

## **Walk:**

### **Wollemi National Park: Glenara Gorge and Noorumboon Gorge**

## **Leader:**

Yuri Bolotin

## **Maps, etc:**

Kurrajong. GPS setting WGS84.

## **Description:**

Park on Bells Line of Road at GR 762 889. Descend into a gorge to the north and follow it all the way down to Wheeny Creek. Walk downstream and enter the next gorge to the east. Walk up it and eventually out to the parked vehicles. A short-ish day. About 5 km. Scrambling and exposure. Exploratory.

## **Rating:**

5M. S223E

## **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:**

3 June 2025.

## **The Party:**

Yuri Bolotin (leader), Yidan Saladine, Irina Sorokina, Michael Samaras, Adam Fung, Helen Magiros, 6.

## **The Weather:**

A little drizzle in the morning that soon dissipated. A partly cloudy day with moderate breezes. The cloud cover was from 100% at the start of the walk, gradually diminishing to about 20% at the end. Temperature range 8 to 17 degrees C.

## **Track Notes**

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

It is rare to start a Wollemi walk from Bells Line of Road, but the map reveals several convenient access points along the southern boundary of the national park. Today, we used one of them, which looked like an ex-truck rest stop, now closed off by sandstone blocks.

At 0856, our wilderness adventure had a very underwhelming start as we trudged across a low man-made earth wall and through an area littered with old rubbish, including the rusting remains of a motor car. One point of interest was a cluster of Ghost Fungi, *Omphalotus nidiformis* that glow in the dark. Much as I would love to see that phenomenon, I was sincerely hoping we would be back here well before the nightfall. In fact, I had advertised this as “A short-ish day”. Down a 1.5 km long gully and up another, even shorter one, both close to the main road – how hard could it be? I was in my mind deciding what to have for lunch back at Grumpy later today.

By 0913, having checked underneath a medium-size cliff line along the way, we entered a broad, gently descending spur covered in short undergrowth. Ten minutes later, this already much better-looking country underwent a complete transformation, as we stood on the brink of a drop into a dark, wild-looking gorge,

listening to loud sounds of rushing water coming from below. This was less than 400 metres from Bells Line of Road but felt like four thousand kilometres away. No rubbish here, as, fortunately, only few people would have been willing to venture deeper into the Wollemi and the ones who had would have treated it with proper respect.

At 0934, after a short scramble down, the party entered a rainforest, at the junction of two gullies, both pumping with water; the one on the right had a five metre waterfall. I was surprised to see a giant 50 metre high straight Turpentine that survived so close to the road. Next, we stepped into a cool, wet, green magical world of the gorge, which was narrow and framed by soaring sandstone walls. There were few potential exit points on the western side and practically none on the eastern flank during the entire length of the trip.



Sundews on the wet rock. Photo: Yidan Saladine.





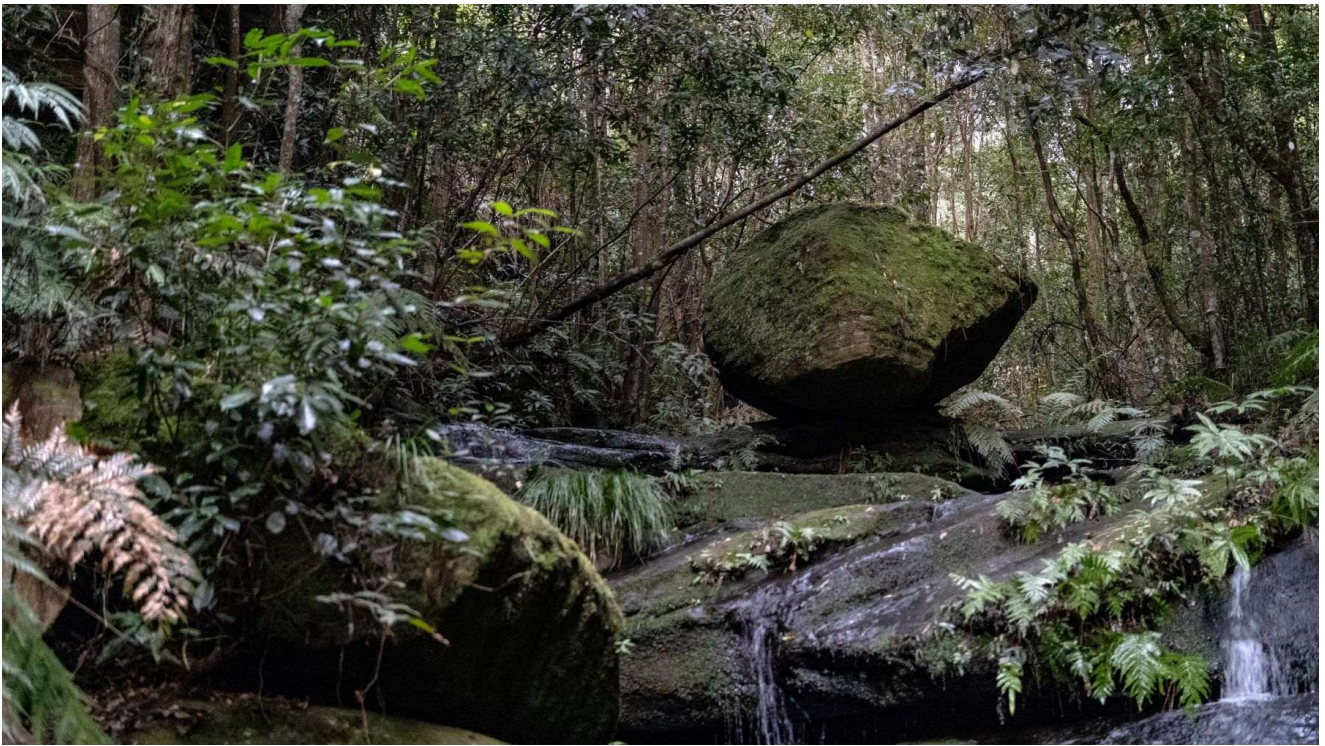
The beginning of Glenara gorge. Photo: Helen Magiros.

The first overhang we checked was dark and dripping with water but very attractive nevertheless. At 0945, the first lovely cascades were recorded. Our progress was easy but not too fast as we took our time to revel in this magical environment. There was always enough room to maneuver within the constriction. At times, we walked above the creek on reliable but not long-lasting ledges, under continuous overhangs; at other times, it seemed more interesting to tread along the bed, with its mossy boulders, Ferns, rocky platforms and stretches of firm sand.



On top of the first cascades in the gorge. Photo: Irina Sorokina.





Rainforest and creek boulders. Photo: Adam Fung.



Banksia seedpod on the gorge floor. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Next, a fifty metre long cave with flat floors was traversed, but, being wet, it would not have been an attractive habitation. We had a quick morning tea at its northern end, from 1002. There was not much, if



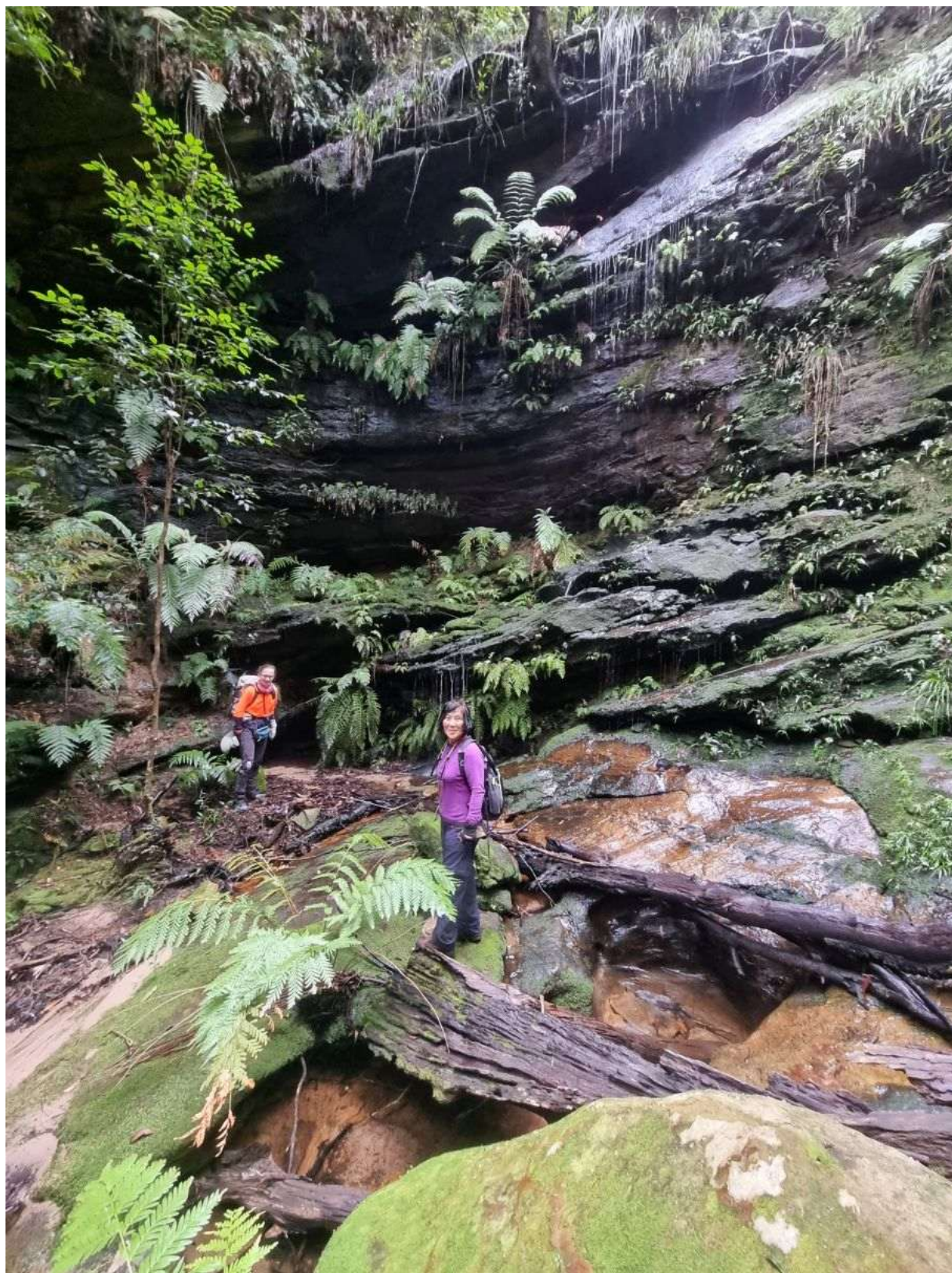
any, dry ground at this spot, and the spirit of exploration felt too strong to resist, so we only spent seven minutes there.



Many shades of green in Glenara Gorge. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Immediately afterwards, the company crossed another huge overhang on a ledge that followed the creek steeply down. The surrounding landscape was getting more and more beautiful and wild as we progressed. At 1021, the group paused to photograph a 15 metre waterfall on the tributary creek coming in on the right.





Irina and Yidan underneath the waterfall. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

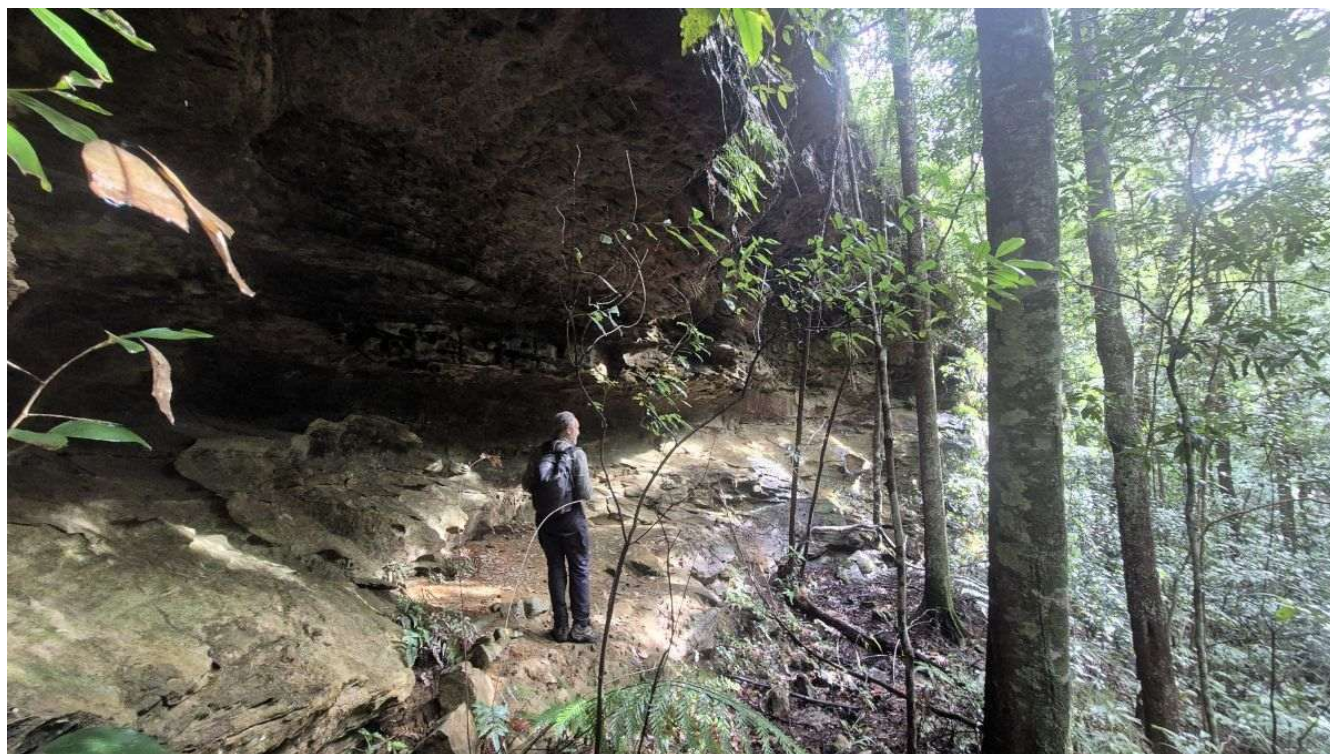




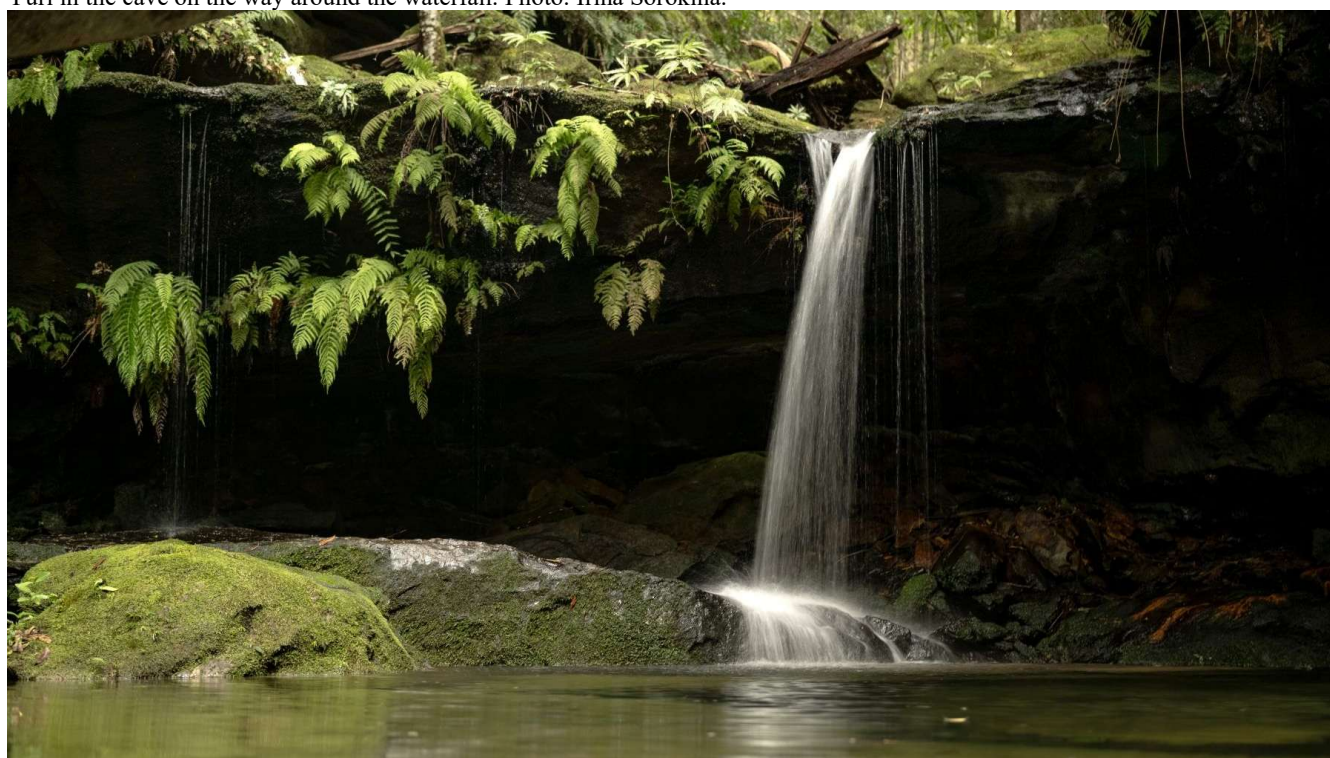
*Urnula campylospora*, Brown Forest Cup Fungi. Photo: Yidan Saladine.

Five minutes later, we stopped at the edge of a four metre waterfall on the main creek. All rocks were extremely wet, but even in drier conditions this would require an abseil. Luckily, a way around on the left-hand side was found that involved climbing about 15 metres, traversing through a fairly dry sunlit overhang and then getting back down to the bottom of the gully. Below the waterfall was a large blue crystal-clear pool with a few slim, long Coachwood trees leaning over it and spanning its entire length. Another brilliant sight! A few minutes were spent here on photography. No one was brave enough to go for a dip, which was hardly surprising, given the temperature at this time of the year. During the entire walk, but especially here, I heard people saying, we should come here in summer, and I do not disagree.





Yuri in the cave on the way around the waterfall. Photo: Irina Sorokina.



The waterfall on Glenara Gorge. Photo: Adam Fung.





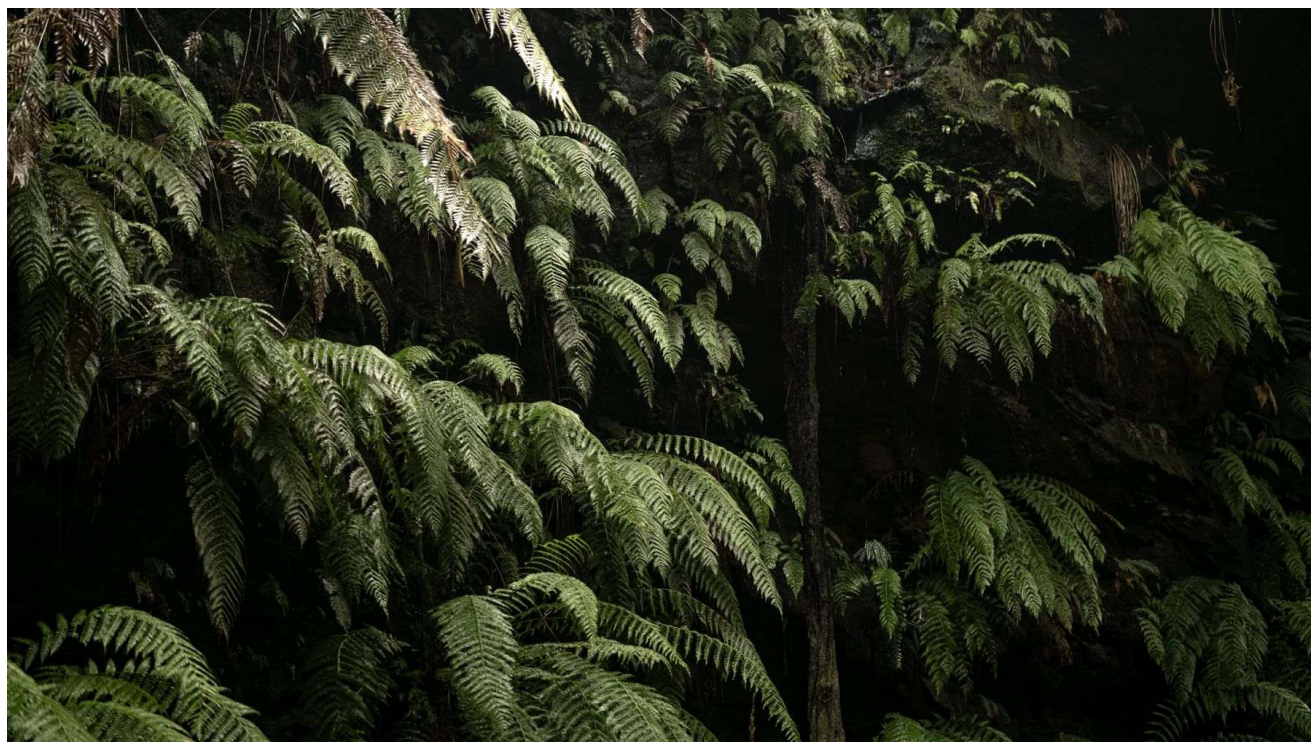
Adam below the waterfall. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Shortly afterwards, a spectacular tall wall of Ferns, framed by Coachwoods, commanded our attention on the left side of the gorge. At 1047. A few hundred metres further downstream, the creek went through a small tunnel, emerging on the other side, framed by bright orange boulders, so fascinating but incongruous in this world dominated by dozens of different hues of green and brown.

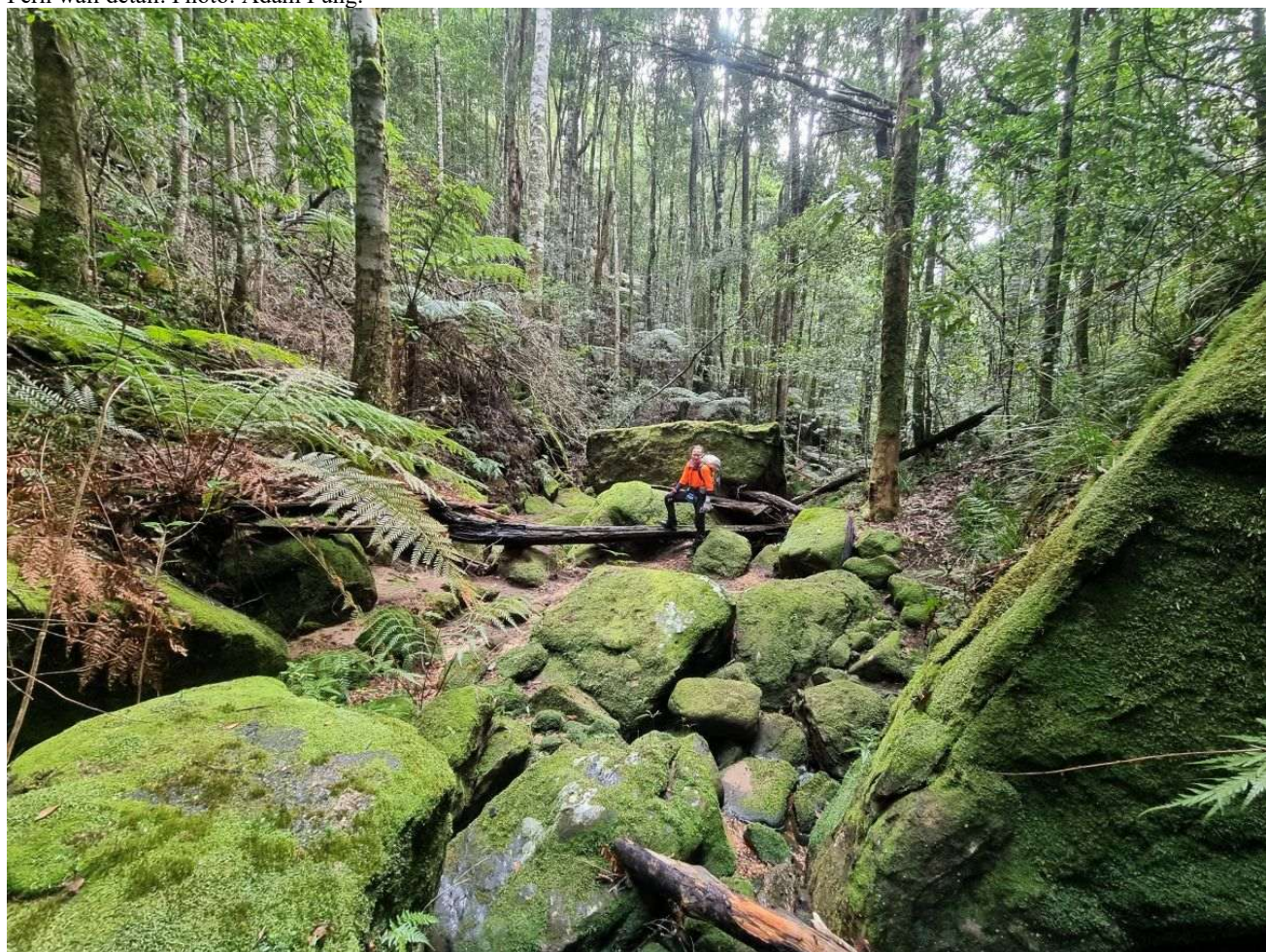


Fern wall. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.





Fern wall detail. Photo: Adam Fung.



Irina in the gorge. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.





Adam in the gorge. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

We now started to notice more tall Tree Ferns, *Cyathia australis*, adding another dimension to the landscape. At 1119, the group passed a small tributary on the eastern side, coming in via a 15 metre waterfall, but it did not have much water. A big log, spanning the creek bed, completely covered by *Stereum ostrea* Fungi, was photographed a few minutes later.



*Stereum ostrea* Fungi on a log. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.





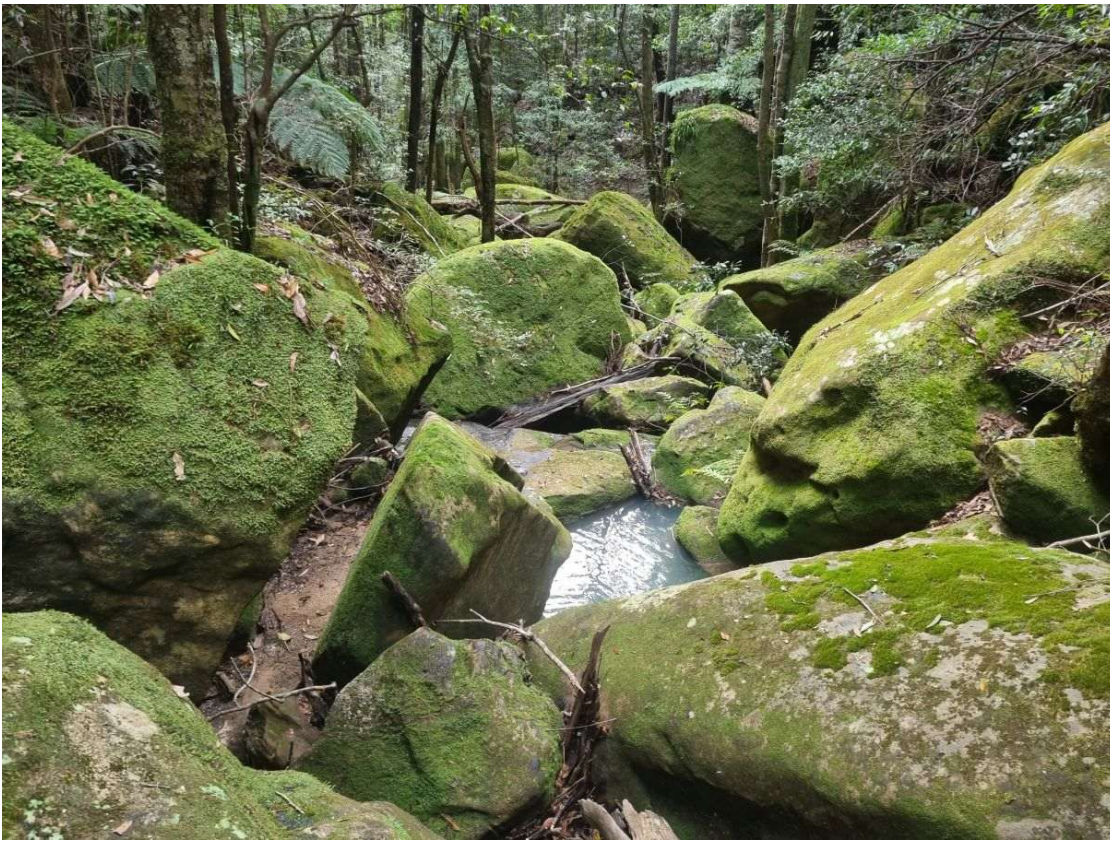
Helen, Yidan, Adam and Irina in Glenara Gorge. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

In the last part of the ravine, the forest was completely dominated by Coachwoods. Within about 150 metres from Wheeny Creek, the water turned from clear to milky-blue, due to maybe some special clays? We stopped again for a minute or two to record a twenty metre long lump of a Moss-covered rock that resembled a giant beached Whale.



The rock resembling a beached Whale. Photo: Helen Magiros.





The last section of Glenara Gorge. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

At 1159, the party arrived at Wheeny Creek. It looked very diminutive here due to a tight bend at the junction. This was the end of an extremely enjoyable (but not quick!) journey down this magical ravine that started near Bells Line of Road, 230 m higher and 1.5 kilometres away to the south. As it runs below a ridge that has Glenara Road on top of it, I would like to call it Glenara Gorge. Getting from here to Grumpy Baker for lunch might have been a bit difficult, so instead we decided to have lunch just above the junction, underneath a couple of enormous Angophoras.

At 1217, it was time to saddle up and start walking down Wheeny Creek towards the next tributary ravine to the east, planned to be our exit route. Six minutes later, an amazing sight caught our eyes, and we had to climb about ten metres to approach it. Angophoras often have extensive root system, but this one was absolutely incredible. The giant tree appeared to have been stuck on a side of a cliff face, its roots spreading about four metres horizontally along the rock, trying to achieve some sort of stable grip. The sculpture-like bottom part of it seemed like it was made from clay. Given its girth and therefore the age, the Nature's engineering is probably excellent, but the tree looked like ready to topple down at any time. At 1223.





The giant Angophora and its amazing root system. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Angophora study. Photo: Irina Sorokina.

Our journey continued at this higher level above the creek as we headed to a few areas of exposed rock seen in the distance. One of the overhangs even had a small section covered in Liesegang Rings, but there was no



floor, just sheer walls dropping vertically into an area of dense Ferns laced with Lawyer Vine. This was, luckily, only a short stretch, and we were soon out of it, reaching the nose of the ridge to the east of Glenara Gorge. I was planning to climb onto it later today and further south on our way out, but for future trips noted an easy, broad walk-up ramp at this location. It was marked here by another enormous Turpentine. At 1247.

Coming around a corner into what I believed was the next gorge to the east we wanted to explore, we began climbing up it. I felt surprised to see how wide and open it was. After about a hundred metres, it occurred to me that perhaps it was not the right watercourse. The map check confirmed it – we went up a small gully on the side of the ridge – too early, as the target gorge was another 50 metres further to the east and hidden from sight by dense vegetation.

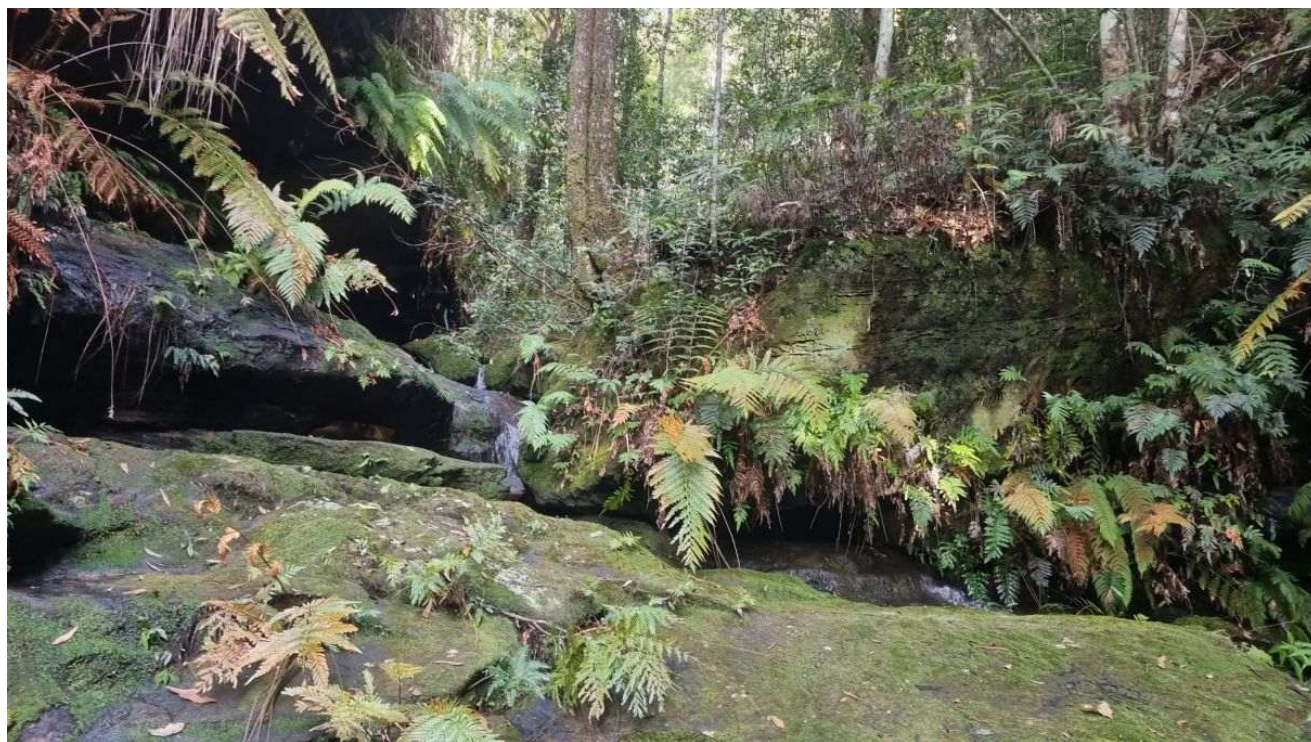
Never mind, this was easy to correct. We reversed out of the wrong gully and then sidled above the valley we wanted to get into, past a good-looking, north-facing cave with flat floors (no signs of habitation) and a couple of big Angophoras, then steeply down to the bottom of the gorge, reaching it by 1309.

We were once again in a rainforest ravine, amongst mossy green boulders, with the clear gurgling brook making its way through them, carrying even more water compared with Glenara Gorge. Making our way up was another delight, as we trod around abundant, noisy cascades and small waterfalls interspersed with quiet, clear pools.



*Galerina patagonica* Fungi and people in the gorge. Photo: Irina Sorokina.





Noorumboon Gorge. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Bracket Fungi in the gorge. Photo: Adam Fung.

At 1342, the company stopped at a dry overhang in the western wall, with a ledge starting below it. The gorge looked like entering another constriction further upstream. I was happy with the explorations we had done today and thought it was time to head back, especially as the exit pass through the cliffs still had to be found. I called this valley Noorumboon Gorge for the property shown on the topographic map at the start of it, just north of Bells Line of Road. Aboriginal word *Noorumba*, meaning Hunting Ground, may or may not be related to this name.

The ledge we were now treading on was a switch-back, as it ran north, opposite to our direction of travel. It had areas of thick scrub but was easy enough to follow and rising steadily. The cliffs above us were still very high. At 1356, we examined a dry 25 metre long cave with flat floors, and next to it, a 20 metre high



shallow cave, more like a niche in the wall, with striking, deep dark brown and beige weatherings. Eight minutes later, as soon as the cliffs stopped, we headed up towards the top of the watershed, reaching it at 1412.



Michael near the end of the cliff wall. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

The trip back along the dry, lightly forested ridge with a moderate amount of undergrowth, was easy and enjoyable. To the north west, there were good but partial glimpses, obscured by trees, of the Wheeny Creek catchment, Mountain Lagoon Range, Little Tootie, Mount Tootie and Mount Irvine. Much closer, below our feet, there were several kinds of wildflowers – white round balls of Sunshine Wattle, *Acacia terminalis*, which is commonly in bloom in early winter, but more unexpectedly for this time of the year, yellow *Hibbertia* sp. and purple Native Iris, *Patersonia* sp.



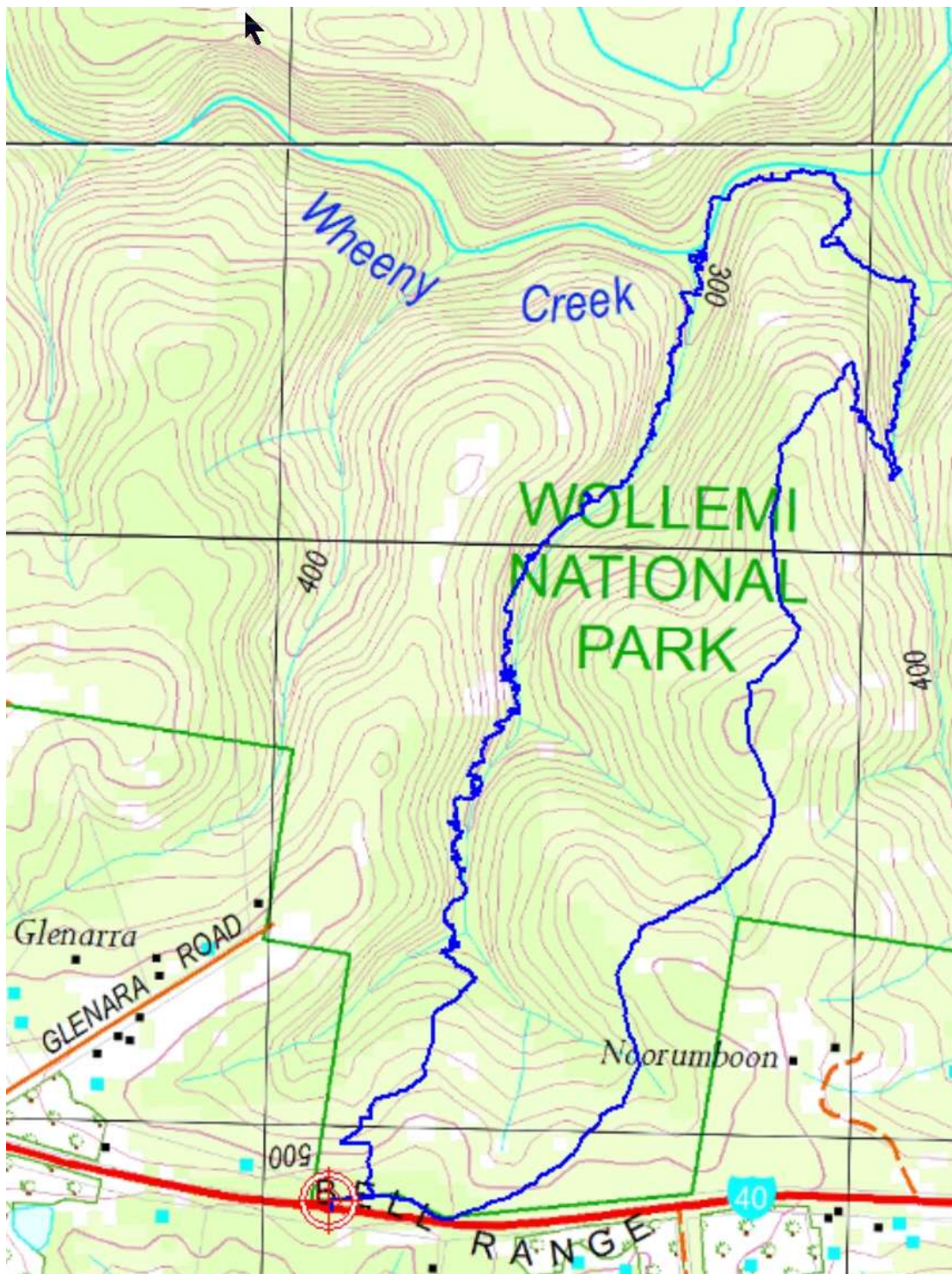


Sunshine Wattle, *Acacia terminalis*. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

At 1438, the party left the ridge and moved south west, to get around *Noorumboon*, which involved a few low spurs and shallow gully crossings. By 1516, we made it back to Bells Line of Road and the parked vehicles.

Day statistics: total distance 6.2 km; total ascent 280 m.





Walk topographic map. Recorded and prepared by Yuri Bolotin.

**Table of Times, Locations and Grid References**

Time	Location	Grid Reference	Elevation
0856	Cars parked and started walking	GR 7612 8886	515 m
0913	On descending spur	GR 7626 8908	470 m
0923	Above Glenarra Gorge	GR 7635 8927	434 m
0934	In Glenarra Gorge	GR 7632 8934	419 m
0945	Start of overhangs	GR 7632 8947	415 m
1002-1009	Morning tea in a cave	GR 7635 8957	400 m



1021	Waterfall	GR 7641 8972	385 m
1026	Waterfall (top)	GR 7641 8977	380 m
1047	Fern wall	GR 7640 8984	370 m
1119	Tributary with a waterfall	GR 7659 9012	330 m
1159-1217	Wheeny Creek and lunch	GR 7670 9051	285 m
1223	Giant Angophora	GR 7676 9061	295 m
1247	Nose of the ridge and pass up	GR 7697 9061	300 m
1309	Noorumboon Gorge	GR 7708 9045	298 m
1342	Overhang and start of the exit	GR 7705 9014	360 m
1356	Overhang	GR 7700 9024	400 m
1404	End of the cliffs and going up	GR 7698 9032	395 m
1412	On the ridge	GR 7691 9025	430 m
1438	Left the ridge	GR 7686 8953	475 m
1516	Back at cars	GR 7612 8886	515 m