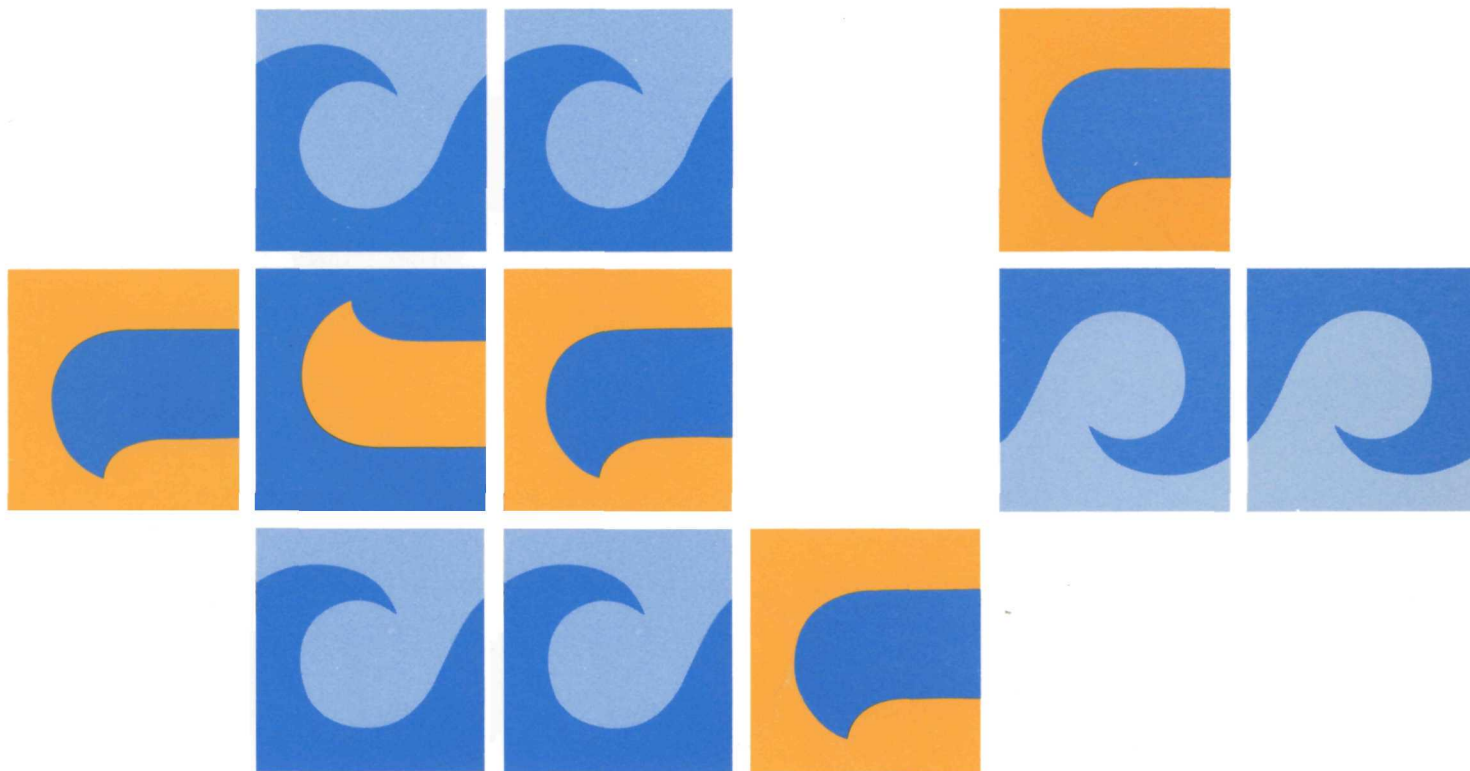




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Wild Rivers: Southwestern Quebec and Eastern Ontario



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Ottawa, 1980
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**Wild Rivers:
Southwestern Quebec and
Eastern Ontario**

Wild Rivers Surveys
Parks Canada
Planning Division
Ottawa, 1980



Turners Chute, on the Kipewa River

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
cm/s - centimetre per second
d - day(s)
h - hour(s)
°C - degree Celsius

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Foreword

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

Long before Europeans laid eyes on them, these rivers served the native peoples as sources of food and means of transportation. Later, the rivers were to carry the Europeans on voyages of exploration and exploitation throughout the vast interior of the continent. 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 newfound needs. But thousands of kilometres of waterways, and the land they pass through, remain essentially untouched.

Today, Canadians are gradually rediscovering these fascinating wild rivers. 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 toward the markets of Montreal, gently floating down majestic rivers which once carried thousands of anxious prospectors towards 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.

Introduction

The rivers covered in this report include one that flows from the Labrador Peninsula and south over the Laurentian Massif, two that flow off the southwest edge of the Laurentian Massif and one Ontario river which flows through a trench on the south edge of the Canadian Shield. These rivers display some similar characteristics as they flow through rock-lined lakes and reaches standing in rifts and basins of Precambrian rock. The rapids connecting these reaches are not large and in most cases can be easily run or portaged. The scenery is often not spectacular but the rivers offer satisfying canoeing through ever-changing waterways. The rivers are generally accessible by land and are close enough to civilization and yet remote and wild enough to satisfy the requirements of many canoeists.

Climate

The climate of this region is excellent for canoe tripping. Break-up of ice is complete by April, and by June the sun warms the days to 20°C. The cool nights keep down the insect population, but frost is rare. July and August temperatures are warm and the average rainfall for those months is 50 mm. Good rain gear is a necessity to assure a comfortable trip. September sees an end to the insects which plague July and August and, though night time temperatures may drop to 4°C, warm afternoons, clear air and autumn colours lend this month a charm all its own.

Planning the trip

In planning a canoe trip, allow 25 km to 35 km a day paddling. Allow extra time and food for such unforeseen events as being windbound or delayed by rain. If egress arrangements are necessary, make sure they are taken care of before the trip begins. Be sure to check out with some responsible agency, the R.C.M.P. the Ministry of Tourism, Hunting & Fishing, Quebec; or the Ministry of Natural Resources, Ontario giving them a route and expected time of arrival. And don't forget to check in 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 and extinguished completely. All garbage should be packed out with you.

A sturdy canoe capable of handling well in rapids, and equipment for its repair are essential. Aluminum canoes were used throughout the surveys and proved most practical. Since lining and hauling are often necessary, several pairs of running shoes or other sturdy footwear which can take the abuse of rocks and constant wetness are needed. In the more isolated regions an emergency survival kit is advised. The kit should contain high energy food rations, a water-

proofed match case, emergency rescue flares for signalling aircraft and fishhooks and line. These items should be well waterproofed. Firearms are never necessary.

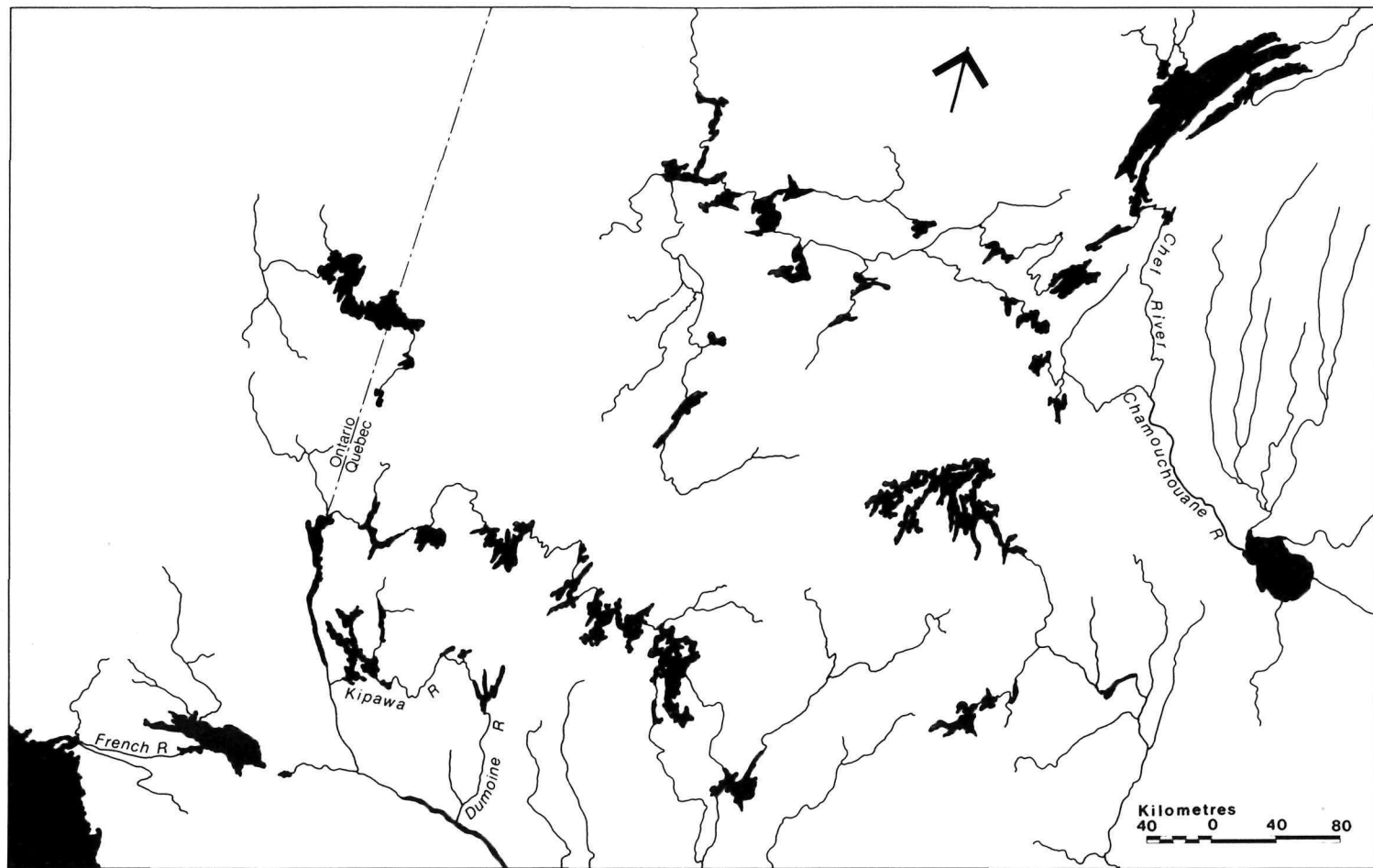
Insect repellent is a must in these areas and headnets and mosquito coils are quite useful.

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.

The National Topographic Series of maps is available from:
Department of Energy Mines and
Resources,
615 Booth St.,
Ottawa, Ont.



1 French River

French River

Access and egress

Maps required

Chaudière Falls to Hartley Bay

3 to 7 days (65 km to 74 km)

4 portages

Date of survey

June, 1973, at high water

To begin the trip at Lake Nipissing the canoeist can either take the steamer from North Bay and depart from the Chaudière Lodge or arrive via the Dokis Indian Reserve Road to Upper Chaudière Rapids. The road starts from Nowelville on Highway 64 off Highway 69. A shorter trip via Wolseley Bay from Highways 64 and 528 can also be made. The trip can be terminated at the settlement of French River if necessary. Hartley Bay offers the same services as French River Settlement.

N.T.S. 1:50 000 scale

41I/1 E Nowelville

41I/1 W Nowelville

41I/2 E Delamere

41I/2 W Delamere

About the river

Geography

The French River is an ancient waterway filling an irregular trough from Lake Nipissing to the Georgian Bay basin. Over the thousands of years required for surface cooling and hardening of the Precambrian Shield, intrusions of molten material were forced in and through the solidifying granite. The reasons for these classic examples of rock formation being visible is the excessive faulting of the area and considerable erosion of bedrock by harsh glacial grinding. At the dam

above Chaudière Falls, the river assumes direction in flow and channel. The rapids flow swiftly over drops of not more than one metre and through canyons created by Precambrian fault lines. Ragged rocky shores with bays on both sides indented up to 500 m line the river in the upper part. The wide valley has gentle sloping sides offering fine campsites. The river stands in long narrow arms of a rocky trench for distances of 1 500 m or more before narrowing and flowing through canyons.

Below Eighteen Mile Island the river enters a channel 50 m wide through a canyon with walls of flat Precambrian rock reaching heights of 20 m. This feature is left behind at Recollet Falls and the rugged Precambrian terrain of Georgian Bay Islands asserts itself.

Flora

The French River area exhibits many of the characteristic associations of the transition zone between the St. Lawrence – Great Lakes and the Boreal Forest Regions. Included are remnants of the maple-birch-hemlock and red pine-white pine groups, cedar-red maple and white pine-red oak species. Along the south channel especially, there are deep-sided well-drained sites on which predominant tree species are sugar maple, yellow birch, northern white cedar and eastern hemlock. Huge American elm are to be seen in wetter areas.

There seems to be little soil to support plant life, especially as seen from the river in its lower reaches. Forest flowers are present wherever they can root. There are few water plants owing to the lack of soil rather than current of the river.

Fauna

Beaver ponds are an important element on Eighteen Mile Island. Deer and moose utilize the pond areas extensively as do

small water fowl and mammals. Moose, deer, porcupines, minks, beavers, raccoons and grey squirrels, coyotes, timber wolves, otters and muskrats are reported, but not always evident.

The deer population, once numbering in the thousands, has now been hunted down to a few dozen. Water fowl and other birds including herons, hawks, bald eagles, blue jays, Canada jays, starlings, whippoorwills, geese, ducks, gulls, loons, goldfinches, killdeer, ravens, chickadees, hummingbirds, nighthawks, swallows abound. The river is reputed for its muskellunge, pickerel, pike, perch and walleye.

History

In 1615 Samuel de Champlain and a Recollet priest first travelled the Ottawa-Nipissing-Georgian Bay route. During the following 200 years the French River was an integral part of the fur trade route to the West. This route was chosen because the Lake Ontario region was well-guarded by hostile Iroquois tribes. Furthermore, the French River offered a route protected from the squalls of Lake Ontario.

The canoe trip

The first settlement on the French River, Copananing, was located at the mouth of the main channel. The community operated a steam mill until a fire destroyed the entire village. Reconstruction was not undertaken because of the inaccessibility of the region. Today, iron boilers still stand at the site. The entire length of the French River offers a wealth of archaeological artifacts. Indian pictographs on the rock faces are still visible. Relics from sunken fur-trading vessels have been salvaged at the foot of most of the rapids.

Chaudière Dam to Crooked Rapids

The upper reaches of the French River include most of the rapids. Of the 11 rapids encountered, three must be portaged at high water. The rest of the river in this section provides relaxed canoeing through wide valleys with gentle sloping lands of Precambrian outcroppings. Islands are numerous. Cottages in the area are well-spaced and are available for emergencies.

The dam and the Upper Chaudière Rapids are two areas of water both bypassed by the same portage. The beginning of the portage is easily seen. It begins at a wharf on the left side. The trail is 800 m long and is in good condition, but not easily followed in some places. It ends below the rapids at a ledge that is an excellent loading platform. The lower Chaudière Rapids are about 1500 m from the upper rapids and must be portaged. The portage, visible in a cove to the right of the rapids, is 250 m long and crosses the Dokis Reserve Road. It is in good shape and ends just below the last ledge in a little cove. The rapids are seen as the bridge crosses a chasm. At Keso Point, the water is deep and fast. The rapids here should be navigated with caution.

The Little Pine Rapids are 16 km from Lower Chaudière rapids and are visible from a fishing lodge on Commanda Island. They may be run with no difficulty along the right side. Power boats navigate them regularly. The right side offers good footing for lining or one can portage 100 m from a cove on the extreme right to the bottom of the rapids. The portage is not visible but walking is good over bare rock.

The Big Pine Rapids are 1 750 m from Little Pine rapids and are considerably more difficult, consisting of two ledges. Portaging is recommended for all except experts who may line or shoot the right side. The portage is 215 m long and in good shape, beginning on the right at a grassy area between two low rock ledges. 1 500 m beyond are the Double Rapids, little more than fast water at high water levels. Ladder Rapids are 750 m below Double Rapids and are very easy. Start on the left and then pull to the right as the rapids move around a slight corner. The portage here is 60 m beginning on the left side. It is not readily seen, but is an easy carry. The rapids may be lined down a narrow chute in a cove on the extreme right.

The Little Parisien Rapids commence 1 250 m from Ladder Rapids and are challenging. A portage is not really visible; the best route seems to be the right side for 150 m. The channel here is split; the left goes over two or three ledges and may be lined, whereas the main channel can be run. It passes through a gorge with banks up to three metres high. When shooting, stay close to the right shore. Not far from Little Parisien is the Big Bluff, an area of fast-flowing water posing little difficulty. The right side of the island is preferable. Five hundred metres from Big Bluff Rapids, is a fast chute posing little difficulty on either side of the island which splits it.



Crooked Rapids to French River Settlement

In this region the river narrows noticeably, yet no rapids are encountered. The banks become much steeper yet are still of the same rock forms. Campsites are easy to find on the points and flats along the river. The river here follows the south bank of Eighteen Mile Island, as yet an unspoiled region. Cottages become more numerous, concentrated on the south side. Unlike the upper section of the river there are very few islands. Arthur Point Hydro lines cross the river at the lower end of the section. In the south end of Dry Pine Bay, above the settlement of French River, is a nine-hole golf course.

Shooting the Little Parisien Rapids on the French River

Crooked Rapids is about 3 500 m from Big Parisien Rapids and can be easily navigated. The right side is most suitable for portaging. The trail is 100 m long although walking is not easy. The right side could be lined.

French River Settlement to Hartley Bay

The river again narrows, this time to as little as 20 m wide. The current increases to 1.5 m/s. Recollet Falls and First Rapids are found in this section. Here settlement is more noticeable with a C.P. and a C.N. railway bridge and Highway 69 crossing the river. Large fishing lodges attract many anglers to this region.

Campsites are not as abundant due to the 6 m to 20 m high cliffs lining the river. Hardwood forests are more predominant and some large elms were sighted along the river.

Recollet Falls is actually a ledge of about two metres and begins 26 km down river from Crooked Rapids. There is a cable stretched across the river just above the ledge. The portage on the left is a skid 50 m long. It is visible as a ramp in the water. Care must be taken when approaching the ramp.

First Rapids is very close to Recollet Falls, and is not difficult. If the destination is Hartley Bay, First Rapids are the last. The canoeist should proceed to the right of Potvin Island. This route demands two portages; one 15 m into a beaver pond and after a 500 m paddle another portage of 120 m. This route is shorter and does not subject one to the prevailing winds of Georgian Bay. On arriving at Hartley Bay via this route, one must go through a tunnel 30 m long blasted out under the CN tracks. It is well hidden but can be found by skirting the shore just below the tracks. One may also travel to the left of Potvin Island. The route is longer and headwinds must be taken into account.

2 Kipewa River

Kipawa River

Access and egress

Maps required

Red Pine Lake to Birch Creek
80 km
9 portages

Birch Creek - Saseginaga river - Kipawa
Lake circuit
130 km
15 portages

Date of Survey

June, 1972

Many of the lakes and rivers west of Lake Kipawa are accessible by all-weather roads. This canoe trip begins at Red Pine Lake; however, there are a number of alternative starting points along the Kipawa River.

N.T.S. 1:250 000 scale

31 L North Bay
31 M Ville Marie

1:50 000 scale

31 L/16 E and W Lac Sairs
31 M/1 E and W Ogascanan Lake
31 L/15 Grindstone Lake
31 M/2 E and W Ostaboningue Lake

About the river

Situated on the Laurentian Plateau of the Canadian Shield the Kipawa River flows westward through an area of rolling topography, lakes and rivers and numerous marshes. The river finally empties into the expansive Lake Kipawa which drains into the Ottawa River. A variety of deciduous and coniferous forests cover the area. Among the more prominent species of trees are balsam fir, poplar, black spruce, birch, aspen and maple.

Wildlife species commonly seen are moose, beaver, bear, fox and deer. Canada Geese, black duck, pintail and red breasted merganser nest in areas of marshland.

Fishing for pickerel (walleye) lake trout and pike is generally good.

The canoe trip

Red Pine Lake

Three kilometres of calm waters separate Red Pine Lake from the first of three sets of rapids. At the first rapid the river narrows from 50 m to 15 m and large waves are formed in mid-channel. The rapid can be run without difficulty.

Calm waters and an increase in river velocity precede the next rapid which is run to the right side. This is soon followed by impassable standing waves which must be portaged for 275 m on the right limit. The trail is well indicated and cleared. Some riffles occur before Grassy Lake.

Grassy Lake

The Kipawa River enters Grassy Lake at its narrows where aquatic grasses extend well into the backshore. The river then flows northwest uninterrupted for three kilometres to Watson Lake. Along the north shore of the lake narrow beaches provide adequate campsites. A three kilometre paddle down the Kipawa River brings the canoeist to the long and narrow Lake des Loups. At the southern tip of this lake a dilapidated wood bridge spans the river and canoes must be hauled for 10 m over the logs.

In the next 24 km a number of rapids are encountered, the first major rapid being the Petite-Calumet. These rapids are made up of three sets, of which the first two can be run without much difficulty. The second set of rapids form around a small island. The main channel and the route to follow is to the left of

the island. These rapids are not too difficult to run but for canoeists wishing to portage, a trail is found on the right bank. The third part of this rapid series has high standing waves which must be portaged for 120 m on the right bank.

Ten kilometres below the Petite Calumet are the Elliot Rapids. Here the river narrows to 25 m and large rolling waves extend across the length of the river. This rapid requires a portage, but the rapids that follow can be run although a portage is advisable. A portage would be 1 250 m long over rough terrain.

One kilometre of swift but even current brings the canoeist to a longer stretch of ledge-filled rapid. This may be portaged on the right using a well-marked, 250 m heavily-vegetated trail requiring about ten minutes to traverse.



Rapids at the outlet of Red Pine Lake, Kipewa River

Portaging could possibly be divided into two sections by launching the canoes after the first ledge. During high water it is possible to shoot the second section of the rapid.

Six point five kilometres below Elliott Rapids the river forms a rapid and then plunges 12 m over Turner Falls (marked as Turner Rapids on the 1:50 000 scale N.T.S. maps.) A 275 m portage trail beginning from the top of the rapids offers a panoramic view of the Kipawa River. The portage trail ends below the falls on a cobble beach, but there are several extensions off the main trail which lead to the river edge. When water levels are low these trails open to a rock shelf giving an easy access right to the edge of the falls. One of these extensions ends below the falls at an ideal campsite among red pine trees. Sand Pan rapids are located three kilometres downstream. This rapid can be run on

the right of the one metre standing waves. An alternative is a 15 m portage on the right shore. The river empties into Sairs Lake 1 500 m below the rapid.

Ragged Chute is a major rapid encountered four kilometres below Sairs Lake. On the left bank, a rail and carriage enables canoes and equipment to be transported past the rapid. This easy portage is 500 m long and ends at a sandy beach. Below Ragged Chute river velocity increases slightly and some minor rapids occur.

Two routes are possible at this point. The canoeist has the option of following the Kipawa River west into MacLaughlin Lake and thence into Grindstone, Bedout, Hunter and Kipawa lakes. A longer and more demanding route follows Birch Creek north into a system of lakes and rivers that eventually give access to Kipawa Lake via the Saseginaga River.

At its mouth Birch Creek is 25 m wide, less than two metres deep and flows slowly allowing an easy ascent of the river. A four kilometre paddle brings the canoeist to the outlet of McKillop Lake where a dam must be portaged for 15 m on the left.

Dead trees and aquatic grasses border the five square kilometres of McKillop Lake, but three excellent campsites can be found on the smaller of the two islands and one on a small point south-east of the islands. A short reach of grass-congested river at the north end of the lake leads to the deep clear waters of Pants Lake. The lake is surrounded by thick vegetation providing few campsites.

A creek entering the large bay on the north west shore of Pants Lake is followed to Echelle Lake. A small waterfall indicates the creek mouth and the start of a portage that is found 150 m to the right. The one-kilometre trail leads to an elongated pond at the end of which is a well-indicated and short portage to Echelle Lake.

Two rocky narrowings divide this lake into three sections. Spruce covered hills crowd the shoreline, limiting campsites to a few rocky islands. At the second narrowing of the lake are the ruins of an old Indian encampment. A small stream entering the north end of the lake is ascended past two beaver dams, to a small pond. If the water is low, this creek is not canoeable, but a short portage trail, which is fairly difficult to locate, cuts overland to the pond west of the creek. The pond may be crossed using the canoe as a bridge to connect to the well-marked, 275 m portage trail to Canal Lake.

Paddling north and past the rocky narrows, Canal Lake suddenly widens. By following the west shore, the creek draining Little Trout Lake is reached. The 60 m portage trail to Little Trout Lake is found to the right of this stream and is well indicated.

Little Trout Lake is one of the nicest lakes in the series. The water is clear making it possible to see the pebbled lake bottom at a depth of six metres. Hills covered with a mixed forest-vegetation rise steeply from the rocky

shoreline. Good campsites are found on the islands and along the shore. At the north end of the lake, there is a well-indicated portage found west of the islands on the north shore and marked by a small clearing in the penultimate bay before the end of the lake. The 1 250 m trail passes over steep hills and through patches of mud and water. A fishing lodge is found at the end of the portage on the shore of Lake Pommeroy.

This is a long narrow lake with several sand beaches providing excellent campsites. Lake water is very clear and more than 80 m deep in places. A grass clearing and a wooden retaining wall along the northeast shore marks the start of a three kilometre trail that passes the

northern tip of Lake Eau-Claire, ending at Saseginaga Depot on the shore of Saseginaga Lake. This portage can be shortened to 1 250 m by following the first half of the trail to Lake Eau-Claire, launching, then paddling to the opposite shore. This can be followed southeast past a small island to a point directly southwest of Saseginaga Depot. There is a log landing to mark the beginning of the well-marked trail. This lake is the highest on the circuit and from here, canoe travel to Kipawa Lake is downstream.

At its northern end Saseginaga Lake flows into Lake Ecarté, accessible via a short portage and passage down a narrow boulder strewn stream. An unmarked portage to North Lake is found in a bay, 150 m to the left of the outlet stream. The portage is over one kilometre long and ends at the lower end of North Lake.

The first portage from North Lake is found to the left of the lake's outlet stream. The 60 m trail leads to a small pond where there is a similar portage to the left of its outlet. The creek which flows into an unnamed lake is 25 m long and six metres wide and can probably be run at high water. From this last lake the Sasaginaga River begins, flowing slowly and meandering for four kilometres within one metre clay banks. Before entering Lake Cinq Milles, large boulders in mid stream create one metre standing waves. The rapid can be run or portaged for 25 m along the right bank.

Lake Cinq Mille is a widening of the Sasaginaga River to one kilometre over a length of eight kilometres. Shortly below the outlet of the lake there is a 275 m stretch of rapids and a 1.5 m waterfall. The portage on the left bank is obstructed by fallen trees – the result of road construction above the rapids. A grass clearing provides a beautiful campsite at the end of the portage.

Two point five kilometres downstream is another rapid with a 1.5 m waterfall. Along the 25 m portage on the right bank campsites have been cleared

among the pines. Following these rapids the river narrows to 15 m and meanders for eight kilometres to Ostaboningué Lake. High clay and sand banks border the river.

In the 32 km length of Ostaboningué Lake the width never exceeds three kilometres. At its southern limit the lake empties into the Ostaboningué River along which in its four kilometres length, large boulders alternate with sheer rock cliffs rising vertically from the water's edge. Two point five kilometres from the start of the river is a set of rapids ending at a waterfall and dam site. These obstacles are portaged for 150 m along the right bank. A road from the dam sites leads to Hunters Point settlement a short

distance away. From the end of the portage the river flows for 800 m past Hunters Point and into Hunters Point Lake.

A five kilometre paddle down the wide and slow Audoin River brings the canoeist to Audoin Lake. The 800 m Turtle portage leading to Kipawa Lake is found at the western extremity of Audoin Lake. The remaining distance to the town of Kipawa is 24 km over the expansive Lake Kipawa.

3 Dumoine River

Dumoine River

Access and egress

Maps required

3 to 6 days (90 km)
10 to 14 portages

Date of survey
late August, 1973

Lake Dumoine may be reached by float plane from Kipawa Quebec or Pembroke, Ontario. It may also be reached by a four day canoe trip from Kipawa via the Kipawa River, or in two days from Lake Joncas in La Verendrye Park via the L'Original River. There is a secondary road crossing the Ottawa River at Rolph-ton and proceeding north to Rowanton, Sheerway and eventually Ten Mile Lake. The lower portion of this road into the Dumoine Club at Sheerway is bad but passable. The upper portion of the road from Sheerway to Ten Mile Lake is passable at the best of times by a four-wheel drive vehicle only.

N.T.S.: 1:50 000 scale
31 k/13 W - Lake Dumoine
31k/12 W - Russell Lake
31k/5 W and E - Rowanton
31k/4 W - Des Joachims

About the river

Geography

The Dumoine River is one of seven wild rivers that flow into the Ottawa River off the southern edge of the Laurentian Highlands. It falls 150 m in 90 km. The river finds its sources in Lake Dumoine and descends from this huge inland water body through a transitional zone away from the Laurentian Plateau in the north toward the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence region in the south. It displays all the classic characteristics of a wild river – tumbling waterfalls, rolling rapids and long chutes on its way to the Ottawa River.

Flora

The forest cover in the north is dominated by black spruce, red pine and white pine with pockets of white birch and white cedar. As one descends out of the highlands and toward the Ottawa River Valley, maples and ash become a more significant part of the forest cover.

Fauna

The cliffs of the Canadian Shield are a home for hawks and bald eagles. Signs of moose and black bears are often discovered. Waterfowl inhabit the calmer sections of the river as do beavers, muskrats and otters. Pike and pickerel can be caught almost anywhere in the river. Bass, speckled trout and lake trout live in the deeper pools along the river or a few kilometres back in tributaries.

History

The Dumoine River has played an important role as a north-south transportation corridor in the economic history of early groups of Canadians. The Hurons and other central Ontario tribes, who wished to avoid paying the toll which the Allumette Indians charged for portaging across their island, used the Dumoine as an alternative route to the Ottawa River on their way to Montreal. This also allowed the agriculturally-oriented Hurons to trade their products with nomadic Algonquins who inhabited the Kipawa and La Verendrye region to the north but rarely came south for fear of encountering the Iroquois.

The canoe trip

During the French domination of the Ottawa River trade routes, a French fort was built at the mouth of the river. Undoubtedly the Dumoine was a fast route out of the fur country in the north. The fort was deserted by 1761, as Alexander Henry Sr. reported when he passed by on his journey west.

The history of the structures still found at Sheerway, halfway down the river, began in 1788 when the Hawksbury Lumber Company sent a group of men up the Dumoine to establish a base camp and begin cutting and driving the huge white pines used for the masts of the

British Fleet. Some evidence of this prosperous and colourful chapter in the Dumoine history, including the huge white pine stumps, the log chutes constructed around Grande Chute and of course the original main lodge of the lumber camp, still remain. This main structure served as a hotel, post office, homestead, and today as the main lodge of the Dumoine Rod and Gun Club. It is in excellent condition.

Lake Dumoine to Little Italy (one or two days)

Lake Dumoine is a large body of water. Three of the local major rivers connect with this lake: the Kipawa flows out of the northwest arm, the L'Original empties into the northeast arm and the Dumoine flows out of the most southeasterly bay. Immediately at the end of Lake Dumoine, a 315 m portage on the right side in good condition goes around an impassable chute. Slow moving, with sand and gravel banks supporting large stands of red pine, white pine, white cedar and white birch, the river links lakes Dumoine, Brulart, and Laforge, the headwaters of the Dumoine River. There are several excellent campsites, the best being at the Lake Dumoine side of the first portage. Lake Laforge is a long narrow lake with high cliffs rising from the eastern shore. At the southern tip of

Lake Laforge a five metre waterfall demands a 275 m portage on the right side. Almost immediately another impassable chute requires a portage on the left side, 180 m long. There is a good campsite at the end of this portage. The river widens out here and the current has become obvious, producing riffles wherever the river bed rises or narrows. The next three sets of marked rapids are easily run. In the next series of rapids, the river descends 15 m in three kilometres. There is a rough 1 500 m portage on the left side. The final set of rapids in this section provides a long and pleasant run into the widening of the river containing the peninsula aptly named 'Little Italy'. There is a good campsite on this peninsula.

Little Italy to Sheerway (one or two days)

The first three sets of rapids in this section can be run with ease. The fourth set however, requires close examination and the fifth set must be portaged on the right for 90 m. There is a clearing at the right of the end of this portage which makes a nice campsite. In the next series of rapids the first may be run but the next two must be portaged on the right side for 180 m. The following two rapids may be tracked or run.

Beginning at the set of rapids above the 'T' in Temiscamingue County on the Russell Lake map sheet, there is a long run called Little Steel which includes three sets of rapids. The run is four kilometres long with the only difficult portion being the turn after the island. A 225 m portage on the right is necessary around the final rapids in this set. The river continues to move quickly down an obvious

grade until Big Steel. The scenery includes some spectacular 100 m granite cliffs which are the face of the Laurentian Highlands.

Big Steel is not as long a run as Little Steel, but has much heavier water through the first sets. The entire run from beginning of Big Steel to the bridge at Sheerway was known as the Horse-race. The name originated from a challenge between the lumberjacks and the Indians. The lumberjacks would race the Indians to the bridge at Sheerway, the lumbermen driving their wagons and horseteams down the lumber road on the west bank, the Indians paddling their canoes through Big Steel.

The widening of the river at Sheerway is known as Mooney Lake, on the north shore of which there is a large excellent campsite.

Mooney Lake to Red Pine Rapids (one day)

From Mooney Lake to Grande Chute the current slows. There are two sets of rapids before Grande Chute.

Grande Chute is a spectacular falls. Its portage begins on the left bank, crosses the bridge and continues south, then returns to the river, the entire portage being 1 250 m. The last three sets in the Grande Chute series can be run into Robinson Lake. There are several Rod and Gun Club cabins on Robinson Lake.

At the end of Robinson Lake is a set of seven rapids known as Red Pine Rapids. The portage, situated on the right, bypasses all seven sets but it is very rough and unnecessary in high water. Only the first three sets need be portaged for 550 m down the rough trail on the right side. The rest may be run with caution.

Robinson Lake to Driftwood Provincial Park

This last section of the river is perhaps the most scenic. Deciduous trees begin to compete successfully with the coniferous, representing the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence transition. The first set of rapids after Red Pine Rapids is runnable but requires careful reading and strong paddling. The second set should be portaged on the right side for 90 m. This

entire portion of the river is like a staircase with small easy steps at every point where the river narrows. Three kilometres past the second marked set the Fildes River empties into the Dumoine. The Dumoine here takes an abrupt easterly turn into the base of its most spectacular cliff. This sheer cliff, 150 m high, hosts at least one family of bald eagles each season. After Bald Eagle Cliff, there are but two more sets of rapids the first of which may be run easily and the second be portaged on the left side for 180 m. The mouth of the river is three kilometres away and Driftwood Provincial Park another 2 500 m directly across the Ottawa River. Driftwood Park is located on Ontario Highway 17.

4 Perch, Chef and Chamouchouane rivers

Perch, Chef and Chamouchouane rivers

Access and egress

Maps required

From Mistassini Post to St. Felicien:

330 km 12 to 14 d
24 portages.

Mistassini Post can be reached via Route 167 from Chibougamau or St. Felicien, 75 km and 230 km respectively. It is possible to begin a trip on the Perch River at the route 167 bridge crossing, 19 km from Mistassini Post. Egress takes place at St. Felicien situated on the shores of Lake St. Jean. The town is serviced by road, rail and air.

N.T.S. 1:250 000 scale
31 I Mistassini River North (Baie Abatagouche)
32 H Mistassini River
32 A Roberval

1:50 000 scale
32I/5 Post de Mistassini
32I/4 Lake des Canots
32A/3 W and E Lake Damville
32A/14 W and E Vermillion River
32A/15 W and E Normandin
32A/10 W and E Notre Dame de la Doré
32A/9 W and E Roberval

About the river

The Canadian Shield of Quebec is divided into several distinct regions. In the "Labrador Peninsula" Region is Lake Mistassini, File-Axe-Lake and the Perch River while the Chef and Chamouchouane rivers are located within the "Laurentian Massif".

The "Labrador Peninsula" is a vast archaean plateau of moderate relief with an elevation varying between 500 m and 600 m. This region is drained by numerous and sizable rivers and lakes, of which Lake Mistassini, the largest in the province, extends over 160 km in length.

The "Laurentian Massif" has a more varied relief with extensive morainic lakes and deposits.

Flora

Coniferous forests of predominant black spruce grow in the Lake Mistassini region. South, along the Chef and Chamouchouane rivers a transitional forest of deciduous and coniferous species is evident. Within this zone, poplar, birch and maple associate with spruce, cedar and pine.

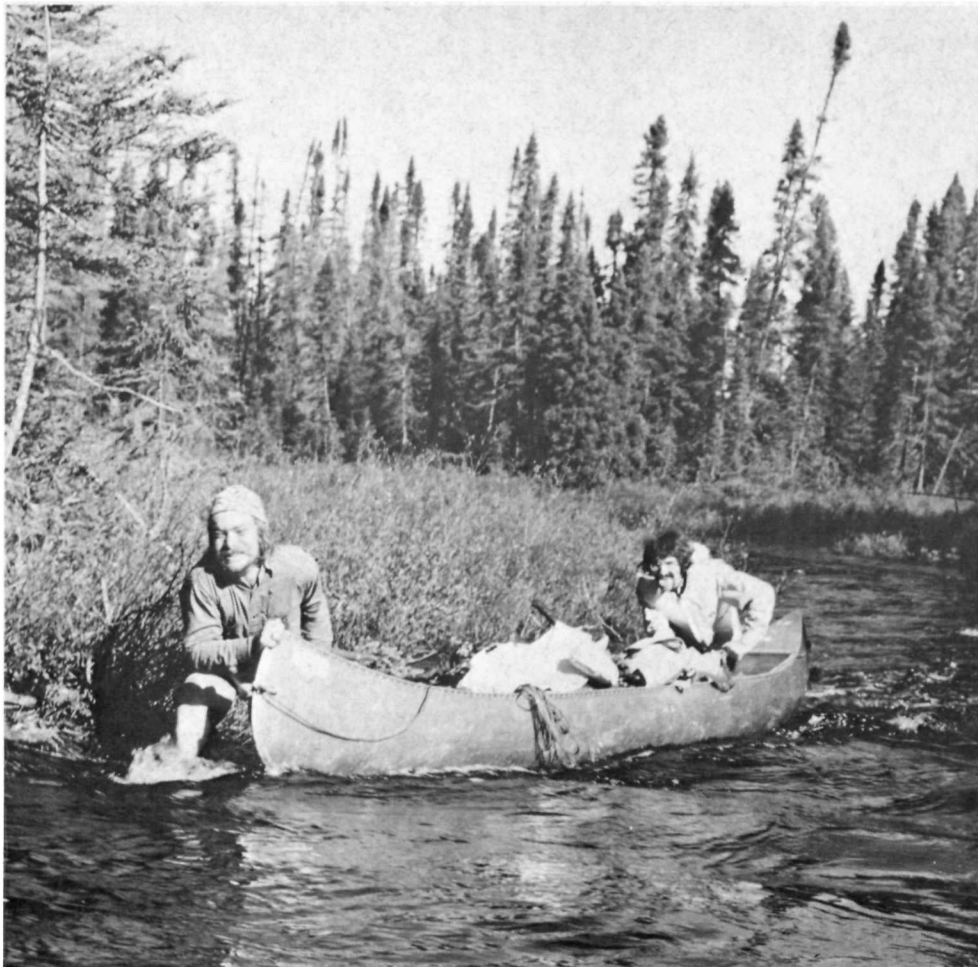
Fauna

Fish catches vary from very good at the beginning of the trip to fair at the end. The most common species of fish caught are northern pike, walleye (pickerel) and whitefish. Wildlife and waterfowl are also more plentiful in the headwaters region.

The canoe trip

The river system described entails an arduous upstream paddle, a portage over a height of land and then a challenging descent through rapid-filled waters.

Portage trails along the Perch River are easily traversed because of frequent use by Indians operating trap lines in the area. However, along the Chamouchouane River, lining is usually the best procedure to follow as portage trails are few and those existing are frequently overgrown.

**Mistassini Post to File Axe Lake**

37 km

7 portages

Described in this section is the change from the Rupert River's drainage basin to the drainage basin of the Chamouchouane River. This river course is one of the few easy access routes to the Chamouchouane River. Embarking at the Fort Mistassini Indian Reserve, north of Baie du Poste on Lake Mistassini, the canoeist paddles 16 km southeast and portages over a sand esker to the mouth of the Perch River. The river mouth is 60 m wide rapidly narrowing to a width of 15 m over its entire length. Over the

next 24 km the river ascends approximately 4m/km reaching File Axe Lake at an elevation of 450 m. The upstream paddle is difficult and time-consuming since many portages are undertaken around long stretches of rapids and a waterfall.

Within this reach there are six rapids and a waterfall together totalling over 1 500 m in length. All rapids must be portaged. Upstream 3.75 km of the last rapid begins a 1 500 m portage over the height of land to File-Axe Lake.

File-Axe Lake to Lake Laganière

29 km

No portages

This part of the river system forming the headwaters of the Chef River consists of a chain of lakes joined by segments of river. Roughly a quarter of the course is by river averaging 15 m wide. The remainder is composed of shallow sand-bottomed lakes containing numerous islands. File-Axe is the largest lake of the series and offers good pike and walleye fishing and camp sites on a number of islands.

Draining the lake at the southern end is the start of the Chef River. Following this river to Lake Laganière the canoeist passes over Carbonneau Lake and Canoe Lake. In the short stretch of river separating these water bodies there are five rapids that can be run or lined.

Lake Laganière to the L'Epervier River

51 km

4 portages

River width along this reach varies from 25 m to 30 m and river bed material consists of rocks and clay. The few lakes encountered are more accurately described as widenings of the river.

The landscape remains much the same as that encountered after Lake Mistassini that is, rounded hills covered by black spruce. The reach of river between Lake Laganière and the L'Epervier River contains 16 well-spaced rapids and three small waterfalls each separated by relatively calm sections of water. Most of the

rapids are too difficult to run and are best lined or portaged. A long day of arduous canoeing or two days at an easy pace, should be sufficient to reach the L'Epervier River.

**L'Epervier River to the
Chamouchouane River**

75 km

3 portages.

The addition of sizeable tributaries below the L'Epervier River adds considerable volume to the Chef River resulting in an increase in depth and width. For much of the distance between L'Epervier River and the Chef/Chamouchouane confluence, the river averages 90 m in width, is bounded by sand banks three metres high and flows over a bed of clay and

sand at a velocity of 3 km/h. Within the 75 km of this reach, there are approximately 10 sets of rapids and a waterfall. Again between each set of rapids there is relatively calm water. The additional volume of water allows competent canoeists to run most of the rapids. Those stretches which are unnavigable can usually be lined. A difficult stretch of white water occurs 11 km below the Chef/Dobleau confluence. Here, a portage in excess of 275 m is required around a waterfall and set of rapids. The carry is easiest along the left side.

The last set of rapids in this reach occurs five kilometres above the Chef/Chamouchouane confluence. Known as the Rapide à l'Original this 180 m stretch of standing waves can be navigated but the run is difficult. At the confluence of the Chamouchouane and Chef rivers, one sees that the Chef is twice as large as the Chamouchouane River, originating from Lake Chamouchouane. The river is confined by a narrow valley and is surrounded by hills rising 108 m above the river. The site of the junction is accessible by a forest road running along the Chamouchouane River. The road joins the St. Félicien - Chibougamau highway near Bochart, 32 km to the southeast.

**Chef/Chamouchouane confluence to
Chaudière Falls**

65 km

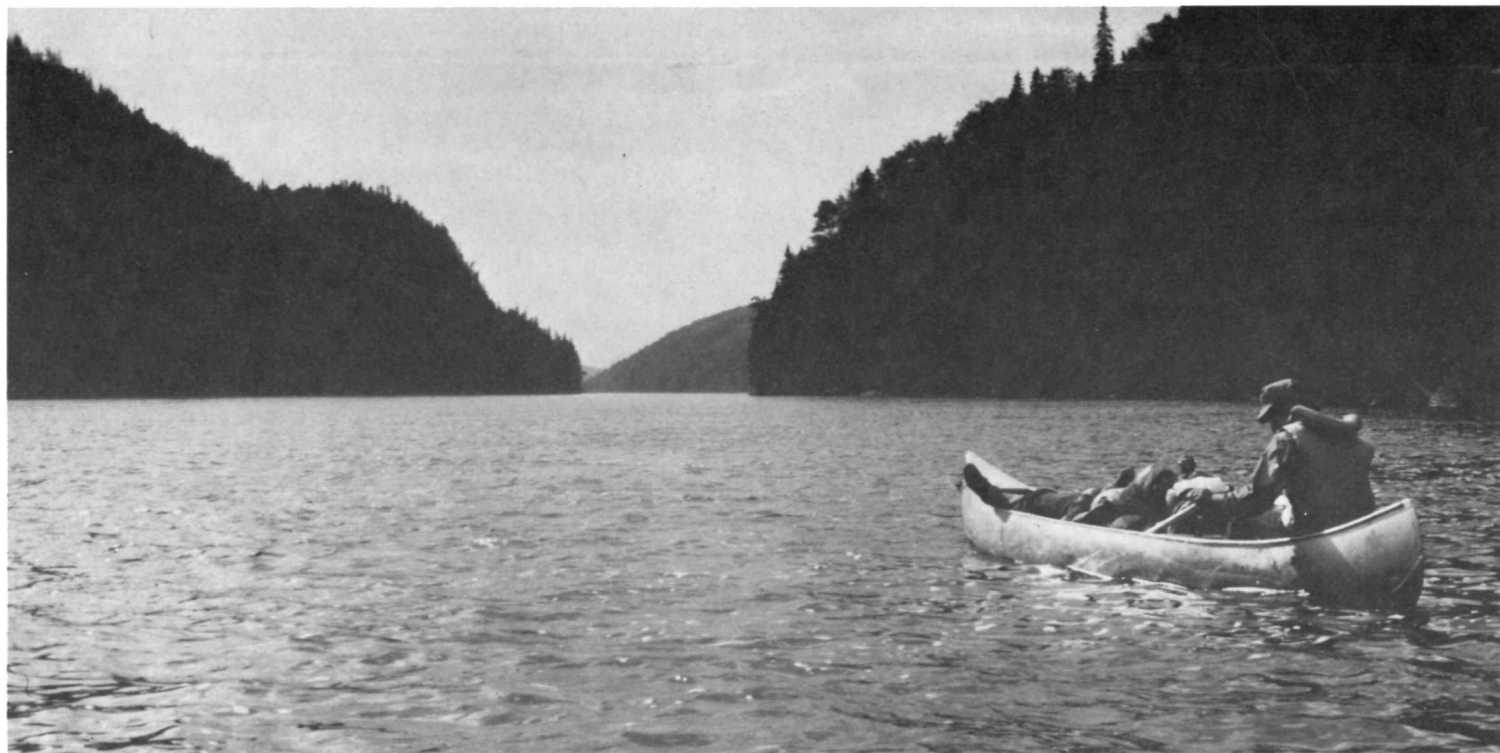
2 portages.

This section of the Chamouchouane River offers some of the best scenery of the river trip. The forest however, has lost much of its natural appeal due to logging operations. Many of the trees except those lining the river have been harvested.

Above the River Aux Brochet there are five sets of rapids all of which are runnable with the exception of the Rapides du Fer-à-Cheval. This one-kilometre-long rapid may be run to the right of the island found after the small waterfall. The last 90 m is very difficult to descend and lining may be necessary.



Lining a rapid on the Chef River



An enclosed section of the Chamouchouane River

Two rapids above the junction with the River Chigoubiche are too difficult to run. The first rapid is lined while the lower part of the second rapid is portaged along the left side.

Below the River Chigoubiche the Chamouchouane flows smoothly as far as the rapids at the head of Chaudière Falls. A portage at the top of the rapid on the right bank extends for three kilometres ending at the base of the waterfall.

Chaudière Falls are 12 m high and are a part of the Chibougamau Provincial Park.

Chaudière Falls to St. Felicien

74 km

8 portages.

Along the upper part of this reach, bordering hills rise 100 m above the river creating a canyon-like appearance. This deep incised valley marks the southern limit of the Laurentian Massif.

In this final reach, the river averages 110 m wide and flows at a velocity of 8 km/h with a 3 m/km gradient. Much of this drop is accounted for by two waterfalls, the Petite Chute a l'Ours and the Grande Chute a l'Ours which together drop 30 m over a distance of three kilometres. The rapids along this reach are characterized by large boulders just under the surface of the water.

The first of the major rapids is the Rapide a l'Epinette. The upper part of this 1 250 m rapid can be run but the lower section is best lined. The next major rapid is the Rapide Pas de Fond which is of medium difficulty. Canoeists should be cautious of the large waves at the end of the run. At this point the canyon ends and for the next 40 km a rural character dominates the landscape. The river widens and is bordered with sand terraces behind which lie large areas of marshland.

Sixteen kilometres below the end of the canyon is the Rapide des Roches which must be portaged over bedrock for 150 m. The final 60 m of this 200 m rapid can be lined. The second part of this rapid is of the same length and must also be lined. Petite Chute a l'Ours is less than 1 500 m downstream. A portage of 110 m bypasses the first falls which is immediately followed by Grande Chute a l'Ours. A 900 m portage along a gravel road on the right bank is the best route around the falls. The other is an overgrown tote road found on the left side. The trail is shorter than the gravel road but portaging through the under brush would be difficult.

At the base of the falls on the left is a campground. Below the falls are two sets of rapids, both less than 90 m in length. The first can be run but the second should be portaged past the small cottages on the right side.

A small waterfall and rapids follow with portaging feasible over the rocks on the left side. The last rapid is portaged over the rocks for 25 m. The last five kilometres to St. Félicien has obstacles.

Further Reading

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