



When the sun was out it was hot and burning. We were thankful for the many tubes of sunscreen we had brought. Nancy and Kathy rigged up masks that hung from their hats to protect their faces. Rudy and Ross grew beards. But the clouds were a mixed blessing: when they hid the sun it became chilly immediately.

It was a short paddle from the lake into the Bonnet Plume River, which had just enough water to float us over a few gravel bars. The first six kilometres were swift with some tight corners and riffles. The first landmark was the Rockslide Canyon. On river left rose a hill of rubble while on the right was a high gravel/boulder bank. The canyon was formed by the river cutting through a rockslide that had started high on the right-hand slopes and covered the entire river valley. The rapids in the canyon were a challenging grade 2 plus with big boulders, sharp turns, chutes, and numerous nice eddies. They were fairly continuous for almost three kilometres.

Halfway through the canyon we camped on the river right at the only good campsite in the canyon. Previous trippers had cleared two tent sites on a small wooded shelf. A rock bench provided a good cook site and the canyon walls were just low enough that mountains could be seen in two directions.

We took the next day to hike up the rockslide. It was an incredible trip around huge decaying boulders that jutted 7–10 metres above a slope covered in fist-sized chunks of scree. The day was hot and sunny and we found no running water until we discovered a small snow-melt stream near the top. The slide provided us with easy access to a high ridge and a great view down the Bonnet Plume Valley. The real treat, though, was on the other side of the ridge, which dropped off in a sheer cliff that left our slope jutting up into the sky. After the hike our evening's entertainment was watching a beaver try and swim up the canyon rapids.

After Rockslide Canyon there was a pleasant drift section before the next rapids. Two wavy corners led to a short straight stretch before a class 3 rapid, which we scouted from a good trail on top of the bluff. Ross and Nancy portaged their packs. Both canoes put on their spray decks. A big hole half-way through easily submerged our canoes, and Rudy and Kathy took water over the top of their splash cover. This

rapid had a recovery pool and some nice eddies that made it more relaxing than some rapids further on.

We camped at a clear water spring just below the rapid, and started the next day with a portage around a small falls 50 metres downstream from our campsite. A good trail on river right follows the top of the canyon, but it led us 100 metres past the put-in, which is actually just below the falls. Some tricky boulders and chutes in the canyon came next, followed for about six kilometres by one set of exciting and challenging rapids after another. Rudy and Kathy were the lead boat. Whenever we saw them pull over and bail we knew it was time to stop and take a second look. None of these rapids were a true class 3, but some of them pushed it.

The next set of class 3 rapids was difficult to tell until we arrived there. They started soon after a major creek entered from river left. The lead-up was a long, tricky rock garden with a couple of ledges. In the middle was a tight S-turn around a drop, ending in a canyon with big waves and a tight corner. Rudy and Kathy ran the distance, Ross and Nancy lined around the S-turn. We camped that night on a high mossy bluff. With the lack of rain, the moss and lichens cracked and broke beneath our feet as we walked to our tents.

Day 7 was a fast drift through braids and a few wavy rapids to Goz Creek. We stopped there for lunch and watched a moose cross the Bonnet Plume about 30 m downstream from us. The afternoon was spent hiking up Goz Creek in search of a swimming hole and then into a nearby lake.

That evening at camp we watched a bank of smoke roll up the Bonnet Plume Valley towards us. As it crossed the ridge immediately downstream, general panic ensued. Tents were taken down and canoes packed up as we prepared to

