



# New Zealand 07.1 Canoeing

Autumn Issue 2007

## Extreme Whitewater Races on the rise!

So what's been happening around the paddling scene over summer? Well, the last couple of months have been particularly interesting. Between all the ongoing issues with power companies and hydro schemes (Arnold, Matiri and the Mokau River to name just a few), irate jet boaters, access disputes (Ngawaapurua rapids) and the relentless spread of Didymo, there were heaps of excellent paddling opportunities to be had. The sheer increase in Extreme River Races and the prospect of more in the pipeline is heartening and reflects the ever increasing popularity of the various whitewater disciplines. Events like the Wairoa Extreme Race, Andy Duff Memorial Kaituna Challenge (more on that later), BullerFest, Women on Whitewater, BlissFest and the Teva River Festival and competitive flavours like Big Air, Rafter Cross, tandem race, sledging and freestyle should keep everyone busy!

The first Huka Falls Extreme Race would have been a fact by now, if it weren't for Mighty River Power (MRP). Disappointingly, they decided to decline the flow request (50 cumecs) stating their perceived liability and interests in public safety as a prime concern. Hold on! Isn't Mighty River Power's business to generate electricity? It certainly shouldn't be to deprive others from recreating on a public resource – the same amenity that MRP makes use of. This development is vaguely reminiscent of the Taupo Harbour Master, who attempted to exercise authority over kayakers back in the eighties. MRP may perceive the risk of such an activity to be high, but they are not experts in the field. There is plenty of evidence to show that an appropriately organised event on Huka Falls is in no way any more dangerous than other sections of rivers.

Twenty-five years on from when Greg Oke and Nick Kerkham plopped over the lip in fibreglass it has been paddled in every imaginable way at a variety of flows – from hand-paddling to tandem to wave wheeling. Huka Falls is no longer considered extremely difficult. Nowadays, there are numerous people with the skills to safely negotiate the falls as shown by the frequent descents. All-in-all kayakers have demonstrated that they are totally capable of making sound decisions on what they judge safe.

From a liability point of view there is ample precedent too - agencies like the Dept of Conservation approve events like adventure racing on land that they administer, without compromising their interests in public safety. Similarly, Transit and Motorsport NZ have never been deemed to set a bad example by promoting motorsport events that encourage speeding on public roads. Ski-field and helicopter businesses regularly stage extreme skiing events, again with no liability on their part.

Therefore it should be possible for such an event to be held without compromising someone's interests in public safety provided that a decent safety procedure and audited risk management plan is at hand. The onus should remain on the organiser and the competitors. This is aside from the fact that paddlers already use MRP's releases down Aratiatia rapids without their explicit consent. In the end it should remain up to the individual to decide what's safe and what's not.

Happy paddling,  
Guido

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Lots of air, crazy moves and confetti at BullerFest 2007. Photos at [www.photochick.co.nz/](http://www.photochick.co.nz/)

## About New Zealand Canoeing

*New Zealand Canoeing* is the official newsletter of the New Zealand Recreational Canoeing Association (NZRCA) Inc. *NZ Canoeing* is published quarterly and distributed free to around 1,000 members of the NZRCA throughout New Zealand/Aotearoa. The views expressed in *New Zealand Canoeing* are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Executive of the New Zealand Recreational Canoeing Association.

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Thanks to contributors and advertisers and the myriad of e-mail correspondents for their contributions to this issue of *NZ Canoeing*. May the rivers flow for you!

All map references are to NZMS Infomap 260 Topographical series.

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Your contributions of articles, trip reports, classified advertisements, and letters for publication are gratefully received.

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*as elected at the NZRCA AGM April 2006*

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## Changes to River Rescue Course Subsidy !!

The NZRCA offers a safety subsidy to its affiliated members through Water Safety NZ. This subsidy reimburses 50% (up to \$100) of the cost of a River Rescue or River Safety course done with an approved provider (either on your own, through your club or in an organised group).

The limited funds and the great success of the river safety programme last year meant that our allocated safety subsidy for 2006-7 became oversubscribed. To prudently manage the funds for these courses, NZRCA has introduced new guidelines which must be followed to get reimbursement. Before the intended course date the individual or group organiser must email [education@rivers.org.nz](mailto:education@rivers.org.nz) and advise the name of the provider / instructor, course dates and the amount of subsidy which will be required. The NZRCA will pre-approve the subsidy provided funds are available, and will confirm this by email. The reimbursement will be made on completion of the course, once the NZRCA receives the subsidy claim form (print this from [www.rivers.org.nz](http://www.rivers.org.nz)) and the course receipt from your course instructor. If your subsidy is not pre-approved you may not be subsidised.

So take control! Organise a group, find an instructor (look under Safety, then Safety course on [www.rivers.org.nz](http://www.rivers.org.nz)), email [education@rivers.org.nz](mailto:education@rivers.org.nz) to get pre-approval, enjoy your course, fill in your claim for reimbursement and send it to us.

# NewsSplashes

**Kaituna River** - DoC's agreement-in-principle on Bay of Plenty Electricity's concession to use a small area of the Upper Kaituna Scenic Reserve for the purposes of hydro-electric generation certainly raised a few eyebrows among those that oppose the scheme. The dam, to be built halfway down the Awesome Gorge, effectively leaves the river in between Awesome and Gnarly Gorge dry with all the water above the dam backed up to the Trout Pool Falls.

Strikingly, the consultation report released by DoC clearly states that the adverse environmental effects of this project are in direct conflict with the conservation values for which the Scenic Reserve is held. Thus, approval of this concession would effectively breach DoC's mandate on conservation values that are held within the Conservation Act.

Over the last couple of months, DoC called for public submissions (deadline closed 12<sup>th</sup> March) and the public hearings have been scheduled for late April. Meanwhile, the kayaking community has not sat idle—the NZRCA and fiery locals like Donald Calder and Andi Uhl have encouraged many clubs and individuals to submit against the scheme. As the number of small hydro schemes seems to increase relentlessly, so has the local drive to involve everyone that sinks a blade in those rivers. For example, about sixty submissions were collected from Wairoa Extreme Race participants: goes to show that these events are particularly useful in rallying up support within our community. Everybody's vote counts – yours included!

## Release Schedule

### Tongariro River - Access 10

Poutu Intake	Sat	29 September	09:00 - 15:00
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### Tongariro River - Access 13/14

Rangipo dam	Sun	06 May	08:00 - 16:00
Rangipo dam	Sun	30 September	08:00 - 16:00

### Whakapapa River

Whakapapa	Sat	01 September	09:00 - 17:00
Whakapapa	Sat	22 September	09:00 - 17:00

### Wairoa River

Wairoa Release	Sun	06 May	11:00 - 17:00
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### Mangahao Gorge

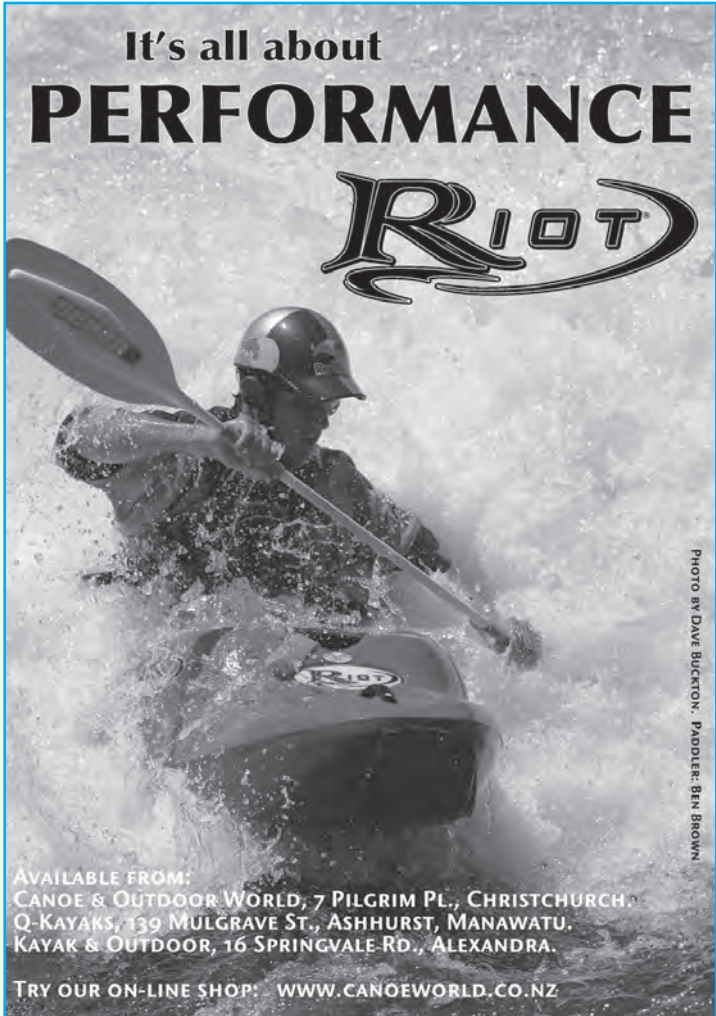
Mangahao Release	Sat	15 September	10:00 - 16:00
Mangahao Release	Sat	27 October	10:00 - 16:00

Please refer to our website ([www.rivers.org.nz/events/](http://www.rivers.org.nz/events/)) for the latest release schedules, including flow information. Please note that the list above is **not conclusive**.

**Matiri River** - The threat of a controversial hydro scheme on Lake Matiri near Murchison has prompted Fish and Game to seek its inclusion into the Buller WCO to protect its outstanding values. The Matiri River is a vital part of the 'Buller experience' and highly valued for its variety of flows – from monster flood flows down to low summer flows.

Originally, Lake Matiri was left out of Kahurangi National Park by virtue of a water right (which was never used) to build a hydro dam at the outlet of the lake. The original Buller WCO was negotiated between parties with this in mind and as such the current WCO protects the lake and the river upstream of it only partially.

The 4.6kw scheme will consist of a lake-level weir built near the head of one of the lake's three outlets and would divert up to 6.3 cumecs of water to a powerhouse 2.2 km further down. A meagre residual flow of 1 cumec would be retained in the river, similar to existing low summer flows. This would effectively be a death sentence for the mega-classic flood run of the Buller District. The NZRCA, Whitewater Canoe Club and many others have submitted in support of Fish and Game's proposal.



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PHOTO BY DAVE BUCKTON. PADDLER: BEN BROWN



# New Thinking Needed to Save our Rivers!



Story and photos by Guy Salmon

*The big issue facing New Zealand this decade is to put the country's economic development on to an environmentally sustainable basis. That won't come easily to people that have been in the habit of sacrificing rivers for the sake of irrigation projects, hydro-electricity, and careless pastoral farming on erodible hill country.*

Fish and Game and kindred organizations are preparing a national campaign to protect and restore our living rivers. Guy Salmon, of the Ecologic Foundation, says the campaign needs to engage New Zealanders in debating some big questions about our country's future.

The top half of the South Island is a good place to start. There, four attractive rivers are currently subject to hydro-electric development proposals – the Wairau, the Gowan, the Mokihinui

and the Arnold. Another two rivers – the Waimakariri and the Hurunui, are facing huge abstraction demands for irrigation projects.

On each of these rivers, Fish and Game is already involved in statutory hearings processes, or it soon will be. But it's becoming obvious that defending rivers one by one is not enough. The underlying factors that drive New Zealand's development down an unsustainable path have to be challenged.

*Top: Huge irrigation draw-offs for dairy farms are depleting lowland streams while further irrigation permits are still being issued in depleted Canterbury aquifers. Right: Nutrient leakage into Canterbury's Lake Forsyth produces toxic algal blooms, prompting these health warning signs.*

Let's start with the thrust toward hydro-electricity. Damming or diverting rivers is a costly business which in recent decades, fell from fashion. Generating electricity from natural gas and coal has been cheaper. But the imminent expiry of the Maui gasfield, and the rise of global concern about the threat of climate change, has fundamentally changed the situation.

So today, the hunger for hydro-electricity is back. The latest assessments prepared for the Ministry of Economic Development highlight a sizeable resource of 8870 GWh/year of hydro-electricity costing less than 10c/kWh that could be developed before 2015 with "high or medium confidence".

For comparison, Trustpower's proposed scheme on Marlborough's Wairau River, which would divert up to 40 cumecs of water into 46 km of canals and five power stations, would produce in total 415 GWh/year. Thus, the amount of hydro-electricity identified for early development by the Ministry is equivalent to building 21 Wairau-sized schemes. A recent amendment to the Resource Management Act (RMA) requires decision-makers to have particular regard to the benefits of "renewable energy." That makes rivers like the Wairau much harder to defend.



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But the word “renewable” is a misnomer when it comes to hydro-electric development. While the water flow is renewable from rainfall, the recreational values, fisheries and wildlife habitats sacrificed by damming or diverting rivers are usually lost forever. Electricity demand has been growing since 1999 by 900 GWh a year.

That means that sacrificing a Wairau-sized river to development could only meet the nation’s voracious demand growth for less than six months. After that, the power companies have to find yet another river to dam or divert.

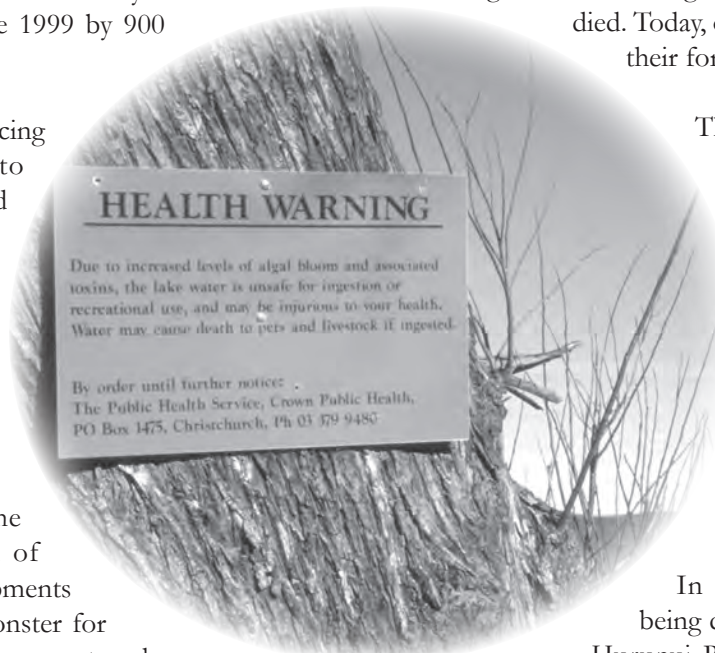
At the current rate, the Ministry’s 8870 GWh of potential hydro developments could only feed the monster for another ten years. So the current push into hydro development is not a long term solution to satisfy New Zealand’s energy needs.

Some other countries have simply said “no more rivers development,” and moved their search for energy elsewhere. It’s a collective value judgment that New Zealand will surely have to make soon. Either we will change to new sources of energy in the very near future, when there are many fine rivers still left; or we will change over later on, when those rivers have been lost. Fish and Game’s message on this must be clear: if we are to preserve New Zealand’s unique environment, the time to make the change is now.

In February 2004, during the Manawatu floods, 200 million tonnes of sediment slipped off farmed hill slopes and accumulated in the region’s streambeds and riverbeds. Water quality – starting to recover after the last big influx of sediment off the hills twelve years earlier – was set back once again, as river systems were re-clogged with fresh deposits of fine silt. This silt, churned up from stream beds, makes for turbid, near-lifeless waterways, unsuitable for swimming or most fishing activities. Downstream, estuarine shellfisheries and coastal rocky reef fisheries become smothered with the silt, losing their value to local communities. Phosphorus adheres to soil particles, and in most regions soil erosion is the principal pathway by which phosphorus finds its way off the farm and into water bodies vulnerable to eutrophication.

Extensive erosion on New Zealand’s farmed hill country is a regular, predictable event, and we know how to prevent it. Decades of research has shown how to use space planting on farms to restore sustainability to the four million hectares

of at-risk, erodible hill country. The research has also shown that some of this land needs to be completely retired and returned to forest. Unfortunately, when the responsibility for funding soil conservation work was shifted from central government to regional councils, the whole effort almost died. Today, on-farm plantings are at a fraction of their former levels.



This situation must be turned around. To restore water quality in many rivers and streams, especially in the North Island, fixing farmland erosion is the critical step that has to be taken. The second big agriculture-related issue that must be tackled is land use intensification. Driven by lashings of irrigation water and nitrogen fertilizer, this impacts harshly on lowland rivers and streams.

In Canterbury, huge water takes are being demanded from the Waimakariri and Hurunui Rivers for irrigating areas of up to 60,000 ha in each case. Impacts will arise from reducing the summer flows of these rivers, from the proposed storage impoundments, and from the nutrient-enriched waters that will drain from the irrigated areas. - *To be continued.*



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# ANDY DUFF RACE 2007

Story and photos by Douglass McCormick

Despite a deluge of biblical proportions, over 50 paddlers turned out to race in the 4th annual Andy Duff Memorial Kaituna Challenge on the 13th of January. The rain began six days before the race and did not let up once.

With the river levels on the Kaituna under the control of the good people at Environment Bay of Plenty, we were all a bit nervous that we'd be racing in flooded conditions (not that this was going to put a halt to the race!). But kind words will get you far in New Zealand, and we were able to have a high flow, but within commercial limits, flow on that Saturday evening.

I am always amazed at how much everyone looks forward to this event. Take Sam Sutton's words, who told us that he was more excited for this race day than Christmas day. Young Sam went on to win the playboat division (with a time of 6:51) and the tandem race along with the legendary Kenny Mutton (in 6:32). It needs



to be said though, that Sam and Kenny (along with Jamie Sutton and their neighbour Ian) have been doing race runs at 6am everyday for the past three months, in preparation for this race, the Wairoa Extreme Race, and for taking over the paddling world. Therefore, it should be no surprise that Kenny Mutton also won the men's main event, the long boat race, in a lightning fast time of 6:36. Sutton and Mutton... has a ring to it, doesn't it?

Nikki Kelly took the gold (along with a generous prize package from House of Elliot Hair Salon) in the women's group and continues to dominate as a strong paddler - easily beating over half the men to the finish. A Japanese freestyle paddler, Yoko, won the women's playboat race even though she received a good thrashing at the weir.

Joel Flamank has yet to be defeated in the sledging division. His finesse, strength and endurance got him through the finish line in 8:35...a very fast kick down a mile of river. The raft race had eight rafts and one cataraft (Shredder) trying to squeeze through the narrow falls and corners of the river.

Some boats that managed to hold the lead up to the waterfall began struggling to hold their lines through the swirly corners on the bottom half of the race. Tim Pickering and Scott McGlashan, in the Shredder, pinballed between the lead and third place through most of the race, but reached the finish line (where it really counts) first.

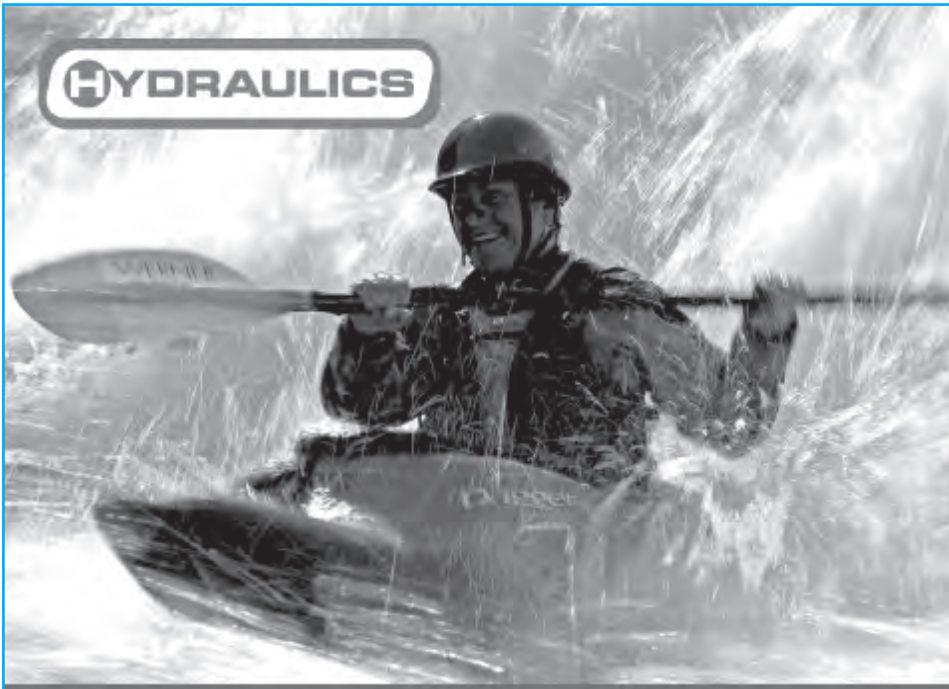
As usual, there isn't a race without some carnage. Mark Schimanski, one of the local guides, lead that charge by getting surfed upside down at the first waterfall, the powerhouse, and acting as a landing pad for about 15 kayakers behind him (he came out okay, with only a slightly bruised ego). Scotty McGlashan seems to be making it a tradition to swim out of his kayak at the

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# ANDY DUFF RACE 2007



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Many thanks to Andy Fuller for helping organise and being a reputable presence at race time, Graeme O'Rourke at Environment Bay of Plenty and Keith Hughes from Kaituna Cascades for allowing us use of the put-in.

Craig Elliot from House of Elliot for the prize package, Evan Freshwater and Scott Fitzgerald for being the safest (!) safety team at the waterfall, and Sarah Uhl for the beer! And of course, thanks to all the paddlers, and spectators, for turning up even though the weather was less than desirable.

I only wish that more of you could have been here to see this event. It's such a fun night, and it's so inspiring to see everyone come out and have such a good time.

weir. But the "Best in Show" award went to Tim Duff for having the "cojones" to take a surfboard down the river (including the waterfall). He was escorted down the river by Arnd Schaeftlein and styled the whole thing. After three years of talking about this, Tim finally came out with the goods and impressed everyone there.

Sarah Uhl from the Okere Falls Store again donated a case of beer for the raft winners, which in this case were only two people. Scott and Tim, though, generously shared their winnings.

Still soaking wet from the river and the rain, paddlers and spectators hung out at the take-out for the prize-giving and a beer or two.







# Arunachal Pradesh Kayak Ex

*A story by Alan*

*'Our trip started as some drunken babble and an enthusiastically drawn sand map. Shalabh had visited the state before and told tales of the wild rivers that lie there. Arunachal lies right in the North Eastern corner of India where it meets Burma, Tibet, and Bangladesh - making it a crazy melting pot of cultures. This amazing area is a medieval cultural tour as each valley holds a different tribe and method of life, not to mention style of river.'*

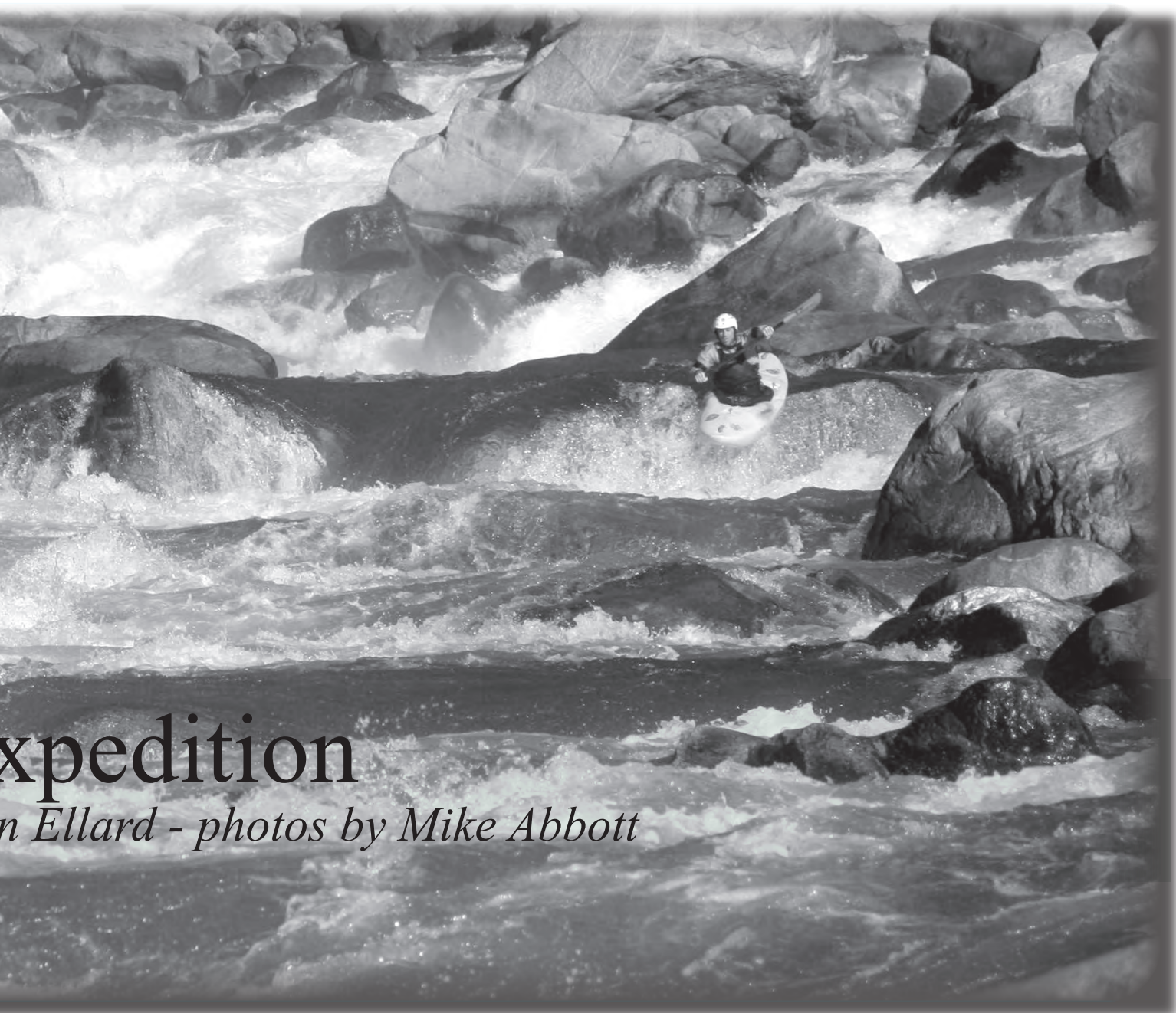
Our trip was prompted by the enthusiasm of Shalabh Gahault, who runs the 'Ganga kayak School' in Rishakesh. Two years back after many beers on a beach in Nepal, Shalabh drew a map in the sand of rivers he had run and had seen on visits to Arunachal. Many emails later he organized permits and our team miraculously made it to Dibrugarh on the 15th of November. A jeep turned up that just happened to have a perfect roof rack for five boats and we were off on an adventure of a lifetime.

Travelling to Arunachal from Assam and crossing the Dibang and Siang to get west involves some very exciting ferry crossings. Small boats with platforms carry pretty much anything across the surging rivers and sometimes it does not

all go according to plan. On our first ferry across the Lohit River we made it onto the ferry no problem, but driving off nearly ended the trip as the jeep fell off the runners and balanced on a fine line, about to slip back into the depths of the river. The locals did not seem too worried, apparently it happens all the time, so we went with it and it all worked out eventually.

Our international team, consisting of myself, Marcus Morse (Australia), Benjamin Hjort (Norway), Shalabh Galhault (India) and Mikey Abbott (New Zealand) made its way up the Dibang River, mapping the canyons and tributaries as we went. One thing we have learned from our many trips to Asia, is that you gather information from as many sources





# xpedition

*n Ellard - photos by Mike Abbott*

as possible. This means you go and ask the same question to several people and see what average you can work out. Some gorges can reportedly be 10-80 kilometres in length and waterfalls can range anywhere between 2-20 meters. We did find here that when the locals thought we were crazy for going 'down there', they were pretty accurate and should be believed next time!

We chose to visit Arunachal in early winter, hoping to find low water and pleasant temperatures. Overall we hit it bang on with all the rivers apparently running at their lowest flows of the year. Things could have been very different, as we found out after two days of rain - the river rose to flood level and a huge landslide blocked road access for a day.

Most of the rivers around Arunachal have some sort of road access, which means you can get the feel of the river as you try to get as high up as the 'Indo/China' border police will let you get. Quite often though this will leave you scouting the river from 1000 feet above or more, where it is very easy

to underestimate the size of things. Without reliable altitudes of put-ins, bridges and take-outs you can easily find yourself hiking out of a river you probably should not have even started on, as we did on the upper Siyom River.

After reaching the furthest point our permits would allow, we made a descent of the two main headwaters, the Dry and Mato. Both these rivers and the Talon were each flowing at around 60-80 cumecs, joining to become the Dibang at a rolling 200-300 cumecs. We then ran the Talon River to the confluence, from where the river is known as the Dibang all the way down to where it joins the Brahmaputra.

The Dibang started in alpine territory and came to plains level of about 230 meters in less than 200 kilometres, which is quite amazing for a river of this size. We were constantly amazed at how runnable the river was, almost everything was boat scutable bar a few huge rapids you felt better having a look at. There was one gorge of doom called 'Mouse Leap Gorge' - a three kilometre section of deep bedrock, hiding in



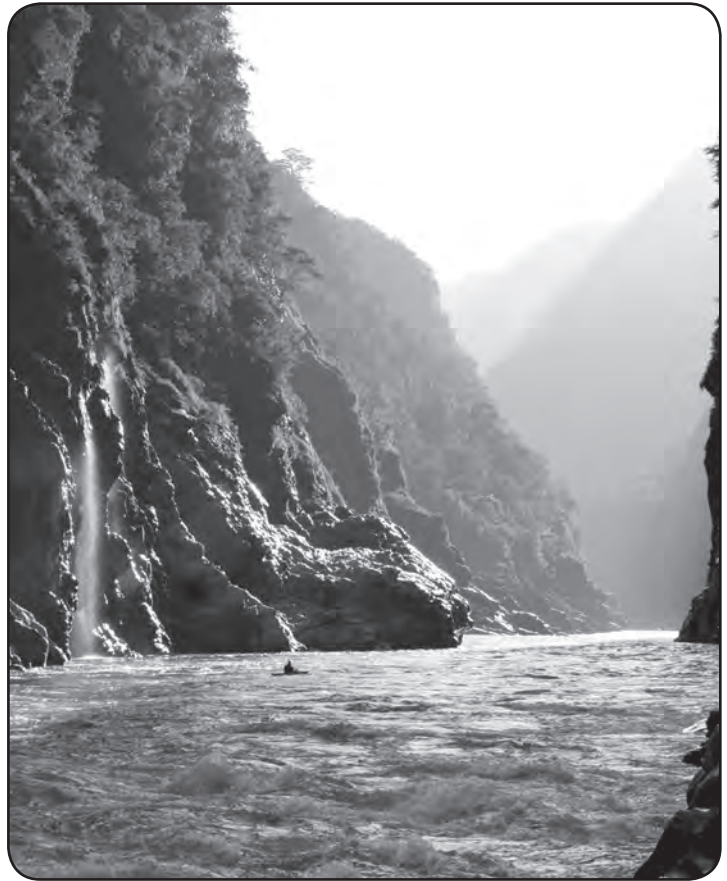
its depths falls of major consequence. Legend has it that a mouse can jump the river somewhere in there, maybe even a man. On investigation we found a contorted bedrock gorge that hid possibly several large falls capable of stopping the upstream progress of fish species - an amazing place with deep spiritual power. Gorges like this are better left to keep their legends! We battled through the forest for hours and barely saw a thing!!

The final section of the Dibang took us through 40 kilometres of isolated canyon where we weren't exactly sure what we would find. We had 150 metre contour maps and images from 'Google Earth' to go on. From what we learnt from the upper river it seemed this gorge would go on, so we dropped right in. Deep within the 400 metre high cliff walls we found big volume fun, incredible beauty and a small bedrock ledge beach to spend our last night on the Dibang.

The team then headed west to explore the Brahmaputra's western tributaries - scoping out several valleys and hiking out of one called the Siyom. We finally had a successful descent of the upper Subansiri River, down to where it had been rafted in the past. Again starting as high as possible, we put in above some major rapids.

Our first day was harrowing as we were unable to rescue Marcus after a swim, during which he dropped into a section we planned to portage. The next 15 minutes were among the worst I have had in my life as I made my way downstream looking for him, fearing the worst. To find that he had self rescued was a huge relief and a reminder of the reality of what we were doing.

The rest of the Subansiri was outstanding with very runnable, but challenging white water and a canyon straight from a fairytale, with waterfalls cascading in from the sides. The people in this valley, as everywhere we visited, were fantastic, kind,



*Each district in Arunachal is named after the largest valley and river that contains it. Each valley holds a different tribe, who have managed to stay unique due to the isolating character of the terrain. The tribesmen are some of the most interesting and friendly folk we have ever met. Not once did we feel in danger, or at risk of having anything stolen. This is quite funny as almost everyone carries a 1-3 ft long sword which they say is for fighting men with!*

and welcoming. They stared in amazement at us with our boats, and we at them with their primitive dress, and metre long swords. Most of the people here carry these swords and have a tendency to use them against other tribesmen. However, we had nothing but good times with these people, sharing laughs and local brews.

Five days later we reached the point where teams have rafted before and chose to take out. As we packed up and finally left the state, a billboard at the border post said it best, "Arunachal Pradesh – a paradise yet unexplored!"

We wholeheartedly agreed. We will be back. ..



*'At some time Arunachal had been a disputed territory, so when a truck load of gun wielding guys turn up and start walking towards your car, it's ok to be nervous!'*



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## Individual Membership Form

New Zealand Recreational Canoeing Association

PO Box 284 Wellington

E-mail: nzrca@rivers.org.nz

Website: www.rivers.org.nz



### Personal Details

Name

Ph (day)

Ph (a/h)

Address

E-mail

Fax

Occupation

Club

Your membership details are managed by the NZRCA in accordance with the Incorporated Societies Act (1908) and the Privacy Act (1993).

### Individual Membership

\$ 30.00

*Includes three issues of NZ Canoeing and a Water Safety Subsidy of 50%, upto \$100 per person per year for River Safety or Rescue Courses.*

Please note that Club and Associate members pay different fees. See our website: [www.rivers.org.nz](http://www.rivers.org.nz) for details of other membership classes.

### Donation

\$ .00

Additional support for our work in Conservation, Access, Safety and Education is gratefully appreciated.

Total \$ .00

Tick to receive a receipt

Make cheques out to "NZRCA" and send to PO Box 284 Wellington. **Welcome!**

### For NZRCA Use Only

Membership ID

Receipt #

Response Date

Deposited