



A successful angler on the Opihi River

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Cover Photo: Lower Opihi River upstream of State Highway 1 Bridge

Photography: by G. McClintock

ACCESS ETIQUETTE

- No dogs
- No guns
- No camping
- Leave gates as you find them
- Stay within the river margins
- Do not litter
- Respect private property
- Avoid disturbing stock or damaging crops
- Do not park vehicles in gateways
- Be courteous to local landowners and others

Remember the reputation of **ALL** anglers is reflected by your actions

FISHING ETIQUETTE

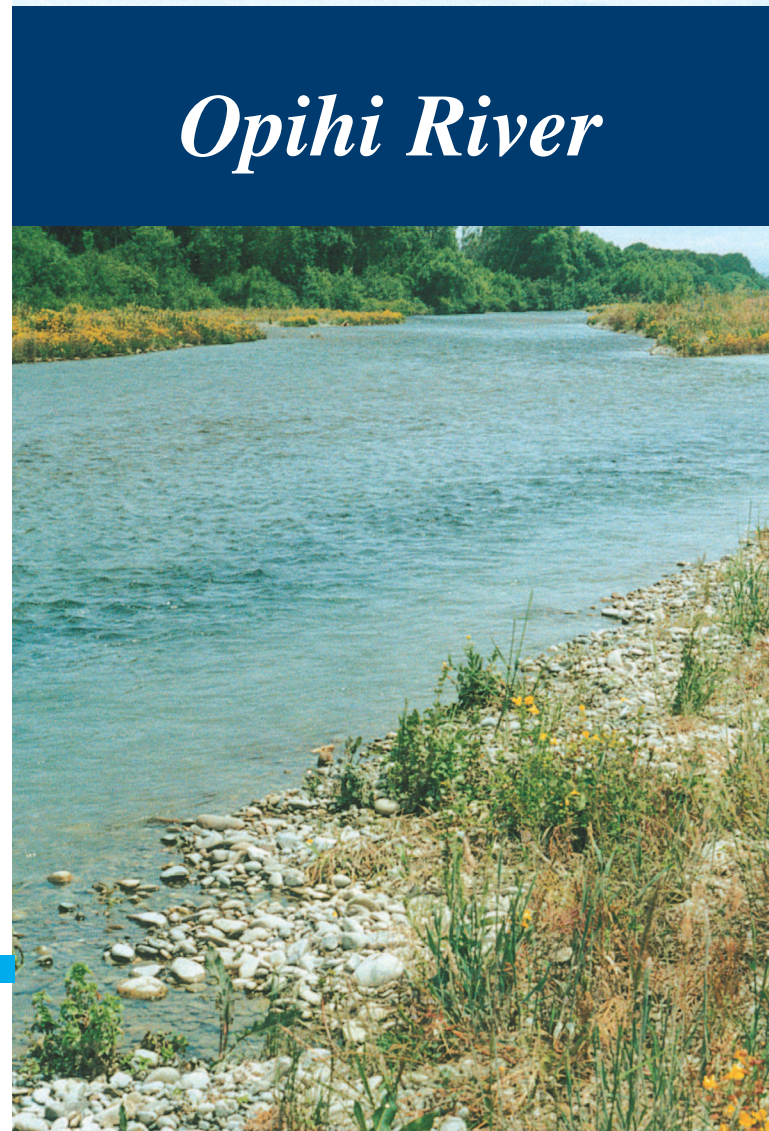
- Respect other anglers already on the water
- Enquire politely about their fishing plans
- Start your angling in the opposite direction
- Refer to your current Sports Fishing Guide for fishing regulations and bag limits



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Opihi River



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THE OPIHI RIVER FISHERY

The Opihi River rises in a small modified wetland of approximately 2 hectares at Burkes Pass and flows in an easterly direction for about 80 km to enter the Pacific Ocean 10 km east of Temuka. Several small mountain streams join the river between Burkes Pass and Fairlie. In the Opihi Gorge the flow tumbles through a series of rapids enclosed by steep rock walls where the width varies from 10 to 20 metres. Below the gorge at Raincliff on the northern bank the Opihi River is joined by the Opuha River which is actually a larger flow than the Opihi itself. From Raincliff to the sea the Opihi River is wide braided and is confined by extensive stop banks. In places the river flows between plantations of poplar and willow grown for flood protection purposes. The riverbed substrate is made up of unconsolidated cobbles, and shingle with an average width of 30 to 40 metres. Just before Pleasant Point the Tengawai River joins the Opihi and downstream of Temuka township the Temuka River, the combined flows of the Te Moana, Kakahu and Waihi Rivers, further augments the Opihi flow.

The Opihi River has a long and distinguished angling history and despite reduced flows and water quality is still a valuable and locally important sport fishery. Anglers fishing for brown trout report a high and reliable catch rate with the lower reaches from confluence of the Tengawai River to the Opihi River mouth being the most popular fishing area.

Chinook salmon migrate into the Opihi River usually in February and at this time the fishing pressure in the lower river increases significantly.

As a result of warm nor-west rain and snow melt the larger Rakaia and Rangitata Rivers often flood and during these times the spring fed Opihi River becomes a popular alternative as anglers seek clear flows and migrating salmon.



A Brown Trout is deceived by a bead head H/C nymph.

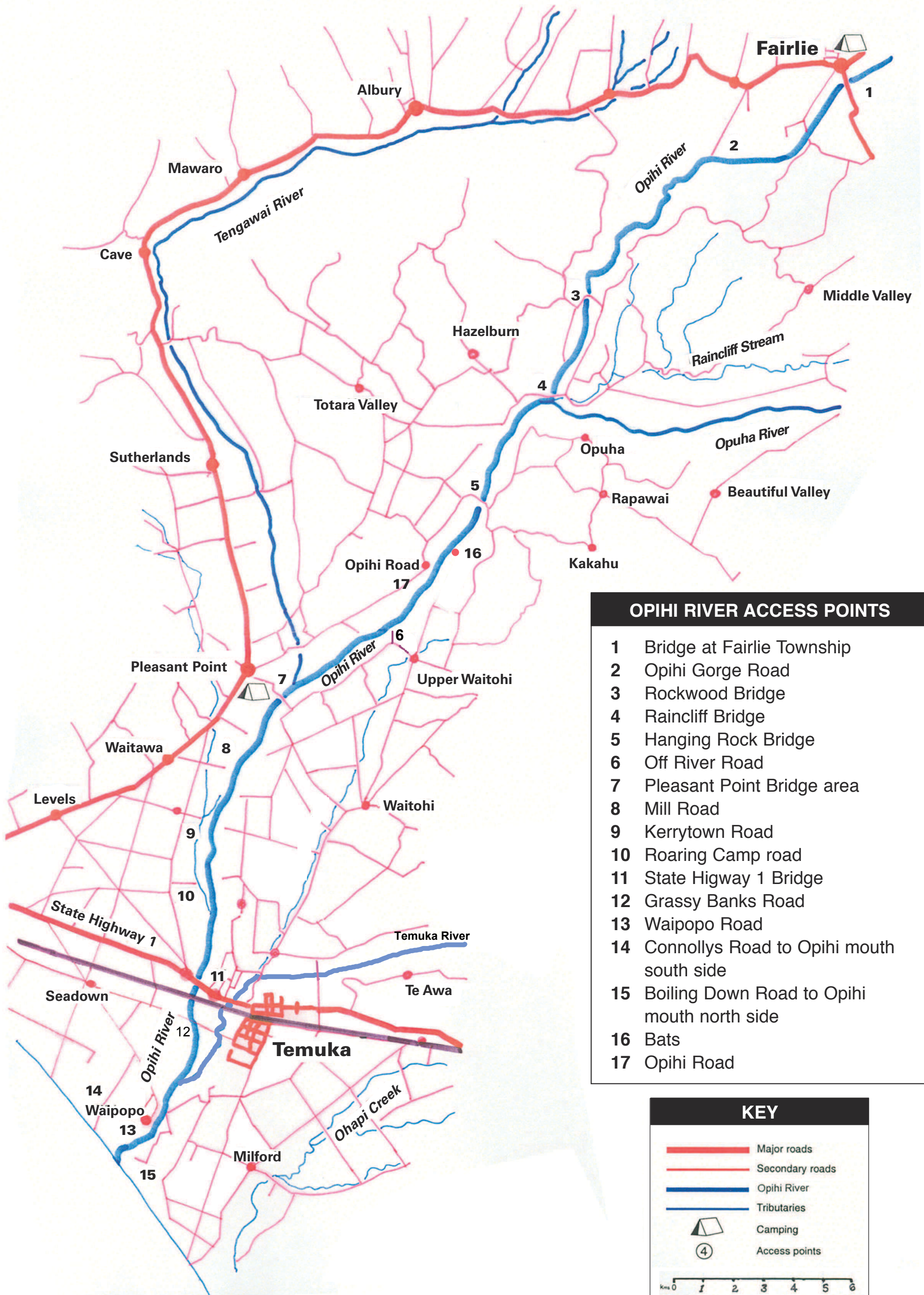


ANGLING INFORMATION

The Opihi River supports good populations of both chinook salmon and brown trout. In the waters from the mouth to about the State Highway 1 bridge there is a remnant population of rainbow trout, survivors of Acclimatisation Society hatchery releases. Previously salmon angling was restricted by regular mouth closure, however with the Opuha Dam now operating, higher summer flows ensure that the river flows to the sea at most times. Occasionally, due to heavy seas, the mouth can still close but this is short term with the river breaching the gravel bar at the next low tide. This should guarantee good access to salmon, sea-run brown trout and the many diadromous indigenous species, whitebait, bullies, smelts, eels and lampreys.

The Opihi's main tributaries, the Temuka and Waihi Rivers are also popular trout fishing waters for local and visiting anglers. The Opihi mouth is fished most often when migratory smelt and whitebait are moving into the river. During these periods feathered lures such as Grey Ghost and Ginger Mick are proven trout deceivers. Spin fishing with "Z" spinner or a weight and Colorado spoon will take salmon when they are running. In the upper reaches of the Opihi and its tributaries casting a dry fly to imitate mayfly naturals or a nymph representing the larvae will be successful. In mid summer when flows are low and clear, considerable stealth and accurate casting with ultra light tippets are essential, if the angler is to be successful.

Opihi River



OPIHI RIVER ACCESS POINTS

- 1 Bridge at Fairlie Township
- 2 Opihi Gorge Road
- 3 Rockwood Bridge
- 4 Raincliff Bridge
- 5 Hanging Rock Bridge
- 6 Off River Road
- 7 Pleasant Point Bridge area
- 8 Mill Road
- 9 Kerrytown Road
- 10 Roaring Camp road
- 11 State Highway 1 Bridge
- 12 Grassy Banks Road
- 13 Waipopo Road
- 14 Connollys Road to Opihi mouth south side
- 15 Boiling Down Road to Opihi mouth north side
- 16 Bats
- 17 Opihi Road

KEY

- Major roads
- Secondary roads
- Opihi River
- Tributaries
- Camping
- Access points

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