

Discovering the Upper Ngamuwahine River

A hidden paradise

By Josh Neilson



*Sam Roil - Double Drop.
Photo by: Josh Neilson*

I have been documenting my kayaking from the beginning and I now have books full of photos from under the local bridge learning to do 'whippy turns' and my first heli trip on the upper Mohaka River.

It started with a 35mm film camera and as technology progressed so did my cameras. Photos were soon accompanied by video and the library of footage soon grew from a few Megabytes to well over 10 Terabytes. Where would we be without digital imagery?

Of course it was going to be hard to capture everything, often due to long days on the river and people more interested in 'bombing' down the river with only essential scouting stops. Appreciating these, and

knowing how much people like to see good photos of themselves and their friends running sweet white-water, I always carry the camera just in case.

Recently, Sam Roil came banging on my door. "Get up Neilson, it's rained all night and we're going creeking!" With the rain still coming down hard and the temperature in single digits, the speed in which I was dressed, fed and out the door to pack the car was surprising.

We drove up past our local Kaituna run, now at open gates due to all the rain and headed toward the Kaimai's. The rain had not reached the best drainages yet but there was sure to be some water somewhere.

The next stop was the upper Ngamuwahine River. At the take out we met up with Cole O'Connor-Stratton and Laurence Brown, Tauranga

What's in a photo?

By James Fitness

I don't know about you, but I find it hard to keep up with the speed of technology's advance.

Many of us will remember the 110mm film with auto focus, one of the first 'pocket' cameras. For the flashier photographer, there was the 35mm SLR, with settings for Africa, and auto focus of course.

Digital photography fathered smaller cameras with way more settings, while only the size of your memory card limits the number of photos you can take. The point and shoot facility means there is little need to consider lighting, focus, or distance. When you can see the image on the screen, you'll probably get a photo.

Of course the bigger and more expensive the size and quality of the camera and therefore the lens, the better the images you can record. Unfortunately mobile device cameras such as your phone are restricted by lens size and are unlikely to enlarge well.

You'll increase the number of photos you can store by reducing the

quality. But beware! This affects your ability to produce quality prints.

Camera manufacturers describe photo quality by size e.g. 3264 x 2448 pixels, or 1600 x 1200 pixels. Basically, this means 'the bigger the pixel number, the larger the photo you can print while maintaining quality'.

The unwary can trip up on digital photos viewed on the computer. On screen there'll be no problem. BUT, what happens when you take a stunning shot and print it to be framed or submit it as a cover shot for NZ Kayak Magazine? It'll be fuzzy or pixelated.

I suggest that you take high quality, large photos (i.e. more pixels) and get a larger SD card. When you take a rubbish photo – delete it.

To determine photo quality look at the file size or how big the file is when transferred to the computer? An average image of 1MB (megabyte) or higher should give you a good print. 3 - 4MB is best for a front cover.

Also, check that the shutter speed is fast enough to be used from a moving kayak or when shooting moving objects? Other problems can include misting, water, and dust, especially on small lenses.

This is only a brief look into modern photography. Hopefully it will help.

locals, and took to the hills from there. The Kaimai Ranges are littered with great kayaking from the popular Wairoa River to the newly explored and hot favourite, Wainui River. After a short 4x4 drive, we abandoned the truck and walked to the river.

Sam was the only one in the group to have paddled this run before, so we followed him, as the river made its way through some amazing bush and into the first set of rapids. Paddling over the rocks in here was like kayaking over a cheese grater and we soon made a conscious effort to avoid rocks at all cost! Sam informed us that we had a long run ahead of us. We seldom stopped to rest, let alone capture a photo, as we bombed down some nice white-water. After some time on the water we came to the crux section. We walked round the first portage and set our boats down to scout the first section of runnable white-water. With my injury time still hot on my mind, I opted to walk and shoot photos while the others dropped over a rapid called 'Handle bars'. This involved a tight entry and a 90% chance of going over the handle bars and landing on your head, hence my decision to walk.

Around the corner I set up camera and watched as the others came down the next drop. This drop is much nicer, but is inaccessible unless you run 'Handle bars' first. With no real imagination it got called 'Double drop', given the drop is followed by another in close succession. Sam came down, leading the way for the young boys, who were supposed to be in Math class at this time. They were probably paying more attention to Sam than they had ever paid to Math, following Sam's sweet lines.

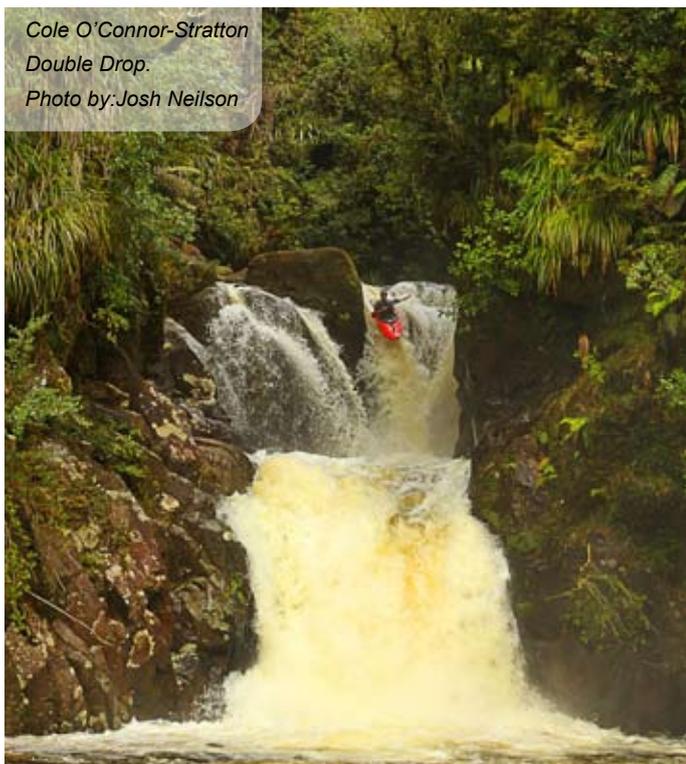
The rain had totally given way to a bluebird day and the gradient kept up as we made our way down the river, catching the odd eddie to check on each other and back into the flow again. Before long we were back into farm land and onto the lower part of the river.

This was my first flood run in the Kaimai's and it was a good day! A little more water and a better shoulder would have made my day even better. But it was definitely nothing to complain about!

After another short 4x4 ride, we were back on the main road to Okere Falls with a short pit stop for some much needed fast food!

At home Sam and I pored over the photos and although the days can be long with heavy boats at times, it's at the end of the day when you can share the shots you got and the memories that it makes it all worthwhile. Another few photos to add to the ever growing collection of waterfalls, friends and awesome adventures!

*Cole O'Connor-Stratton
Double Drop.
Photo by: Josh Neilson*



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Laurence Brown on the Double Drop
Photo Josh Neilson