



# Important Information About the Alaska River Logs

These narratives about trips on Alaska rivers are valuable even decades after they were written. However, we recommend that you to keep the following in mind as you read.

**First, a word of warning:** use these river logs as one source of information that you will supplement with more. Alaska rivers can be very dangerous because of their remoteness, the climate, their sources, and other factors. Bring adequate and proper clothing, equipment, and food. File a "float plan" with someone who can call for help if you do not return on time. Take a satellite phone or other communications tool if at all possible (but not usually a cell phone because of their limited coverage in Alaska). You should plan carefully for a safe and pleasant trip.

**Second, note also that land status information contained in these documents may no longer be accurate.** These logs were compiled long before massive land transfers of unreserved public land to restrictive public ownership or private ownership. River users should be careful to follow federal or state regulations where appropriate, and to avoid trespassing on private land. [Here is some additional information Alaska native landowners.](#) You can obtain

information about access on public lands from the [Alaska Public Lands Information Center](#).

**Third, be sure to also check current fishing or hunting regulations, as what was legal decades ago may not be legal today.** You can obtain information about state fishing and hunting regulations from the [Alaska Department of Fish and Game website](#). More restrictive federal regulations may apply on certain federal lands.

**Finally, there may be errors.** We are working to make as much of this material as possible searchable by adding a text layer to the original image-only PDF files using a text capture process. This process is ongoing. Where possible, we have also converted these to HTML files. Please note that while we have corrected obvious errors generated during these processes, errors may still remain. There may also be errors in the original material.

[Return to Alaska outdoors areas](#) for more information about boating, fishing and hunting areas.

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sufficiently to allow us to remain in the canoes and paddle rather than drag our way downstream. The tree growth along the river banks increased and many trees had fallen into the river. Considerable maneuvering was required to avoid the "sweepers". It began to rain in mid-afternoon. By the end of the day we had covered 12 miles. Marshy terrain and the rain precluded any hiking into the side drainages. We camped at mile 63 on the river.

We arose at 0745 on Sunday, August 5. It had rained hard all night but had stopped by morning. There was still a heavy, low cloud cover and no wind. The mosquitoes were out in great numbers. Rain began again about 0830. The number of sweepers increased as we continued downstream and, by Mile 58, they were found on the banks of the river and in every bend. This is not a river for novice canoeists as much maneuvering is required.

Just above Nakailingak Creek we stopped for lunch in a heavy downpour. The wind was up and added to the difficulty of maneuvering. Although we waited an hour and a half the wind and rain did not let up. We continued downriver. At the mouth of Nakailingak Creek, rounding an island in the river, we were unable to avoid sweepers and had to abandon the canoe to save ourselves. We climbed on the sweepers, staying relatively dry and retrieved the canoe just downstream at Mile 54. This increased our respect for the force of the tributary streams emptying into the Kanektok.

Rain and wind continued all afternoon. At 1800 camp was set up below Klak Creek, approximately at Mile 47.5.

Cold wind from the south and a heavy rain greeted us as we awoke on Monday, August 6. We waited until 0900 when the rain and wind subsided somewhat, then made breakfast and broke camp.

Within a mile and a half of camp we ran into serious trouble. Maneuvering through an "S" bend we caught our stern on a submerged gravel bar which swung us parallel to the current in the bend. This naturally carried us with great force into sweepers. The river was running at perhaps 9 knots and the canoe was swept under the sweepers. Lew Waller was able to get onto a downed tree and pull himself out of the canoe. I was pulled

out of the stern by the sweepers. The canoe went down from under me and I went under the sweeper except for my left arm which I was able to throw over a limb, enabling me to grab on. My body was under water beneath the tree with the exception of my head, left shoulder and arm which were upstream of the sweeper. My hip boots filled with water and my legs were dragged straight downstream with the current. I held on for five minutes and was truly convinced I would any second be pulled under the sweepers completely. Water was surging around my ears and the cold was getting to me so that I could not hold on much longer. Finally, the other canoe team had lined through, crossed the river below and come back upstream through the woods. Just as I was about to lose my grip from the tremendous pressure of the current and the cold, Bill Gasaway was able to get a line out to me. I got it with my right arm and let go the sweeper with my left. Immediately I was swept under the sweeper but was pulled out to shore before I was swept into the next tree. I credit Bill Gasaway with saving my life.

After building a fire we were able to retrieve the canoe. All gear was soaked. I lost all my maps and field notes, the geo-chem samples, a hat and a paddle (the paddle was later retrieved). The camera and tape recorder were full of water and out of commission. The BLM radio was also inoperative.

We ate a hot lunch and continued down river till 1845, then made camp. It was a cold, wet, miserable night.

On Tuesday morning, the rain had not diminished, the river was swollen and the maps had indicated more channels below. After a near fatal accident the day before we decided to call BLM to appraise them of our situation and try for a chopper to get us past the braided section below, which would be choked with sweepers. We set up a 30 foot antenna, aimed it towards Anchorage, McGrath and King Salmon, and got no response. The radio wouldn't work. The 30 minutes it had remained underwater was sufficient to put it out of commission.

We started cautiously downstream. The river now had no banks to contain it. It ran in many channels through the woods. The "old channel" was often difficult to

locate. We managed to pick a wrong channel which finally ran through a tunnel of sweepers with great force. Unable to proceed, we walked through the woods and found a quiet arm of the river which led to the main channel. For an hour and a half we portaged through woods to the main channel. Upon putting in on the main channel on the left bank we had to immediately ferry across the surging current to the right bank to avoid sweepers just below. The other canoe began to ferry across and was instantly turned about by the current and was going downriver backwards. Fortunately they were able to pull the bow into an eddy and swing the stern in and out of danger. In order to avoid their predicament, we began to ferry across and put great power into our strokes. Unable to swing us about the river simply swept up over the sides and swamped the canoe.

After emptying the canoe, we proceeded downriver, wet, cold and somewhat disgusted. By 1900 we discovered we were not in the main channel. We were paralleling it and the channel we were in cut "through the woods" to the main flow. We pulled out on the right bank preparing to portage across to the main channel but decided to camp instead. It had been a long, wet, day.

At 0700 on August 8, there was no rain, just fog. At 0900 we began our descent of the river. With no maps we had only a vague notion of where we were. We had trouble picking the correct channel several times, resulting in much lining to get to decent water.

After lunch rain commenced and we continued downstream; by 1530 we arrived at a native fish camp. They told us we were only about 12 miles from Quinhagak and that the channel was easier to locate below their camp. With this good news we moved on and presently the sun broke through for the first time since we left Kagati Lake on the 3rd. Finally by 1915 we arrived at the village of Quinhagak and set up camp at the airstrip, one mile out of the village.

As a result of the field evaluation, we determined: that the river is not suited to novice canoeists; that the topographic maps are "out of date" as they do not show the new channels; that the river can be run but it should not be attempted by one canoe as there are

literally hundreds of sweepers waiting to clutch a canoe and hold it fast; that the prospective traveler should be prepared to line and even portage often; that there are adequate camp sites all along the river; that the most scenic segment is the upper half of the river where it flows through the mountains; and finally that the river is an excellent fishery and one can depend on fish for every camp dinner.

On the morning of August 9, I located Kenneth Cleveland, Village Council President, and arranged for a meeting to be held at 10:30. The Village Council turned out and I went over the background of Sec. 17d-2 of ANCSA and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. I answered their questions and gave them 25 Q&A sheets. The entire meeting was translated. Their mood was sullen at first, (anti-Gussek) and their chief concern was that they were convinced Wild River designation would lead to regulations which would prevent or limit their subsistence use of the area. After repeatedly answering that question I finally gave a copy of PL90-542 to the interpreter, underlined Sec. 13 and had him read from the Act. This convinced them.

They asked about their native allotments and I explained that if they have allotments they will be honored. I also told them that the land office maps in Fairbanks BLM only show two allotment applications on the river. I told them that if they have more than two allotments they should immediately contact their BIA representative and BLM to get it straightened out.

The meeting lasted two hours and their attitude changed from sullen distrust to friendliness. They said they would support the Wild River program provided they could still fish and trap along the river. (Hunting is not of prime importance due to the lack of game). They also said they would not oppose the Wildlife Refuge under the same conditions. We adjourned the meeting at 1230 p.m.

At 2 p.m. the Beaver landed in the river and within five minutes the Widgeon landed on the landing strip. We loaded up and took off, landing in Lake Hood at 6:50 p.m.

Participants were requested to send their slides/photographs to this office so that we could select some for

duplication for our files as the BOR camera was inoperative for most of the trip. The participants agreed.

Attached is a list of wildlife observed during the field evaluation.

*Noel P. Granzow*  
Noel P. Granzow ✓

WILDLIFE OBSERVATIONS  
Kagati Lake / Kanektok River  
August 3 - 8, 1973

Species	Date						Remarks
	8/3	8/4	8/5	8/6	8/7	8/8	
Arctic ground squirrel	X						Common around Kagati Lake
Mew gull	X	X	X	X	X	X	Common
Long-tailed Jaeger	X						
Savannah sparrow	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Raven	X		X	X	X		
Scaup	25						Small lake northwest of Kagat
Ptarmigan	1 w/7		X				
Red salmon	X						Outlet of Kagati Lake
King salmon	X	X	X	X	X	X	Estimate 100 observed each da
Rainbow	X				X	X	
Grayling	X	X	X	X	X	X	Most readily caught sportfish
harr	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Arctic tern	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Yellowlegs	X	X		X			
Wandering tattler (?)		X			X	X	
Beaver sign	X	X	X	X	X		
Bear sign.	X	X	X	X	X	X	Bear tracks abundant
Arctic loon		X	X		X		
Robin		X			X	X	
Red-breasted Merganser		X	X	X	X	X	Broods: 7, 7, 7, ?, 8
Harlequinn		X	X	X	X		Broods observed
Short-eared owl		X					

Species	Date						Remarks
	8/3	8/4	8/5	8/6	8/7	8/8	
Dufflehead			w/3				
Mallard			X		X	X	
Bald eagle			2/w nest				
Magpie			X	X			
Bank swallow		X	X	X	X	X	
W. sandpiper			X				
Oldsquaw			X				
Moose sign			X		X		
Semipalmated plover				X			
Black turnstone				X			
Glaucous or Glaucous-winged gull				X	X	X	Several chicks
Green-winged teal				X	X		
Rough-legged hawk				Pr.			Possibly with nest
Chum salmon					X	X	
Fox sign					X		
Pintail					X	X	
Aleutian tern (?)			X				
Weasel						X	