

How do they form?

The mountains sheltering Coal River Springs are outcrops of limestone composed mainly of calcium carbonate. As groundwater percolates through the porous limestone, it gradually dissolves the calcium. When the calcium-enriched water emerges from the earth at the foot of the mountains, a change begins to occur.

Mosses and other vegetation change the acidity of the water as they absorb carbon dioxide. As the pH level of the water changes, its ability to retain the rich supply of dissolved calcium is reduced. The calcium combines with carbon, separates from the water and begins to precipitate.

Calcium carbonate builds tufa as it is deposited on the surface of any object in contact with the water. Twigs, leaves, whole trees and even animal carcasses eventually become covered in the rock-like tufa. Living mosses that rim the pools are literally "turned into stone." Continual build-up of tufa, at a rate of 2 to 3 cm per year, has created the terraced travertine formations surrounding the springs.

The edges of the springs' pools slowly grow inward and upward so they are suspended over the water below. If left undisturbed, the pool walls would eventually enclose at the top like a dome. New pools would begin to form over the old pool chambers. Several of these chambers are likely hidden below the pools we see today.



Publications

Available at Environment Yukon offices, Visitor Information Centres or from: www.env.gov.yk.ca:

- [Into the Yukon Wilderness](#)
- [Yukon's Wildlife Viewing Guide](#)
- [How you can stay safe in bear country](#)

Maps

1:50,000 – Mount Gilliland (095D03)
1:250,000 – Coal River (095D)

Contacts

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Yukon
Parks

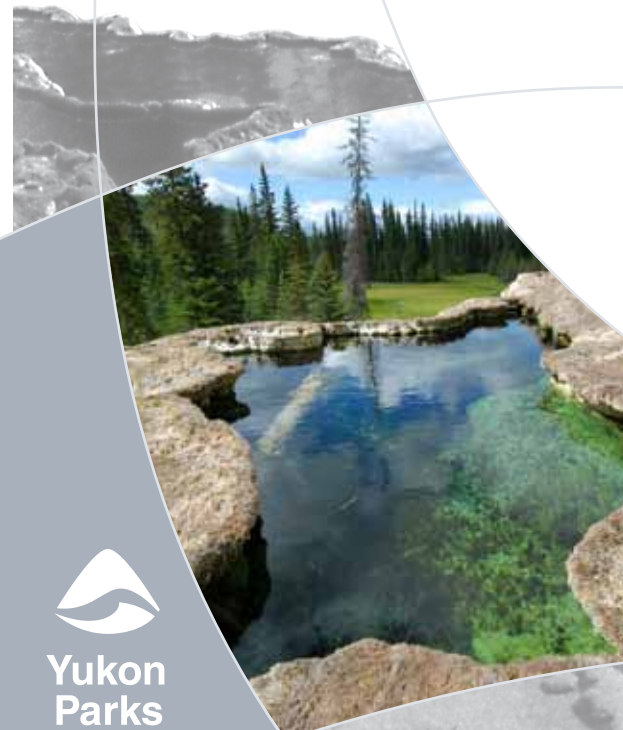
A GUIDE TO

Coal River Springs Territorial Park

The Fragile Beauty of Coal River Springs

Throughout centuries of hunting, fishing and trapping in the Coal River drainage, the Kaska Dene people have admired the fragile beauty of Coal River Springs without damaging the delicate mineral formations. Still relatively untouched, the springs' lush tufa terraces resemble a staircase of dripping colour.

In 1990, a 1537 ha area encompassing the springs became Yukon's second territorial park and first ecological reserve. The park was created through the combined efforts of Yukon Government, Liard First Nation and Nature Conservancy Canada.



Getting There

Protection of the reserve is the primary purpose of the park, so access to this isolated site has remained limited, difficult and expensive.

Boating



The springs can be accessed by experienced paddlers canoeing the Coal River. Once on the river, boaters are committed to a week-long trip with grade III-IV rapids both above and below the springs. The put-in for the upper river is via floatplane from Watson Lake and the take-out is at the Alaska Highway where it crosses the Coal River in British Columbia.

Flightseeing



Other access is by helicopter from Watson Lake, 80 km west of the park. This is usually a one hour return flight. A Park-Use Permit is required to land a helicopter in the park.

Facilities



Please camp in the clearing adjacent to the outhouse, located 200 m east of the main formations.

Hiking



It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to bushwhack from the rough mining/logging road to the banks of the Coal River. This involves navigating a 2 km maze of large, burned deadfall. The river cannot be crossed by foot at any time of year.

Hiking opportunities within the park are limited.

Keep it Wild

Plan ahead. Prepare to leave no trace

Travel and camp on durable surfaces. Use existing trails and campsites. In pristine areas, spread out on durable ground.

Dispose of waste properly. Pack it in, pack it out. When outhouses are not available, cover human waste in a small hole 60 m from water, camp and trails.

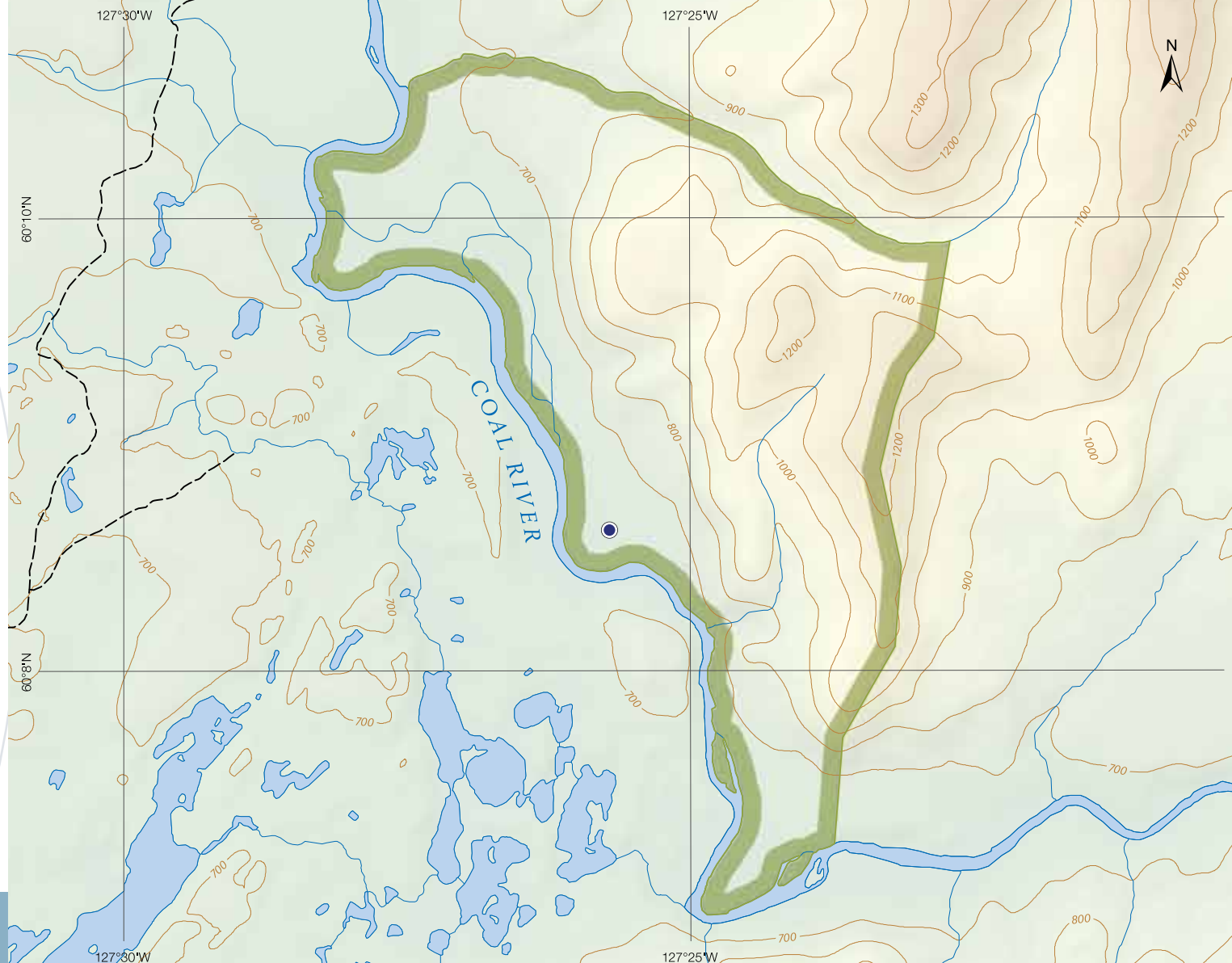
Leave what you find
Leave natural, historical and cultural artefacts undisturbed.



Minimize campfire impacts. Use stoves or existing fire rings. Keep campfires small.

Respect wildlife. Observe from a distance. Never feed them. Keep pets under control.

Be considerate of others



Coal River Springs Territorial Park YUKON



Map ID: ENV.013.001.01

Scale 1:50,000



● Springs

■ Park boundary

- - - Trail

— Contour (interval 100m)



Wildlife and You

Learn about bears and how to prevent negative encounters.

Food and garbage are the number one attractants. Never leave food, dishes, garbage, cosmetics or any smelly item where a bear could get it, especially in your tent. Store attractants and waste in bearproof containers away from your camp.

Pick up a copy of *How you can stay safe in bear country* at any Environment Yukon office or Visitor Information Centre. Ask to view the *Staying Safe in Bear Country* video.

Wildlife and Scenic Viewing



Rich and rare plant life is nourished by the moderated temperatures and constant water flow through-

out the year. The springs support an abundance of plant life, including several species found only in this corner of Yukon. Though cooler than a hot spring, the main pool averages 13°C and does not freeze. The mean annual air temperature is only -3°C.



The rare Great Northern Aster and (*Canadanthus modestus*) and Philadelphia Fleabane (*Erigeron philadelphicus*) thrive near the springs. Wild Sarsaparilla (*Aralia nudicaulis*), Red Baneberry (*Actaea rubra*) and Knotweed (*Bistorta vivipara*) complement bright yellow patches of Common Large Monkeyflowers (*Mimulus guttatus*). Tall Noble Larkspur (*Delphinium glaucum*) grace the lower wetlands which drain into the Coal River. Flowers of Raup's Paintbrush (*Castilleja raupii*) add splashes of salmon pink to the lower meadow.

Wildlife populations in the Coal River region are relatively unaffected by human activity. Black Bear, Grizzly Bear, and Wolf live here. The constant flow of water attracts Beaver, which have dammed the system and created extensive wetlands along the foot of the bluffs. The early-season aquatic vegetation attracts moose in the spring.

The Boreal Toad and the Northern Wood Frog both live in these wetlands. Bull trout fish inhabit the river beside the springs and small sculpin swim in some of the terraced pools high on the bluff.

Rare birds and butterflies abound. The Magnolia Warbler and the Western Pine Elfin butterfly are limited to this corner of Yukon.

