

## TWEEDSMUIR PARK

By THE LADY TWEEDSMUIR, M.P.

In the autumn of last year my husband and I had an opportunity of exploring the park which was named after his father in 1937. Tweedsmuir Park is set in the Coast Mountains of British Columbia, which so many people confuse with the Rockies. In fact, the Rockies, which form an almost continuous chain reaching southwards to Mexico, lie further to the east. Between their high jagged summits and the Pacific are a large number of mountain outcrops, each with its own name. There are three such in Tweedsmuir Park: the Quanchus, the Pattullo and the Rainbow ranges. Together they form the Coast Mountains of British Columbia.

Tweedsmuir Park is set in the midst of this wonderful wilderness, somewhere between the towns of Prince George to the east and Prince Rupert on the coast. It was designated as a Provincial Park by the British Columbian Government about the year 1938. Parks are of many different kinds. Those like Banff and Jasper are national parks, where the wild life is rigidly protected, though fishing is allowed. Tweedsmuir Park was planned to preserve for ever, in a furiously developing country, a piece of pristine wilderness of mountain, river and lake. You may hunt there if you are accompanied by an accredited guide, and you may fish. But there will never be any roads there, and you may not build yourself a house or acquire rights to cut the timber.

When the park was first conceived, its eastern boundary was a chain of rivers and lakes which drained the whole mountain mass to the Nechako river to join the upper waters of the Fraser, and, after describing a vast circle, to enter the Pacific just south of the city of Vancouver.

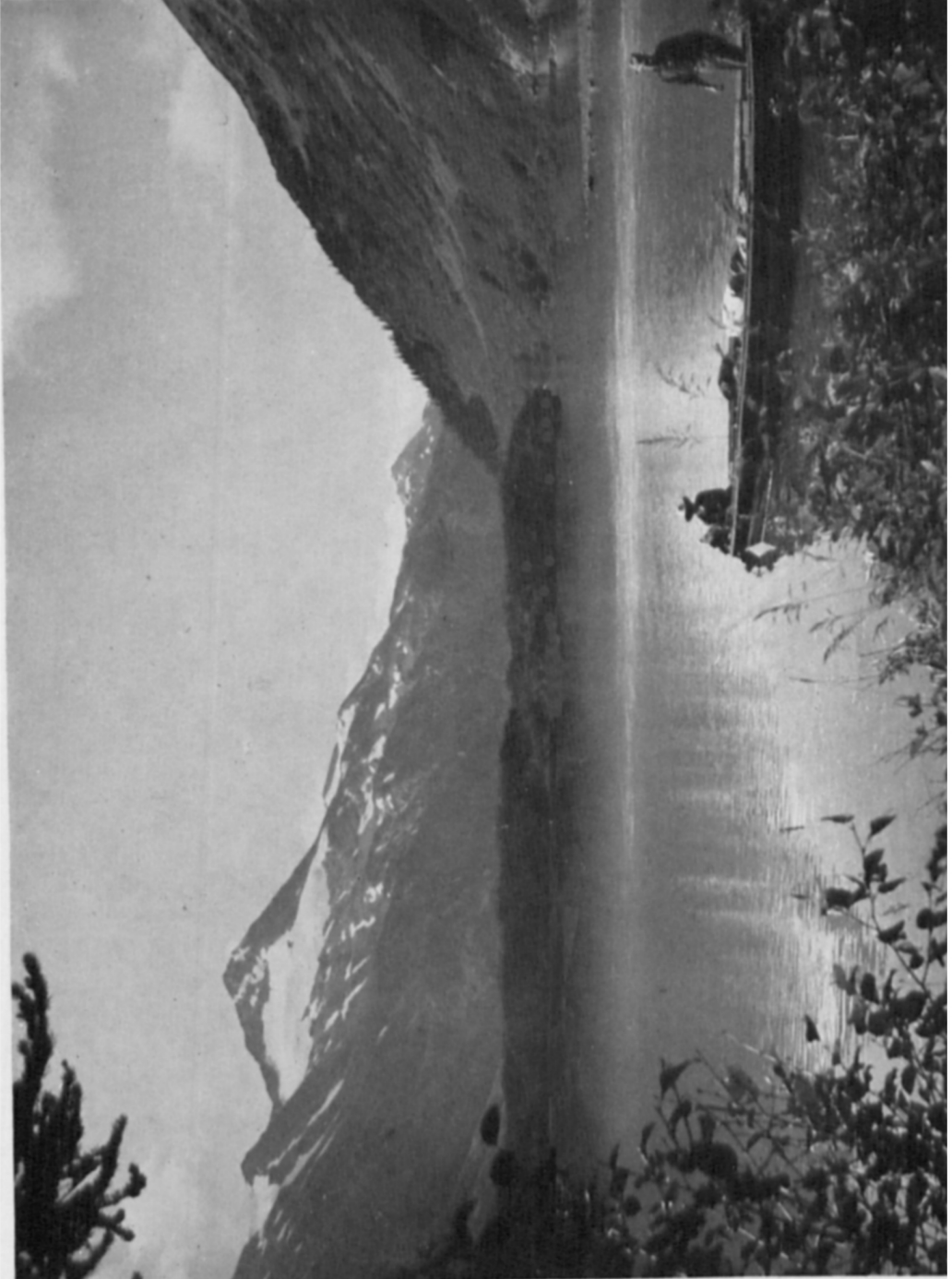
But man is a demanding animal and he is hungry, among other things, for aluminium. And aluminium calls for hydro-electric power. To make even one ton of aluminium requires as much as would heat a highly-electrified Canadian home for twelve years. And because bauxite, its raw material, is brought from distant lands by sea, the power and the bauxite must be wedded from the sea coast. So it came about that the Nechako river was dammed by the Alcan Company with a 325-ft. dam. The water rose in some areas up to 200 feet until lakes and rivers became one at the feet of the mountains.

These waters, seeking their outlet, go down a 10 mile tunnel

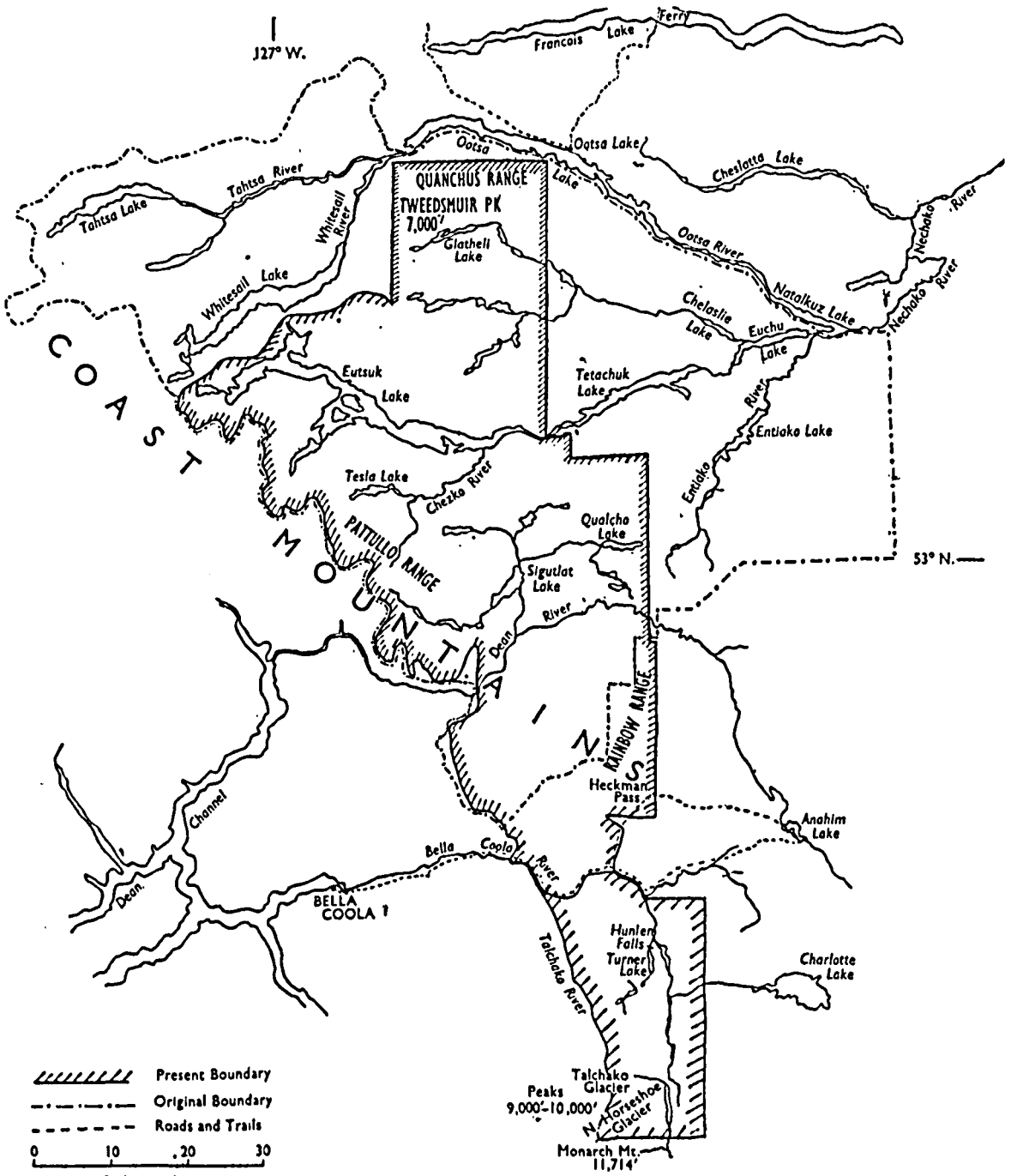
which man has driven westwards through the mountains. Down this tunnel the water moves no faster than a strong swimmer could swim against it, until it reaches the power station at Kemano, where the tunnel tilts to an angle of 48 degrees and the waters fall half a mile to strike the turbines and produce the power which one day will be that of more than two million horses. That power is carried 30 miles up and over the Kildala Pass and down on the far side to the smelter at Kitimat, 90 miles north-west of the park. Giant transmission towers carry it, like a line of giants walking in procession, with cables across their shoulders.

The British Columbian Government, true to its original purpose, has now redrawn the boundaries of Tweedsmuir Park. The areas of inundated valleys are now outside the park, whose boundaries have been extended southwards across the headwaters of the Bella Coola river, into mountains which are little known and merely shaded dark brown on the map, with the terse description, "Peaks up to 10,000 feet." The great merit of the new southward boundaries is that these peaks include Monarch Mountain, 11,714 feet. Only one other peak in British Columbia can match this impressive height, and the whole range must be one of the wildest and most beautiful in the whole country. The original area of Tweedsmuir Park, 5,350 square miles, has been cut down by 1,600 square miles in the easterly and north-westerly areas. This includes all the flooded region.

These new boundaries may well not be final. I should not be surprised if, one day, objection will be taken to the fact that some of the boundaries are drawn on the map as straight lines and do not follow topographic features. This has come about because there are no accurate maps and the area is very little known. The map shown here was made only a year ago. The only road runs a short way through the new southern area of the park from Bella Coola to Anahim Lake, both of which are well outside the boundaries. The highest point on this road is Heckman Pass, at sub-alpine elevation; it should help the traveller to explore Rainbow Range, which was omitted by some mistake in the original park area in 1937. Otherwise there are only trails, very few well marked, and the majority but faint scars across thousands of miles of thickly-wooded screes and high bare plateaux, among a myriad lakes and streams. So the somewhat arbitrary boundaries have been drawn with the help of aerial surveys. It is a superb wilderness, and because still so unknown, infinitely alluring. Very few people have seen the Hunlen Falls in the new southern area of the park. This



TWEEDSMUIR PARK, EUTSUK LAKE, WEST END.



Tweedsmuir Park, British Columbia.

magnificent waterfall has been variously estimated as between 800 and 1,200 feet high. Not far away is Glacier Valley and the Cariboo Mountains, which are of great beauty. There is also the lake, part of which never freezes and which is the wintering ground of trumpeter swans.

This southerly extension is, without doubt, a tremendous asset to Tweedsmuir Park. Yet one cannot but regret deeply the

damage done to great natural beauty by the demand of industry in the north. My husband and I felt it keenly on our first visit in the Fall of 1955. We flew over the Rockies by the Polar route and could hardly wait to explore those wonderful lakes and forests and peaks that seemed so perfect from the air. But when, at last, we flew from Prince George in a bush plane over the Kenny Dam on the Nechako river to land on Ootsa Lake, the scenes were only too different from those of our imagination. Then we explored Tahtsa and Whitesail rivers and lakes, in a boat most kindly lent us by the Alcan Company, and the damage done by the rising waters became only too clear.

The lodge pole pines, up to their waist in water, had turned rusty-orange when they died, till they toppled and whitened. The hope that these trees would soon rot and sink, or be shorn off in the freeze-up, had been dashed. Tahtsa river is a ghastly scene of drowning trees, whose dead heads are a constant menace to a boat. At times we even lost the main channel in the tangle of brush and ghostly swamped forests. There were no landings, no moose meadows, no beaches. In making a landing through the drifting logs, one was at once engulfed in the dark depths of lodge pole pines and spruce, so difficult to penetrate over the deadfall that is a part of virgin bush. One longed to get clear above the tree line, to feel the sun, to escape from this forest graveyard. No doubt it would be costly to clear the 600 miles of reservoir shore line, a dense coniferous forest in rugged country. The Alcan Company was not asked to do it. Indeed, the present project is estimated to cost about 550 million dollars. The result has been a colossal waste of timber, the devastation of natural beauty, of feeding grounds, the destruction of many landings, so that where ninety families lived on the north side of Ootsa Lake (outside the park) now there are a bare sixteen. Compensation was, of course, paid but controversy and misunderstanding were rife. Nothing can alter the fact that the original area of Tweedsmuir Park can no longer be described as a sportsmen's and naturalists' paradise.

Despite all this, we enjoyed ourselves immensely. We were very fortunate in securing the services of a well-known Tweedsmuir Park guide, Alan Blackwell, a paratrooper in the Canadian-United States Special Service Unit in the war, whose father had been one of the first settlers on the shores of the Ootsa Lake, just prior to the first war. With him, we started off by boat to fish and camp where we willed inside the original marches. We threaded the waterways under the Whitesail Mountains, sometimes steering past rusty dying trees, and sometimes on lakes

miles in width, over which the wind blew hard, cold and pure from the glaciers. We fished and got some thirty rainbow trout where the glacier streams joined the rising water level of the man-made flood. The flooding of the trees seems to have had a bad effect on the fish which, though enormous and hard-fighting as ever, seemed thin and, in one or two cases, diseased. One rainbow weighed a bare three pounds, and would have been fully seven in his prime. But really legendary fishing remains in those lakes like Eutsuk, to which the flood will never rise. Our base was on the east side of Ootsa Lake, at 2,800 feet, where the early settlers of nearly fifty years ago carved out homesteads and little cattle ranges, from which you can look across the blue expanse to Tweedsmuir Peak on the far side, rising to 7,000 feet high above its skirts of forest. This eventually we climbed, placing a stone on a cairn and each having a wish, in time-honoured custom.

The second part of our trip was spent hunting in the present park. It took a calm day to ferry the pack ponies across Ootsa Lake. We threaded our way on horseback up the narrow trail till the forest stopped at about 4,000 feet.

We saw no deer, although we saw two signs of them. We only once heard a coyote howling in the distant darkness. In the whole expedition, although we saw many signs of grizzly, we actually encountered only one. There were signs of black bear, but we never saw one. But the caribou, once very scarce, are now common on the high tundra. This is said to be due to the battle successfully waged by the game wardens against the wolves. They drop meat on the ice from small airplanes. The meat contains poisoned capsules. If the wolves have not eaten the meat by spring it disappears when the ice melts. It is a matter of conjecture whether the reduction in the numbers of both black and grizzly bears is due to these animals, as well as the wolves, picking up the poison. It is a country where you would look for bighorn sheep among the crags, but although there are sheep to the north and the south, they, the most splendid of mountain animals, have never sought these peaks. Rocky mountain goats, on the other hand, are common.

Birds there are very few. Ptarmigan on the high tundras, whisky jacks round our camp, a pair of fish eagles beside a creek full of trout, and two big wedges of Canada geese were all that we saw. We camped where the forest peters out to a shrubbery of dwarf pines which they call "shin tangle", and you could not find a better name. We picketed the horses round our camp fire at night to give warning of the approach of grizzly. We clattered

on the high tundra plateaux on our ponies. Then we tethered them and took to our feet to climb the loose slabs of rock and the snow-covered stretches of the peaks and to peer over the top of the crags on to the ledges where live the rocky mountain goats.

As a piece of classical northern beauty in the autumn sunshine, you will find its equal only elsewhere in British Columbia. The Government of that Province are greatly to be congratulated on their determination to retain for ever so large a stretch of fairy-like natural wilderness. Let us pray that it will not be threatened again by economic man, and that it will rest superb, remote and undisturbed.

## THE FUTURE OF REINDEER IN SCOTLAND

By M. N. P. UTSI

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When the current reindeer experiment in Scotland is discussed I am sometimes asked : " Why try to introduce, or reintroduce, reindeer when there are probably as many red deer as the ground can carry and certainly more than the black-faced-sheep farmers want ? "

On my first visit to Scotland, nearly ten years ago, I was very proud to catch a glimpse of red deer grazing in the Spey valley. " The monarch of the glen " on a crag is a stately sight, or a herd galloping with heads held high. After the rut, on the other hand, stags become " lean as herons ", to quote David Stephen.

Red deer are still numerous in some deer forests and land-owners formerly had good reason to welcome them for the sake of the income from stalking tenants ; but nowadays such lettings are often unobtainable. There are also afforested and other extensive regions where red deer are not wanted at all and are excluded by miles of 6 ft. fencing. Because red deer require the protection of woods in winter, and deer forests are often almost treeless to-day, the red deer come so close to the villages that they may become a menace to agricultural land and much resented by smallholders. Highland grazing and farming needs every piece of land it can use to produce beef, mutton, milk, wool and leather, corn, potatoes, turnips and other crops.

Yet Scotland without red deer would seem empty to everyone, and I believe there would be little complaint from smallholders if they stood to gain something, sport or profit, from invading