

Message to Visitors

“River-born fugitives, red-muscled under sheathing silver alive with ocean’s changing colours...”

So begins the dramatic poem about sockeye salmon by Roderick Haig-Brown for whom Roderick Haig-Brown Provincial Park is named. Haig-Brown was a magistrate, writer and avid angler but above all he was a man dedicated to conservation in British Columbia. Naming this area that was created to conserve and protect spawning beds used by sockeye, chinook, coho and pink salmon, was a fitting tribute to Haig-Brown who devoted much of his life to the preservation of the sockeye salmon, one of British Columbia’s most valuable natural resources. On a commemorative plaque that was placed at the time the area was named for him, is inscribed Haig-Brown’s poem in its entirety.



How to Get to the Park

The entrance to Roderick Haig-Brown Provincial Park is 5 kilometres from Squilax on the Squilax Anglemont Highway. Squilax is on the Trans-Canada Highway, 66 kilometres east of Kamloops and 46 kilometres west of Salmon Arm.

This 1,059-hectare park is located on both sides of the Adams River, between Adams Lake and Shuswap Lake. (See map inside.)

Park Fees

Open all year. A day-use parking fee is charged during the time of the dominant salmon run, to help off-set the costs of the special *Salute to the Sockeye* event.

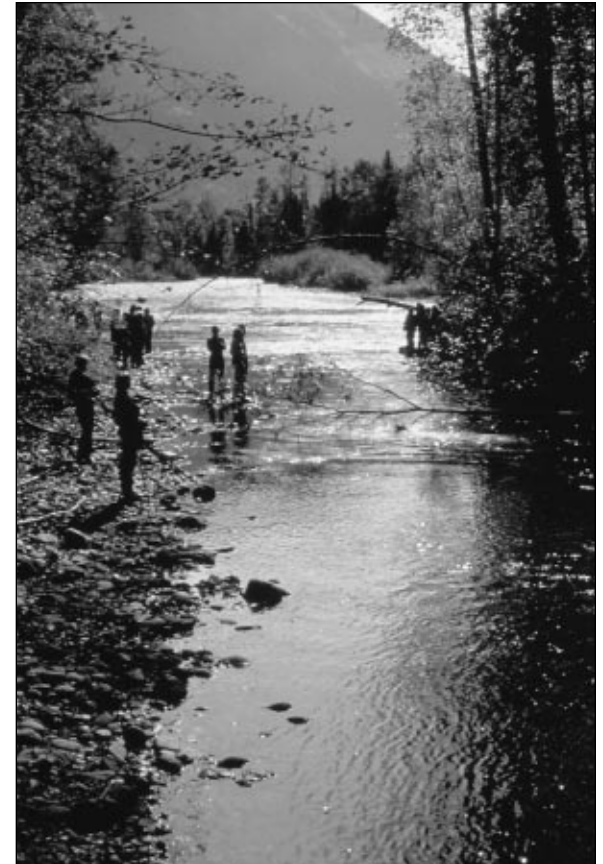
Special Attraction

Salute to the Sockeye is presented at the time of the quadrennial dominant sockeye salmon run. Featured are guided walks, printed material, exhibits and displays by Fisheries and Oceans Canada and BC Parks.



Roderick Haig-Brown

PROVINCIAL PARK



For More Information

BC Parks

<http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/bcparks>



Ministry of Water, Land
and Air Protection



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Welcome to Roderick Haig-Brown Provincial Park, a fascinating place to visit at any time of year, but particularly in early October during the return of the Adams River sockeye salmon. Every fourth year (i.e 2002, 2006, etc.) is a “dominant” run, with millions of fish to be seen.

Thompson

The Sockeye Salmon Story

Early in October sockeye salmon return to the Adams River – the stream of their birth – from the Pacific Ocean, where they have spent their adult life, to complete their life cycle that began here four years previously. Their life is nearly finished but before they die they will spawn, thus producing the offspring that will carry on the cycle.

The salmon are bright, silvery four-year-olds when they begin their migration up the Fraser and Thompson Rivers from the sea. During the 17-day, 485-kilometre odyssey, the fish undergo a dramatic change in appearance. Their bodies turn crimson and their heads turn a pea green. The males develop large, hooked jaws and prominent teeth that they use when defending their spawning sites. They do not eat after entering fresh water.

When the salmon have reached the spawning beds in the Adams River, the female begins a search for a suitable site to lay her eggs. It must be clean, silt-free, coarse gravel in moving water, so that the eggs will receive necessary oxygen. Once she has chosen a site she will defend it until she dies. Before laying her eggs the female creates an egg pocket or “redd”, a small depression about 25 centimetres deep in the stream bed. She accomplishes this by turning on her side and violently fanning her tail, lifting the gravel from the bottom. Meanwhile, swimming close by, is the male fighting off other males who are venturing too close to his chosen female. When the redd is prepared, the female moves over it and discharges a stream of orange-pink eggs onto the bottom. At the same instant, the male (or sometimes two or more males) presses close to her and releases a shower of white milt that fertilizes the eggs. This procedure is repeated several more times, each time slightly further upstream, until the female has laid three to four thousand eggs, each covered with a layer of gravel. Within days the pair will die.

The spawning activity attracts many predators and scavengers to the river. Trout, sculpin and whitefish feed on eggs that have floated free from the redds. Gulls, eagles and a variety of waterfowl eat both eggs and carcasses, and bears often join the search for a fish meal.

By the end of October, quiet has returned to the Adams River. The eggs lie in the river bed until January when the first noticeable stirring of life occurs. In February, the eggs hatch into “alevins”, a half-way stage between the egg and the infant fish or “fry”. Each alevin has a yolk-sac attached to its belly that provides sustenance for the developing fry. As April approaches, small, silvery fry wiggle free from the gravel and migrate the short distance to Shuswap Lake. Here the fry will remain until the following spring feeding and growing into “fingerlings” before descending the Thompson and Fraser rivers to the Pacific Ocean. For three years the sockeye salmon will wander the high seas. In the fourth year, true to their natural instinct, they leave the open ocean to return to the place of their birth and the cycle will begin once again.

The cycle of the sockeye salmon does not produce equal spawning runs each year. Every four years there is a “dominant” run which may have more than one million fish returning to the Adams River. These dominant runs are followed by three years of far fewer fish. About one quarter of a million fish spawn the year following a dominant run with considerably less the other two years. In 1990, Fisheries and Oceans Canada estimated that 2.2 million sockeye returned to the river. The next such runs occur in 2002, 2006 and 2010. Spawning sockeye are not alone in the

Adams River. Several thousand chinook and several hundred coho and pink salmon will be seen with the sockeye in the Adams and its tributaries. The Adams River is vital to the salmon industry of British Columbia. Conservation of these magnificent fish is the primary purpose of the Roderick Haig-Brown Provincial Park. The river and surrounding lands must be protected to ensure the continuation of the salmon's life cycle.

Conservation

The park encompasses the spawning beds of the sockeye, chinook, coho and pink salmon. The wooded area surrounding the river contains a natural assortment of trees including the Douglas-fir, cottonwood, birch, alder, ponderosa pine, hemlock and cedar. The park is also home to numerous forms of birds and mammals including whitetail and mule deer, black bears, beaver, river otter and mink.

Birds are in abundance. All of the river is utilized for spawning although most visitors observe the phenomenon on the lower reaches from viewing sites along the eastern bank of the river.

Flowers, trees and shrubs are part of the park's natural heritage. Please do not damage or remove them.

Poison ivy grows along dry, exposed sloped in this area: do not touch! The plant can be identified by glossy green leaves in groups of three, with white berries close to the stem. The leaves turn scarlet in autumn and then fall off. Poison ivy is harmful at all times of the year.

Visitors in October (every fourth year, 2002 onward) will marvel at the spectacle of two million sockeye salmon spawning in the Adams River. The year after each large run is also worth a visit as over 300,000 fish return. For more information, visit the Adams River Salmon Society.

History

The park was established in 1977 to conserve and protect the spawning beds used by various species of salmon. It was named after the conservationist and magistrate, Roderick Haig-Brown (1908 – 1976), for his dedication to conservationism in the province. Pictographs on the canyon walls indicate the presence of people long before the Europeans.

Wildlife

Wildlife is abundant in this riverside area including whitetail and mule deer, black bear, beaver, river otter and mink. During the salmon run, eagles are often seen.

Wildlife is potentially dangerous and may be encountered at any time. Never approach or feed bears or any wild animal. Make lots of noise when hiking.

Cultural Heritage

The river-eroded landscape of canyons, terraces and flood plains has seen much human activity over the centuries. The vegetation provided the Shuswap people with materials for the construction of their homes and the implements for hunting and fishing. Roots, berries and seeds supplemented salmon as their major food source. Archaeological studies of the area have uncovered evidence of large settlements. Depressions from kekulis (pit houses), artifacts and pictographs (rock paintings) can still be seen in the area. All are strictly protected.

What You Should Know



Camping, overnight use and open fires are not permitted in this park. See Special Note below.



The 26-kilometre trail system provides access to viewpoints along the river to observe the spawning salmon and offers the opportunity of exploring the historic and natural points of interest of the area.



Some trails are suitable for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in season.



Horses are not permitted in this park.



The Adams River is closed to salmon fishing. Angling for rainbow trout, Dolly Varden and whitefish is a popular activity. *British Columbia Sports Fishing Regulations Synopsis for Non-Tidal Waters*, available from BC Environment, Fisheries Branch offices and sporting goods stores throughout the province, gives detailed information regarding licences and regulations. There are special regulations for the Adams River.



The Adams River is popular for white water canoeing and kayaking. Life jackets and helmets should be worn at all times when on the river. The river has dangerous sections that include numerous sweepers and log jams that are not always visible in advance. Always exercise extreme caution. Navigation below the Adams River bridge is not permitted. Inner tubes and air mattresses are not recommended for travel on the Adams River. Several people have been killed while using these devices.



Professionally-guided white water rafting trips on the river are offered by local rafting companies during the summer. Adams River users should be familiar with local regulations that are posted on signs on and near the river.



The river is closed to motorized vessels.



Keep all dogs out of the water! Ensure they do not harass the fish. The fish are extremely sensitive to any kind of disturbance and dogs are perceived as a particular threat.



There is no drinking water provided on site, and the water from the river is not drinkable.

Special Note

Shuswap Lake Provincial Park at Scotch Creek, 15 kilometres along the road to Celista, has a campground with 272 sites, a sani-station, picnic areas, swimming beaches, playgrounds, flush toilets, free hot showers and a boat launching ramp.