is separated into two channels by an island. At high water, the right channel is the better to run, and for the next 67 km the river is quite slow and presents no problems. Along this stretch of river the best campsites are generally found in meadows and on abandoned farm property.

### **Chinochey Creek to the Nechako River**

Below the entrance of the Chinochey Creek, the river bends to the south and the speed of the water increases. Upstream from the Saxton Creek, there are four sections of fast and rather rough water as the river rounds four successive bends. The best route is to the inside of each turn, thereby avoiding the standing waves on the outside. Below Saxton Creek, the speed of the water increases. There are four rapids between Saxton Creek and the Nechako River. The first two are around bends of the river, where the inner course is the best. The third rapid, long and very difficult, begins seven kilometres up the Stuart River from the Nechako as the river widens.

It consists of two sections: the first can be run on either side to avoid the high standing waves in the centre of the channel. At low water a great deal of manoeuvring would be necessary to negotiate a course between the boulders. The other section comprises a series of ledges. At high water, the right side of the river is the best course, while at low water this rapid could be very dangerous and would have to be carefully examined before running.

Below this the Stuart runs swiftly for 5.5 km to the Nechako River. An excellent campsite on the right shore embankment marks the site of an old Carrier Indian village.

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### **Stuart-Nechako Confluence to Prince George**

The confluence is marked by high sand cliffs. The Nechako is slower than the Stuart for the first few kilometres, but the speed of the river gradually increases. No rough water was encountered until five kilometres above Isle de Pierre Rapids, where the river narrows just before it turns south. This rapid is composed of four distinct ledges. The right side of the river is the best run. One point five kilometres below the ferry-crossing are the Isle de Pierre Rapids, which consist of three parts: the first two rapids are 90 m apart. The river is separated by

an island, and the channel along the left shore, is the best route to run. The third rapid is also divided by an island and again the left channel is the safest route. The third section which begins with a series of log piles is one kilometre farther down the river.

Five point kilometres below the train stop at Nichol is a section of rough fast water which is best run on the right. The next rapid encountered is White-mud Rapid, also in three parts. The first section begins as the river bears right. During high water the extreme left hand side of the river is the best route. At low water, the extreme right side would be better. One point five kilometres farther, a strenuous rapid consisting of two ledges is encountered. The right side of the river is the

best route, however one must be extremely wary of the boils and back eddies at the bottom of each of these ledges. Fast water studded with boulders continues for five kilometres. The rest of the river gradually slows down as Prince George is approached. Scattered houses and a sawmill mark the approach to the city.

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### **3 West Road River**

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## **West Road River**

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## **Access and egress**

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Eliguk Lake to Lower Blackwater Bridge

### **Length**

7 to 10 d (208 km)

15 to 22 portages

### **Date of survey**

mid-July 1973

Highway and road networks allow access to the major portion of the West Road River (locally known as the Blackwater). Furthermore, cart-and horse-trails parallel the river system throughout its length, so that the headwaters may be readily accessible by four-wheel drive vehicles. Although the upper segment of the river is best reached by float-plane, a less costly alternative would be to truck into the Euchiniko Lake area, thereby avoiding several arduous portages in the upper segment of the Blackwater. If flying is

a practical alternative, then Eliguk Lake is the best access point. From there, one can paddle the entire length of the river. Tsacha Lake as a starting point would include all of the finest scenery of the river, yet avoid the rather difficult portages and rapids found upstream. Quesnel is the terminal for float plane access. Egress is by road at the Lower Blackwater Bridge.



## Maps required

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(N.T.S. 1:250 000 scale)

93 C Anahim Lake

93 F Nechako River

93 G Prince George

## About the river

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### Geography

The headwaters of the Blackwater are fed by snow-melt and spring water from the conical extinct volcanoes of the Ilgachuz Range which rise 1 000 m above the plateau surface. The river then flows for 280 km, dropping from a little over 1 000 m to less than 600 m above sea level at the lower Fraser confluence. In general, local drainage is poor, partly owing to the diverse terrain. The surrounding topography changes dramatically throughout the length of the Blackwater River. Near Eliguk Lake, the snow-capped peaks of the Ilgachuz Range come into view. The terrain adjacent to the river is rather flat and monotonous for the initial segment, then as the river flows beyond the marshy flats, it drops rapidly, exposing

interesting bedrock surfaces. The surrounding ridges are quite pronounced and provide a scenic backdrop before the river finally plunges down to Tsacha Lake. Tsacha Lake is bordered by hills composed of loose glacial till overlying volcanic flows, and the plateau surface itself is marked by many drumlins. The river then flows through a series of rapids and canyons. Blocky lava flows have been cut through by the river, and the result is a very interesting cliff structure. After the confluence with the Euehiniko River, the Blackwater cuts deeply through the lava flows to meet the Fraser. There are frequent clay and gravel cliffs, and before the lower Blackwater Bridge, a river segment characterized by shallow gravel bars and a broad flat plain. The river bed material is glacial rather than volcanic as in other portions.

**Flora**

The Blackwater basin lies in the Montane (Cariboo Parkland) Forest Region, characterized by a mixture of grassland and light forest, mainly lodgepole pine, aspen, willow and Douglas fir. The moist grassy areas are usually associated with depressions formed by lake eutrophication, but dry grasslands having a high grazing and browsing value are also common.

**Fauna**

Fishing in the Blackwater River ranges from good to excellent. The major species of game fish is rainbow trout ranging in weight from 1.5 kg to 3.5 kg, which may be caught almost anywhere in the drainage basin. Dolly Varden are also present, but in fewer numbers. Lake trout and kokanee (landlocked salmon) are present in the deeper lakes.

In addition to these game fish, the river also supports some species of "coarse fish": squawfish, suckers and whitefish. The first are most numerous and may be caught as easily as rainbow trout. Small runs of spring- and sockeye-salmon up the Blackwater occur in late May and early July, but fishing for these is illegal.

The most common species of large birds encountered in the Blackwater area are the bald eagle, the osprey, and, to a lesser extent, the golden eagle. Smaller bird species include cliff swallows, terns, robins, Canada jays and warblers. Canada geese, mergansers and black ducks are a common sight along the river. The chief mammals of the Blackwater area are moose, mule deer, black- and grizzly-bears, beavers, fishers, otters, minks, martens, wolverines, wolves, foxes and coyotes.

**History**

Alexander Mackenzie gave the name "West Road" to the river and walked along an Indian trade route to its headwaters and over the coast mountains, reaching Betnick Inlet near the present town of Bella Coola on July 22, 1793. In so doing he became the first European to traverse the continent.

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## The canoe trip

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### Eliguk Lake to Tsacha Lake

Eliguk Lake is drained by Ulgako Creek which forms a small lake before joining the Blackwater which flows from the south. The 2.5 km section of the Ulgako from Eliguk Lake to the smaller unnamed lake is too shallow and too narrow to canoe and therefore must be portaged along a wagon trail on the left. The channel widens as Ulgako Creek meets the headwaters of the Blackwater, and as the water volume increases larger rocks and silt are found on the stream bed. The water is dark brown almost black. Below the Blackwater-Ulgako confluence the river continues to be very narrow and shallow, but canoeists have eight kilometres of quiet water before the first



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*Boulder riffle on upper Blackwater River,  
13 km below Eliguk Lake*

fast water is encountered. Here the river runs through some extremely rocky narrow sections where the depth of the water varies from five centimetres to 20 cm in mid-July. Between these sections there are deeper pools, with rocks and gravel on the stream bed, and often a thick growth of algae. Nineteen kilometres after Eliguk Lake, Carnlick Creek enters the Blackwater and the river undergoes a distinct change in character. The cooler green waters of the Carnlick Creek increase the width, depth and velocity of the main river. The stream bed material now consists mainly of gravel and rocks, and the water is very clear. One point five kilometres below the entrance of Carnlick Creek there is a

pioneer farm operation on the right shore, and a little farther a series of rock gardens and small ledges which continue for four kilometres and are immediately followed by two short waterfalls. Portages bypassing the waterfalls can be easily made on the right shore, the first being 100 m and the second 55 m. Almost 180 m below the last waterfall is a strong chute which may be run down the centre. Below this chute are two rock gardens that require precise manoeuvring and a rapid that should be run down the left channel.

The river meanders through a broad valley flat and then again changes character as it enters a straight, rapidly-flowing eight-kilometre course. The river drops steeply and there are numerous large rocks on the stream bed. The first two rapids in this section, 275 metres apart, both require portages. The first is along the left shore for 90 m and the second along the right shore through 82 m of willow brush. No trails exist. Both of these rapids have a lower half which can be run after careful examination.

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The river then flows through a canyon about 900 m long with sheer walls of exposed basalt bedrock. At the end of the canyon there is a 15 m drop over a falls and a series of rock terraces. At Tsacha, one of the outstanding features of the trip, the river widens sixty metres. A 450 m portage and game trail on the right side bypasses the ledges and the spectacular 12 m waterfall. Below the falls there are three more impassable ledges surrounded by rapids. To bypass these canoes must be hauled 365 m along the right shore. The last ledge is divided by an island, below which there

is a 180 m rapid. At high water nearly all of this section is unnavigable and must be portaged for a kilometre on the right. The river changes its character yet again as it enters a broad meandering section 6.5 km long before Tsacha Lake. The high ridges following the river become more visible but the valley is still several hundred metres wide. The current has slowed considerably and the river becomes quite shallow before the lake.

Canoeing in this segment of the river requires considerable skill, especially in low water during the late summer. Canoeists must be prepared to haul their canoe through extremely shallow water at times and to manoeuvre through rock gardens. Portages are strenuous and often lead through thick undergrowth, where there are no trails. Because of the extensive marshlands and undergrowth in the area between Eliguk and Tsacha Lakes, campsites must be found on the high grassy banks.

**Tsacha Lake to Euchiniko Lakes**

This 56 km segment is basically composed of two large lakes, joined by a difficult section of river. Tsacha Lake is 19 km long and is the broadest body of water on the Blackwater route.

Throughout its length, massive hills may be viewed in all directions and snow-capped mountains seen to the southwest, thus adding an alpine component to the scenery. The vegetation along the shores is predominantly spruce and birch. A small cabin at the end of Tsacha Lake marks the beginning of an extended series of rapids. Below the lake there is a two metre ledge and falls which must be bypassed along a 75 m trail on the right

bank. After a short paddle through some shallow rapids, the speed of the water increases and there occurs a series of six ledges running through a canyon. After scouting, the first four ledges can be run, but a safer alternative is a 430 m carry along the right shore that bypasses all six ledges. Downstream, four chutes follow, the first of which is the most difficult and should be run left of centre. The second, third and fourth are relatively easy. Following this last chute there is a short series of rapids followed by a four metre waterfall. A 180 m portage, up a steep bank on the right and along a game trail, bypasses a rapid and the fall itself. Below the falls there are two rapids that can be run after careful scouting, or avoided by continuing the portage for another 180 m. A short section of meanders precedes entry into the Euchiniko Lakes.

This portion of the lakes segment offers some impressive scenery, as 150 m to 300 m ridges border the north shores. The slopes are largely open and meadows have bedrock exposures with poplar growths in the lower portions, while pine and spruce line the peaks. The hills along the south shore rolling and densely covered with pine, are not as spectacular. Because the Euchiniko Lakes are consistently narrow, a river character prevails, but the weed-choked shallows clearly define the water's velocity, and indeed in the long shallow sections of weed-infested waters paddling is laborious.

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**Euchiniko Lake to Euchiniko River Confluence**

This segment of the river is 78 km long and stretches from the eastern end of Euchiniko Lake, through Kluskoil Lake, and downstream to the confluence of the Blackwater and Euchiniko rivers. At medium and low water levels, the river throughout this section is characterized by shallow rock gardens, low banks and a frequent division of channels.

The initial portion from Euchiniko Lake to Kluskoil Lake is a fairly difficult one to paddle, but no portages are necessary. There is an extended series of rock gardens and fast water, but the water is shallow enough to step out of the canoes and walk around impassable areas. Often the river slows to form deeper pools, and a marshy character is evident towards the shore.

Beavers have constructed several lodges on these pools. Kluskoil Lake is the final major body of water of the Blackwater system, and is similar in nature to the lower end of Euchiniko Lake. The left shore offers many more opportunities for camping due to the open poplar and grassland area. The Blackwater River then tumbles over a series of ledges and short rapids connected by deeper pools of slow-moving water. This terraced character offers both challenging canoeing and attractive scenery. There is a series of falls and ledges 90 m past the Kluskoil

Lake outflow point. The portage around the falls is 365 m long and begins on the left shore 60 m above the falls. The trail utilizes part of the road running alongside the river before cutting down below the falls.

The river then flows through a series of rock gardens, and over several smaller ledges that require walking or carrying the canoes at low water. However, at high water there are some extremely dangerous rapids and ledges that must be portaged. The pools found between these rapids have often almost no current and support a large beaver population. Often there are exposed sections of bedrock, but the

general pattern is similar to the lake system in that there is open vegetation on the left bank and a more dense coniferous stand on the right.

Near the Nazko confluence, the rapids and pools are replaced by a continuous section of fast water. Gravel bars and numerous campsites characterize this lower portion. The river often breaks into two shallow channels, with a central island supporting cottonwoods. There is a bridge before the Nazko confluence that could serve as a starting point. After the

Nazko confluence, the river broadens considerably and is characterized by gravel bars and an extremely wide flood plain. The current is fairly fast, but no rapids have formed along this section. Cottonwoods and open grassland, with pine and spruce on the bordering slopes, grow on glacial till and silt soils. The dwellings of three Indian reserves are visible from the river.

Just before the Euchiniko confluence, the river broadens considerably, but the flood plain diminishes. As the Blackwater road parallels this final section there is considerable fishing and camping.

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### **Euchiniko Confluence to lower bridge**

For a few kilometres above the confluence the river moves fairly slowly. After the confluence there is a sudden increase in velocity to about 6 km/h. The river narrows to an average of 25 m and begins to drop sharply down the gravel banks, chutes, and ledges with a gradient of 10 m/km. Several large and dangerous rapids are encountered in this section, but they can be run or portaged, depending on water levels and experience of the canoeists.

The river lies at the bottom of a valley flat one kilometre wide. On the right bank the land rises gently to form

*Blackwater River: chute five kilometres  
below Euchiniko confluence*

rolling hills 500 m away, with pine, spruce and fir as the principal vegetation. Paralleling the left bank, 500 m to one kilometre away, lie long grassy ridges 100 m to 200 m high. The stream bed winds down this valley in a series of sharp bends through gravel and boulders.

About 13 km below the confluence of the Euginiko, the river enters a small canyon eight kilometres long composed of lava, shale, and clay. Mineral pigments lend vari-coloured hues to the walls and rocks. At points the river flows 30 m below the canyon rim, although the average depth is 15 m. It drops over ledges, through chutes and down rapids separated by

pools 45 m to 90 m long. After leaving the canyon the river resumes its former character. The banks flatten and the stream bed reverts to gravel and boulders. The river itself remains fast and steep, dropping very sharply for another three kilometres. About 25 km below the Euginiko confluence two violent rapids precede the entrance to another 1.5 km canyon of lava and sandstone. Within the canyon, steep walls tower 100 m above the river. The current slows, the river turns left, and the entire Blackwater, normally 25 m to 30 m wide, glides through a gap of 14 m. To the left is the overhanging canyon wall, to the right a mass of boulders forming a rocky point. The river drops over a ledge and leaves the canyon. The entire section must be reconnoitred from shore before any attempt is made to run the canyon.

A 730 m portage on the left over a 60 m hill will bypass the canyon entirely. The river again returns to its valley flat and plunges down the last 15 km to the lower Blackwater bridge. It sweeps around bends in violent corners, forming wide gravel bars on the inside and high cutbanks and sand cliff on the outside bends.

Ninety metres above the bridge, the river suddenly turns left and enters a channel 15 m in width. Ahead looms the beginning of the dangerous lower canyon of the Blackwater. The road here provides easy access to Quesnel.

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## **4 Bowron River**

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**Bowron River**
**Access and egress**
**Maps required**


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Bowron Lake to Fraser River

**Length**

3 to 6 d (173 km)

2 to 6 portages

**Date of survey**

late June 1973

Access to the Bowron River is by Highway 26 from Quesnel. The road is paved as far as Barkerville, and then gravel to Bowron Provincial Park. Log jams on the upper 16 km of the Bowron may be avoided by using the secondary road which follows the right bank. Canoeists should unload where the road first meets the river, 11 km from the government campground. Hansar's Bridge, four kilometres from the confluence with the Fraser River, is the best point to end the trip. There is road and rail access to Prince George from the community of Upper Fraser, located nine kilometres downstream from the confluence of the Fraser and Bowron Rivers. Once the bridge, 2.5 km upstream from the mouth of the Bowron, is completed this road would be the best route to Prince George.

(N.T.S. 1:250 000 scale)

93 H McBride

93 G Prince George

93 J McLeod Lake

93 I Monkam Pass

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## About the river

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### Geography

The Bowron River is ultimately fed by glacial meltwater from the Cariboo Mountain system. The river then cuts through the Fraser Plateau, where surrounded hills rise 600 to 1 000 m above the river. In the upper reaches of the Bowron, the high hills and ridges are often obstructed from view by fairly high banks. Along the middle stretches of the river steep valley walls rise 60 to 100 m above the river, and several canyons work an area of river regeneration. The topography changes again and the V-shaped valleys are replaced by a low but broad terrace. Bars of gravel and eroded sand banks predominate until the Highway 16 bridge. Snow-capped mountains are visible at several locations along this segment offering a field of vision unique to this river trip.

### Flora

The drainage basin of the Bowron River lies in the Columbia Forest region, which due to the Columbia Mountains, receives a higher precipitation than most of the Interior Plateau. Spruce dominates on the well-drained slopes of the river valley. In the poorly-drained sections of the basin, especially where the river meanders through wide flats, there are alder and willow swamps. Douglas fir on well-drained hillsides is usually mixed with other species. A few stands of lodgepole pine are also present. There are cottonwood and birch along the banks of the river, the former being most numerous in the lower river. The tree-line in this area occurs at 1 665 to 1 800 m above sea level.

### Fauna

Moose, bear, mule deer, eagles, ducks and geese may all be seen along this river. At the entrance of streams Dolly Varden and rainbow trout abound. In August the salmon run up the river to the headwaters of the Bowron. Several species of ducks and Canada geese nest on the river and ospreys, and bald- and golden-eagles may be seen.

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## The canoe trip

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### History

The Bowron River has only slight historical significance because of its difficulty of navigation. However, in 1860 Billy Barker's gold strike on William's Creek brought thousands of prospectors to the area. Antler Creek, which flows into the Bowron River near Bowron Lake Bridge, was one of the richest gold mining sites. Eighteen Mile Creek also yielded some gold, but strikes there were too small to be of great significance.

### Bowron Lake to Haggen Creek

In the first 16 km of the Bowron River, six log jams completely cross the river, and caution is required. In some instances the canoes can be lifted over the few logs that block the river. At least three others require portages of 18 m. The water is then smooth as far as Eighteen Mile Creek, which enters from the left. A section of rough, though navigable water begins 275 m upstream from the entrance of this creek. One kilometre below Eighteen Mile Creek and just below a small island, there is a sharp S-turn caused by three protruding logs.

About 38 km downstream from Bowron Lake (eight kilometres below Eighteen Mile Creek) a 13 km long rapid begins. The first section requires manoeuvring to avoid boulders. The

rapids continue, and at high water the inside of each corner is the safest course. At Kilometre 45 the rapids become more intense and a canyon begins which runs to Kilometre 63. The canoeist must certainly survey these rapids from shore before attempting to run them. At high water it may be advisable to keep to the left around the first outcrop and then cross to the right for the final chute. At shallow water, the right side may be the best course. One must be careful of the whirlpools and powerful eddies on the extreme left. Two point five kilometres below the canyon there is some rough water around a right bend in the river, which can be run with caution. There

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is no portage trail around the above-mentioned canyon. The river continues to pick up speed until it reaches the entrance of Haggen Creek. A log jam has resulted around the supports of an old bridge just above Haggen Creek, but a passage can be found on the extreme left.

### **Haggen Creek to Taspai Creek**

Haggen Creek is a beautiful, clear cold mountain stream adding volume and speed to the Bowron River. The river continues moving quite fast with two small easily-negotiated rapids following. Below Spruce Creek the river remains fast until another small rapid is reached 500 m upstream from the crossing of the 750 m contour line. Three kilometres below this small rapid there is a very long log jam. A passage exists on the extreme left,

but great caution is required as the passage could close at any time. The river continues through a large forest fire burn. High gravel banks become more frequent and the river widens after an abandoned coal mine is passed on the left.

### **Taspai Creek to Cottonwood Island**

One kilometre below the entrance of Taspai Creek, the first of three long rapids sections begins, before the river reaches Highway 16. These sections require experienced white-water canoeing techniques. The first rapid is located in a wide part of the river. There is a variety of routes through the boulder field: the right side may be best for the first two sections while the left is the best route for the third. The Highway 16 bridge may be seen from the third rapid section. If the trip is to end here, the canoes may be taken out just below the bridge on the left bank.

Below the Highway 16 bridge are found the most difficult rapids of the entire river. They are 22 km long and contain 16 sections of individual drops and ledges. The first two sections begin 180 m below the bridge. There are a number of routes, but the left side appears best. The third section is a short canyon marked by high black walls as the river turns left. The best route is left of centre, avoiding boils and back eddies. Below this small canyon is the fourth section. It is navigable by a variety of routes. The river continues for 2.5 km below with a fast smooth current. The fifth and sixth sections are short and close together. They may almost be considered ledges though they may be run, depending on water level and the experience of the canoeist. The right channels may be the easiest to run for both these sections. Open canoes will

ship water. The seventh section is split by an island. The right channel is a better route, especially at high water. The river walls now become higher. The next three sections all contain a main chute and either side of the chute may be run. One kilometre below is a rough section, marked on the topographic map; it cannot be run, so a 55 m carry along the left shore is required. The river then widens and just below is a very difficult rapid requiring careful examination. The river is wide, so several routes are available depending on water level. The left of centre may be the best route, but care must be taken to avoid small ledges and boulders.

These rapids are followed by a three kilometre stretch of smooth fast water which precedes the last four sections of this 16-section rapid. The first section consists of a boulder field which

may be run on the right. The second is a small ledge, but there is a chute on the extreme right which can be run. The third drop cannot be run, and a 27 m carry is required on the right side. This drop then opens into a short canyon with high walls and turbulent water. The last rapid in this section occurs 500 m below this canyon. During periods of high water, the right channel is the best route. However, the left channel may be run along the left bank, to the right of a large rock. This is the last of the fast and dangerous rapids.

### **Cottonwood Island to the Fraser River**

The 48 km river segment from Cottonwood Island to the Fraser River is unique in that the water velocity slows considerably and extensive meandering occurs. Broad valley flats predominate, with low gravel bars, and fre-

quent mud banks forming the channel wall. About 500 m below Cottonwood Island the river makes a sharp left turn through a narrow high-walled canyon. One must be careful of the powerful eddies and boils. At the end of the canyon a lumber road bridge spans the river. Five kilometres below Cottonwood Island is possibly one of the most dangerous parts of the river. Here there is a huge log jam with the only passage on the extreme left through a metre-wide channel. The river is very strong and could very easily pull a canoe under any part of the jam. The extreme right may look clear, but there is an unseen one-metre ledge. At any time the left passage may be closed and one should examine this from shore before continuing. The river below slows down and meanders into the Fraser. The C.N.R. bridge is three kilometres below the confluence.

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## 5 Chilcotin River

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**Chilcotin River**

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**Access and egress**

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**Maps required**

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Part One – Chilcotin Lake  
to Hanceville

**Length**

3 to 4 d (113 km)  
4 portages

**Date of survey**

July 1973

Chilcotin Lake can be reached by following Highway 20 from Williams Lake and turning north 1.5 kilometres before Redstone B.C. at the bridge across the Chilcotin River. The lake is 48 km north. Chilcotin Lake may also be reached by float plane.

(N.T.S. 1:50 000 scale)  
93 B/4 W Redstone  
93 B/4 E Redstone  
93 B/3 W Alexis Creek  
93 B/3 E Alexis  
92 O/14 E Hanceville

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**Access and egress**

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**Maps required**

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Part Two – Confluence of Taseko and  
Chilko Rivers to Chilcotin River

**Length**

1 d (22 k)

1 portage

**Date of survey**

July 1973

Chilko junction may be reached by taking a left turn off Highway 20, 21 km above Alexis Creek. This road up the Chilko River valley should be followed for almost 16 km to a point where a yellow marker on a large tree on the right marks a left turn. The junction is 6.5 km away on this route. The egress point, the Hanceville Bridge, is 5.5 km by road from Highway 20.

(N.T.S. 1:50 000 scale)

92 O/12 E Elkin Creek

92 O/13 E Scum Lake

93 B/4 E Redstone

93 B/3 W Alexis Creek

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## About the river

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### Geography

The Chilcotin River flows through the Fraser Plateau from an elevation of over 1 500 m to 450 m above sea level where it joins the Fraser River. The topography surrounding the Chilcotin River can be divided into three types. The upper segment of the river is not wide and meanders considerably with low till ridges forming the valley walls. The river bed is composed of volcanic rock, often in the form of large boulders or low ledges. Gravel bars predominate in the lower portion of the Chilcotin before it reaches the Chilko confluence. After the Chilko enters the Chilcotin River, the topography changes dramatically. High valley walls border the river flats and often form deep canyons marked by lava escarpments. The river flows through alternate sections of broad meandering and braided patterns in

wider valley flats to narrow and straight canyons. The valley slopes are dry; consequently meadows and open stands of conifers predominate. This has resulted in a semi-arid character, unique to the Fraser Plateau. The river bed and bank material is gravel.

The canyon walls feature finely sculptured sandstone and clay sediments on high lava ridges. After Hanceville, the Chilcotin plunges through a series of canyons and deep valleys. Farwell Canyon is marked by pillars of sandstone and cliffs composed of loose gravel and lake sediments. The lower canyons have steep valley walls rising to over 300 m, vegetated by sagebrush and thinly scattered conifers.

### Flora

The Chilko-Chilcotin river basin lies in the Dry Forest Region of central British Columbia. This area has a parkland character, with growths of Douglas fir and lodgepole pine interspersed with a mixture of birchgrass, sagebrush, and other shrubs including black hawthorn, chokecherry and mock orange. On the upper Chilcotin River some spruce, willow, and poplar grow near the stream, but towards the Fraser Valley large vegetation tends to decrease. In the more arid portions of the lower Chilcotin River, some cactus may be seen.

## The canoe trip

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### Fauna

Moose, bear, deer, and sheep inhabit the area. Game fish in the rivers belong to the salmonoid family and include rainbow trout, Dolly Varden and steelhead (taken only in the Chilko and lower Chilcotin rivers). There are also a number of "coarse fish" in the system: suckers, squawfish and mountain whitefish, all belonging to the carp family. Runs of salmon occur at the end of May and again in early June and July.

### History

The Chilcotin River is essentially linked with the history of the Chilcotin People. 'Chilcotin' means 'people of the blue water' while 'Taseko' means 'white water'. The Chilcotins of the early times lived in covered dugouts in the earth called 'Keekwilly holes'. These are found all along the Chilcotin, but particularly fine examples exist just above the confluence with the Chilko.

The first written history came with the advent of the white man and the Hudson's Bay Company. The Hudson's Bay Company had one trading post during the middle part of the last century on the north bank of the Chilko, but this lasted only a few years.

### Part One – Chilcotin Lake to Hanceville

#### Chilcotin Lake to Chilko River

The Chilcotin River drains Chilcotin Lake at its most easterly point. The first 6.5 km offer minor canoeing difficulty through continuous fast and shallow rapids. This is followed by eight kilometres of slow water. Open range and cattle can be seen at various points. Below this is 1.5 km of shallow fast water not unlike the 6.5 km stretch draining Chilcotin Lake followed by 10 km of slow and easy canoeing. At this point a 210 m wide canyon extends for five kilometres, with a drop of 9.5 m/km. Within the canyon is a series of boulder fields and ledges which are difficult to canoe, especially at low water. Lining is the best way to pass the difficult sections. This area contains two windfalls which completely block the river.

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A boulder field 45 m long then precedes a fast shallow section which runs four kilometres to the town of Redstone. The Chilanko River enters 1.5 km below Redstone as the Chilcotin separates into a number of channels, where all the banks are heavily overgrown with alders and willows. The channels become very narrow and shallow.

In the next 15 km the river splits into a number of these very shallow narrow channels, blocked by frequent windfalls, and a number of fast, shallow chutes. One log jam 5.5 km above the Chilko Road Bridge, can be bypassed along a channel to the right,

18 m upstream from the jam. Wading and hauling the canoes through the heavily overgrown stream channel may be necessary.

A ranch precedes the Chilko Road Bridge and the last 6.5 km of the river before the confluence with the Chilko River. These last 6.5 km consist of narrow channels and a drop in elevation of eight metres per kilometre. Here, there are shallow rock gardens, log jams, and willows extending out over the river.

### **Chilko River and Chilcotin River Confluence to Hanceville**

The Chilko River increases the initial volume of the Chilcotin River tenfold to form a wide cold river with a strong current. When running this section the only difficulty is the large standing waves. No other difficulties exist until four kilometres above the Alexis Creek

Bridge. Alexis Creek enters from the north. Large standing waves are encountered here as the river makes a number of sharp turns. About 1.5 km below there is a large chute that can be run along the extreme right shore beside a rock outcrop. Below the Alexis Creek Bridge the river continues fast and smooth for 19 km. Six point five kilometres above the Hanceville Bridge at Stoney Canyon is a strong chute that is followed by relatively easy canoeing all the way to the Hanceville Bridge. The best point of egress is on the left shore just past the bridge.

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### **Part Two – Confluence of Taseko and Chilko Rivers to Chilcotin River**

Below the confluence of the Taseko and Chilko Rivers, the first six kilometres present no real problems, with the exception of high standing waves that are avoided by canoeing along the shore. A large S-turn with heavy standing waves then follows. The extreme right side of the river presents the best route through this rapid. Below is a more extreme S-turn, but this may be easily run along the right as well. This

*Chilcotin River: Farwell Road Bridge, with salmon ladders underneath*

is followed by a narrow, impassable gap spanned by a bridge. Once the bridge is sighted it is advisable to pull out on the right shore, where a 55 m portage crosses the bridge and continues down the left bank. Below the bridge the Chilko presents no further problems. Hanceville is the probable egress point, but any other point along Highway 20 will do, as the Highway flanks the Chilcotin.

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## **6 Cariboo and Quesnel Rivers**

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**Cariboo and Quesnel Rivers****Access and egress**

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**Maps required**

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Sandy Lake to Quesnel

**Length**

5-9 d (173 km)

6 to 13 portages

**Date of survey**

Early June 1973, medium to high  
water levels

Sandy Lake, on the Bowron Lake chain,  
can be reached only by canoeing the  
lake chain itself from Bowron Lake.

Flying to Sandy Lake is prohibited as it  
is a protected lake within a provincial  
park. An alternative access point, Kim-  
ball (Swan) Lake, may be reached by  
chartered aircraft from Quesnel, B.C.  
Bowron Lake may be reached by road  
on Highway 26. This trip ends at the  
town of Quesnel, which is serviced  
by roads.

(N.T.S. 1:250 000 scale)

93 H McBride

93 A Quesnel Lake

93 B Quesnel

93 G Prince George

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## About the river

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### Geography

The Cariboo-Quesnel river system is located for the most part in the Quesnel Highlands, a specific section of the Fraser Plateau. This area of deeply dissected lava plateau attains an average elevation of 2 000 m above sea level although the rivers vary from 870 m in the upper regions to 600 m on the lower Quesnel River. The headwaters of the Cariboo River are found near the ice-fields of the Cariboo Mountains, so the upper portions of the river are distinctly mountainous.

In the vicinity of Sandy Lake, large mountains such as Mount Tinsdale rise to more than 2 000 m. Well-formed cirques, matterhorns, and talus slopes are evident, as well as classical U-shaped valleys. Unna Lake is a large kettle in the outwash plain. It is likely that ice moved down the Cariboo River, for there is evidence of a U-shape in the upper portion. Only a few kilometres downstream from Unna Lake, the more youthful V-shape predominates. Cariboo Falls, 2.5 km downstream, is characterized by large outcrops of sedimentary bedrock. The rather straight channel, V-shaped valley pattern continues up to a magnificent canyon 15 km downstream from Cariboo Falls. Sheer cliffs rising 100 m to 150 m above the river border the valley floor. The river then becomes a slow-moving meandering stream with broad valley flats and several ox-bow lakes and meander scars.

Farther downstream, approaching the confluence of the Cariboo and Quesnel, a typical plateau-type drainage develops. Deeply cut valleys with high sand cliffs and a V-shaped profile predominate. The water flows very fast with several sets of rapids and much undercutting of the gravel banks. Shallow point bar deposits and even a moderately braided pattern are distinct features. A few kilometres upstream from Quesnel, the river again flows through a steep-walled canyon. Bedrock and eroding sand cliffs characterize the valley walls.

**Flora**

The Cariboo-Quesnel river system is in the Columbia Forest Region. The dominant species of trees are Douglas fir, spruce, and lodgepole pine with some birch, cedar and hemlock. In addition aspen thickets and cottonwood grow along the banks of the river. Further downriver the amount of deciduous growth increases.

**Fauna**

Moose are the mammals most often seen, but bear, both black and grizzly, mule deer, beaver, wolverine, wolf, coyote, otter, weasel and porcupine also inhabit the area. Canada geese and a variety of ducks can be seen as well as bald- and golden-eagles, osprey, and a variety of hawks. Dolly Varden, lake trout, and rainbow trout are present although logging operations are affecting these adversely.

**History**

The earliest inhabitants of the Cariboo River area were the Carrier Indians. Their name was derived from the custom of compelling the widows to carry the charred bones of their late husbands on their backs for a period of one year after cremation. In latter times they have adopted the name Tukulli. The area was known as New Caledonia in the latter part of the eighteenth and first part of the nineteenth centuries. Gold was discovered at Keithley Creek in 1859, and by the following year the Cariboo gold rush was at its peak. Keithley Creek was still panned and mining in the area continued, even after the rush itself.

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## The canoe trip

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Between 1874 and 1954, gold worth \$27 million was taken. Quesnel Forks, for a brief time was the capital of British Columbia, was used as a stopping place en route to Barkerville, on the Cariboo Trail. The townsite was first surveyed by the Royal Engineers in 1861. Although there were few permanent buildings in the area, 10 000 miners flocked there, and stayed for two summers, most of them living in tents around the mouth of the creek on Cariboo Lake. After the main gold rush of 1859-60, the Chinese carried on much of the mining and exploration.

### **Sandy Lake to Kimball Lake**

Sandy Lake is drained by the Cariboo River at its northwest corner. The current increases there and a few sections of riffles and gentle rapids are encountered before Cariboo Falls. Cariboo Falls is eight kilometres downstream from Sandy Lake. A small open rapid just upstream from the falls can be easily run. Here the falls can be heard and the right hand shore is the best route as the river bends to the left.

The portage is on the right and begins about 18 m upstream from the falls. The 675 m trail is in poor condition and terminates below the falls at an old trapper's cabin. The river continues at a fast pace and includes three gentle rapids which can be run. Eight kilometres below the falls a larger rapid, which may be run down the left side, indicates the beginning of a gorge and canyon, 2.5 km long, just above Kimball Lake. The canyon can be neither run nor lined. An old logging road exists on the right side of the river.

It is in poor condition but serves as a portage, 5.5 km in length and with a climb of 390 m. A three-kilometre carry on the left side is the only alternative. As there is no trail, this route is exhausting and may take up to 12 h to complete. The canoes must be hauled up a 135 m hill and then lowered or winched down into the gorge. The gorge has sheer walls 100 m to 120 m high.



*Cariboo and Quesnel rivers, looking upstream to Cariboo Falls*

**Kimball Lake to Quesnel Forks**

Below Kimball Lake the current subsides and the river meanders about 25 km down into Cariboo Lake. The lake is 15 km long and is drained at its southwest corner where the Cariboo River narrows again. Three wide rapids precede a waterfall 5.5 km downstream from the lake. They can all be cautiously run but more care must be taken here, where logs are pushed into the river by a lumber company. No trail exists around the

falls, but a 90 m carry on either side is required. The river is very narrow and swift below the waterfall. The three-kilometre section from the falls to the beginning of a canyon may be run, but the canyon three kilometres below the falls must be portaged. Again no trail exists to facilitate the required 455 m carry on the left. Between this canyon and the bridge to Likely there are four more navigable chutes. One must be wary of the large standing waves along the outside edge where the river bends. Below the bridge, the series of rapids continues. There are five main rapids before a large stockpile of logs on the left at Murderer's Gulch. They may all be run on the inside of each corner; watch for eddies and log booms.

Below this log pile, which is half way between the Quesnel Forks and the bridge to Likely, there is a tough short rapid around a tight right hand bend. Again it should be run on the inside of the turn along the right. Downstream from this rapid, the river remains swift with large standing waves on the outside of each turn.

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**Quesnel Forks to Quesnel**

At Quesnel Forks, the cold clear Quesnel River intersects the muddy bark-saturated Cariboo River. Quesnel Forks is an historic site, as it was the first capital of British Columbia. Many old log buildings remain. The Quesnel River drops an average of five metres per kilometre here, through high sand and gravel banks. Just above the entrance of Buxton Creek, the river has

extremely high banks and fast, tight bends producing high standing waves and powerful boils and whirlpools. Extra caution is required to avoid floating logs and log booms. One point five kilometres below the mouth of the Beaver River, there is a ledge on the right and a narrow chute on the left. This large rapid may be run along the left shore. Eight kilometres below this rapid there is a powerful S-shaped chute just below a small island. This rapid should not be run but rather portaged for 100 m along the right shore.

The river continues offering little problem to the canoeist, to a bridge at Sardine Flats. One must be careful of the tow log booms funnelling the logs under the bridge. Eight kilometres below the bridge is a short rapid called Little Canyon. This may be run along the left. Around the corner, there is a boil 10 m in diameter. The best course

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is between the boils and the standing waves. Twenty-seven metres below is a chute which should be run on the left. The river continues uninterrupted for 10 km to Big Canyon. This canyon is 5.5 km long and is impossible to run in high water. The canyon is best approached along the right shore where a portage trail along a road can be seen from the river. The portage is 5.5 km long but easy. The beginning of the canyon is marked by a large 12 m whirlpool on the left. Below this canyon the river runs one kilometre down through the town of Quesnel and into the Fraser River.

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