

Intro to the Canning & Kongakut Rivers (Arctic National Wildlife Refuge)

This booklet of photos and general information is formatted to fit on a phone, intended to be a companion with two other documents on the Alaska Native Plant Society website: <https://aknps.org>. Those are a checklist of flora (names only), and a booklet of wildflower photos and field ID notes for some plants of the Canning & Kongakut Rivers. These are wilderness rivers, popular for floating, and offer great hiking to high ridges in the Brooks Range. The arctic and alpine factors, nearness to the Beaufort Sea, and a great deal of limestone gives them a diverse flora and wildlife viewing opportunities.

The Alaska Native Plant Society is a non-profit organization founded in 1982 to promote awareness, education and preservation of Alaska native flora.

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A small number of pilots who know the country, and have specialized aircraft, provide access to the Canning & Kongakut Rivers. They are very busy in the summer, make arrangements well in advance.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Pack-rafts are good options for the mix of hike and float on many Arctic rivers.



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Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Preparations for sitting in ice cold water all day are standard practice, but warm sunny days are normal.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

To access good hiking often requires getting across braided rivers.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Brown bears in the region are fearful of humans, and not often seen. Keeping a clean camp and cooking away from sleeping areas will help avoid problems.



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Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Various routes on the Kongakut and Canning Rivers can be connected to other rivers with some backpacking.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Upper Canning River in late summer.



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Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Going over Carter Pass on the crest of the Brooks Range connects the upper Canning to rivers in the Yukon drainage.



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Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Fall tundra, berries & carpet of color.



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By late August, snow can be expected in the Brooks Range.



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Fall caribou migration through Carter Pass.



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Bearflower (*Boykinia richardsonii*) turns bronze-colored in late summer (upper Canning River gravel bar).



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

On the way to Carter Pass, canyons in the upper Canning.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

On the way to Carter Pass, canyon of the upper Canning. The steep upper slopes were etched with caribou trails.



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Canning & Kongakut Rivers

On the way to Carter Pass, canyon of the upper Canning. The steep upper slopes were etched with caribou trails.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Hiking Arctic rivers, frequently crossing braided channels. Forget trying to keep the feet dry, extra socks are easy.



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Arctic alpine vegetation makes impressive attachment to cracks in the rock. Moss Champion (*Silene acaulis* ssp. *subacaulescens*).



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Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Upper Canning.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Upper parts of both the Canning & Kongakut Rivers have calcium rich rocks which give a diverse flora, unique to this region. This photo is fossil coral.



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Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Muir's Fleabane (*Erigeron muirii*) is a rare plant in Alaska, limited to the high arctic. The dense woolly covering and large daisy-like flowers are unmistakable.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Limestone ridges above the Canning & Kongakut Rivers are like wildflower gardens. Alaska Phlox (*Phlox alaskensis*) and Muir's Fleabane (*Erigeron muirii*) in the Shublik Mountains just above the lower Canning River Valley.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Kamchatka Cinquefoil (*Potentilla vulcanicola*) is one of eight different bright yellow cinquifoils that can be found on ridge lines of the region.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Arctic rivers are well known for the hazards of augeis. These slabs remains well into summer, and often have strong current flowing under the ice, which can trap boats and suck them under.



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Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Experienced rafters provide much instruction in standard ways of navigation and river skills.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Mid-June is usually a good time for river travel with plenty of snow-melt to avoid dragging boats, and few bugs, but weather can be surprisingly cold.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Mid-June weather can be surprisingly cold.



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Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Mid-June storms might dump several inches of snow, but likely to melt in a couple days. River travel can be floating through a winter scene.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Bog Rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia* ssp. *pumila*) on the Canning River.



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Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Richardson's Phlox (*Phlox richardsonii*) is something like a dwarf of the more common Alaska Phlox. It's a limestone loving rare plant in Alaska.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

McConnells Poppy (*Papaver mcconnellii*) on a Kongakut River gravel bar.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Arctic rivers are known for the unusual hazard, augeis. These slabs remains well into summer, often have strong current flowing under the ice, and can trap boats and suck them under. This one was bonded to the gravel bar, no current going under.



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Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Aufeis often has a channel of safe passage where river current flows, but that can change to strong currents going under the ice.



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Tussock Cotton Grass (*Eriophorum vaginatum vaginatum*) is dominant in wet uplands along the rivers.



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Willow Ptarmigan chicks are almost invisible.



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Following a small tributary to find a good camping spot away from strong winds along the river.



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Yellow Lichen (*Vulpicida juniperinus*) is a bright yellow limestone loving lichen.



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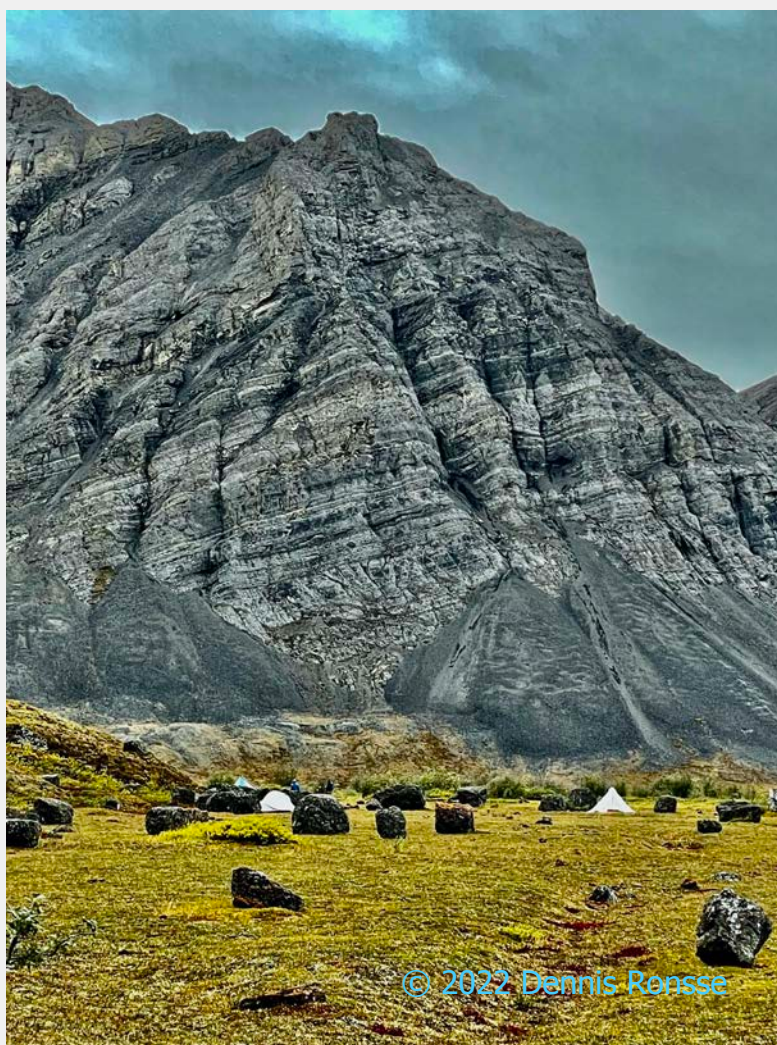
Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Ridge lines offer great overlooks of the rivers and interesting flora, like Glacier Avens (*Geum glaciale*) with large fuzzy golf ball-looking fruits.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Marsh Fork of the Canning has a big, steeply walled valley and ideal campsites.



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Set up for the night on the lower Kongakut, rafts tipped over.



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Dwarf Alpine Hawk's Beard (*Ascellia pygmaea*) is frequently found in river bar gravels. It is grown as a rock garden ornamental, according to the Rock Garden Society website.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Hikers scan for wolves, caribou, and bears from a ridge above the Kongakut Valley.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Arctic Lupine (*Lupinus arcticus arcticus*) on a low ridge above the Kongakut. Flowers are normally blue, rarely white.



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Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Arctic Char in the Kongakut.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

High Arctic Dandelions (*Taraxacum hyparcticum*) are creamy-white.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Limestone ridges along the Kongakut are loaded with wildflowers.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Many ridges have prominent little overlooks.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

No trail needed in firm tundra to ascend ridges, 2,000 to 3,000 above the river.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Evening hiking after a storm.



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Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Overlooking the Kongakut, large patches of aufeis on the river.



Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Just above the Kongakut River Valley, hikers stopped to scan for wildlife.



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Rafting the Kongakut, below the canyon, observers on shore to provide assistance if needed.



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Canning & Kongakut Rivers

Gathering aufeis for coolers.



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Bear tracks seem to be everywhere but they normally avoid getting near humans.



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Viewed from an aircraft, wet arctic tundra shows polygon shapes of permafrost.



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