

Looking for Gold

Bed rock is one of the most important words in placer mining

It is on this impervious layer well where over 90% of all the placer gold in B.C. has been recovered. There are a number of points concerning **bedrock** with which every placer miner should be familiar with. Some of these are as follows:

1. The definition of bedrock. Usually a continuous layer of rock upon which placer gold settles because of water action. Sometimes this layer is heavily fractured, cracked or broken and, when it is, the gold tends to collect in the cracks and crevices, especially but not always, under large rocks on the bedrock.
2. The location of bedrock. In mountainous country and near creeks and rivers with steep gradient slopes bedrock is usually close at hand. In valleys like the Fraser Valley and other river valleys where the river is generally slow moving, bedrock is usually far below the surface. Newer streams and creeks cut through to bedrock as they flow down from higher levels, hopefully, bedrock on these streams will be found on or close to the surface.
3. Types of bedrock. In some areas there are half a dozen distinct types of bedrock which yield placer gold. In the Caribou black, reddish, yellowish, and grey are known to carry gold. Experienced miners are always on the lookout for bedrock which coloured. Red oxidized bedrock has yielded extremely well throughout the province. Smooth bedrock often does not hold gold. Old hands look for bedrock which is heavily creviced, cracked, or rough.
4. Clay on bedrock. When clay is covering the bedrock, gold is almost never found. Old placer men seldom check bedrock that has clay on it. Walk on by. The old Lightning Creek mine is an exception to the above statement.
5. Bedrock may be found far above the present level of creeks or rivers. High bedrock which is bedrock found on high benches often carries placer gold. In times past the streams ran in channels which were higher than today. Erosion cut the channels deeper but the gold stayed behind in good quantities. Many historic old towns/districts had high ancient channels which were often hundreds of feet above the present channels but yielded exceptionally rich placers. Always be on the lookout for high bedrock which could carry gold.
6. False bedrock. This is a phrase applied to hardpan, a hard layer of clay which looks like true bedrock and is often mistaken for it. There are a number of famous annals of B.C. mining history where a 'false' bedrock was penetrated to the true bedrock and amazing amounts of gold was recovered.
7. Errors made when cleaning bedrock. The most common error is the failure to penetrate the bedrock deep enough. A surprising amount of gold can often be recovered from cracks which have penetrated deeply into the bedrock. Another mistake which is usual is neglecting to scrape off or wash muddy rocks and slabs when breaking apart bedrock. Quite often the mud carries significant quantities of gold.