

# Walk 1.11 Nullo Range Adventure, Part 1

## THE WEATHER

Three perfect, almost identical days. Very little or no wind, cold in the morning, and sunny and warm during the day.

**Day 1.** Temperature range 11 to 24 degrees C

**Day 2.** Temperature range 0 to 24 degrees C

**Day 3.** Temperature range 0 to 26 degrees C. Light clouds appeared in the sky from mid morning.

## TRACK NOTES

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

## DAY 1. 23 APRIL 2021

Cars were left on Myrtle Trail, and the adventure commenced shortly after 1000 as the party crossed a paddock overgrown with thick weeds that had sprung up here after the last year's bushfires and the subsequent wet weather. As we began climbing a narrow ridge that leads towards Minim Gap, the sea of dense green vegetation that had initially enveloped us was replaced by a more agreeable landscape of mature Gum trees and sparse undergrowth scattered on rocky outcrops. When the first views back towards the Yodellers Range appeared through the trees, I thought it was so good to be back walking in this magical landscape again, eight months after our Yodellers Traverse in August last year.



LEFT: The pre-walk briefing. Photo: Tom Zubrycki.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Peter Hannam in Isothermal Cave. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

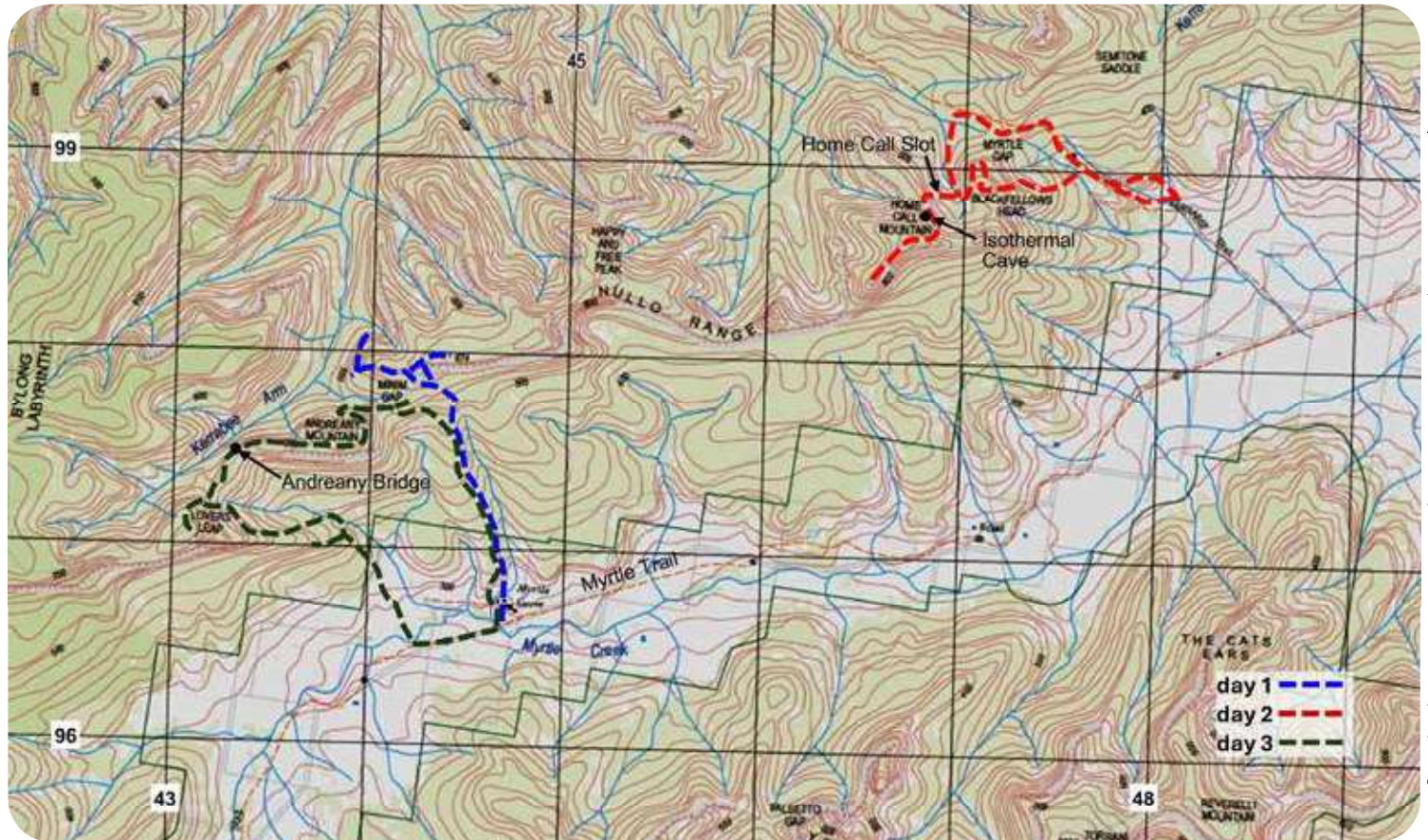


<b>Maps, etc.</b>	Department of Lands topographic map Widden 8932-1N, 1:25,000, third edition. GPS setting WGS 84.
<b>Walk description and route</b>	A series of three one-day walks from a base camp exploring the Nullo Range (directly north of the Yodellers Range) between Minim Gap and Lovers Leap. The plan for each day is to be advised, as progress will depend on our ability to penetrate this very difficult but spectacular terrain.
<b>Gear issues</b>	Base camp walk gear. Water needs to be brought into the camp.
<b>Comments</b>	Exploratory. Scrambling and exposure. About 6 km each day.
<b>Date walked</b>	23 to 25 April 2021  <b>Important Note:</b> Part of this walk is through private property. Access permission must be sought for each visit.

For this trip, Kevin and I had devised three separate day walks that we hoped would cover the traverse of Nullo Range from Myrtle Gap in the east to Lovers Leap in the west, some five kilometres as the Kookaburra flies. For most readers, five kilometres a day for three days will surely sound too easy, but after studying the topographic and aerial maps, we thought it would be better not to be overambitious. If you read to the end of these track notes, you will find out what we were about to learn once again – that the walking distance is not a good measure of the effort required to navigate your way through this country.

Our main goal today was to visit Minim Gap and find a way of ascent from there to the tops. This was really important as the plan for tomorrow was to start at the opposite, eastern end and to try and reach Minim Gap by late afternoon; by that time, we most certainly would not have enough daylight for retracing if a pass down was not found. Another objective was to assess by looking west across Minim Gap whether a descent from Andreany Mountain was possible in this direction, as that may come into play on Sunday.

By 1023, after a steep ascent, the group reached the national park boundary. There was no fence there. Shortly after, we traversed a pleasantly flat area covered in *Macrozamia*s before another steep section had to be handled. It was getting quite warm, and a light cooling breeze felt heavenly against my cheeks.



At 1039, the party stopped at a five metre high boulder standing alone in the middle of the forest. We decided to scramble up it and were rewarded with a striking and rather forbidding view of the eastern flank of Andreany Mountain, on our agenda for Sunday; behind it was the top of Lovers Leap, also on the Sunday's list; and to our north west, we looked towards the low saddle of Minim Gap. A great spot for morning tea, which finished at 1053.

Straight after resuming, we spotted a small flock of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos in the nearby trees. The birds flew away quickly as we staggered up another sharp rise in the ridge. At the end of this section, we briefly stopped to catch our breaths at a spot north east and above Minim Gap, underneath a line of high cliffs. Whilst the others were resting, from 1126 till 1132, I decided to scramble 30 metres up a narrow slot nearby, hoping to find a way through to the tops, but that was not to be.

From here, the group continued sidling under the cliffs and around a big headland shown on the map, all the time looking for a way up. It was hard and slow going due to the now thick scrub, debris, and frequent up and downs. The cliffs above us were unrelenting. After a while, the ledge we had been walking on suddenly stopped, necessitating a complete reverse and a sharp descent to a low level. At 1156, coming from the shadow of the southern side, we rounded the west

face of the cliffs and emerged at a great overhang bathed in beautiful warm sunshine with a stunning view north into the gorge of Kerrabee Arm and beyond. Only problem was, the narrow ledge terminated here at a 60 metre drop. Another no-go and retrace, followed by a significant descent.

Finally, by 1219, we found a ledge that seemed to be going at more or less a constant level under the cliffs. I was getting worried about the fact that, instead of climbing to get to the top as had been our goal, we had by now been forced to go further and further down towards the bottom of the

valley. My great and only hope was a significant gully a few hundred metres up ahead that looked pretty good on the topographic map. At 1230, having just rounded the last corner, we stood at a viewpoint, shaking our heads at the sight of an 80 metre wall of smooth rock towering near the end of that gully. This was a definite no-go.

The group spent a few minutes looking around for any passes, but none was found. There was nothing else for it but to declare that it was probably not possible to find a way up from Minim Gap to the top of Nullo Range in the easterly direction. I thought, *Just because*



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Peter Hannam in the striking overhang just before the 'no-go' spot. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Andreany Mountain from our morning tea spot. Lovers Leap can be seen behind it. Photo: Kevin Songberg.

On the ascent ridge to Minim Gap. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:  
Jason Watts pauses in front of the G  
trees that seem to say to us, *There is  
way up this way.* Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

A spectacular cliff face. There was  
no way up here, but we kept tryin  
Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

The view of Lovers Leap from above  
Minim Gap. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

*I've drawn some pencil lines on my map when preparing for this walk does not mean these routes are possible. At least that knowledge is going to be extremely useful for our plans for tomorrow.*

We now headed back towards the ridge we had ascended in the morning, in order to make our way down to the vehicles. Coming to the start of the last ledge, the group stopped for lunch, at 1300. As a desperate move, whilst everybody was resting, I climbed a short steep spur towards the cliff line, hoping to find something, but ended up at the overhang with a view we had visited earlier. A 'Groundhog Day' moment indeed.

I quickly joined the group at the bottom and gulped down my food, and at 1328, we began walking back underneath the cliffs. We thought we might as well keep searching even as we were retracing. Another ledge was soon tested, but once again, it did not go anywhere we needed it to go. As disappointing as it

was, we were not giving up, especially as there was still plenty of daylight at our disposal.

By 1354, just after we had stopped and photographed a pretty overhang, another slot leading up presented, so Kevin and I went to check it out. After a steep ascent followed by scrambling up a few ledges, at 1425 we reached an open area underneath another cliff line, from where we could admire, for the first time, fine views all the way back south towards the Yodellers Range. None of the options forward from here on seemed safe enough.

The good thing was that this elevated location enabled us to have a good look at the northern flank of Andreany Mountain. There was no easy pass or single slot visible, but it seemed that by maneuvering down some ledges, it may be possible to get into Minim Gap. We were hoping this knowledge would come handy on Sunday. After taking a few photographs, Kevin and





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:

Lyrebird nest in a cave near the pass. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

The view north from the mountaintop. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Yuri Bolotin is smiling. We found a pass to the tops, and what a view! The Yodellers Range and beyond. Photo: Jason Watts.

Wedding Cake Mountain from the top of the pass. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

TOP TO BOTTOM: Blue Yodellers Mountain and beyond from the top of the pass. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Yuri Bolotin, Jason Watts and Peter Hannam with the view towards the Yodellers and Pomany Ranges. Standing out on the horizon line is Mount Pomany. Mount Coriaday is just visible to the left of it. Photo: Kevin Songberg.

I headed back to the group, rejoining them 10 minutes later. I then consulted the map and realised that the team had waited for us at the spot from where we now needed to commence our descent down the ridge towards the vehicles. This felt truly like the end of the exploratory proceedings for today.

It did not have to be the end, though. We still had the energy and time to look a little further east under the cliffs, away from our exit route. Within 20 minutes, at 1444, a gully appeared ahead, and we decided to undertake one last investigation. That would have to be our final attempt, bearing in mind the available daylight for returning to the vehicles before the sun set. I was joined by three volunteers, whilst the others chose to wait for us at the bottom.

After a short initial climb, the gully split. Peter and Kevin turned up the left branch, whilst Jason and I went up the right one. We only travelled for about 20 metres before coming to an almost vertical cliff face. It was beautifully eroded but offered no way up. The decision was made to quickly descend and then climb up the left branch, where Kevin and Peter had gone. You can imagine my disappointment when, a few minutes later at 1500, I realised that we had come to the same open platform Kevin and I had stood taking

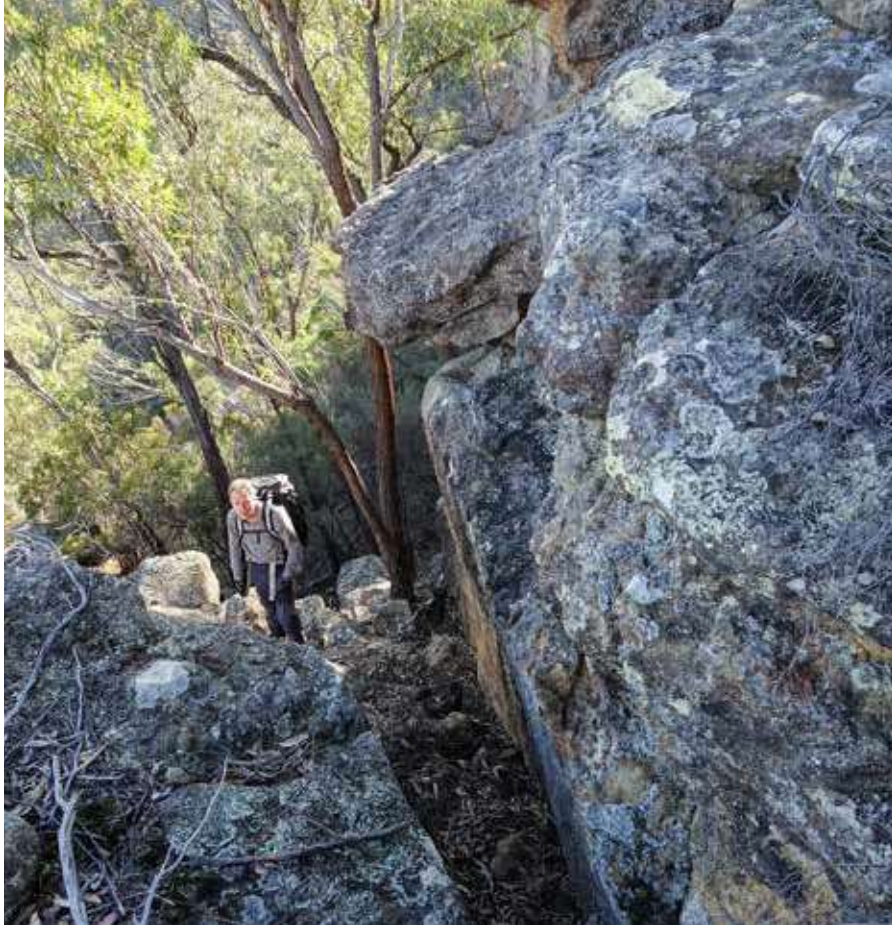


photographs on half an hour earlier, that we had ruled out as a viable way

Just at that minute, we heard Peter calling from somewhere up above, *Hey, come up, Kevin might have found something here.* We scaled a ledge, using a slot to the right, then went through another narrow slot, rounded a corner of the cliff, then descended slightly before turning right and climbing up a rocky ramp that led to the top!!! This was at 1510.

I felt utterly elated, both by our achievement and by the tremendous panorama below us of the Myrtle Valley and the Yodellers Range, with the En Creek Valley further south bordered by the Minaret Ridge. The afternoon sun turned these dramatic sandstone peaks into glowing mountains of gold. East and south, the round bulk of Mount Pomany dominated the horizon, and slightly more east, the very top of Mount Coriaday, over 30 kilometres away, could be distinguished. Wow! Amazing!

After a few more minutes taking it in, we walked a little further east on gently sloping ground, through an area affected by the NPWS's backblock a week or so ago, until at 1534 we reached a point marked on the map as spot height 674 metres. Just there a huge Wedge-tailed Eagle took off several metres in front of me, plunging down effortlessly from the 200 metre cliff that it had taken us all day to conquer. The way ahead from here seemed to be quite straightforward and I thought we were now well



positioned to achieve our goal of traversing the Nullo Range from Myrtle Gap to Minim Gap tomorrow.

This was as much reconnaissance time as we could afford today, so, somewhat reluctantly, we turned back and retraced our steps, stopping momentarily to take photos of a beautiful small cave with a floor of fine powdered sand and a Lyrebird nest on the side, before rejoining the waiting group at 1554.

The rest of the trip down the now familiar ridge was very easy compared

with all the scrambling and wayfinding we had to do previously. At 1610, we passed the morning tea rock, now beautifully lit by the afternoon sun, and at 1640, the party made it back to the vehicles.

**Day statistics: total distance 6.4 km; total ascent 675 m.**

ABOVE: Kevin Songberg at the critical slot that gives final access to the top. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Jason Watts and Peter Hannam show where to find the pass when coming from the bottom. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

## TIMES, LOCATIONS AND GRID REFERENCES – DAY 1, 23 APRIL 2021

Time	Location	Grid Reference	E
1000	Cars parked and started walking	4480 9666	
1023	Crossed national park boundary	4462 9708	
1039	Morning tea on top of a rock, 14 minutes	4442 9754	
1126	Slot investigation, 6 minutes	4417 9790	
1156	The ledge ends at an overhang with a view	4392 9795	
1219	On another ledge	4389 9789	
1230	No-go gully	4399 9808	
1300	Lunch and ramp investigation, 28 minutes	4389 9789	
1354	Another slot (bottom)	4404 9788	
1425	Flat area with a view (the upper extent of our investigation)	4422 9791	
1444	Bottom of another gully	4426 9789	
1500	Back to the area with the view	4422 9791	
1510	Top of the pass	4422 9794	
1534	Spot height 674 m	4439 9797	
1554	Back together with the rest of the group	4426 9789	
1610	Morning tea rock	4442 9754	
1640	At vehicles	4480 9666	

