





The Beverly caribou herd, estimated at over 275,000 in 1994, is second only to the 500,000 strong Qamanirjuaq herd with which it shares its range, making up one of the largest caribou herds in the world. The calving grounds of the Beverly herd overlap the Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary, and it is often possible to see thousands of caribou migrating across the river and through this area. The caribou bring predators, as well, so wolves are commonly seen, and sightings of wolverines and grizzlies are not uncommon. Lynx and moose are often encountered on the upper Thelon, where the river runs through taiga (sparse boreal forest).

Raptors such as peregrine falcons and gyrfalcons, golden and bald eagles, and rough-legged hawks nest on cliffs along the river. On the upper Thelon, in the patchy boreal forest, paddlers may see merlins and great grey owls. Tundra swans and four species of loons nest on lakes along the river, shorebirds skitter along mud or sand beaches, and small boreal forest and tundra birds sing nonstop in early summer.

This river has long been home to the Caribou Inuit, and the shores are rich in old campsites with tent rings, storage caches,

stone fox traps, game drive systems with *inuksuit* to guide the caribou into places where they were within bowshot of hunters crouched in stone hunting blinds (*taluit*), and more. Today, Inuit still return to the Thelon River to hunt and fish, and groups paddling the river often meet up with residents who camp along the river, adding to the beauty of the cultural experience.

#### WHERE HISTORY MEETS LEGEND

There are many historical stories about this river, as well, and one of the most interesting is the story of young Edgar Christian, who was traveling with John Hornby, a well-known and eccentric wilderness traveller. Christian kept a diary, and this account of their tragic end was found several years after their death, in the stove in the tiny cabin at Warden's Grove, where Hornby, Christian, and a companion starved to death. The cabin has been preserved as an historic site. There are many other stories, including stories of the Tyrrell brothers who wrote extensively about their mineral and other discoveries, and many Inuit legends about this area, including some about *ijirait* (shapechangers or "shadow people") and shaman's rituals.

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On this river system, canoeists can choose several trip alternatives. They can start on the Hanbury River, paddling a strenuous route with several portages but spectacular waterfalls at Dickson Canyon and Helen Falls. Or, they can start on the upper Thelon for a great whitewater experience with numerous rapids and the lovely Thelon Canyon, which requires a long portage. The river below the junction of the Thelon and Hanbury is generally free of portages, and winds through taiga forest in the wildlife sanctuary, with huge sand eskers and hills to 160 metres (500 feet), and several examples of intriguing pingos (ice-cored hills).

Day-hiking along the eskers is exceptional, offering more chances to see wildlife. The fishing for arctic char, lake trout, and arctic grayling is excellent, especially in the area where the river passes through Beverly, Schultz, and Aberdeen Lakes. Sandy beaches along these lakes offer good camping, but paddlers must always be aware of the weather, as sudden storms can cause groups to be wind-bound. The last 100 kilometre stretch of river down to Baker Lake offers a thrilling ride through high-walled banks and a swift current.

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## TRAVELLING TO THE PARK

The upper river system can be reached by charter aircraft from Yellowknife or Baker Lake. Paddlers who travel all the way downriver to Baker Lake can return home by commercial flights from Baker Lake.

After the final paddle down to Baker Lake, canoeists can look forward to a hotel stay or a nice camping area at **Inuujaarvik Territorial Park**. Facilities at the park include tent pads to accommodate 8 tents, a cookhouse/shelter, outhouses, a fire pit, picnic tables and a barbeque. While in Baker Lake, paddlers should not miss an opportunity to visit the Vera Akumalik Centre, the Inuit Heritage Centre, and

the Jessie Oonark Centre, as well as several local art galleries. It is often possible to meet and talk to many local artists who tend to carve in front of their houses.

The Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary and river are best known for their superb summer experiences, but occasionally groups travel into these areas by skidoo or (rarely) by dogteam in the springtime. At this time, the spring sunshine sparkles on the snow, the caribou are filing northward to the calving grounds, muskox are calving and the birds are returning. The area is lovely at any time of year, but more easily accessible in summer.



For assistance in planning a trip on the Hanbury or Thelon River to Baker Lake or for more information on the **Thelon Canadian Heritage River**, the **Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary**, the **Vera Akumalik Centre**, and **Inuujaarvik Territorial Park**, check the Nunavut Parks website at [www.nunavutparks.com](http://www.nunavutparks.com), or call Nunavut Tourism at 1-866-NUNAVUT to request the Nunavut Travel Planner, which lists all licensed tourism operators, accommodations and services. ■

### NUNAVUT PARKS & SPECIAL PLACES

☎ 867.975.7700 📠 867.975.7747

[parks@gov.nu.ca](mailto:parks@gov.nu.ca)

[www.nunavutparks.com](http://www.nunavutparks.com)

### VERA AKUMALIK CENTRE (open summer only) and INUUJAARVIK TERRITORIAL PARK (campground)

☎ 867.793.2456

### NUNAVUT TOURISM

☎ 866.NUN.AVUT 📠 867.979.1261

(1.866.686.2888)

[info@nunavuttourism.com](mailto:info@nunavuttourism.com)

[www.nunavuttourism.com](http://www.nunavuttourism.com)

### BAKER LAKE INUIT HERITAGE CENTRE

☎ 867.793.2598

[www.bakerlake.org](http://www.bakerlake.org)

### CANADIAN HERITAGE RIVERS

☎ 819.994.2913

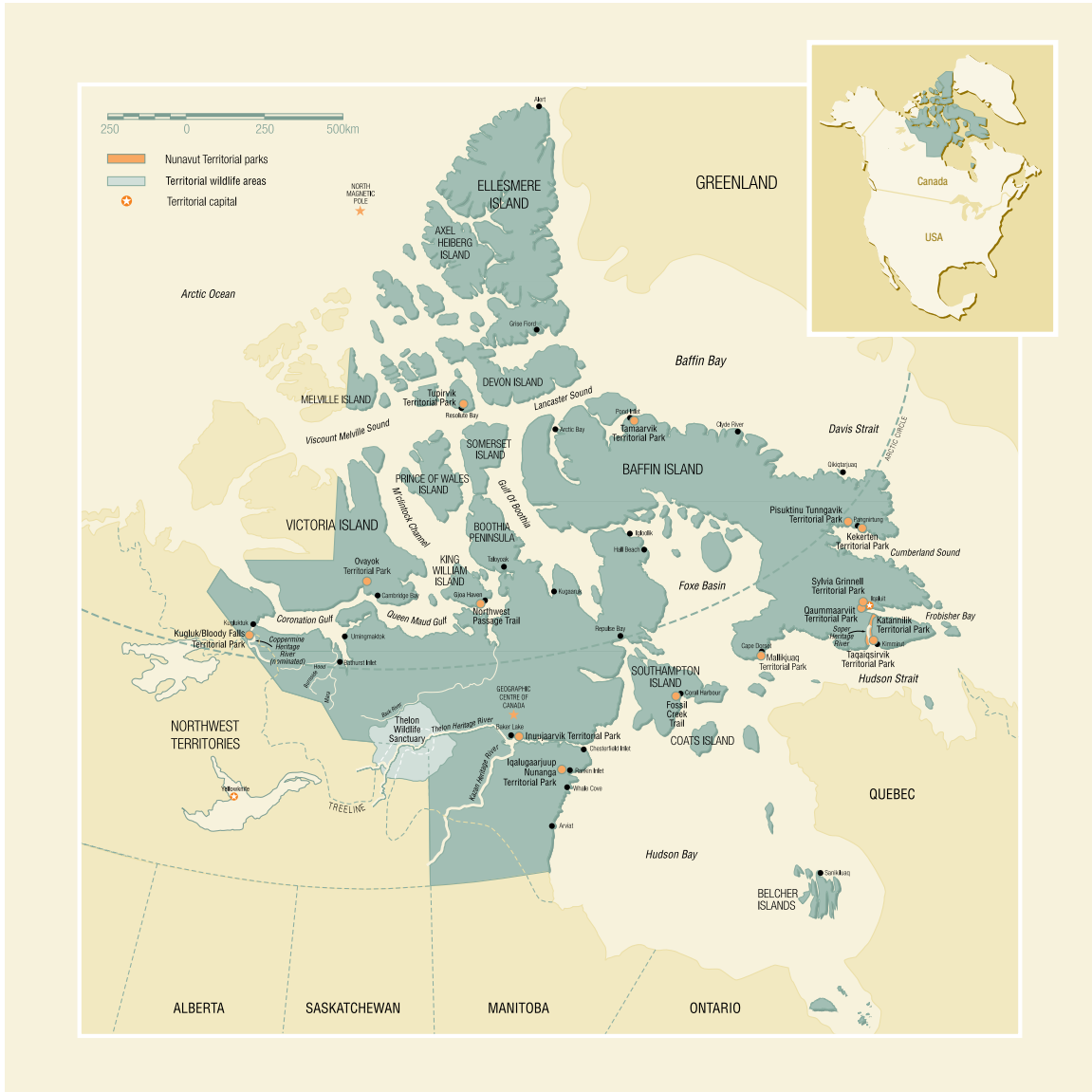
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### SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL IN NUNAVUT

Nunavut’s Territorial Parks offer some of the most breathtaking scenery and magnificent wildlife imaginable, but there are risks when traveling in a remote area. You must be self-reliant and responsible for your own safety. The extreme environment can change quickly, challenge your survival skills and face you with an emergency. Also remember, when you travel in Nunavut you are in polar bear country. Polar bears are strong, fast and agile on ice, land, and in water.

For more information on Safe and Sustainable Travel and Polar Bear Safety in Nunavut please visit our website at [www.nunavutparks.com](http://www.nunavutparks.com).



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