

FALL 2020

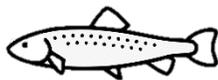


# BOWSMAN RIVER FISHING PACKAGE



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*The Bowsman River originates at Gull Lake and meanders south-eastward through the Porcupine Mountains into the Swan Valley until eventually flowing into the Woody River near Bowsman, MB. The best angling opportunities exist in the middle reaches of the river where the habitat is sufficient to support brook trout. The most frequented areas by anglers exist between the Sinclair's Bluff and Goat Hill.*



### **THE FISHERY:**

The Bowsman River is both stocked with brook trout and homes a naturalized population. The river has been stocked intermittently since the 1950's with brook trout and rainbow trout. At the time of publication, the most recent planting of trout occurred in 2008. In 2020, SVSFE conducted presence/absence surveys in preparation for this document. Brook trout were found in all reaches of the Bowsman River from the Sinclair's Bluff to the old crossing at Goat Hill. Surveys were not completed in the upper reaches and efforts in the lower reaches yielded only chubs and dace. Interestingly, naturalized populations of brook trout were located as multiple age classes were present. In past decades, the river was a popular angling destination. Today, the fishing pressure is minimal in comparison.



### **THE RIVER:**



Beginning at the headwaters near Gull Lake the river is generally slow with significant beaver activity. The nature of the river continues like this until it begins to gradually descend upstream from Sinclair's Bluff. It is from this point on where the river provides the best brook trout habitat and therefore angling opportunity. From Sinclair's Bluff to Goat Hill the river remains similar in nature with riffle/runs interspersed with cobble/boulder. Along this stretch you will also find the best summer habitat on bends with deep pools with deposits of woody material. Beaver floods are more frequent in this stretch of river as well. Referred to as the middle reaches, the river remains similar throughout this section. The lower reaches meander through agriculture land where the river slows, becomes more turbid and the substrate becomes silted. In this stretch the river changes frequently as a result of beaver activity and high discharge.

## PLANNING A TRIP



### TIME OF YEAR:

In Manitoba, trout streams are closed to angling from November 1<sup>st</sup> to and including April 15<sup>th</sup>. In spring, high levels of discharge often make the rivers unfishable. In general, by early-June flow has slowed and the water has cleared enough to allow safe travel. Angling opportunities exist from this point until November 1<sup>st</sup>, however by late fall fishing quality seems to decrease when brook trout become focused on spawning and migrating to wintering areas. In general, the best time of year to fish the Bowsman River is between mid-August and mid-October when the water starts to cool, and the bugs are absent. It is not advisable to plan trips immediately following heavy rainfall as water levels are known to increase considerably and dirty up the water.



### GETTING THERE AND AWAY:

The hub to exploring the Bowsman River is Goat Hill. To reach Goat Hill, travel North ~14 km on PTH 10 from Swan River and turn west on PR 279 (Whitefish Highway). Travel along PR 279 approximately 10km then turn north on R165W which is ~4km to the landing at Goat Hill. There is ample parking in the area including at the snoman junction 549 & 560 and the old gravel pit. From Goat Hill, it is a short walk to the old crossing and the trailhead to Pike's Peak. Be prepared to cross the water as the bridge has been removed. To reach Pike's Peak from the east when water levels are high, from PR 279 travel north onto PR163W ~5km to the boundary road (225N), and travel west ~3km to Pike's Peak Trailhead. Note, this road is not maintained. The shortest route to Sinclair's bluff takes the same starting route as accessing Pike's Peak from the east. Once on the boundary road (225N), travel 1.6 km west, then 1.6 km north. The boundary road (aka snoman route 549) turns east where you will find the Sinclair's Bluff trailhead ~470m from the corner. The best ways to explore the Bowsman River is accessing the river at one point and exiting at another. For this reason, it is advised to either arrange a friend for drop-off/pick-up, stash a second vehicle/ATV at your exit point or be prepared for distant treks. Utilizing digital river access info will enhance your experience and offer the capabilities of adjusting your trip as need be. Data files come in the form of .gpx or .kml and can be uploaded onto smart devices or GPS units for offline applications.

Visit [www.swanvalleysportfishing.com/lakes/bowsman-river/](http://www.swanvalleysportfishing.com/lakes/bowsman-river/)





### WHAT TO BRING:

The crucial consideration for any river expedition is to **pack light!** River trekking is much more challenging than most would think. Some vital gear to consider; Trekking pole(s), good hiking boots with ankle support, quick dry pants, hiking and/or neoprene socks, good polarized sunglasses, compass, GPS or equivalent, water filter, ice fishing/telescopic rod that can pack down easily, tackle of your choosing, bug control, survival/first aid kit, and miscellaneous backpacking/camping gear for overnight trips (sleeping bag, tent, tarp, hat, headlamp, dehydrated meals, etc.)



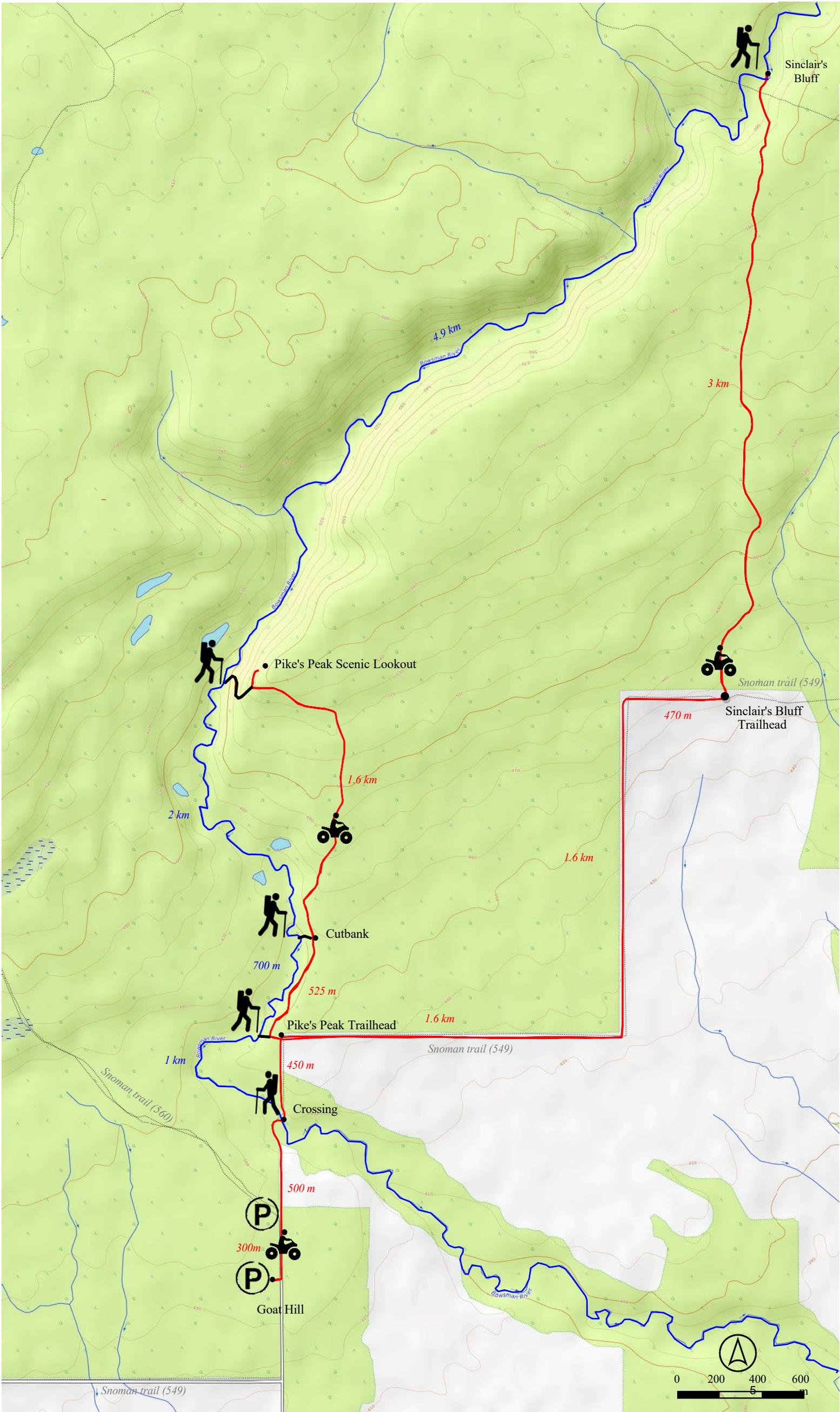
### FISHING:



When angling streams for brook trout the first places to look are areas with cover. Cover can come in many forms including depth, water turbulence, undercut banks, overhanging vegetation, boulders, and of course, instream woody debris. Perhaps the best advice would be to do more looking than actual fishing. In the Bowsman River brook trout are abundant, but fairly limited to the little guys in shallower areas with little cover. Larger, adult fish are usually found in the best habitats which include plunge pools on bends, the backside of large boulders, beneath downed trees, and within beaver floods. There are no guarantees in stream trout fishing. On many occasions the best habitats will yield nothing (likely because of angling pressure and/or natural predators), while some of the smaller overlooked pools will yield the biggest trout of the day.

The next step is catching them, and the first consideration is what type of rod to use. Most anglers prefer a spinning rod, while some anglers prefer a fly rod. Bait and technique combinations are endless. From a fly-fishing perspective some of the best methods are using underhand pitches and bow-and-arrow type casting precisely into tight places with lots of cover. Local stream trout fly anglers say that the go-to flies include stone fly nymphs and caddisfly larva nymphs in spring/summer and terrestrial patterns in the fall. With regards to using spinning tackle, perhaps a simple worm on a hook with a splitshot has accounted for more brook trout than any spoon, spinner, and fly combined. Another tried and true method is a #0 in-line spinner or small spoon. Polarized sunglasses and the lightest possible line (6lb or less) will improve your success considerably.

Technique is arguably more important than lure selection. A common misconception is that stream trout are easy to catch; this could not be further from the truth. Approaching a potential fishing location should be done with care. After spotting a pool be as quiet as possible and avoid casting your shadow into the pool at all costs. Approaching from downstream often minimizes the risk of being spotted because fish are usually facing upstream ready to ambush incoming prey items. Try and precisely cast as close to the cover as possible. There have been endless times when anglers have stung a trout on the first cast because of an imperfect retrieve, and sent the fish into hiding. If you accidentally spook a pool, it could take at least a half-hour before the fish will consider biting again.



## TRIP OPTIONS

The Bowsman River provides many opportunities for multiday and/or shorter day trips. Create your own trip using the map provided or choose from the following. There are many opportunities to complete short day trips adjacent to the Pike's Peak hiking trail, while the reaches upstream are more frequently explored through longer one or two-day trips.

### 1. THE WHOLE SHEBANG

Goat Hill Crossing to  
Sinclair's Bluff

Distance: Approx. 8.6 km  
(river only)

Difficulty: Strenuous

Time: 1-2 days

Summary: This is the  
backpacking trip to explore the  
best stretches of brook trout

habitat the Bowsman River has to offer. Have somebody help you courier an ATV to Sinclair's Bluff so you have a vehicle stashed at the out location. Begin the trek at the crossing north of Goat Hill and trek up-river fishing pools as you desire. There are no known campsites along this stretch so when camping, finding an appropriate site may be challenging. This trip could arguably be achievable in one day but there would not be much time for actual fishing.



### 2. THE BEGINNER'S TRIP

Multiple access points along Pike's Peak Hiking  
Trail

Distance: N/A

Difficulty: Moderate

Time: 1 day

Summary: This trip is a good option to first  
explore the Bowsman River brook trout fishery.  
Along the trail between the parking area near  
Goat Hill to Pike's Peak Lookout there are  
multiple access points to the river. Explore the  
river from as many of these access points as you  
wish. This is an attractive option for somebody  
wishing to spend a partial or full day angling the  
Bowsman River. Note, these access points  
involve cutting through bush or along steep hills  
for short distances.



### 3. THE LOOP

Crossing to Pike's Peak  
Lookout

Distance: Approx. 3.7 km  
(river), 2.6 km (trail) = 6.3 km  
(total)

Difficulty: Moderate -Difficult

Time: 1 day

Summary: This section is perhaps the stretch that receives the most angling pressure (which is still very little). Park your vehicle at the river crossing north of Goat Hill and travel upstream fishing the various pools and beaver floods. Your out location will be approximately 3.7 km up the river below the Pike's Peak Lookout. After traversing the steep banks up to the lookout, it is approximately 2.6 km trek back to the river crossing where you began your trip.



### 4. THE LESS TRAVELLED STRETCH

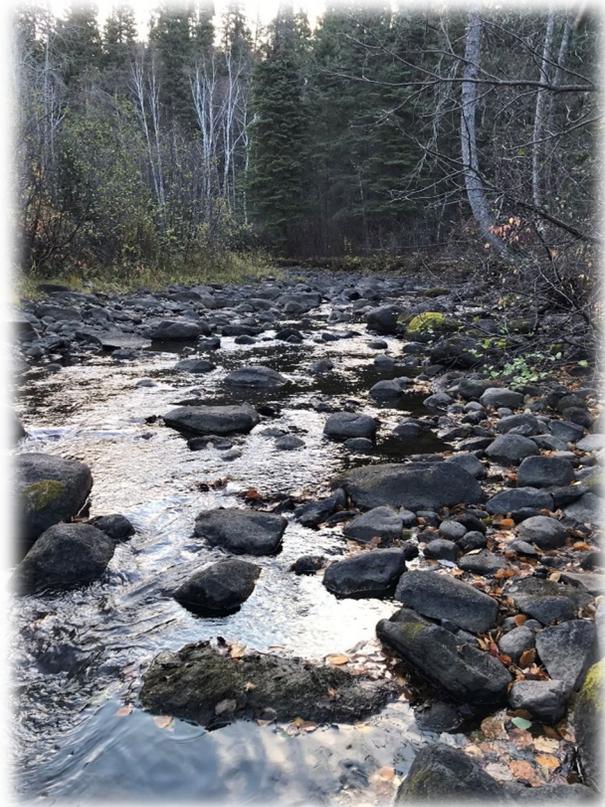
Pike's Peak to Sinclair's Bluff

Distance: Approx. 4.9 km (River)

Difficulty: Difficult

Time: 1-2 days

Summary: This section of river receives very low angling pressure, if any. Have somebody help you stash an ATV at Sinclair's Bluff and drop you off at Pike's Peak. From here, traverse the steep trail down the cut-bank to reach the river. Travel upstream, angling the various pools until the out point at the Sinclair's Bluff (~4.9 km of river). If you opt out of the drop off/stashed vehicle option and decide to trek the entire stretch it will increase your travels by 9.6 km on trails and rural roads with the start and end point being Pike's Peak trailhead.



## **DISCLOSURE**

The travel times in the package are estimates for folks with peak physical ability and good health. Anglers should be aware that a river kilometer is much different than a trail kilometer in terms of the effort/time required to travel it. It is highly recommended that before venturing out on any Bowsman River excursion, that you are well prepared and equipped with the proper gear for backcountry camping or extended travels.

It is important to remember that the roads and trails advertised in this package are used by many different land users and stakeholders. These include outfitters, trappers, logging operations, snowmobile user groups, and anglers alike. Travelling logging roads during times of active logging can be extremely dangerous. In these circumstances travel should not occur without the use of a radio to communicate with logging equipment and trucks. Local outfitters also have active bear baits in the area. In Manitoba there is both a spring and fall season for bear. During these times it is strongly advised to refrain from travelling down unmarked side trails as they may lead to active bear baits. Trail etiquette is extremely important as well. This includes refraining from travelling down unmarked side trails, avoiding wet areas/rutting at all costs, packing out whatever litter you pack in, and respecting permitted structures on the land including warm-up shacks and trapper's cabins. If you come across a downed tree restricting travel, take time to remove and clean up the barrier - the other trail users will appreciate it.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION:**

For up-to-date information on trail conditions, logging operations, and weather reports:

Swan River District Government Office

+1 (204) 734 3429

For dated information on the fishery:

Swan Valley Sport Fishing Enhancement Inc.

swanvalleysportfish@gmail.com

*This promotional package was created by SVSFE in 2020 as an effort to provide anglers with the information required to help plan trips and explore the fishery that is the Bowsman River. Access information, trail conditions, and trail barriers are subject to change over time. Swan Valley Sport Fishing Enhancement Inc. will not be held liable for any damages or injuries that may occur from anglers using the promotional information.*