THE RUN OF THE RIVER
Portraits of Eleven British Columbia Rivers

Mark Hume
B.C. writer; award winning writer for the
Vancouver Sun

New Star Books Ltd
ISBN 0-921586-00-0
http://www.newstarbooks.com/

Anyone interested in BC rivers, the impacts to fish
from industry, and to readers who are fishers of
BC rivers.

An “at home” writer known for his outdoor writing,
Hume gives a concise review of eleven BC rivers,
celebrating them while considering how industrial
developments have impacted both rivers and fish. He looks at recent BC history, the politics
of developments, our lack of knowledge of what was being done, and puts into question
planned future developments. Each river profile contains a story of people who frequent,
fish, live, or otherwise are connected to the river. These personal stories hit home as to the
impacts or changes the rivers have, or are experiencing.

There is a selected chapter-by-chapter bibliography for further reading.

Overview
Industrial work in and around rivers causes impacts, and often we learn their extent well after the fact. In
many cases, we question in hindsight why this or that was done. Hume gives us a review of the politics of
Alcan and the Nechako River; dam building on the Columbia and Peace Rivers; turn of the last century
logging practices on the Upper Adams River; what we only recently found out about steelhead in the
Thompson and Deadman Rivers; etc. All presented through the experiences of people directly involved or
affected by these rivers, or those who fish these rivers.

As a side Note: for those who enjoy fishing and are interested in stories of fish and fishing, try this BC-
based web site that Mark Hume is involved with: http://www.ariverneversleeps.com/

Chapters & Points of Interest
1. The 17 Year Cicada – The Columbia
   • 2,000 km long, second only to the Fraser River, twice the length of the Peace River
   • smelter at Trail, pulp mill at Castlegar
   • in the US, Grand Coulee Dam (1940), Chief Joseph (1954)
in Canada, Mica (1973), Revelstoke (1979)
by 1975 Columbia River Power System consisted of 28 dams; fish losses
introduced rainbow fish into Lake Roosevelt behind Grand Coulee migrate up to Trail and become
the most productive trout fishery in North America
issues with river water surges with releases from dams

2. Ingenika Drowning – The Peace
Bennett Dam (1967) backs up 362 km long Williston Lake
native people flooded out – compensation?
in 1968 Federal government start new reserve at Mackenzie
by 1990 land claims issues arise

3. An Acceptable Level of Certainty – Taking Down The Nechako
Alcan Kenny dam, Kemano aluminum production and low cost electricity
native people flooded out, low river flows and fish concerns

4. Moon In It’s House – The Thompson
Thompson and Nicola rivers
uniqueness of steelhead – trout or salmon?
stories of steelhead at Spences Bridge – their “discovery” in 1947

5. Swimming At Night – The Deadman
steelhead traced from Thompson to Deadman river in late 1970’s – it was not known they where there
concern of loss of steelhead as incidental catch with salmon at mouth of Fraser
low water flow issues

sockeye lost from Salmon with series of rock slides in Hells Gate in 1913
Salmon River habitat loss, erosion, low flows, agricultural water use
many late-run salmon got by the Hells Gate slides so Adams less affected
Upper Adams salmon lost due to use of river to move logs from 1907 – re-stocking efforts mostly unsuccessful – genetic code of fish lost

7. The Great River – The Stikine
flows into Alaska – Canada / US fishing issues
issues of proposed mines and their supply roads
possible dam at Grand Canyon

8. The Colour of Copper – The Tatshenshini
issue of possible copper mine and access roads
Royal BC Museum species survey in 1991

9. Valley of Grizzlies – The Khutzeymateen
grizzly bears being studied – how they interact with the river and surrounding land
logging issues

10. The River Guardians – The Cowichan
problem of managing for multiple fish species
major water license of Crofton pulp mill and weir at Cowichan Lake

west coast logging issues
keeping intact ecosystems versus economical returns of logging
This is a worthwhile publication for adults interested in the preservation of our natural resources, especially the salmon fisheries of the west coast of Canada.

The author, Mark Hume, is obviously a naturalist, fisherman, author and realist. The above are not necessarily in that order, but his writings show his love for nature and his regret at the loss of the beauty and bounty of the B.C. river systems. He has no love for Alcan Aluminum, B.C. Hydro, the B.C. government, or the federal government because of their narrow economic view of the worth of the great British Columbia rivers and their tributaries.

Hume believes clear-cut logging, mining, and shoreline farming all have contributed to the destruction of the spawning grounds of what were once the greatest salmon and steelhead reserves in the world. Silt and extreme high and low water levels have drastically reduced the reproduction of fish. Based on personal observations and dialogue with natural resources personnel, Hume states that B.C. fishing has been plagued by laws that allow anyone to use the waters of the great rivers without regard for flow levels, toxic contamination or spawning fish. Hume writes that the abuse of the rivers and the empty promises of those who said they would build adequate fisheries if their use of the river caused any problems can be readily documented.

The writer sees very little hope for the recovery of B.C.’s river systems and their spawning grounds unless the citizens of the province rise up and condemn those responsible. He hopes that people across Canada will also raise their voices in protest at the rape of our natural environment and will rebuke those prominent individuals who seek financial gain at the expense of our resources.

The book has eleven chapters, each dealing with a major B.C. river system. It also includes an index. Unfortunately, it is lacking in illustrations, which would have assisted the reader in seeing how various dams, flow levels, etc., affect the fish populations and those who are dependent on these natural resources. This is, however, a worthwhile publication and would be an asset to any library resource area.