

Stanislaus River Helicopter Flight

Up River Atlas, Parrott's Ferry to Camp Nine

December 1979

(Likely from National Park Service or BLM project)

Created 2022 by Larry Orman from video for

www.StanislausRiver.org

INTRODUCTION

This atlas is to provide an as-exact-as-possible record of every part of the nine mile run of the Stanislaus River, which was destroyed in 1983.

The basis is two helicopter video flights of the river in 1979, possibly under sponsorship of BLM or the National Park Service.

One flight was upriver, in December 1979. This flight has the better imagery as the weather was sunny. The video quality, however, is poor – but better than the other helicopter flight downriver. The images in the atlas have been adjusted to improve their tone and levels, within the limits of the screen captures and the videotape itself. Some on the ground photos are provided as further documentation of each section of river. The atlas has been arranged to go upriver, just like the flight.

The flight begins just below the Parrott's Ferry take out (with the new bridge present) and then continues up to Camp Nine. The river was very low, probably 5-600 cfs, so many rapids appear quite rocky.

The video of this flight and much other information is on www.StanislausRiver.org.



Parrott's Ferry overview

The new bridge is in the foreground and the take out flat can be seen behind it.





Parrott's Ferry

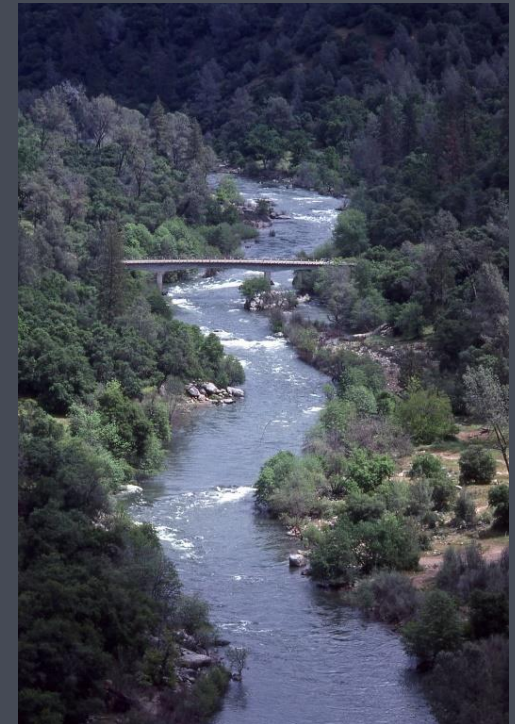
(left) View of the take out area, and road to Vallecito on the far left.





Parrott's Ferry landing area

The old Parrott's Ferry bridge is in the background, with the main landing area for take out visible as a small green patch between the trees.

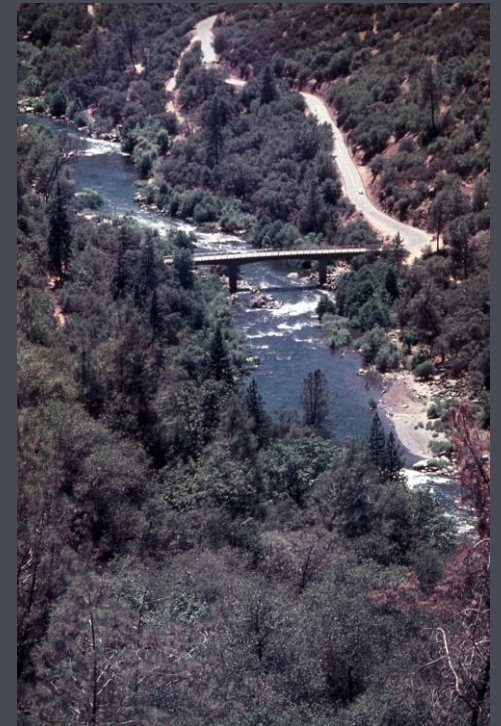




Parrott's Ferry Bridge

The bridge with the main landing area to the right. Fred's Rapid in the far distance.

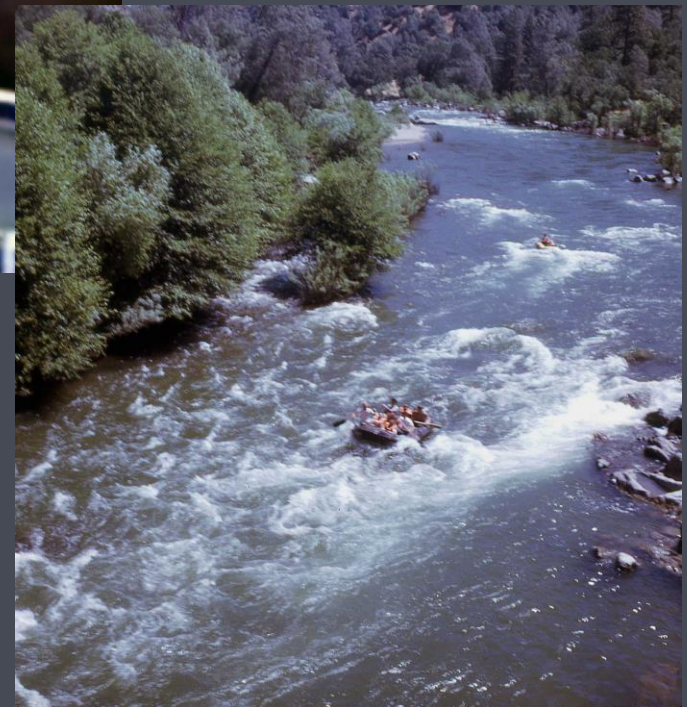
Parrott's Ferry/808' is always the limit, forever – human markers on the bridge, lower left, 1980.





Parrott's Ferry Rapid

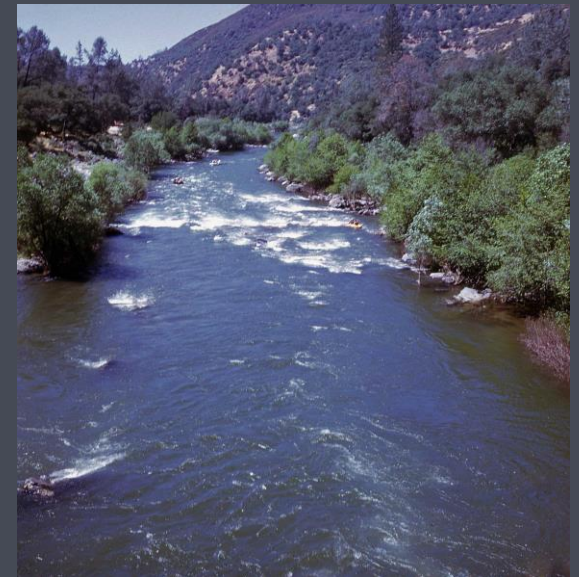
Small rapid just before take out, with its distinctive large rock on river left, next to the whitewater.





Fred's Rapid

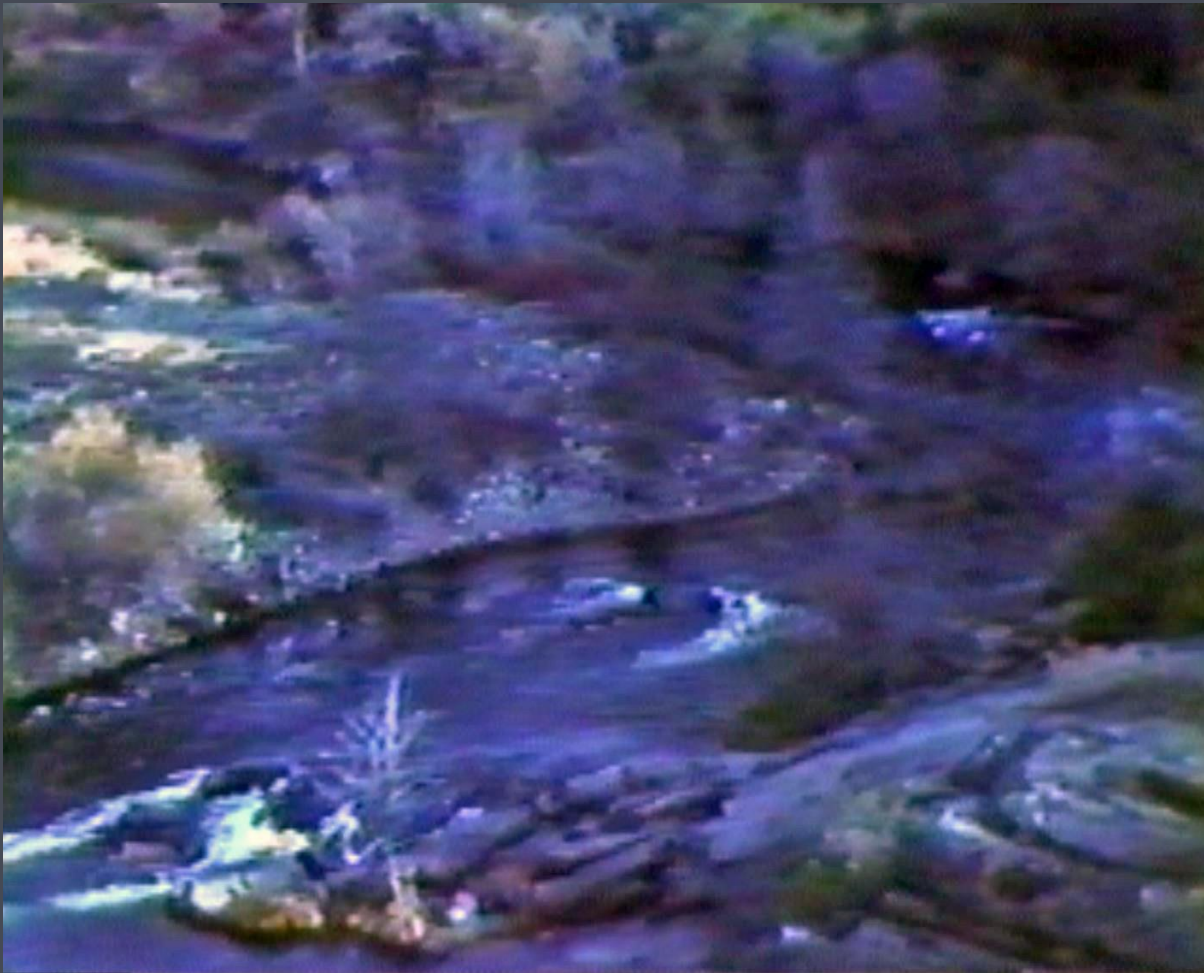
This small rapid that flowed over to river left was next to Fred Dennis' trailer on the flat on river right. Many a kayaker learned to surf and roll on this small wave, because the large pool right below provided lots of space for swimming!





Fred's Rapid and above

Just above Fred's Rapid (bottom of this image) was a gently flowing section that wound around below Chicken Falls, just out of sight at top of photo.



Chicken Falls overview

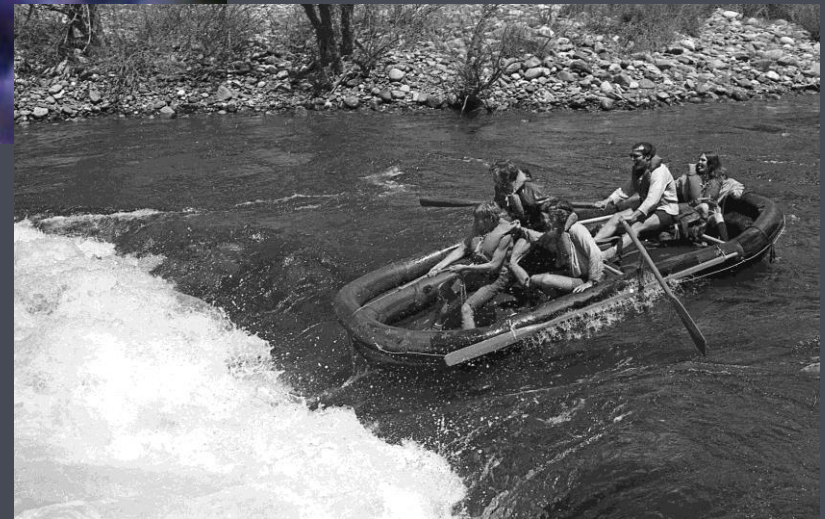
The sharp drop is in the lower left side of this image, while the bend to the right shows clearly above.

The rock ledge that pushes out into the main drop was a great place for getting close-up photos.



Chicken Falls Rapid

At the end of a sharp curve around to river right, this little ledge and boulder set provided for outstanding bumps! Those who weren't up for it could "chicken" out to the right.





Immediately above Chicken Falls

The entry to Chicken Falls shows at the bottom of this image, while the long flat section above features the great sand beach on river left (middle of image), a popular spot for hikers and others.



“Manhattan Beach”

Closer view of the beach on river left, and the gentle riparian landscape on this lower part of the river.

Chinese Dogleg rapid is just out of sight up river.





Chinese Dogleg Rapid

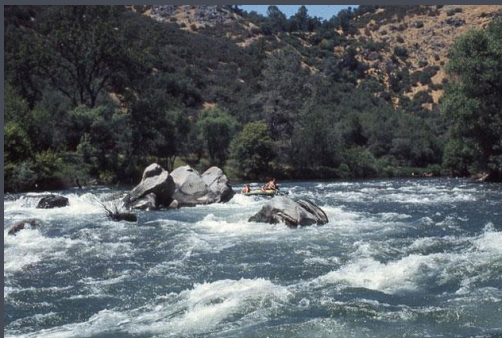
Most of Chinese Dogleg Rapid (also called S Turn) shows here – the entry is river left and then through a winding turn sharp right at the bottom. Avoid those rocks at the bottom!





Chinese Dogleg close up view

This low water view doesn't show the rambunctious waves at the bottom of the rapid.





Pool above Dogleg

Calm area just above Dogleg – the river bends to the right at the top of this image.



Further above Dogleg

The river bends to the right at the top of this image. The rock bar would frequently be covered with flowing water during most days.

Wino Swim is just a bit further upstream.



Just below Wino Swim

Wino Swim Rapid at top middle of this image. Note the long pool below the whitewater for easy swimmer recovery.



Wino Swim Rapid

A great favorite for rafters who wanted to take a long fun swim through a v-wave rapid.

Boatman's Rock is at upper right, see next image.





Boatman's Rock

Boatman's Rock was a large boulder in the middle of the river (it was apparently demolished sometime during the flooding of the river, see left). Guides could drift their rafts to its upstream side, casually climb out onto the rock and walk to the downstream side – if all was timed perfectly, the guide would step back into the raft, surprising their passengers who weren't usually aware of the move.

If you missed the set up, you dove and swam to catch the raft!

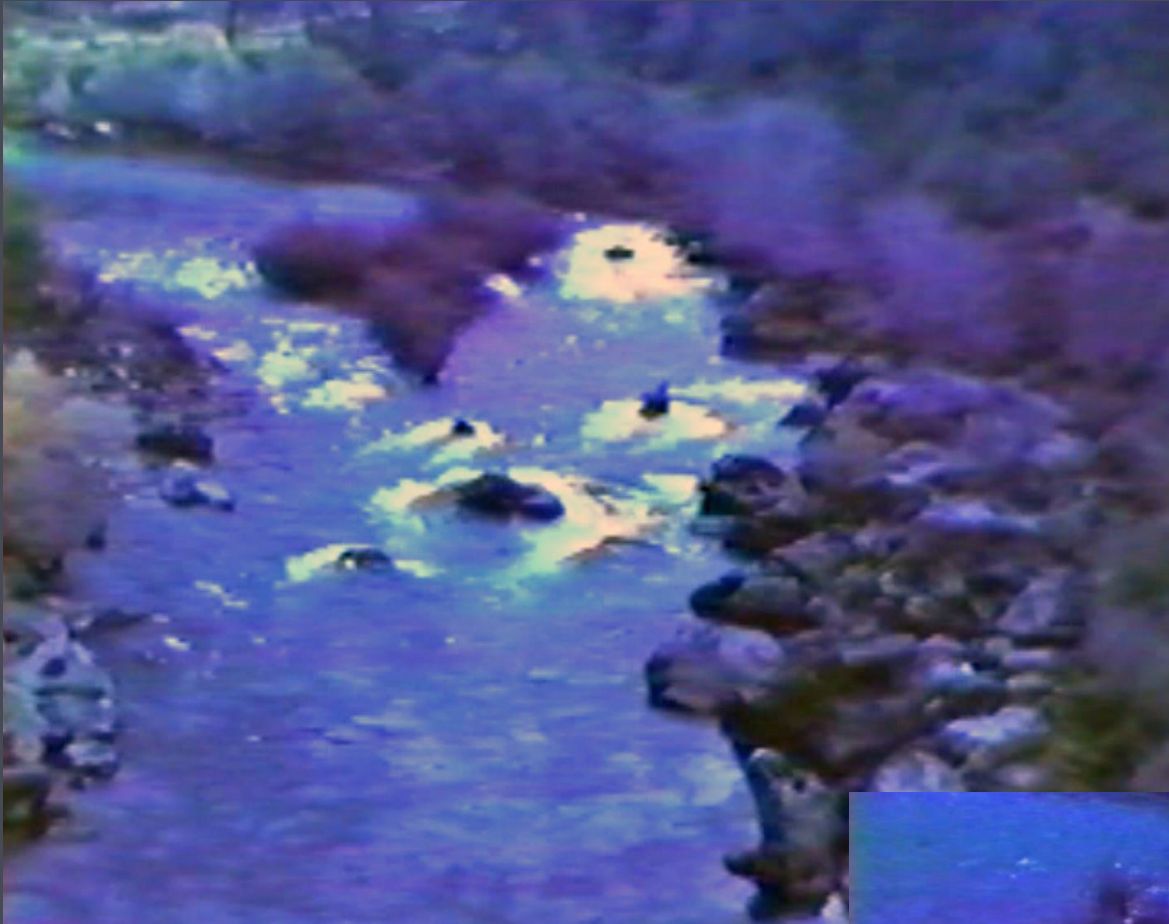
Wino Swim starts lower right, Sierra Club Rapid at top of image.



Sierra Club Rapid

The lower part of Sierra Club Rapid is at the top of this image. The name appears to come from a Club trip that had issues here.

(Boatman's Rock is submerged in the middle of the river in the foreground.)

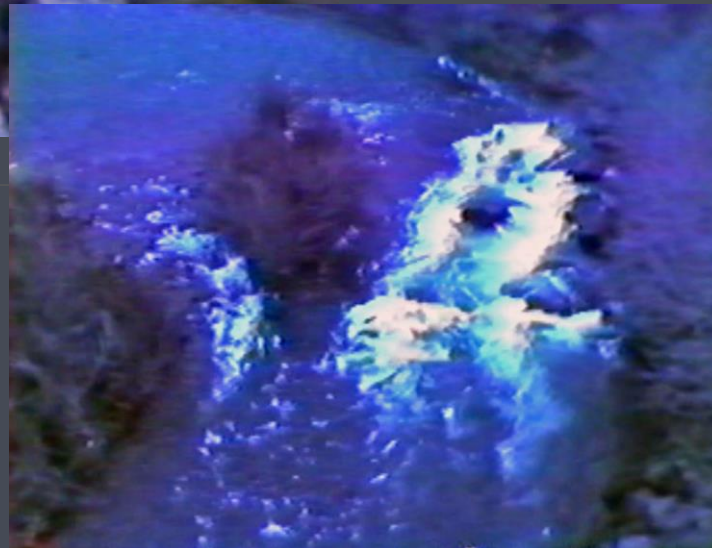


Sierra Club Rapid

Sierra Club Rapid had two (or if daring, three) entrances – easy on river right, a bit more tricky on river left, and a very tight move in the middle between the guard bushes.

From there, guides needed to maneuver to position for running the rocks/hole at the bottom right of the rapid (middle of this image).

The inset image shows the river left and center runs at the top of the rapid.



Photos of this area



Deep Throat Rapid

Immediately upstream of Sierra Club was Deep Throat – a very nasty ledge wave that came out only at high water (over 3,000 CFS). The ledge is visible in the middle of this image next to the wave.

Rumor has it that an ARTA guide trip ran two boats through it at 6,000 CFS on a moonlight night run, with chaotic results. Couldn't possibly be true . . .



Abbey's Ferry

This long flat section above Sierra Club and Deep Throat is likely the location of Abbey's Ferry (the rock bar in the lower left).

At right at the top of this image is the rock talus slope that ran into the river from the mine above (upper right, out of view).





Talus slope and iconic limestone cliffs

A closer up view of the talus slope from the mine (at right, white rocks) along this peaceful stretch.

On left in the image is a grassy area that was used by etc and others as a camp occasionally. The Cliffside camp is at the top of the river.

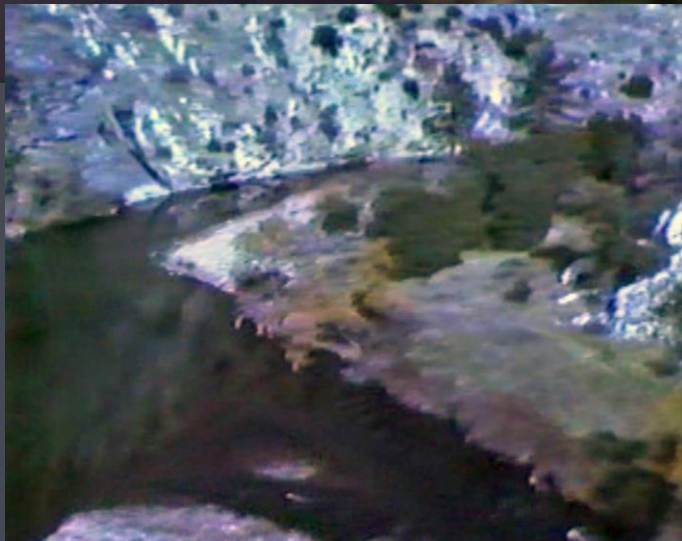
Shark's Mouth is in the massive cliff in the background.





Cliffside Camp

Cliffside was used mainly by ECHO and sat on the inside of the bend as the river came around to the left. Photo below is downriver from immediately upstream of the bend.





Shark's Mouth

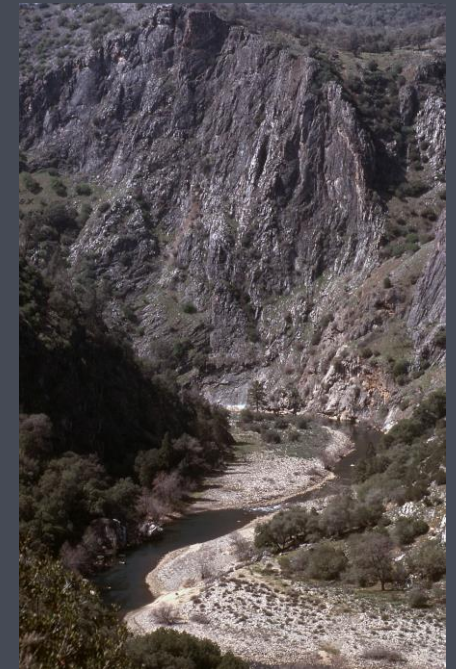
The awesome limestone formation on river right, in the huge cliff above this section of river was always fun to show people. As close as could be to a Great White shark, just 80' above the water!





Looking toward Zephyr Camp

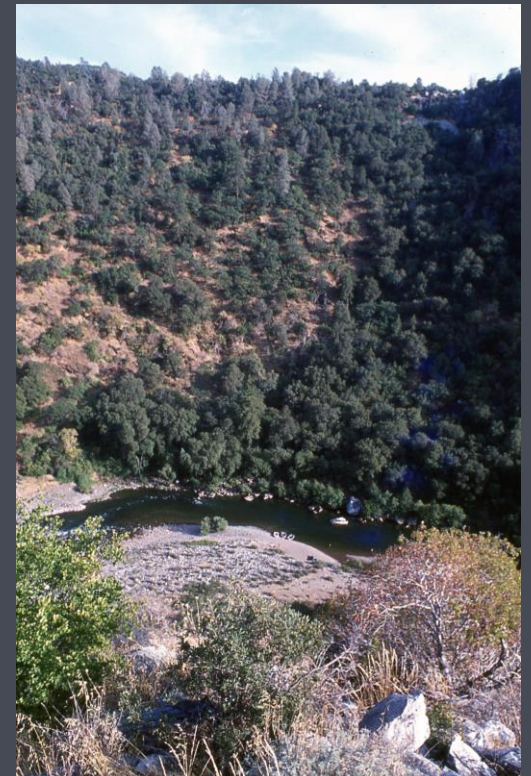
This view is roughly 500' upstream of the Shark's Mouth view on the prior page. The Zephyr Camp is on river right (circle), with the South Fork Stanislaus confluence just beyond. In image below, it is at bottom right.





Zephyr Camp

This rocky beach was home for Zephyr river trips, and sat just 200' below the South Fork Stanislaus confluence.



Downstream from Zephyr Camp



South Fork Stanislaus confluence

The South Fork came in here, just above Zephyr Camp – the landing area for trips was upstream of this a couple hundred feet.



South Fork Stanislaus landing area

The South Fork is at the right of this image, with the landing area for rafts up on the low water bar showing at top.

Just around the curve at the top of the image is Lower Chinese Camp – and Gar’s Treehouse was on river right in between it and the confluence, tucked away in the trees.





Calm water above confluence

This section of the river flowed
very gently in curves with small
riffles above.

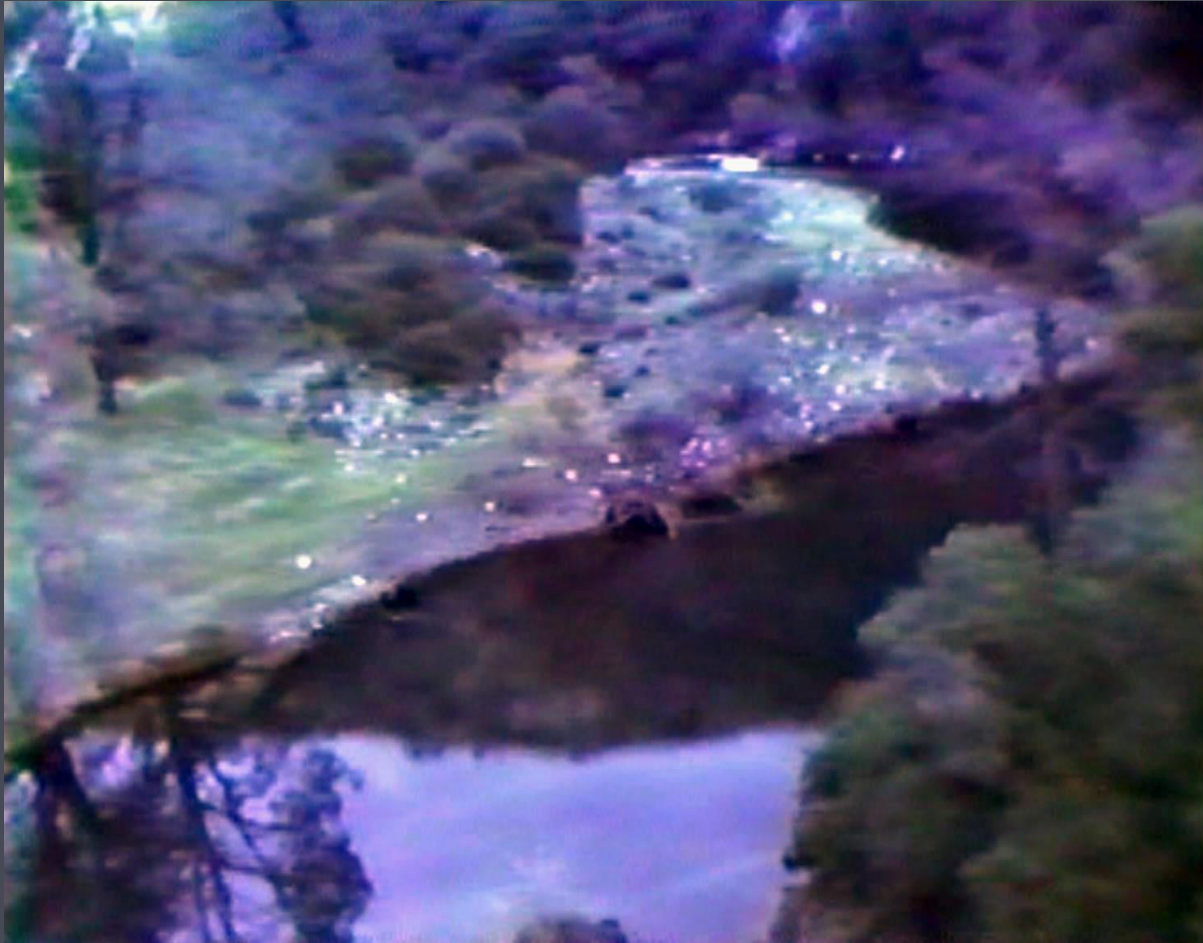




Riffles just below Chinese Camp

Chinese Camp is in the sunlit area at the top of these images – the bottom image is a closer up view of the top of the riffles at left.

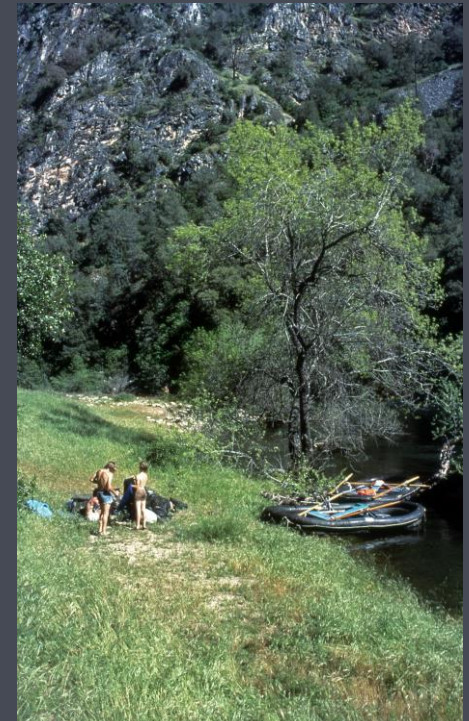




Lower Chinese Camp

Sitting at the base of a big bend of the river to the right, Lower Chinese was a peaceful haven for those staying overnight there.

At the top right of this image, Cop Rock Rapid is just visible.





Cop Rock Rapid

This innocent-seeming rapid on a big bend of the river to the right originally ensnared a police trip (or maybe 3 different ones!).

The extensive rock bar of Chinese Camp shows on the left.





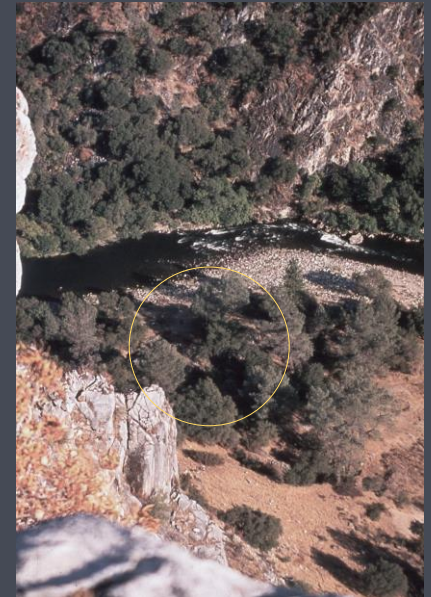
Upper Chinese/etc Camps

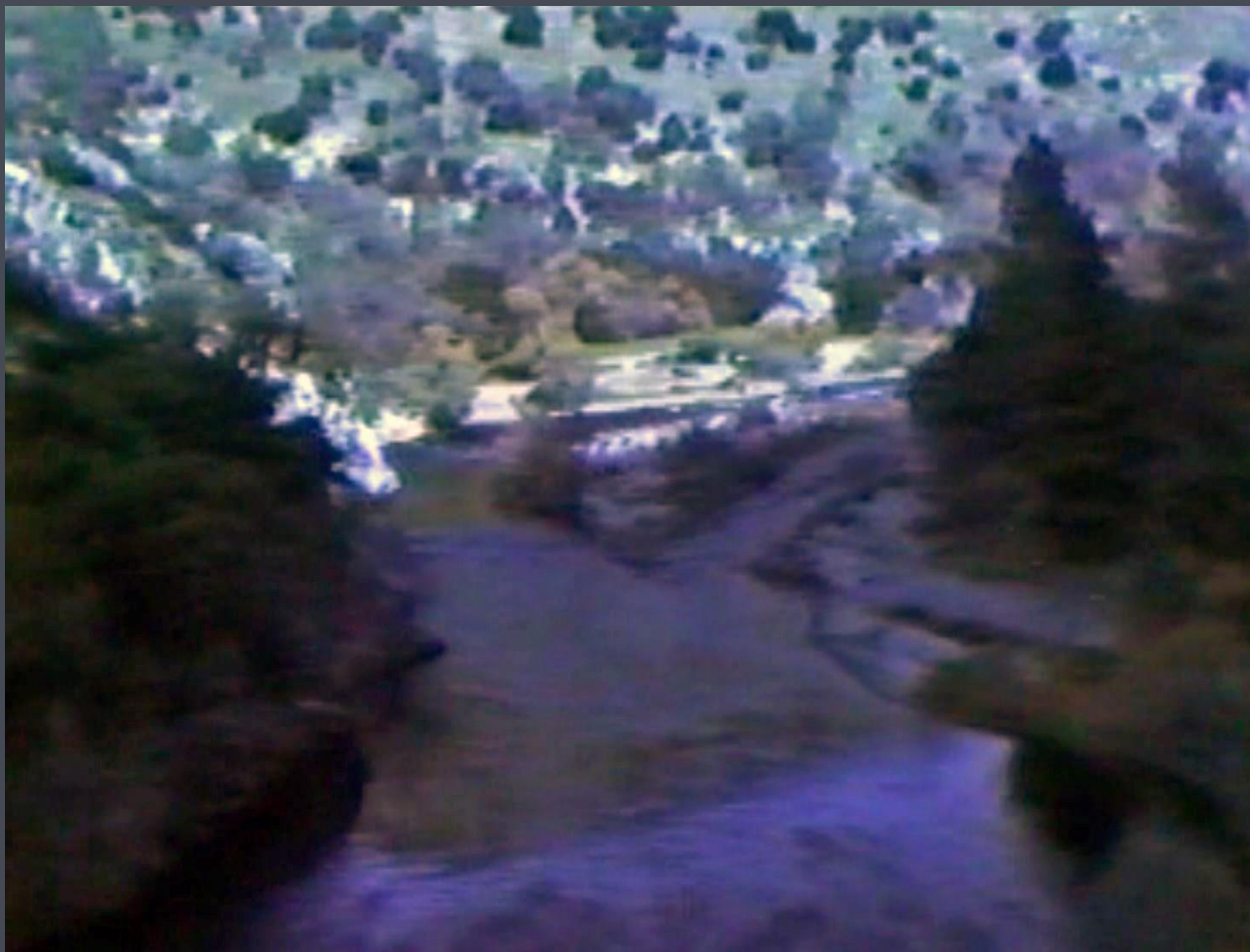
To the left is Upper Chinese Camp, while on the right of this image is the etc camp used by various outfitters. The helicopter flyover didn't capture Upper Chinese Camp itself, but see below.

Duck Bar is in the sunlight at top. Crystal Cave is to the upper left of this image.



Upper Chinese Camp (circles) and Cop Rock Rapid, middle right >





Looking to Duck Bar

The giant sand and rock pile known as Duck Bar sits in the sunlight in this images. Lower Duck Bar Camp is at the left side of the bar at the river.

This big sweep left of the river around Duck Bar created wonderful views of sunlight coursing through the canyon in the late afternoons.



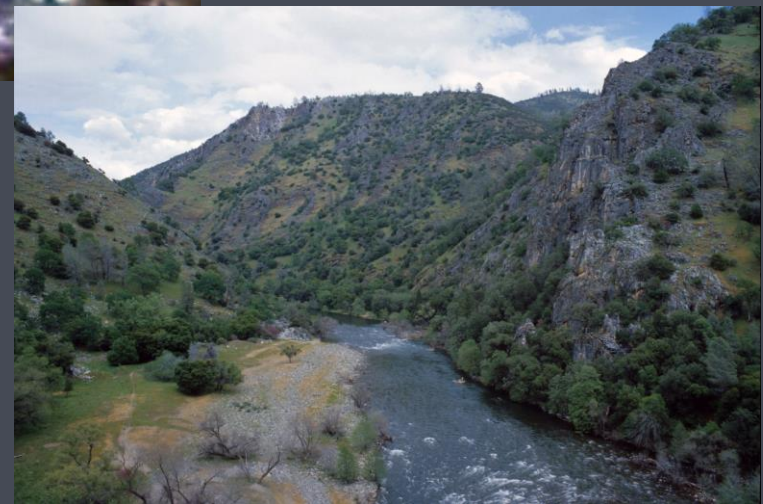
(<left) Late afternoon floating past Duck Bar which is on right; (right>) Duck Bar is lower right, Chinese Camp just beyond.

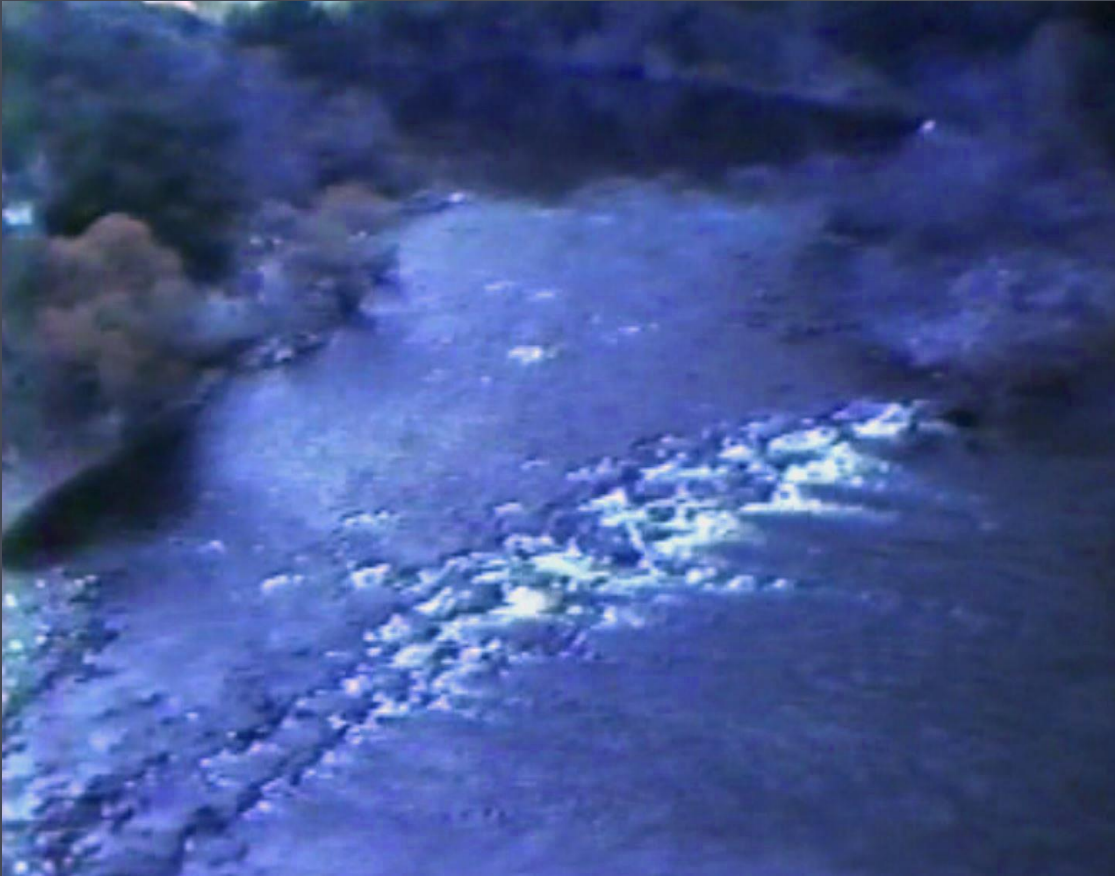




Duck Bar Camp

The large expanse of Duck Bar Camp shows here, with the giant fig tree at top middle of this image.





Pipeline Rapid, Duck Bar

To get by Duck Bar (left), guides had to navigate through the very rocky Pipeline Rapid, in lower water looking closely for the little run out (v-wave) in the middle.

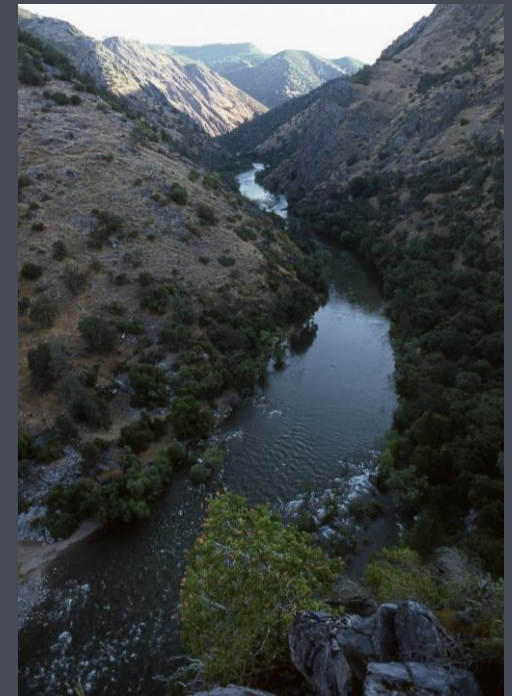
Photo below – the pipeline, used way back for mining.





Dubois Pool

This large pool, named after Mark, was a respite between Razorback and Duck Bar. It is marked by the huge, jagged limestone cliff at Duck, which overlooked the pool (below). Image at right shows just the upper pool, below Razorback; bottom photo shows whole of Dubois Pool.





Razorback Camp

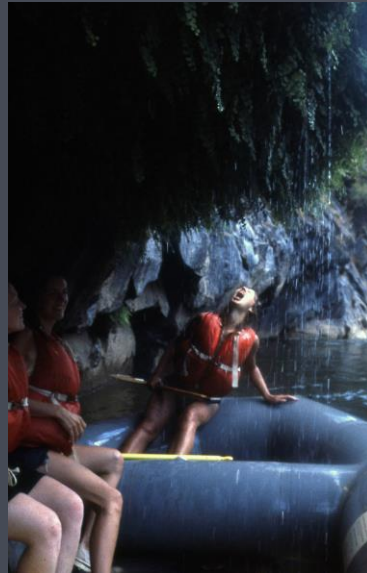
Just after Dubois Pool, the big rock bar (white area, at right) at Razorback made for a great campsite (lower image).





Razorback Rapid

With the river flowing all the way left, the narrow channel with a chert-studded boulder in the middle was a formidable obstacle. Immediately below on river left was the beautiful maidenhair fern spring coming out of the wall.





Lower Razorback Rapid

At higher water levels, the just rapid just below Razorback became a rollercoaster run, as water piled over the rocks there! See photo lower left.



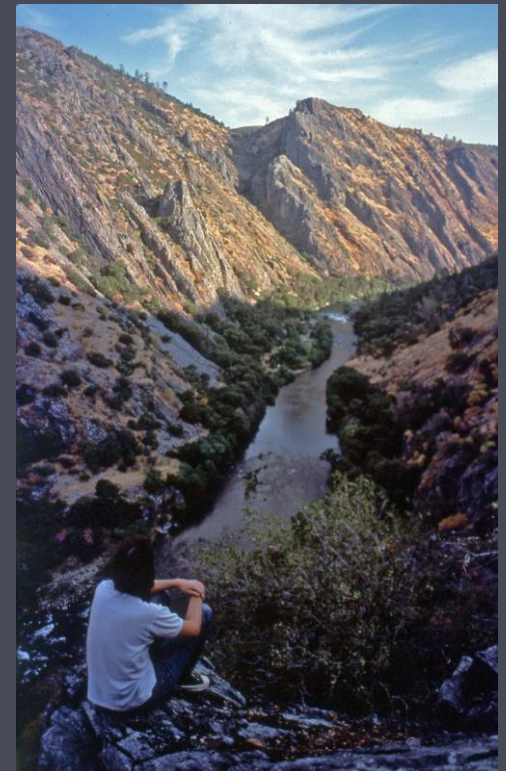
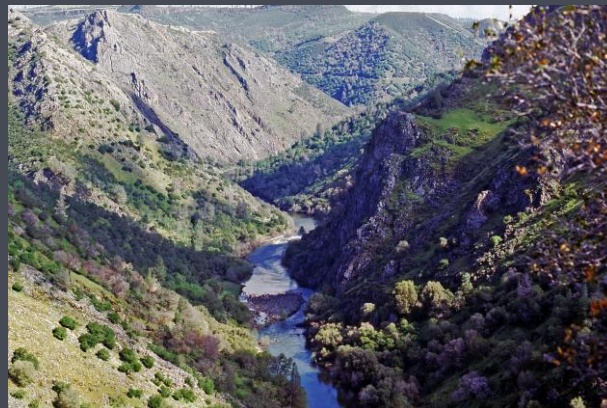
Photos of this area





Upstream of Razorback

Calm area with riffles above Razorback Camp and Rapid (circle below) became very scenic in late afternoons, when looking up to it from Razorback Camp.





Horn Rapid

Some called this riffle Horn Rapid, just above Razorback.





Pool before Mother Rapid

In between Mother Rapid (at top in left image) and Razorback was a fine stretch of flowing water, including great jumping rocks near Mother.

Photo below shows this scene, but looking downriver toward Duck Bar.





Mother Camp, jumping rocks

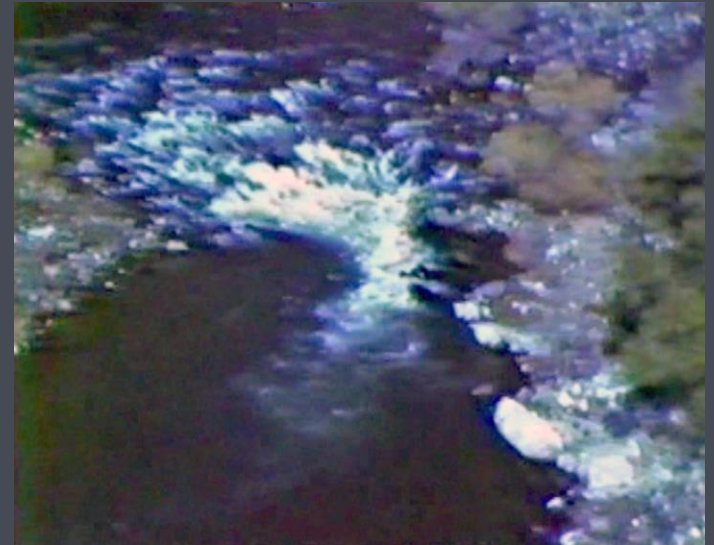
Mother Camp was at the very bottom of Mother Rapid, river right. The great 20' high limestone jumping rocks (circle at left) were a hundred yards below the camp.





Mother Rapid

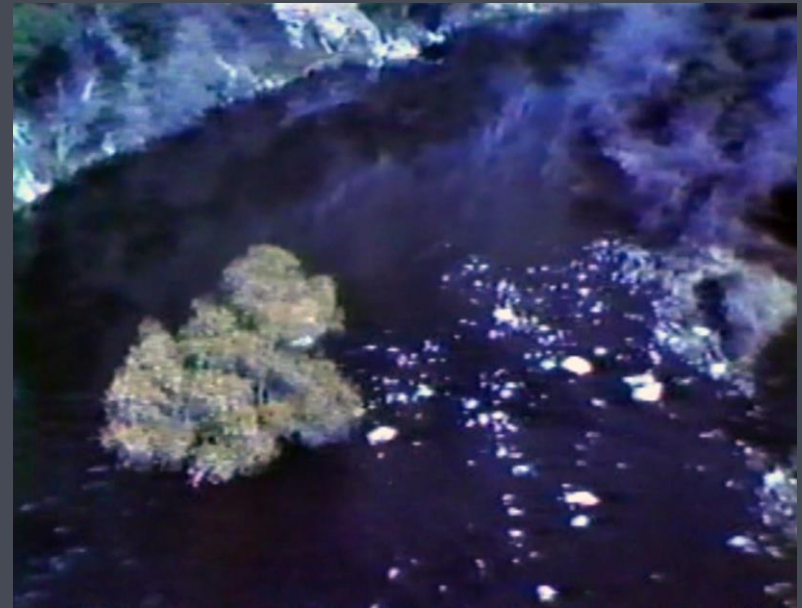
The whole river pushes you down river left, onto the rocks at the bottom! Skill required to avoid them.





Entrance to Mother Rapid

The icon tree in the river told you
Mother was waiting!





Marty's and Vail's Camps

The talus slope river right (from the big mine up above) marked these two beautiful river left camps on the pool right above the entrance to Mother Rapid.

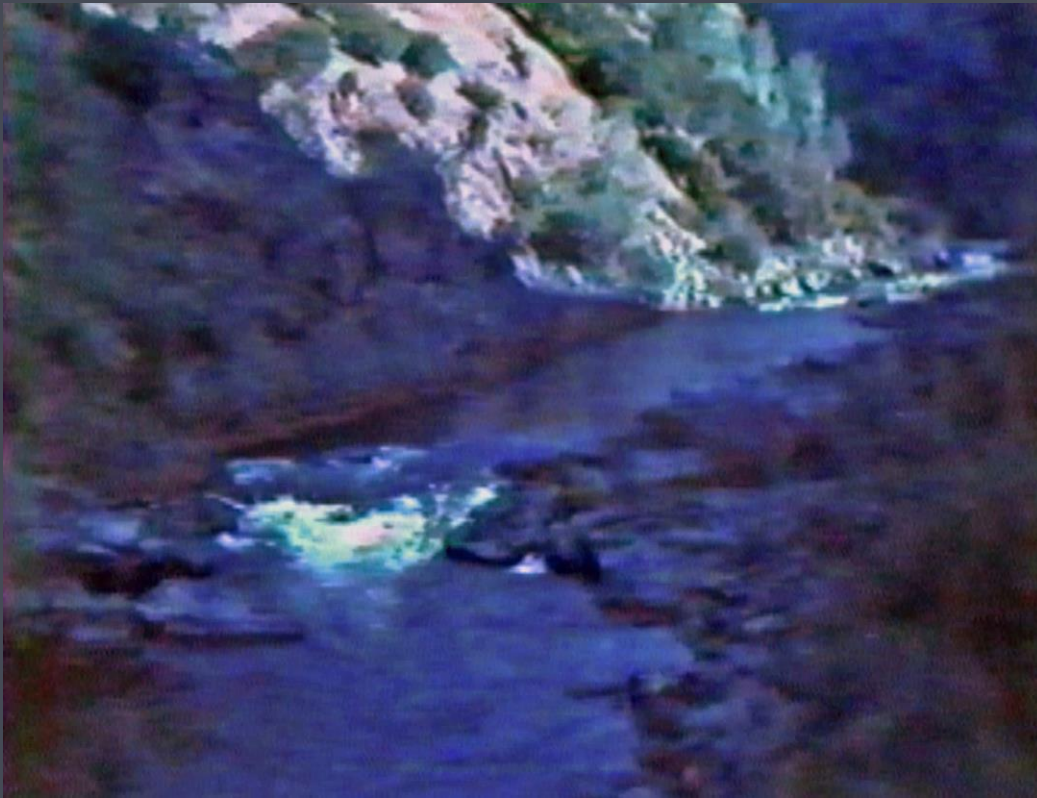




Above Vail's Camp, looking up to Rose Creek

Lower Rose Creek Rapid in the far distance.





Lower Rose Creek Rapid

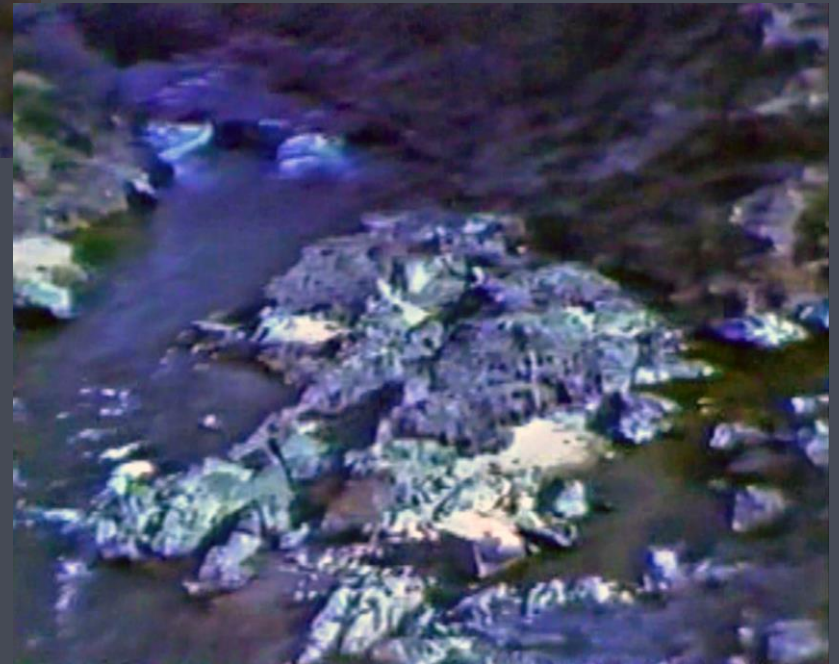
Nice drop 100 yards below Rose Creek landing area (in image at right, in the sunlit area).





Rose Creek confluence, landing area

Just below the confluence (on right) was the swimming rapid, and below that was the heavily used landing/lunch area for trips up Rose Creek. Six-Pack Rapid in distance.



Up Rose Creek



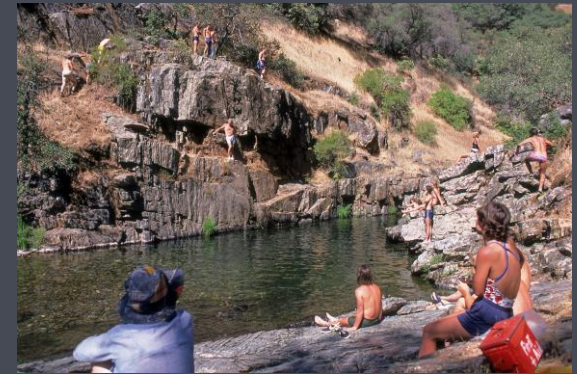
First pool, sliding rocks

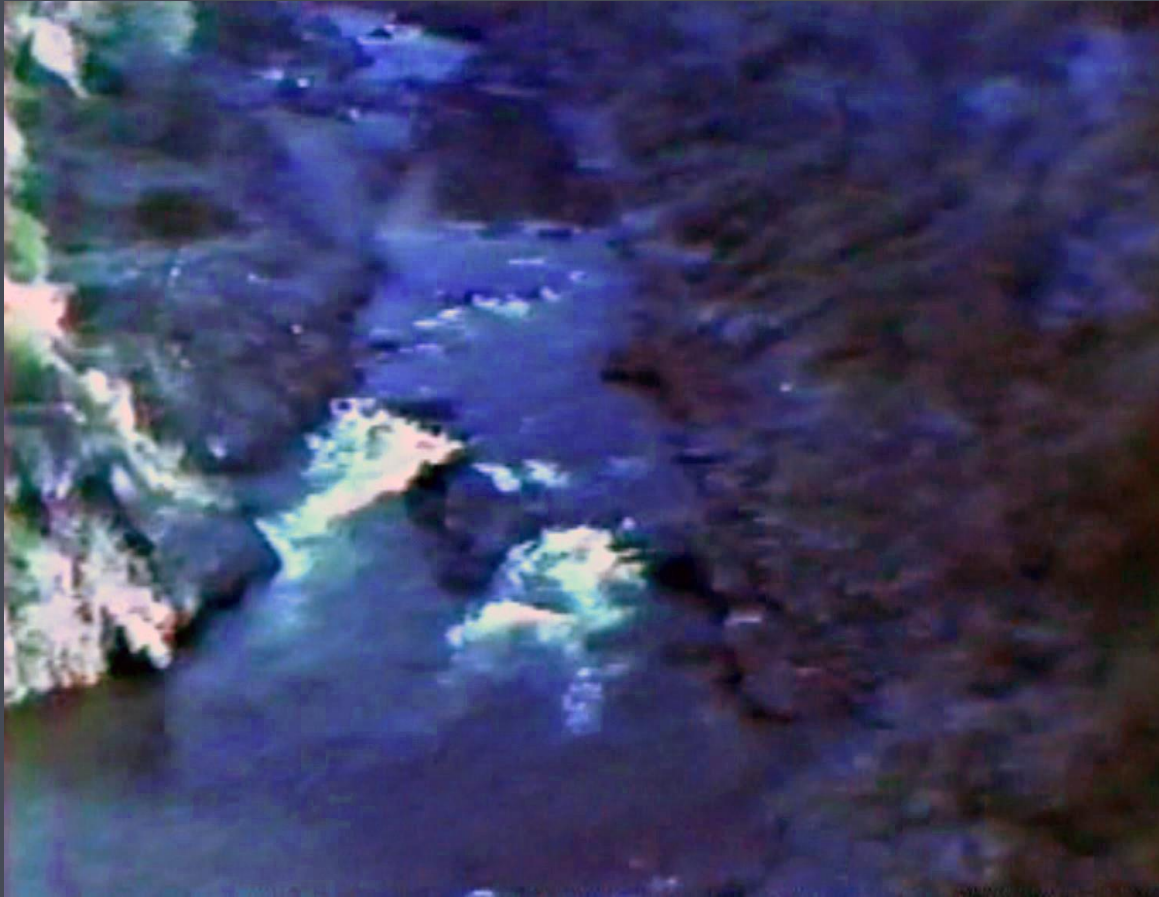


Small waterfalls above



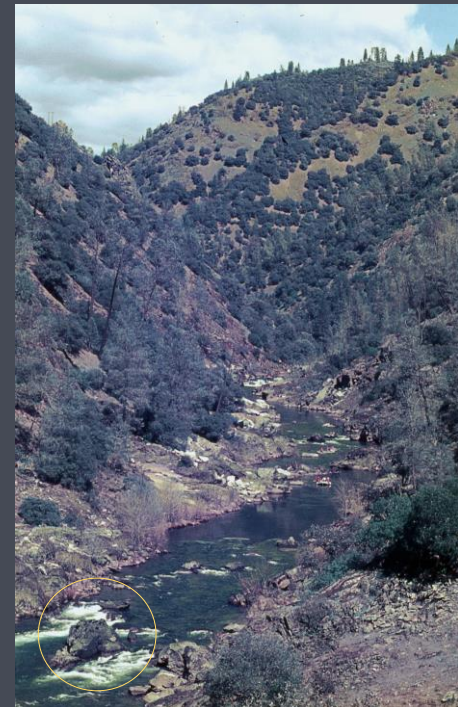
Upper jumping rock





Six Pack Rapid

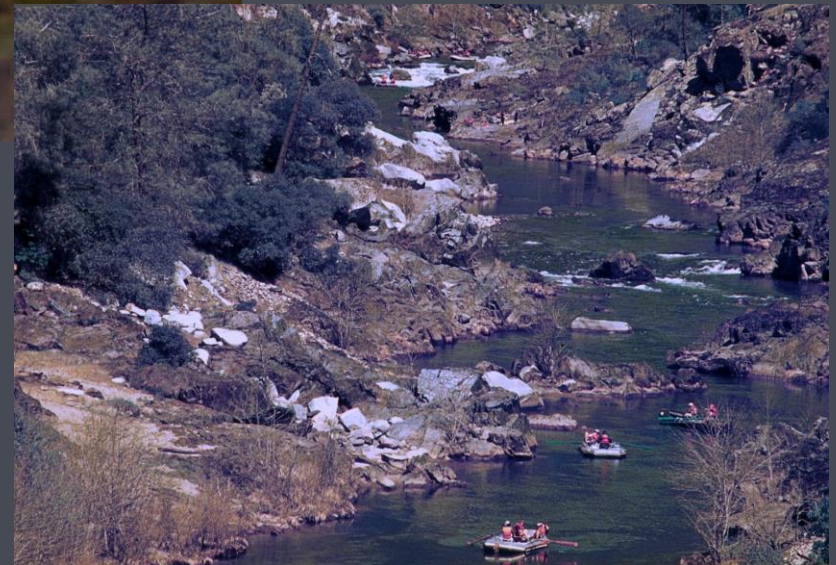
The easy run was river left, but if you were rowing a loaded raft and wanted a challenge, you took the river right drop and pulled back mightily to avoid hitting the wall in front of you – depending on your bet, you could win a six pack of your favorite beverage.





Between Widowmaker and Six Pack rapids

A gently curving section of river
coming into Rose Creek.

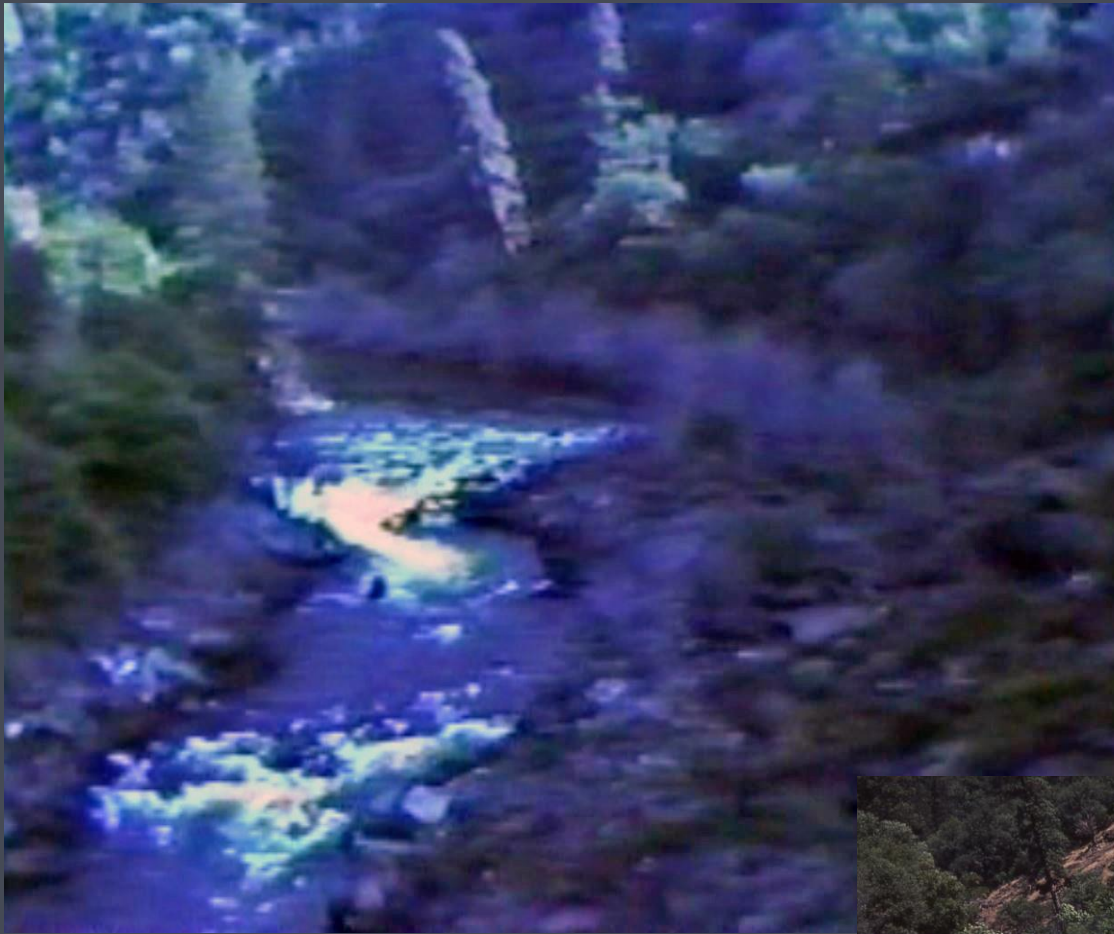




Widowmaker Rapid

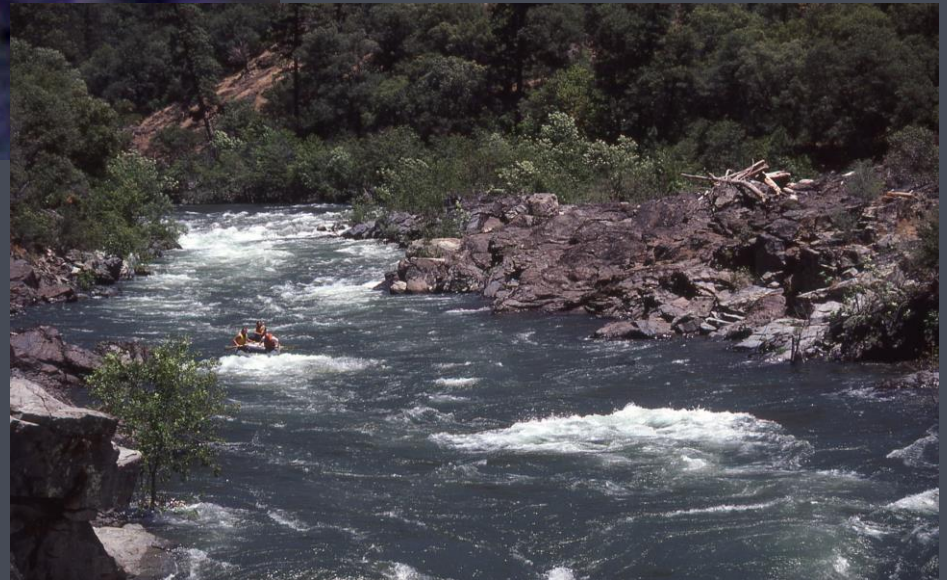
An outstanding rapid, easier run on river left, a tricking move if entering river right, culminating in a right twist around big old Widowmaker rock.

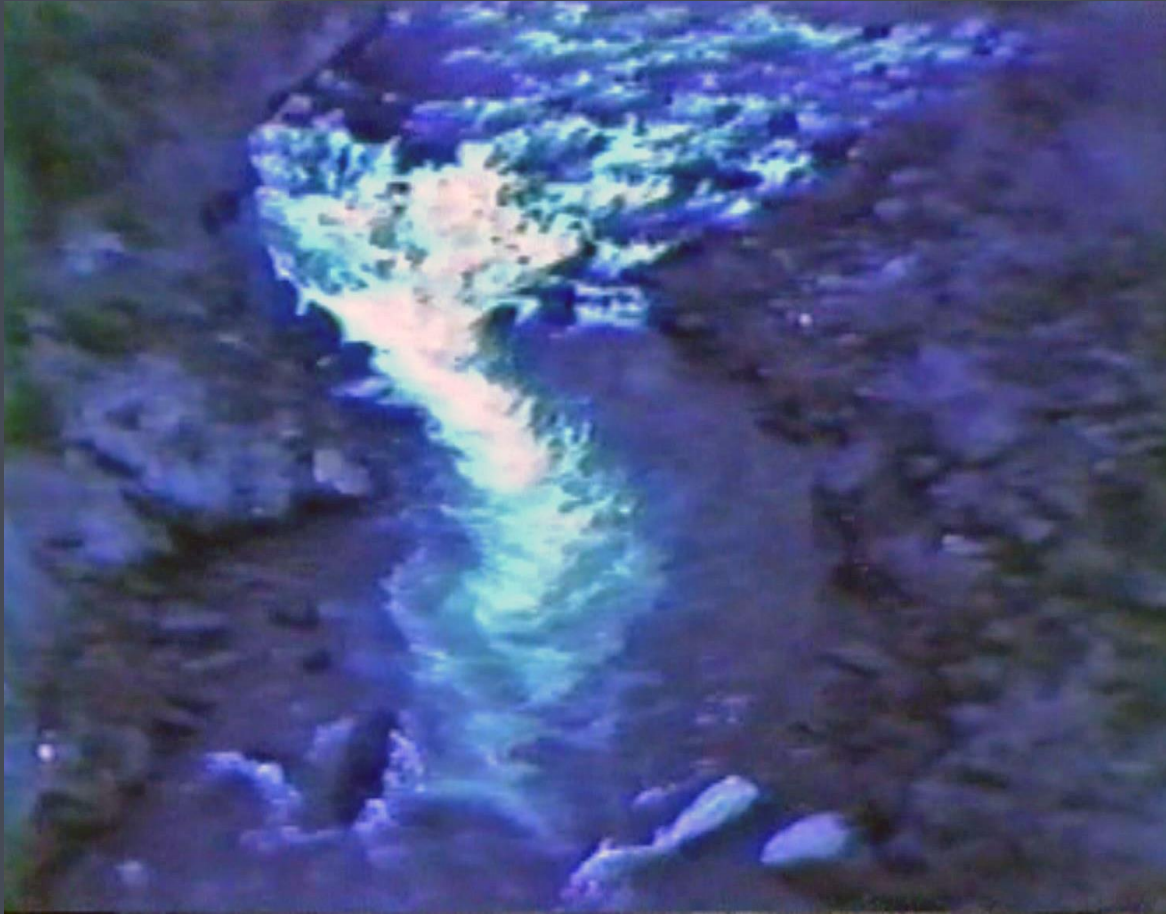




In between Bailey and Widowmaker

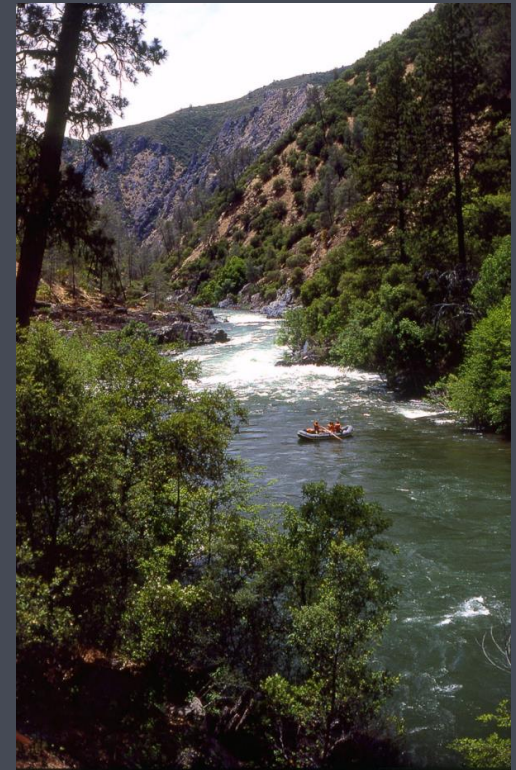
Bailey Falls shows in this image in center of photo. The small riffle in between it and Widowmaker is bottom left. Stony Gulch comes in from river left – debris from floods formed Bailey Rapid.

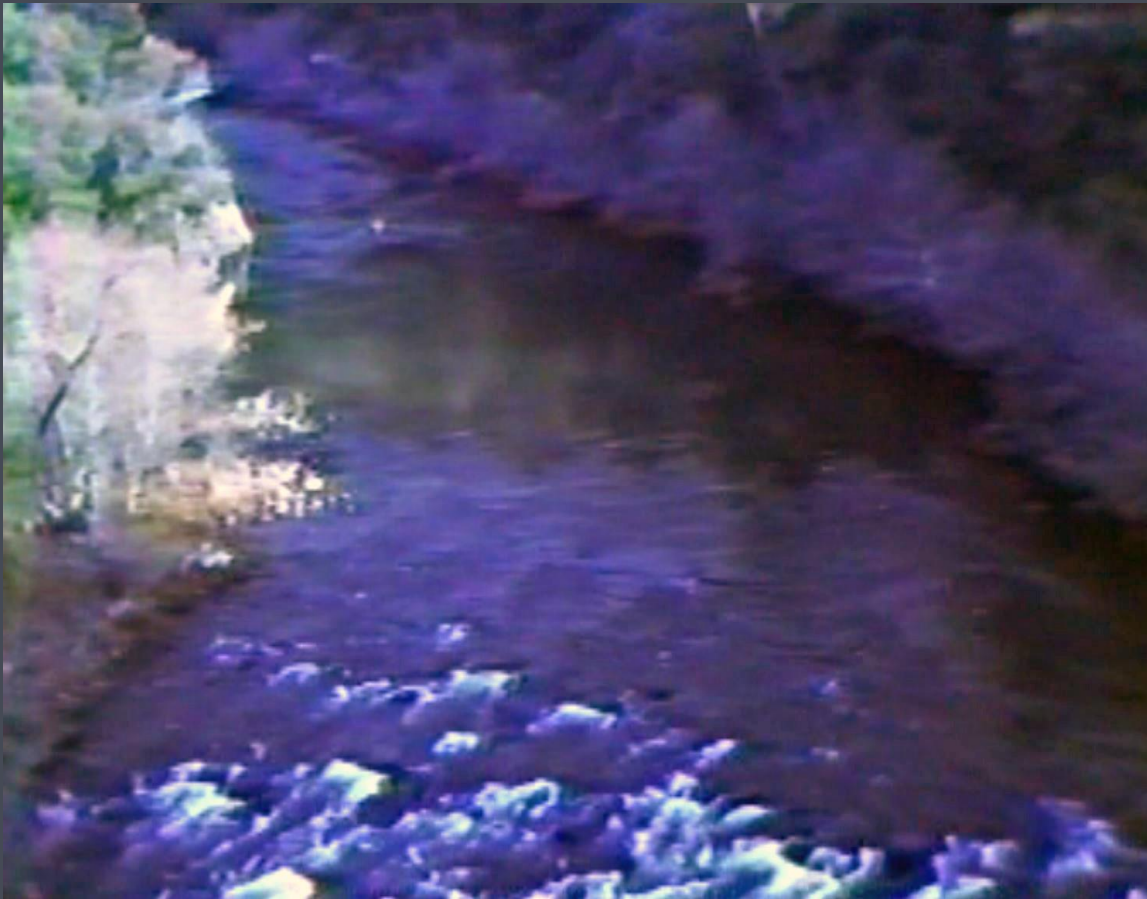




Bailey Falls

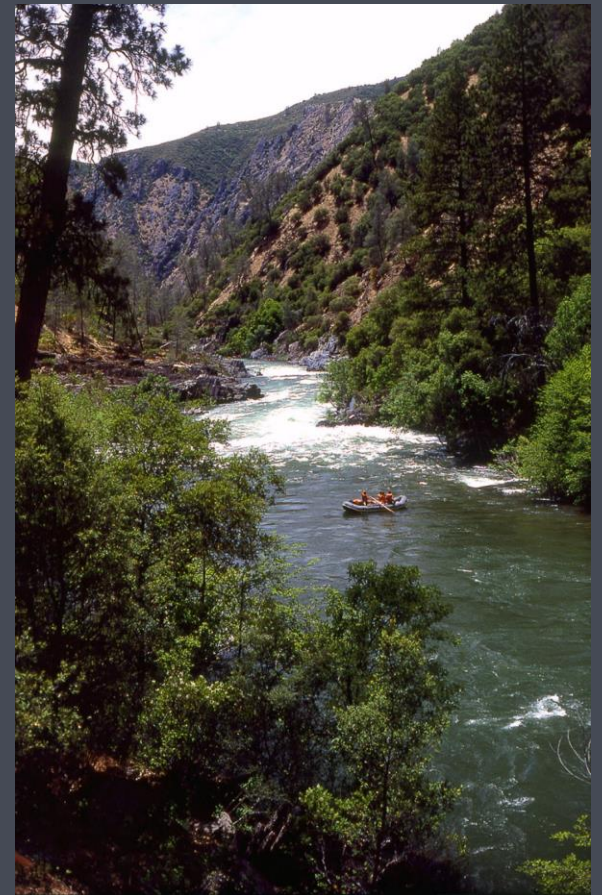
The debris fan that creates the run-left path through the rapid shows clearly here. Entering river right and edging along the wall leads you over a sharp ledge (visible in center of rapid), then into the runout waves.

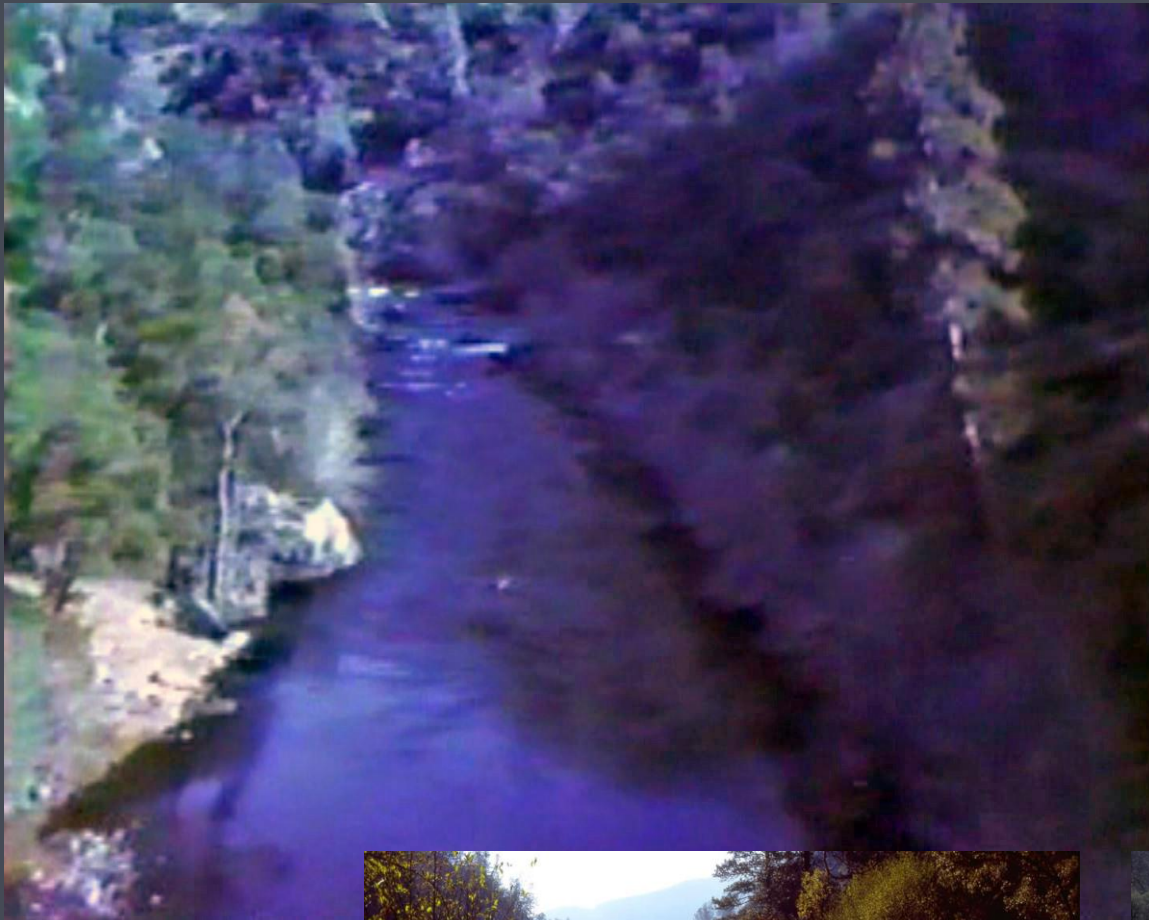




Bailey Falls entry, pool

The placid pool right above Bailey Falls rapid gave lots of time to get ready for the run!





Above Bailey entry pool

Calm stretch of river for about 100 yards above Bailey Falls.





Riffle section above Bailey

Just above the long pool before Bailey is a nice little section of small riffles. Upriver around the corner a ways is Devil's Staircase Rapid.



Immediately below Devil's Staircase

The small ledge at bottom is at the top of the prior page – again, just a section of small riffles leading up to Staircase (the new bridge at Suspension visible in distance).

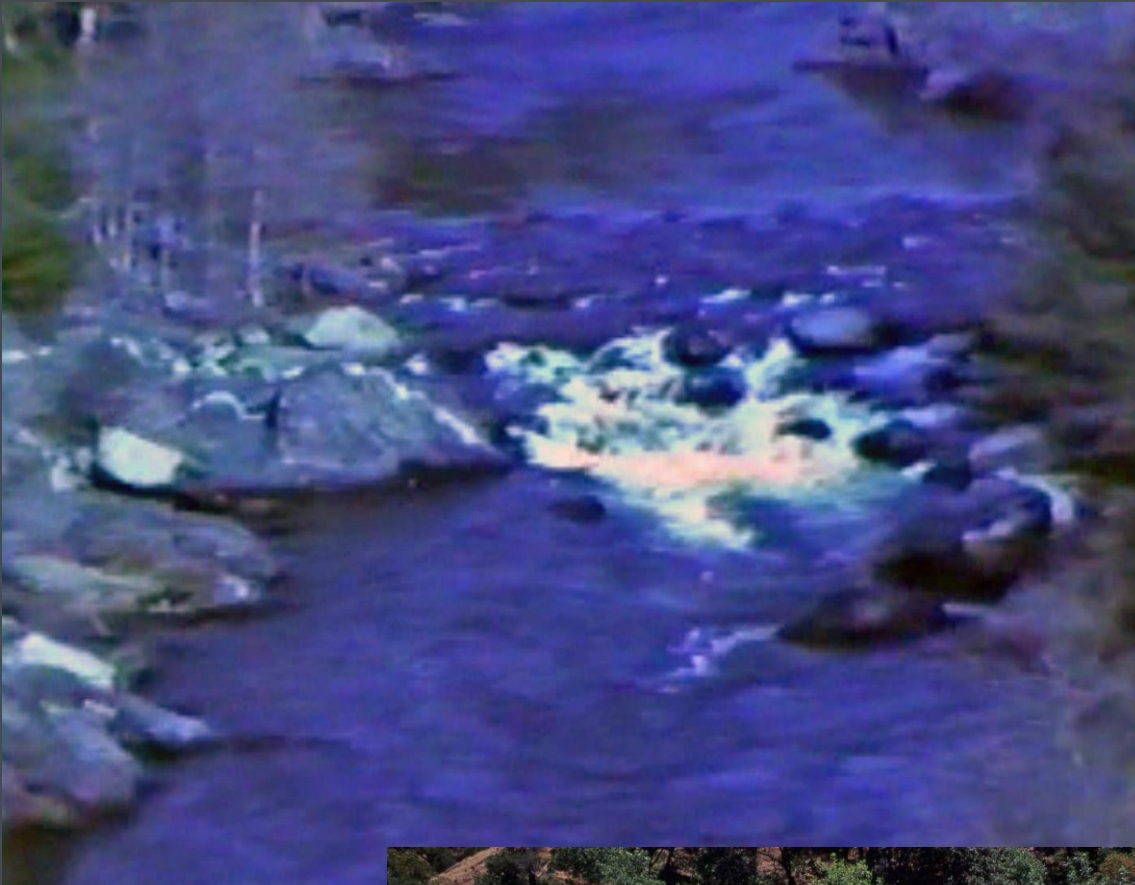




The Staircase – immediately below the rapid

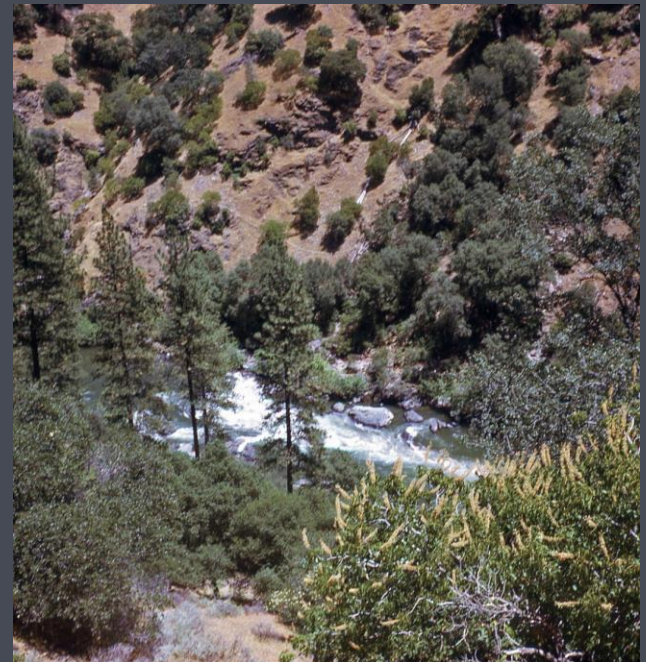
Devil's Staircase is at top (remember this is at very low water), but the “staircase” can be seen very clearly here, lower right. It's a quartz dike that has a distinctive set of stairs to it.





Devil's Staircase Rapid

The run here is to enter river right, missing the larger rocks at the top and then enjoy the great swooping whoosh of running the main drop and the run out waves. At normal and higher water, a wonderful drop.





Death Rapid

Death Rock is in the middle of the photos and the narrow chute past it shows as a white blob with a small runout. Running river left of Death was difficult and rarely successful – very bad wraps/flips often occurred. You ran the rapid from around the upstream corner which could be problematic if someone was in trouble down at Death Rock.



Death Rock (right)



Looking up to
Death Rapid



Suspension Bridge Rapid

The old bridge still shows below the new concrete monster, with the main drop in the rapid showing whitewater.

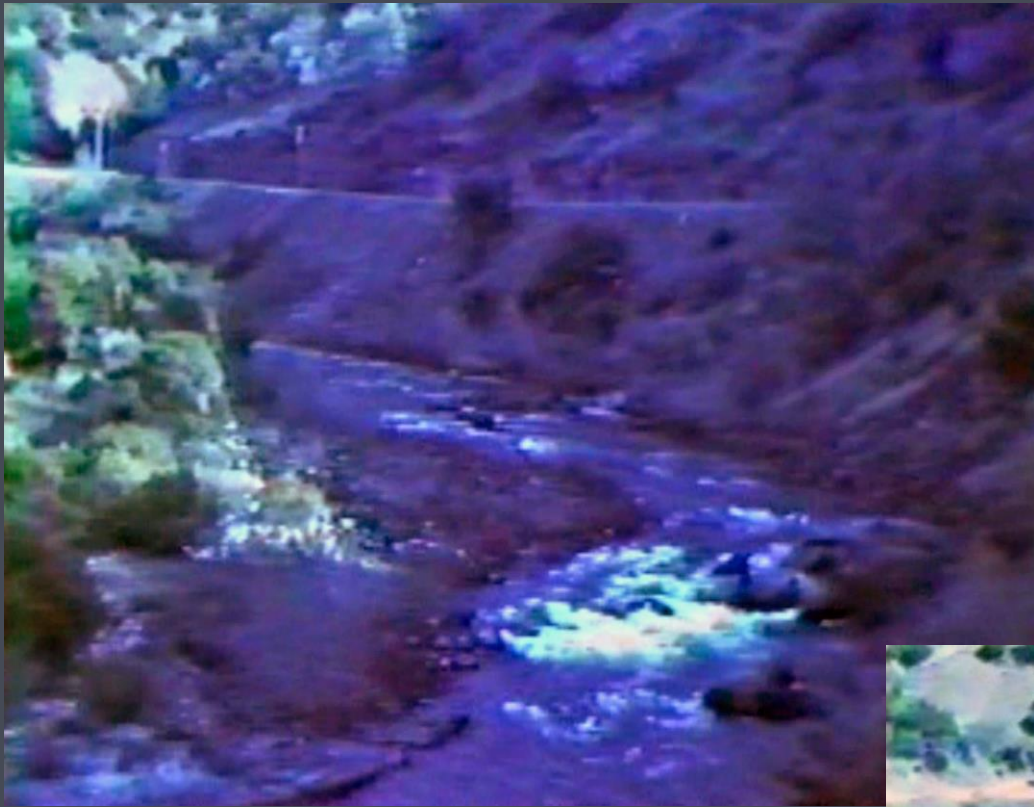
Image below looking downstream above Suspension; Death Rapid scouting area just beyond.





Above Suspension – Big Dog?

After the river was flooded and then receded for a couple years, “Big Dog” Rapid emerged, possibly here, just a couple hundred feet above Suspension Bridge Rapid.



Rock Garden Rapid

Showing its namesake rockiness, this long rapid took a fair amount of maneuvering for a loaded oar boat to navigate. The new road on right was cut after the river was flooded.





Top of Rock Garden

The beginning of Rock Garden, just a 150 yards below the put in at Camp Nine.





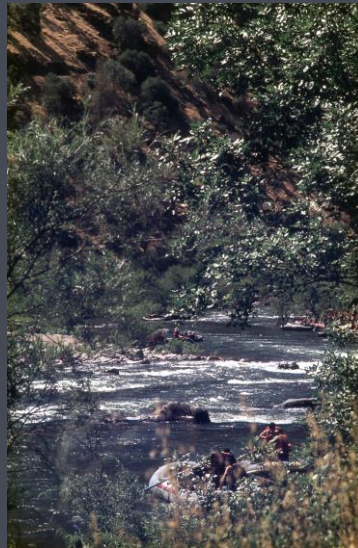
Below Cadillac Charlie Rapid

Charlie (and the put in) are top middle here. The beach at right was sometimes used as a put in area. Rock Garden is just a few hundred feet below this.



Cadillac Charlie Rapid

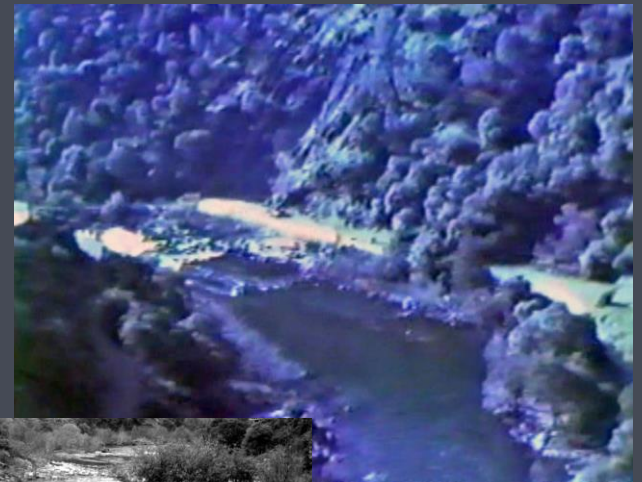
Charlie could be a tough first few strokes for rafts, as the river pushed down on the right bank and the current dropped right on a nasty rock, which stranded many a raft. The main put in is river right, below the yellow sign.





Camp Nine Put In

(left) View looking downstream to the main put in area on river right, Cadillac Charlie Rapid in the glare just below put in; Rock Garden in the top glare area.





Camp 9 bridge and check dam

(left) View downstream above bridge;
(below) view up to the check dam just up
river of the bridge.



