

Walk:

Wollemi National Park: Cliff-edge Spur – Tootie Cascades – Shady Gully

Leader:

Yuri Bolotin

Maps, etc:

Mountain Lagoon. GPS setting WGS84.

Description:

Park at the end of T3 Trail and take the T3 Track towards the Colo, leaving it at GR 818 022 and heading north down a spur that looks like becoming a knife-edge, then into a gully. Find a way down to Tootie Creek at around GR 820 030. Walk up Tootie Creek and visit Tootie Cascades, if there is time; then find a pass back to T3 Track at around GR 814 027. Exploratory and may not be possible. About 6 km. Scrambling and exposure.

Rating:

5M. S333E

Gear Issues:

2 litres of water, GPS, PLB, appropriate head and footwear, electrolytes, maps, compass, first aid kit, tape (leader only). Change of gear for afterwards.

Date walked:

17 March 2025.

The Party:

Yuri Bolotin (leader), Leah Thompson, Bernard Lo, Chris Dalton, 4.

Background Notes

We have done several walks in the area west of the Tootie Creek and Colo River junction. The T3 Trail gives convenient access to it and, despite the topographic map showing no cliffs there, it is full of high and challenging escarpment lines that need to be dealt with to descend through an almost 500 metre altitude difference between the end of T3 Trail and the rivers. An additional attraction of these journeys is a swim either in the Colo River or in Tootie Cascades. This walk was to explore two more possible passes from the T3 Trail and Tootie Cascades.

The Weather:

A 50% cloud cover in the morning that gradually dissipated, resulting in a beautifully sunny afternoon. Chilly breezes throughout the day. Temperature range 15 to 23 degrees C. Ideal walking conditions for this time of the year.

Track Notes

Note: time references in the text relate to Grid References in the table at the end of these Track Notes.

Cars were parked at the end of T3 Trail, and the journey got underway at 0905, as we began walking on the T3 Track. Unlike most other trips, where some significant time and effort would need to be spent before you arrive at the first Wow! feature, here you get an almost instant gratification as a few minutes later you arrive at a breathtaking 180-degree panorama north towards Tootie Creek and Colo River gorges, and the

wilderness beyond. This morning, the air was particularly crisp, and the light was wonderful, so who could resist stopping here to enjoy the view and take photos? At 0910.



The panoramic view near the start of the walk. The first big gorge running from left to right is Tootie Creek; the next one beyond it is Colo River. The peak in the middle of the photo is Parr South. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

The glorious vistas continued for about 200 m, before the track plunged down below the escarpment. At 0915. We soon swung north east, descending on a narrow spur with a less steep gradient for a while, then climbing a small hill, from where the trail went down following a knife-edge like spur that extended for 300 m, where it arrived at a flat area. At 0940. All very scenic, but it was not until six minutes later, when we left the known trail at an almost indistinct high point that the real exploration adventure commenced.

The start of it turned out to be very ordinary as we pushed through a thick stand of prickly Native Holly, *Podolobium ilicifolium*. The good thing was that the bush was dry and it only took a few minutes to come to a more agreeable area. For a while, due to the flatness of the landscape and the dense undergrowth, we had no visibility further than a few steps ahead, but then, at 0953, the party reached a small cliff line from where we could finally see a gully forming below us and, to the right of it, the beginning of our target spur.

Our progress accelerated from here on, as the country became much more open. We knew there were big drops ahead, but for the time being, the incline was very moderate, and then the ground became completely flat. We found ourselves in a gentle landscape of a broad grassy meadow and tall mature trees. A Wollemi idyll!

Suddenly, but not unexpectedly (as I had spent a lot of time before the walk studying the maps), the company arrived at a brink of a dizzying 170 metre drop into the Tootie Creek gorge below. This was typical Wollemi. The 180-degree view felt even more astonishing because of the contrast with the completely flat area we had just been walking through. At 1009. Looking west, we could trace Tootie Creek

all the way to Cascades Peak, Mount D'Arcy and Mount Not-D'Arcy; and to the east, to the Colo junction with Mount Townsend directly above it.



Chris, Leah and Bernard at the lookout above Tootie Creek. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Yuri at the Tootie Creek escarpment with Mount Townsend seen in the background. Photo Bernard Lo.

A perfect time and place for morning tea, which ended at 1024. What followed was a wonderfully scenic journey down a steep, rocky 350 metre long spur on the edge of the escarpment, with continuous panoramic views of Tootie Creek gorge. We stopped frequently to take photos. At 1033, of a giant bird-like rock formation; at 1041, on a rock platform cantilevered above the valley, with the watercourse now much closer, both visible and audible; and at 1054, on the narrow terminal end of the Cliff-edge Spur, as I decided to call this remarkable feature, still 40 metres above the creek.

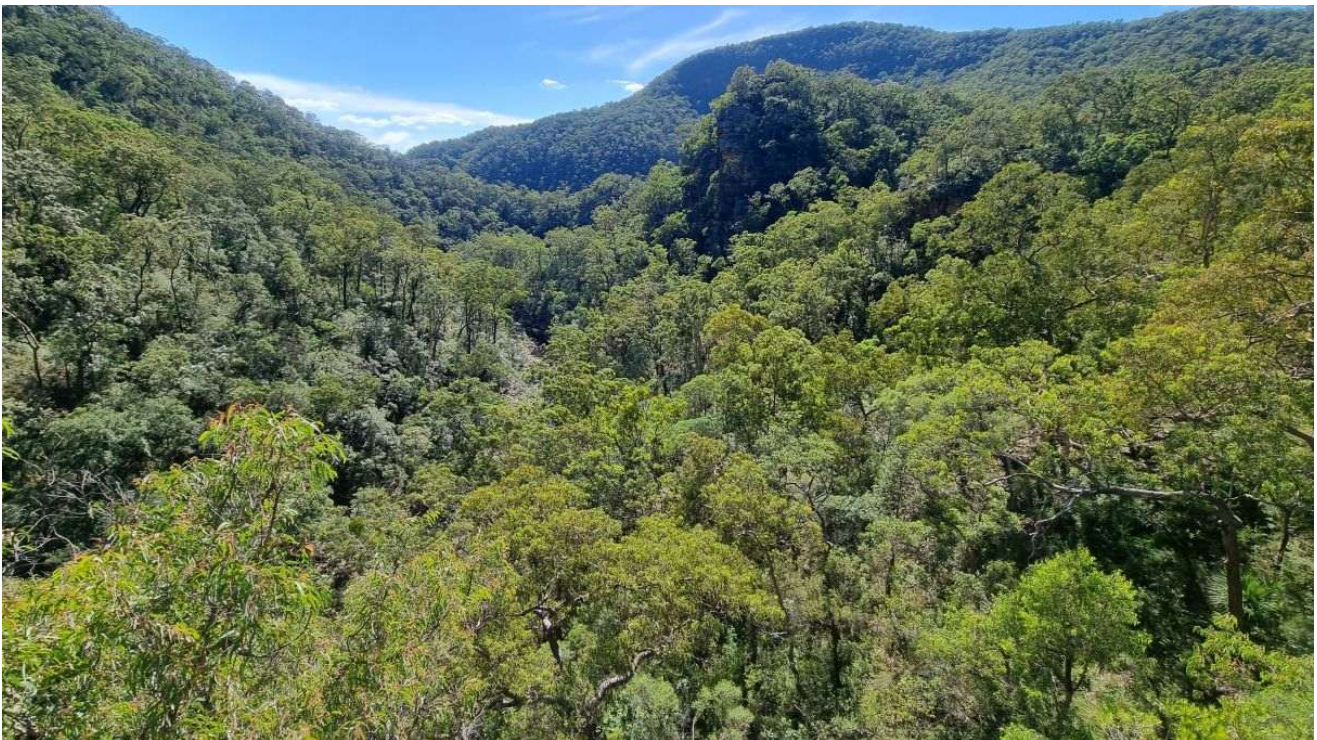


A giant bird-like rock formation along the Cliff-edge Spur. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

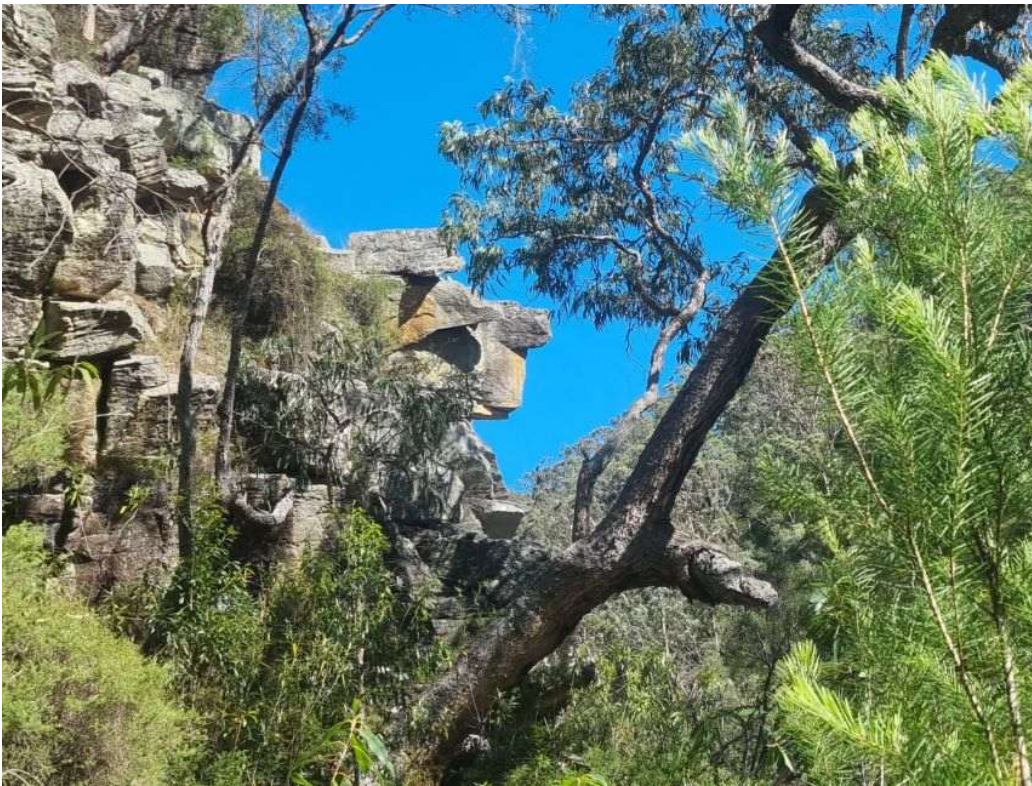


Tootie Creek gorge panorama from the Cliff-edge Spur. Cascades Peak on the far left; Mount D'Arcy in the middle; Mount Not-D'Arcy to the right of it. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

The way forward from here was via the gully on the eastern side of the spur. The descent was very steep and a bit slippery due to leaves on the ground but otherwise pretty straightforward. Before getting too far down, I wanted to check the wild cliffs below the walkable end of the spur for a striking dinosaur-like rock formation we had seen looking up from Tootie Creek on one of the past walks. I soon saw it, but the closest I could get to it was about 30 metres. From this new angle, it looked very different, more like several protruding animal heads, but still quite remarkable.

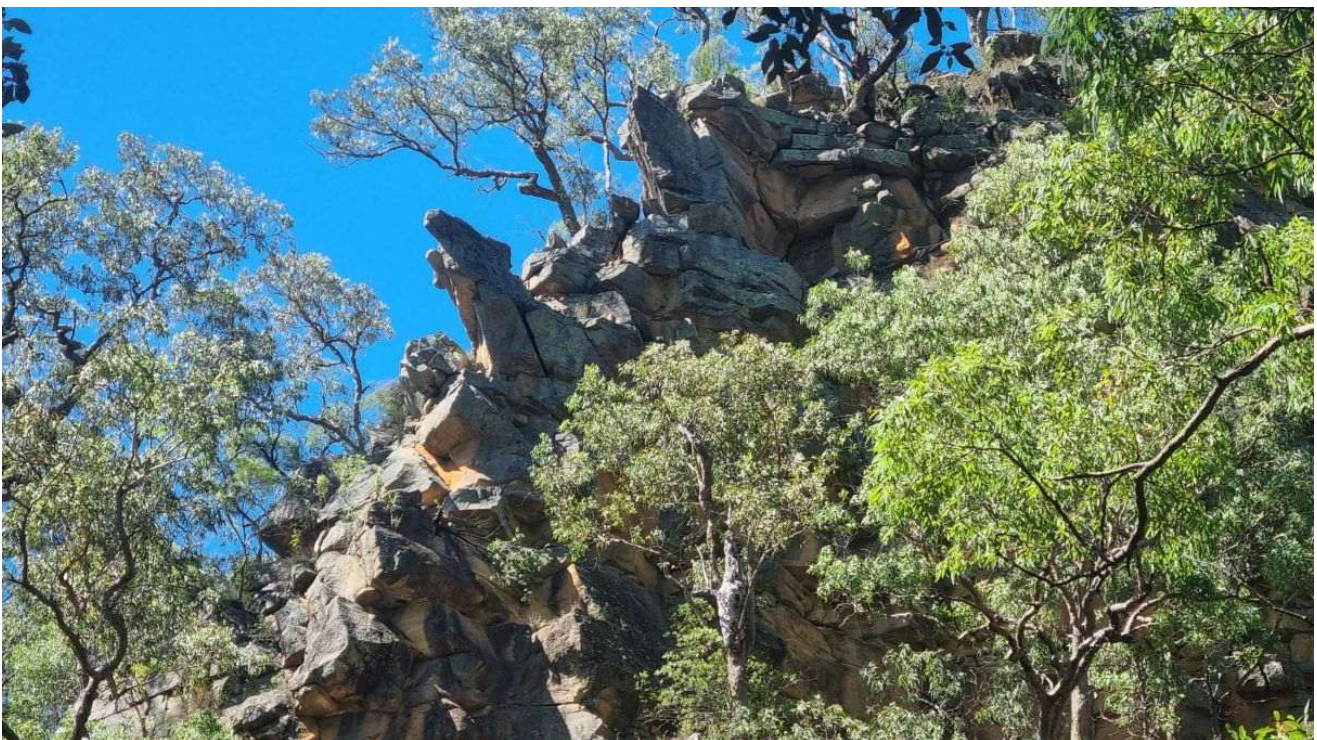


Tootie Creek and Colo junction view from the Cliff-edge Spur. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Protruding heads on the edge of the Cliff-edge Spur. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

At 1111, the group made it down to Tootie Creek, just under a kilometre from the Colo River junction. Our direction of travel today was upstream, away from the Colo. Almost immediately, we made an easy crossing on river boulders to the opposite, northern bank, which was flatter, had less scrub and offered better shade. Advancing a further 50 metres, we looked back at the cliffs on the end of the spur we had just descended. There, we could see the dinosaur-like rock sticking out near the top of the escarpment. At 1117. It was hard to believe that we had stood not far from it only a short time ago – it looked quite impossible from this angle to come anywhere near these precipitous bluffs.



Protruding heads on the edge of the Cliff-edge Spur from Tootie Creek. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Eleven minutes later, to avoid a deep pool, the party moved to the southern bank, where we found wide rocky shelves stretching along the bank just above the river bed – a bushwalker’s dream as the going here was both scenic and easy.

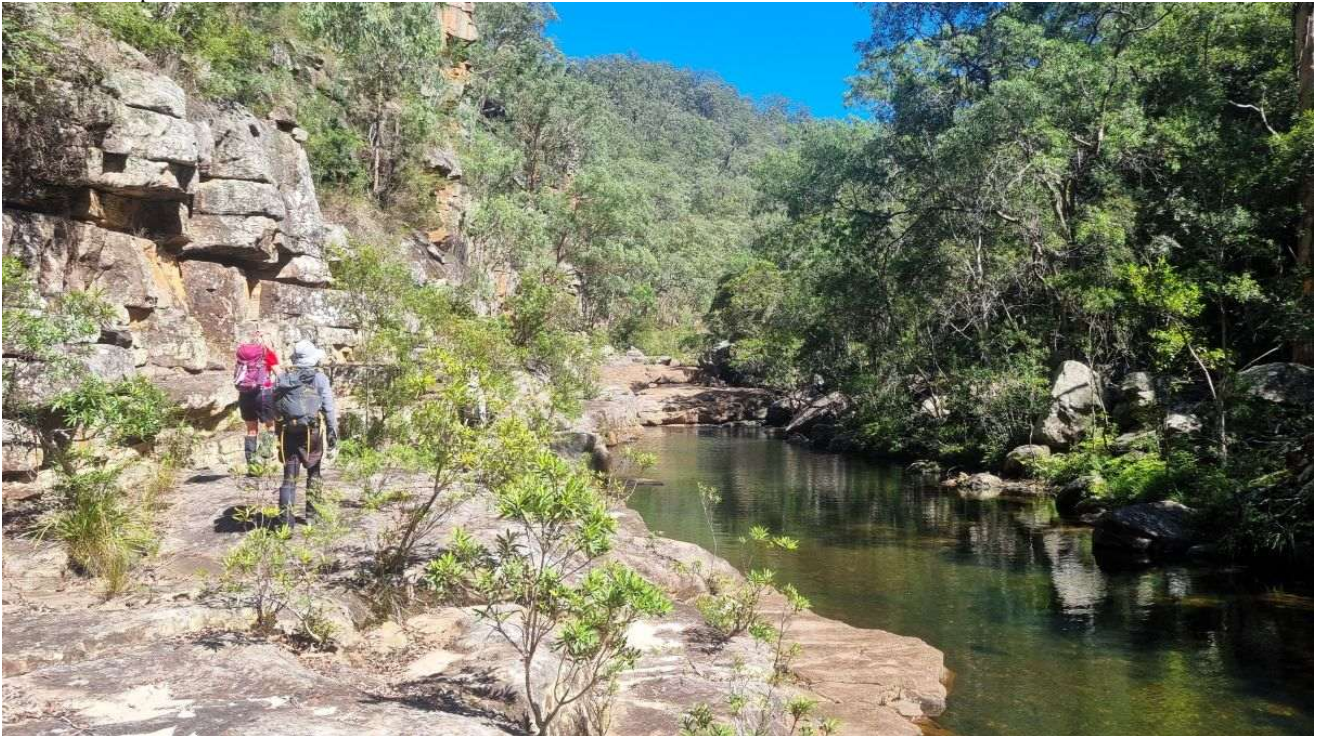


Crossing Tootie Creek on boulders. Photo Bernard Lo.

Next, we spent ten minutes at the gully I had been hoping to use to exit up to the tops. It was hard to see up this steep and narrow watercourse from the bottom, so Bernard went some way further and pronounced it doable. From 1141 till 1151. Whilst no guarantee of what could happen higher upstream, it was nevertheless a good reassurance as I now knew we had plenty of time to visit the fabled Tootie Cascades.



Tootie Creek pool. Photo Bernard Lo.



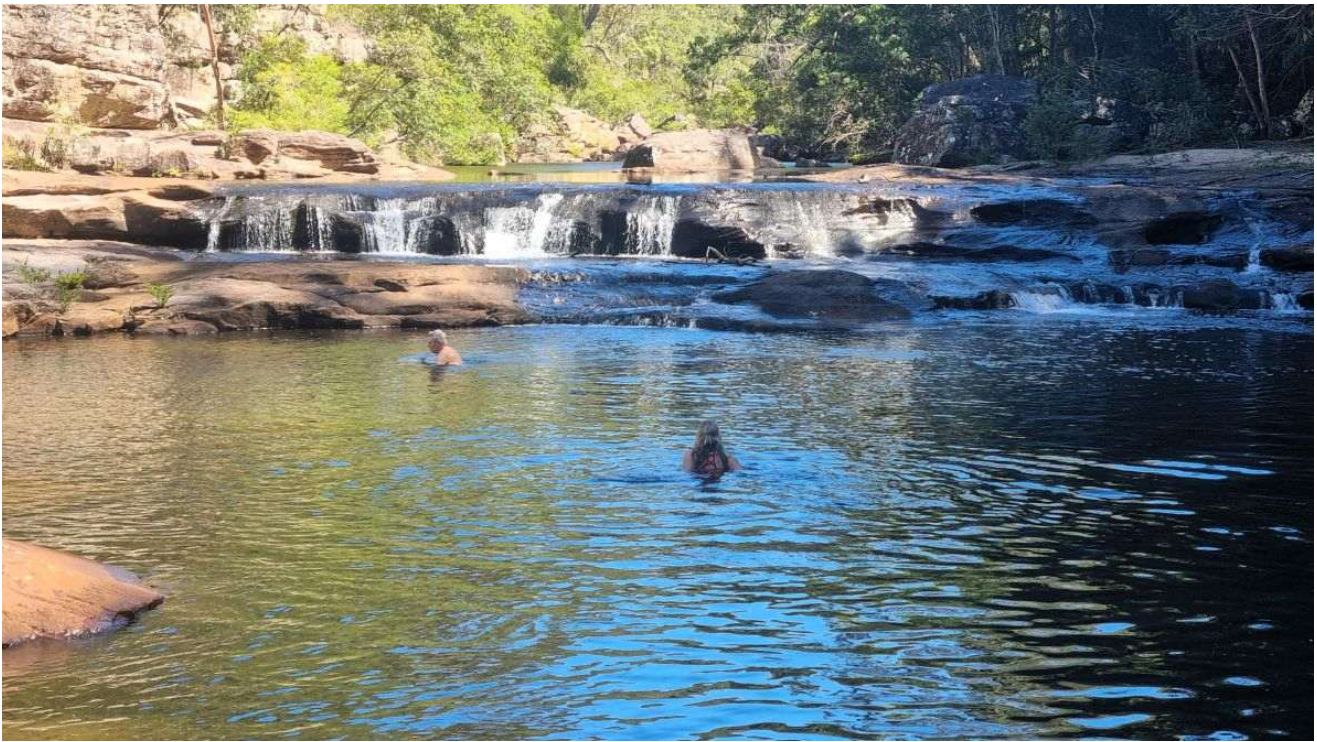
Continuous rock platforms and scenery create ideal walking conditions. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

The walk up only took 17 minutes, thanks to the stone platforms that continued all the way there. With a large part of the northern bank still in the shade and a biting chilly breeze, it took a bit of determination to

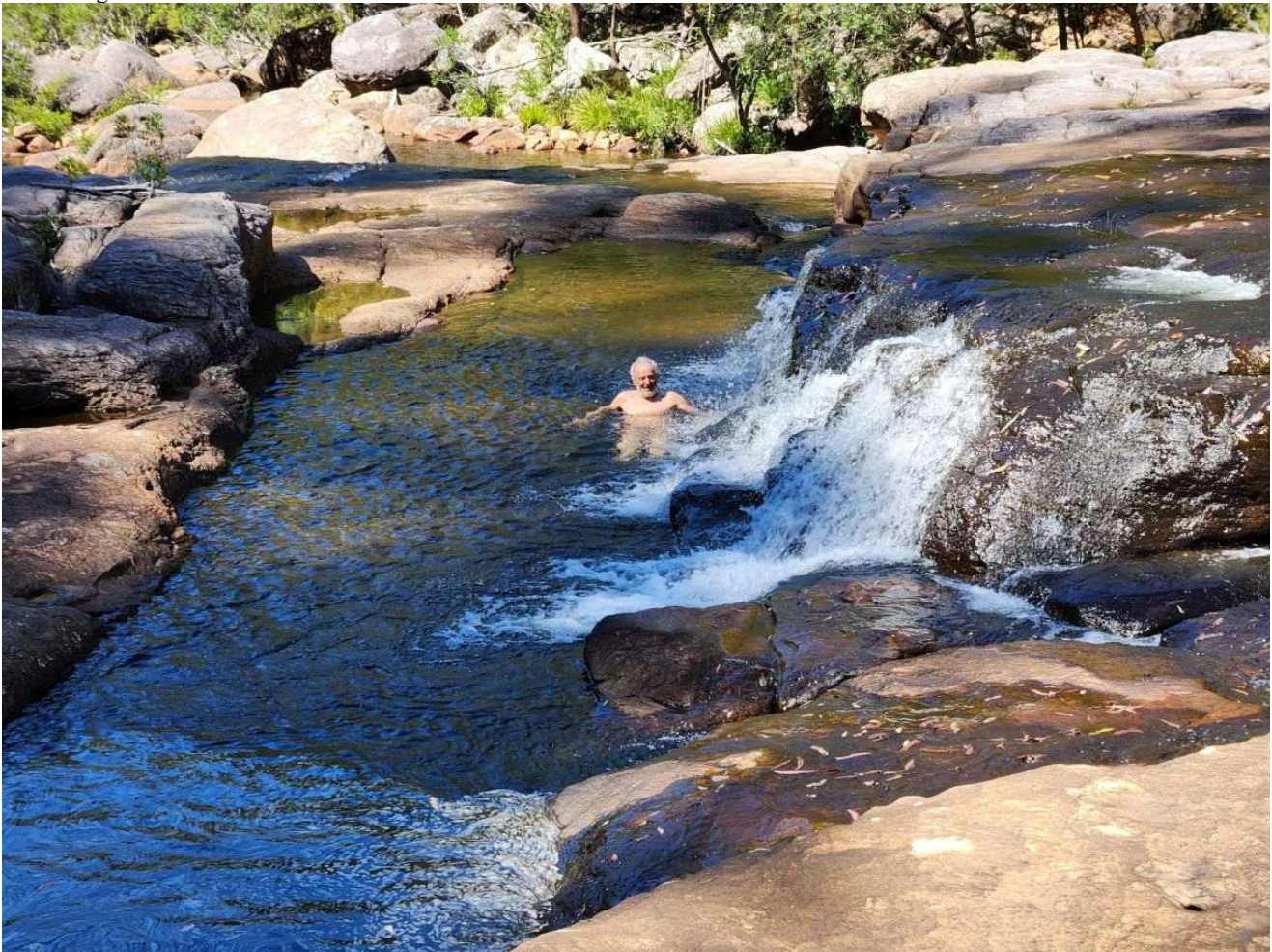
go for a swim, but all of us did. There was a choice here of three different large pools and a smaller spa-like basin. The water temperature was just great, plus it was not hard to find warm sunny rock shelves on the opposite side.



Approaching Tootie Cascades. Photo Bernard Lo.



Swimming in Tootie Cascades. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

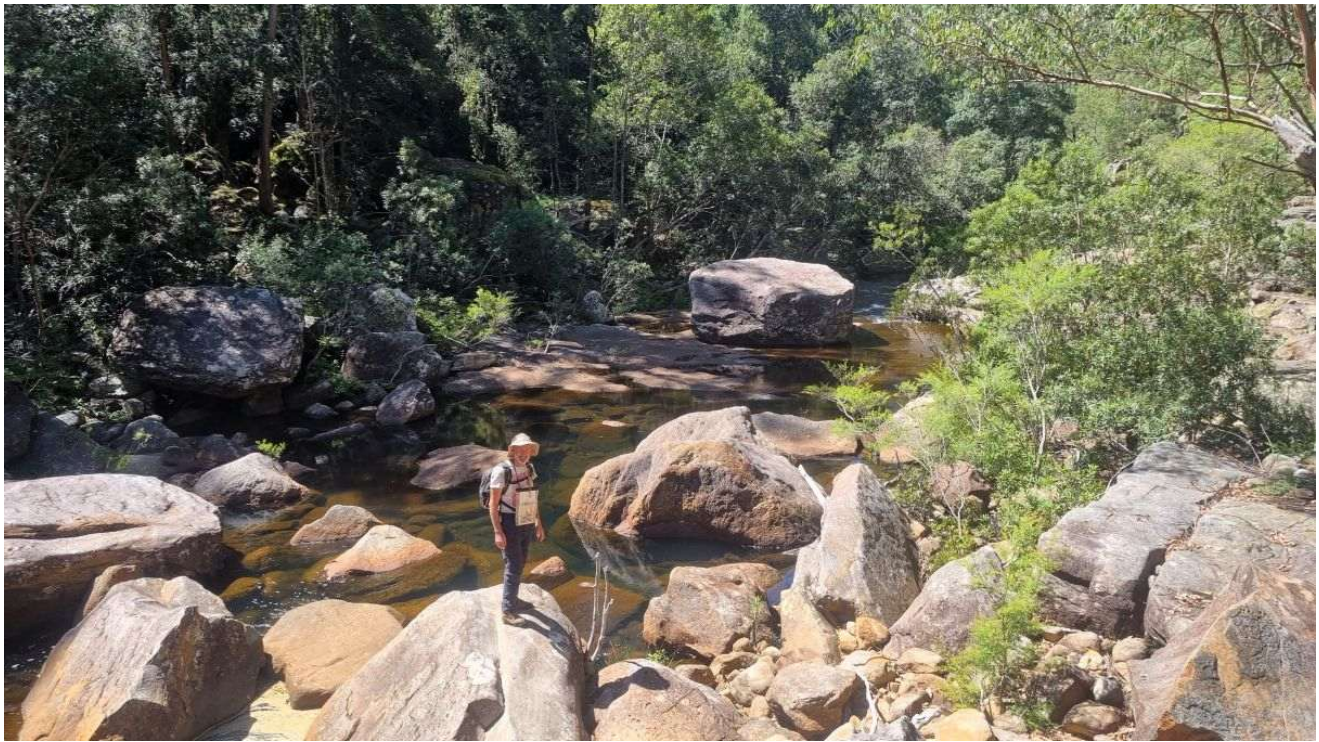


Yuri in a spa pool at Tootie Cascades. Photo Bernard Lo.



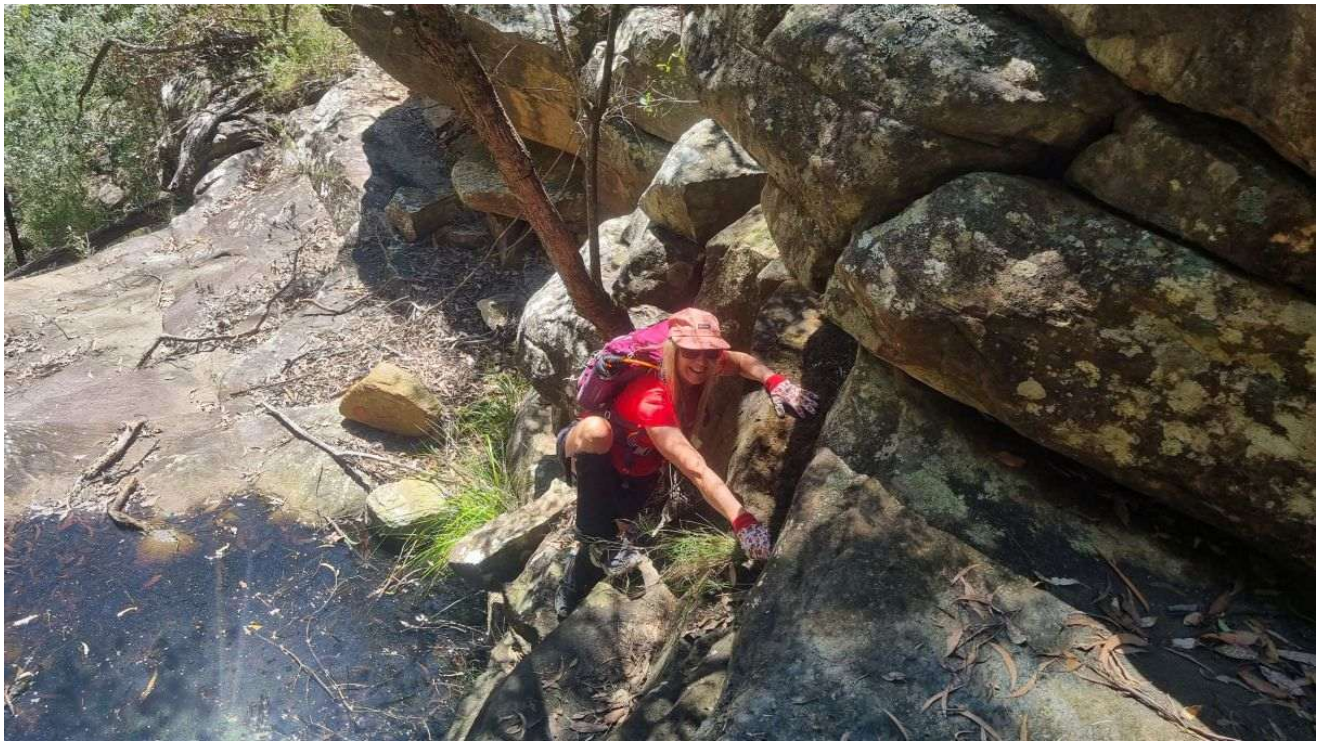
Upper pool at Tootie Cascades. Photo Bernard Lo.

Happy, refreshed and relaxed, we left Tootie Cascades at 1249 and headed downstream. Along the way, a young one metre long Goanna, *Varanus varius*, was woken up from its blissful sunbake and scurried away before we could get to our cameras. The party arrived at the exit gully by 1306.



Yuri at Tootie Creek. Photo Leah Thompson.

At the start of it, there were three scrambles. The first one was easy; the second scramble was a harder one, but there was a way through both on the left (my preference) and the right side of the three metre waterfall; the last one, up a four metre waterfall, was the trickiest one and would be very difficult in wet weather (different going down, when a tape could be set). We managed to do it using a narrow ledge and a tree.



Leah scrambles up Shady Gully. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

After these initial challenges, it was all easy and very much in line with other watercourses in the area. All the way up, we went through a series of stone steps interspersed with flat rocky sections. This ravine had a lot of shady areas as it was deep, narrow, and contained a lot of trees. It was a blessing for us, given the warm sun of the early afternoon. I therefore called it Shady Gully. During our entire trip from Tootie Creek,

we only encountered pools of stagnant water, otherwise the bed was completely dry. I was happy to see a small pretty cave with some tafoni weathering near the end of our journey through.



Steps in Shady Gully. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



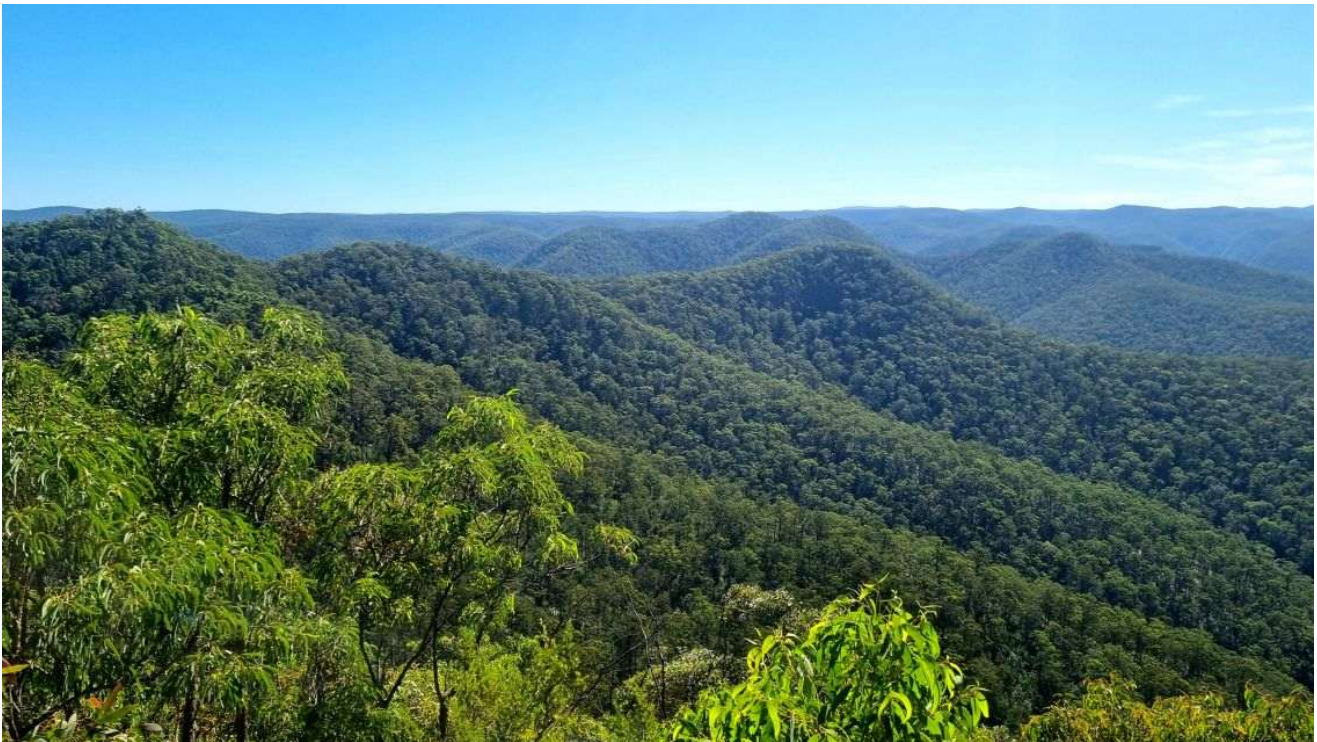
Shady Gully. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

By 1342, we had been walking up the gully for over 600 metres, and it now seemed to have lost its lustre, becoming more open and clogged with debris. Good time to make our exit up the western slope towards a spur above. We had a drink stop or two in the shade, and the cool breeze that had been a nuisance when getting out of the water at the cascades was now extremely welcome.

1357 saw us on top of the broad watershed that was known to me from a couple of previous trips. The first bit, about one hundred and fifty metres was scrubby and over a gentle gradient. At 1410, we entered a much

more exciting steep and rocky knife-edge-like part, with great views and a stronger breeze assisting our progress.

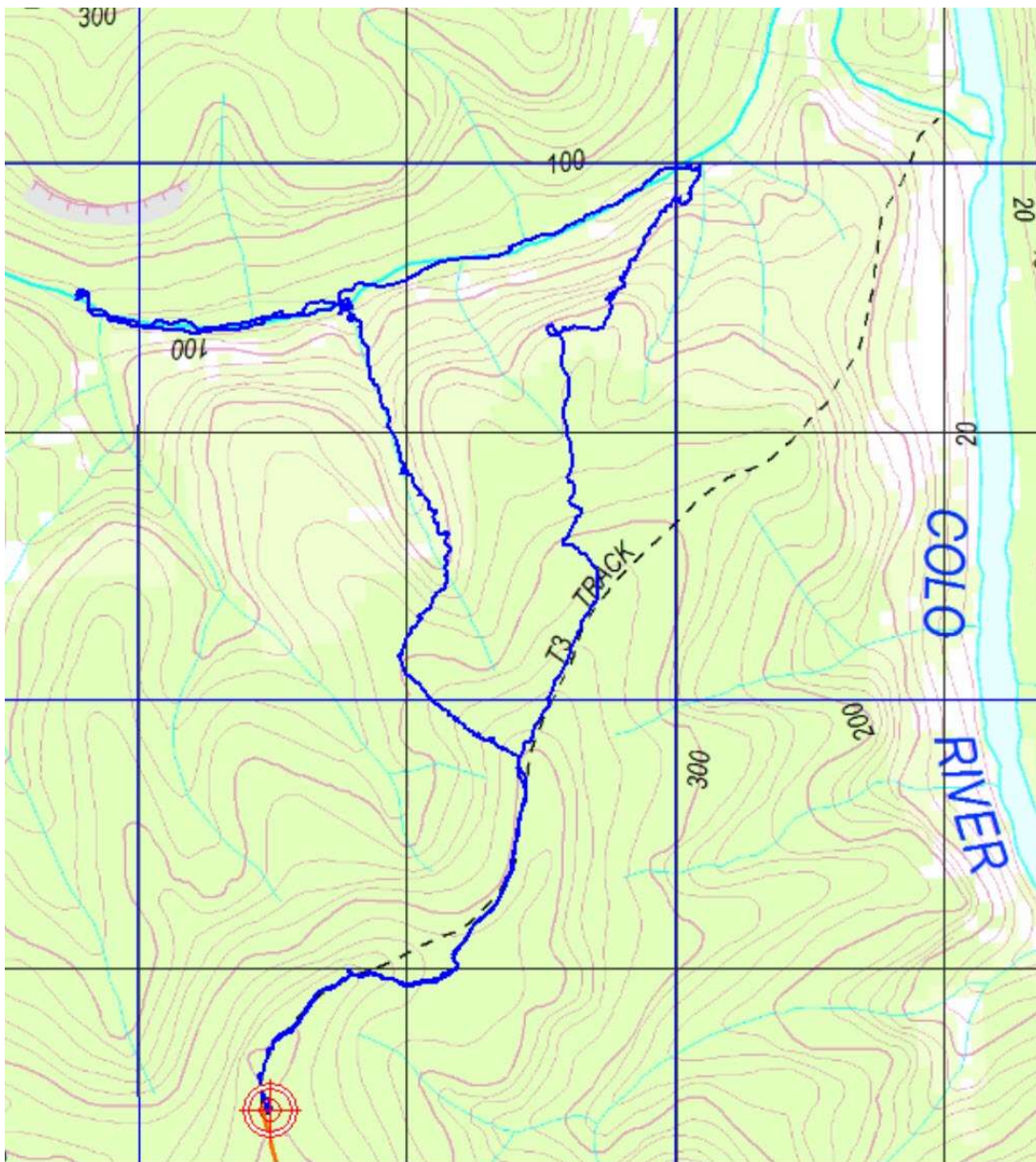
Twenty-one minutes later, (there had been a stop due to one member becoming temporarily unwell), the team made it to T3 Track. There was an obligatory stop at the lookout near the end, at 1505, before we made it back to the cars by 1508.



Lookout near the end of the walk. Cascades Peak is at middle-right. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

A perfect day of Wollemi exploring that resulted in finding two new passes and included a swim at Tootie Cascades.

Trip statistics: total distance 7.2 km; total ascent 538 m.



Walk topographic map. Recorded and prepared by Yuri Bolotin.

Table of Times, Locations and Grid References

Time	Location	Grid Reference	Elevation
0905	Cars parked and started walking	GR 8124 0123	490 m
0910	Lookout	GR 8125 0135	500 m
0915	Steep descent	GR 8139 0149	490 m
0940	Flat area	GR 8181 0210	340 m
0946	Left T3 Trail	GR 8185 0219	335 m
0953	Cliff line	GR 8179 0229	300 m
1009-1024	Lookout and morning tea. Start of Cliff-edge Spur	GR 8177 0270	220 m
1033	Bird-like formation	GR 8188 0276	180 m
1041	Rock platform	GR 8192 0282	120 m
1054	End of Cliff-edge Spur	GR 8200 0293	70 m
1111	Tootie Creek, crossed to the northern side	GR 8203 0299	30 m
1117	Dinosaur-like rock view	GR 8197 0298	32 m

1128	Crossed to the southern side, start of rock platforms	GR 8169 0283	45 m
1141-1151	Recce at Shady Gully	GR 8139 0274	55 m
1208-1249	Tootie Cascades. Swim and lunch	GR 8090 0276	85 m
1306	Shady Gully	GR 8139 0274	55 m
1342	Exited Shady Gully	GR 8158 0223	215 m
1357	Top of the ridge	GR 8149 0209	300 m
1410	Start of steep rocky ascent	GR 8159 0197	340 m
1431	T3 Trail	GR 8170 0190	400 m
1505	Lookout	GR 8125 0135	500 m
1508	Back at cars	GR 8124 0123	490 m