

Mackenzie Mountains

Represented by: Nahanni National Park Reserve

8

LIMESTONE FANTASIES

A complex land of magnificent beauty on a staggering scale. Boiling rivers sluicing through canyon walls that soar over a thousand metres upwards. Broad plateaux washed in shades of red by dwarf birch. Limestone fantasy-landscapes of sinkholes, pinnacles, rock bridges and stalactite-studded caves leading "God knows where".



Virginia Falls, Nahanni National Park Reserve

THE LAND:

This is a limestone land of mountains and broad plateaux. The wide sweeping valleys of the Mackenzie and Liard rivers cut through this region. Rivers slice through the extensive high plateaux and mountains, carving deep canyons. Those of the South Nahanni are best known, but similar breathtaking canyons are found along other rivers in this region. Some of the most spectacular karst formations in the world are located here.



South Nahanni River, Third Canyon

VEGETATION:

Dense boreal forests of white and black spruce, with stands of jack pine or lodgepole pine, cover the rolling uplands and terraces above the Mackenzie and Liard river valleys. Open boreal forests, interspersed with tundra covered by dwarf birch or grasses cloak the mountain flanks and high plateaux. Extensive areas of alpine tundra are found throughout this region.

Natural Region 8

WILDLIFE:

Large mammals include grizzly bear, black bear, woodland caribou, Dall's sheep, mountain goat, moose, wolf, wolverine, lynx and many more. Wood bison have been recently re-established in the Liard



Golden Eagle

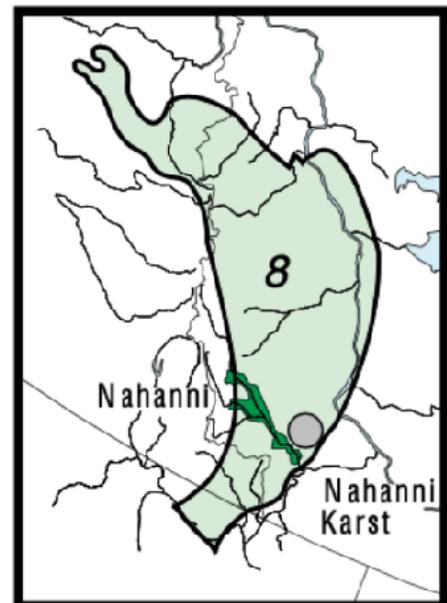
Valley. The rare trumpeter swan breeds in this region. Because of the diversity of habitats - from spruce forests to alpine tundra - both arctic and temperate species thrive here.

STATUS OF NATIONAL PARKS:

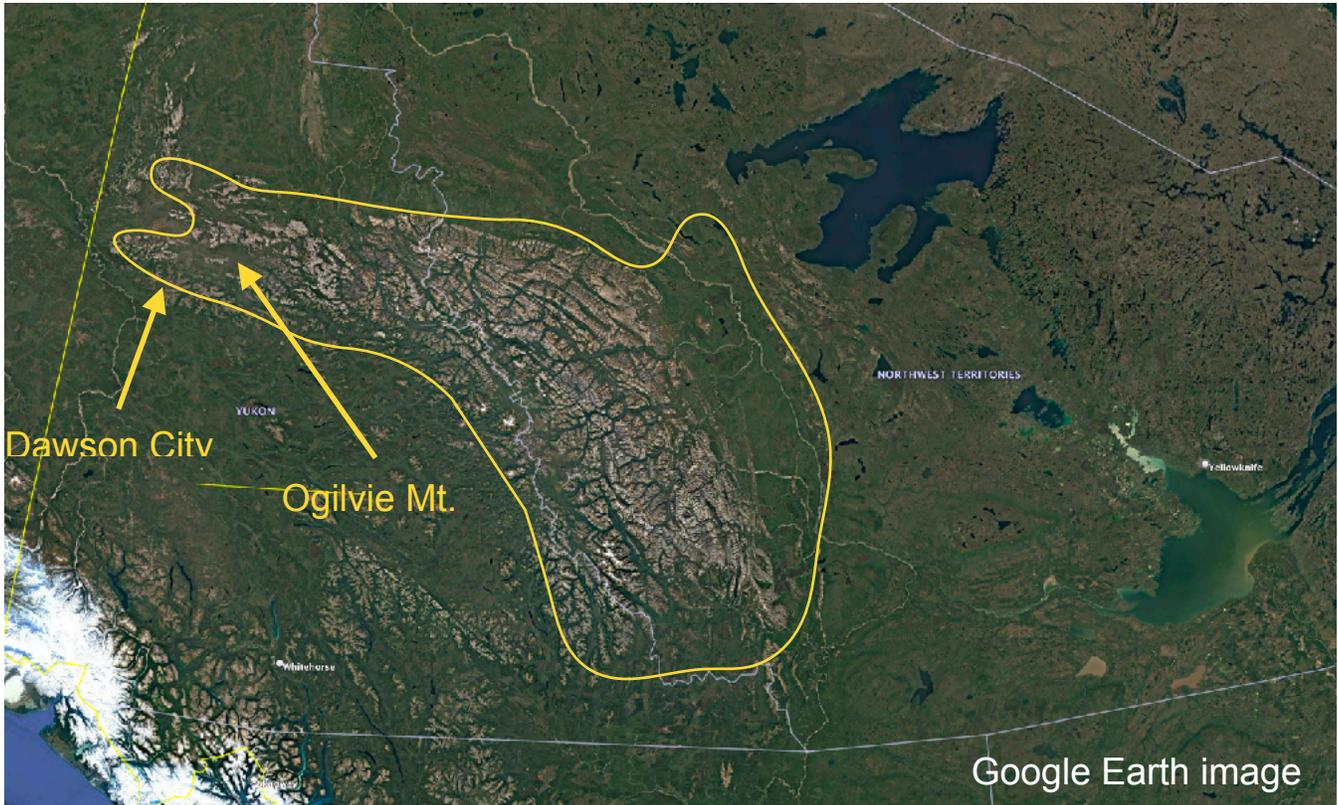
Nahanni National Park Reserve (4,765 km²) represents this natural region. One of Canada's great wild rivers, the South Nahanni, rushes through this World Heritage Site. Some of the deepest river canyons in the world, spectacular mountains, bizarre karstlands, and a wealth of wildlife give this park its marvellous and unique character. Virginia Falls, more than twice the height of Niagara, is the best-known feature of the park. Nahanni provides critical habitat for significant wildlife species such as Dall's sheep, black and grizzly bear, wolf, golden eagle, peregrine falcon and trumpeter swan.

Established in 1976, Nahanni is scheduled as a National Park Reserve under the National Parks

Act. Outstanding Aboriginal issues must be resolved by government before Nahanni can be proclaimed as a national park. Expansion of present boundaries should be considered in the future to improve natural theme representation, encompass additional visitor opportunities, and to help protect the ecological integrity of the park reserve. For example, important Dall's sheep habitat is currently excluded from the park reserve. Portions of the Nahanni Karst, Tlogotsho Plateau and Ragged Range areas have been identified for future study.



Canoeing the South Nahanni, a Canadian Heritage River



The Ogilvie and Richardson Mountains are two ranges adjacent to the west end of the Mackenzie Mountains.

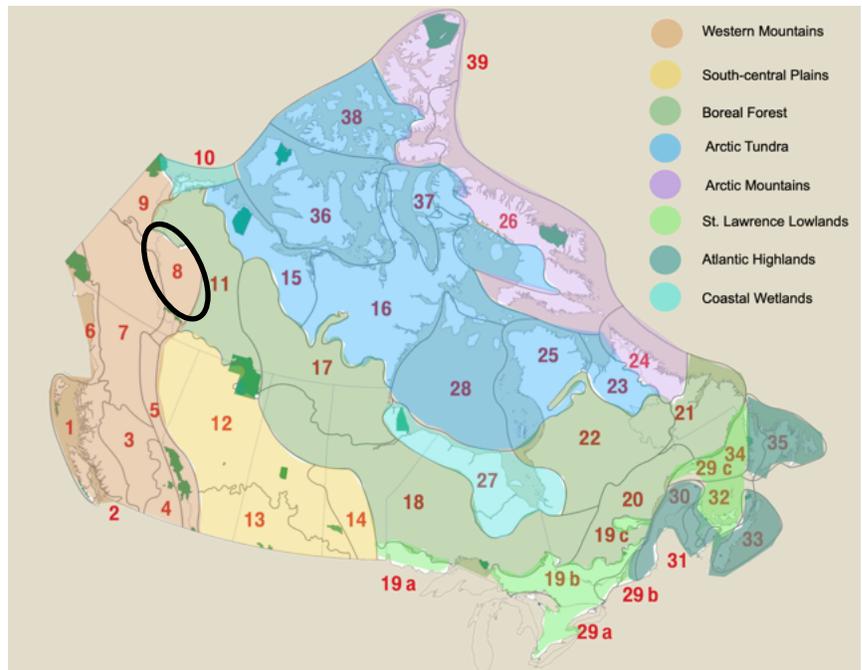
Major Land Uses
 Traditional living
 Mining

Main Communities
 Fort Liard
 Liard Hot Springs

Aboriginal Peoples
 Kaska, Northern Tutchone

Parks and Natural Areas
 Nahanni National Park
 Tombstone Territorial Park
 Mackenzie River

Further Information





Rob Gardner

The Dempster Highway crosses the headwaters of the Arctic Red River, at the western end of the Richardson Mountains.



Looking south across the scrubby forest of 9 Northern Yukon to the rocky but not very jagged peaks of the western-most Richardson Mountains

Rob Gardner



The Ogilvie Mountains, located near the south end of the Dempster Highway, were not glaciated during the most recent Ice Age, leaving them fairly rounded. But how could central Yukon not be glaciated, when almost all of southern Canada was covered with ice? It was too cold to snow! The moist winds from the Pacific Ocean had the snow stripped out as they flowed over the frigid coastal mountains, including those in southwestern Yukon. This cold but dry scene has changed little over the past 100,000 years, other than the mammoths, camels and other giant mammals not surviving.

Wood bison, grizzly bear and moose are just some of the large mammals found in the southern parts of the Mackenzie Mountains. These were photographed from the Alaska Highway near Liard Hot Springs, BC.

