

Walk:

Wollemi National Park: M-Gully

Leader:

Bernard Lo.

Maps, etc:

Mountain Lagoon. GPS setting WGS84.

Description:

Park at GR 813 962 on Mountain Lagoon Trail. The aim is to get into a multi-level rainforest around GR 811 933 utilising Mountain Lagoon Trail, but mostly off-track. The rainforest is very cut-off and lies above Wheeny Creek. We will attempt to enter it at GR 8104 9372, via a gully at the top right of the M-shaped cliff line. We may need a tape. We will only enter if we can exit the same way. This is because there are no other feasible ways out. I expect that we will be the first people to explore this gully. There are around 4 waterfalls (one of which is 60 m tall) visible on Lidar, and many rainforest plants (including Cabbage Tree Palms) on aerial imagery.

Rating:

5. M233E

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:

6 September 2025.

The Party:

Bernard Lo (leader), Heang Cheng, Ro Barry, John Kennett, Scott Marshall, Paul Harvey, Li Lian Jin (Mary), Yuri Bolotin, 8.

The Weather:

A beautiful dry day with variable cloud cover and occasional light breezes. Temperature range 12 to 20 degrees C. Perfect walking conditions.

Track Notes

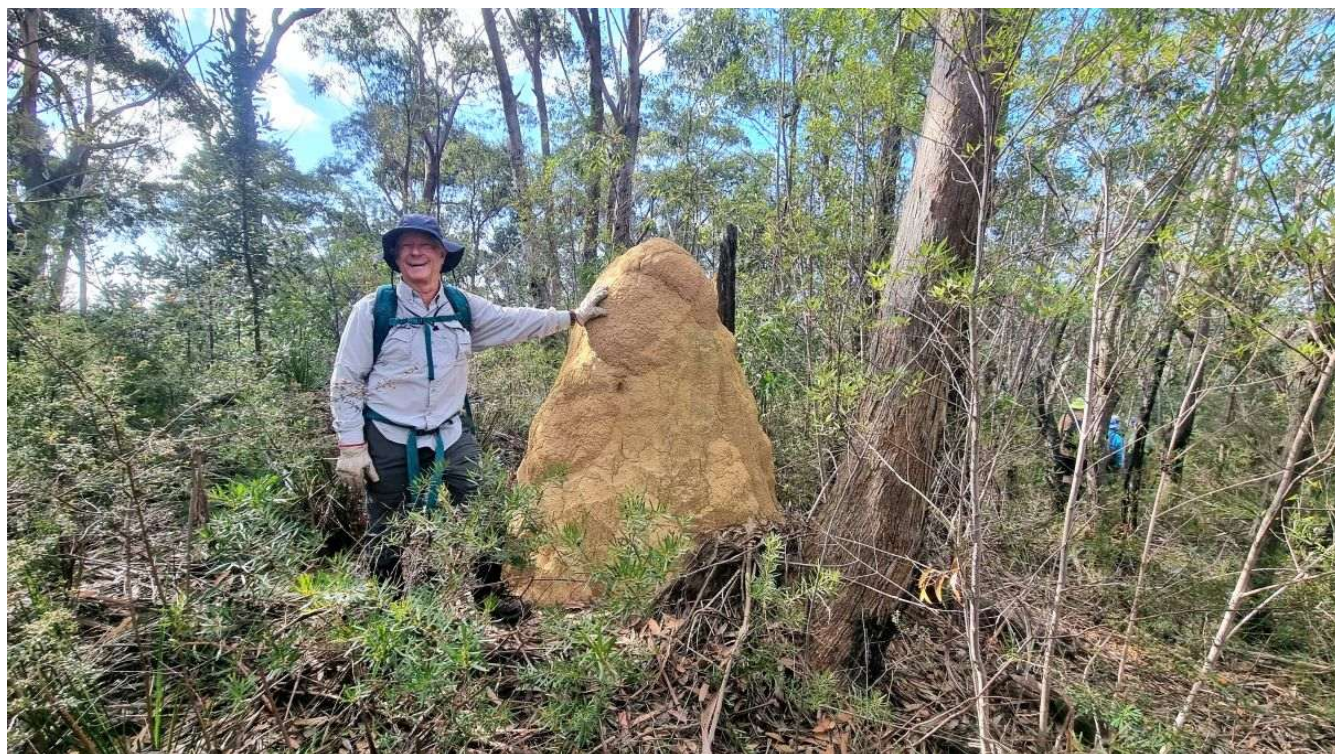
Note: time references in the text relate to Grid References in the table at the end of these Track Notes.

Cars were driven east along Mountain Lagoon Trail for over a kilometre to the start of an old timbergetting road, from where our adventure began at 0831. The road, used by us for the initial part of the journey, has been cordoned off the Mountain Lagoon Trail by a row of huge sandstone blocks; beyond this barrier, the earth was scoured by unsightly excavation pits and mounds. The entire area looks very messy and unattractive. If these measures had been taken to deter people from going that way, the sheer size of the works means they most likely produce the opposite effect. *It looks like there is a gold mine there somewhere*, someone in the party quipped.

Luckily, after about 100 metres, the bush started to look normal, and half a kilometre along the trail was all it took for us to feel we were entering Wollemi wilderness. The old road was still well-defined, but it was now surrounded by a beautiful forest of pristine-looking Angophoras, Peppermints and Silvertop Ash Gums.

At 0914, we left the beaten path (which we knew from our previous walk would soon become indistinct) and headed off-track on a ridge trending south, then south east towards our destination, an M-shaped cliff line bordering a tributary of Wheeny Creek.

The undergrowth in the initial section was quite dense but manageable. We needed to watch where we placed our feet as the ground was rocky and uneven, with various creepers covering the holes in between solid patches. That terrain was soon followed by much more open, nicer country. From 0934, the ridge began descending gradually, and distant views appeared on our right, of Lagoon Creek gorge; and straight ahead, towards Wheeny Creek. A very tall Termite mound was photographed in this area.



John measuring up the Termite mound. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

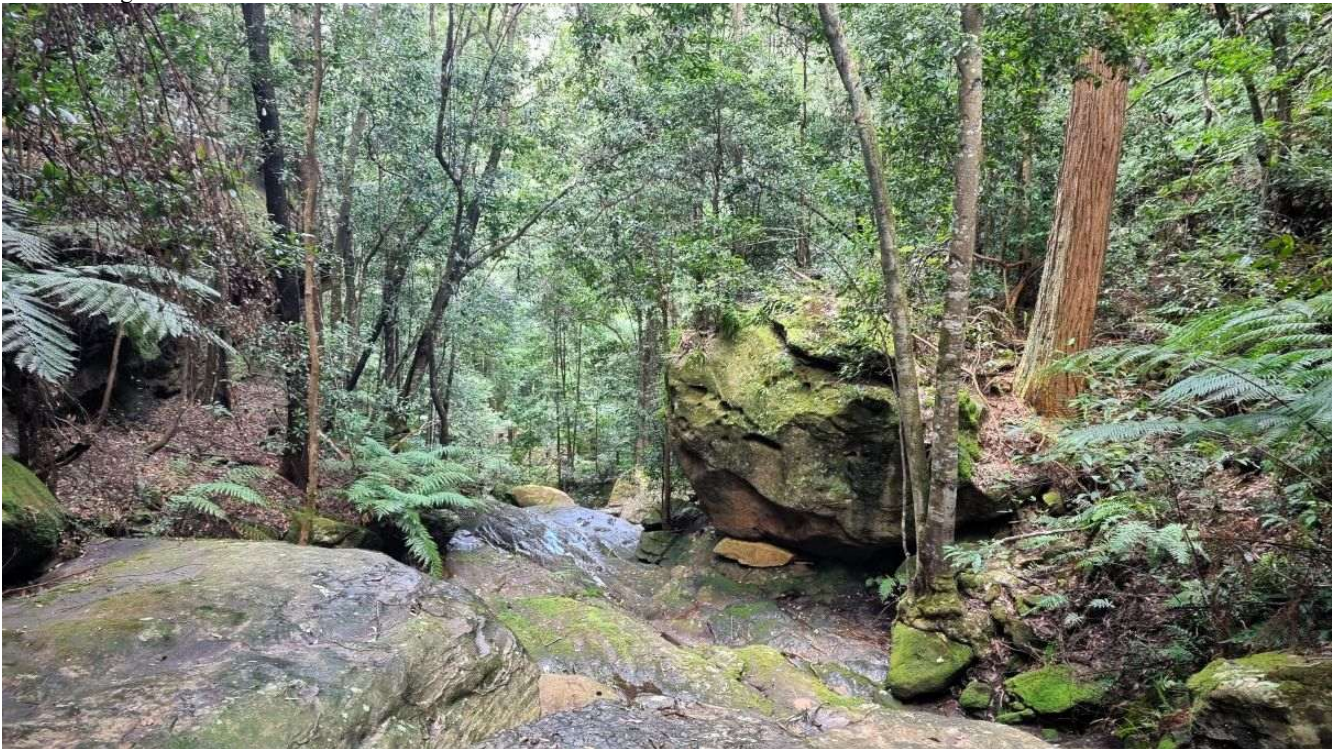
At 1018, we were at the beginning of the steep part. Three small cliff lines had to be negotiated next, by using a few handy slots. Just before the bottom, the group paused to marvel at a colossal Turpentine tree, about 1.5 metres in diameter, and a huge Angophora standing next to it.

By 1043, we made it all the way down, to a stunning rainforest-clad ravine with a vigorously flowing brook winding its way through it. Importantly, we were now positioned just upstream from the top right corner of the letter “M”, where the Lidar map indicated some possibility of further descent; the top left corner of the “M” seemed to be non-negotiable by bushwalking means.

On the opposite side and just above the creek was a brilliant 50 metre long cave, suitable for camping, where we had morning tea, from 1048. Just as we were making ourselves comfortable, the sun came out from behind the clouds, adding beautiful colour and warmth to the scenery. Sitting in the cave, we could see a long way down the gorge, where the watercourse plunged steeply down several times; the last drop looked especially big. I thought, *It may be a short day, if we would need to turn back.* Well, we knew we would find out soon.



The morning tea cave on the other side of the ravine. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



The gully plunges from here on; the last drop looking especially problematic. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

At 1100, we resumed our journey, aiming to get as far downstream as possible. The first drop in the creek was about six metres. It could be negotiated on either of the two sides. On the left, via a narrow steep slot; I

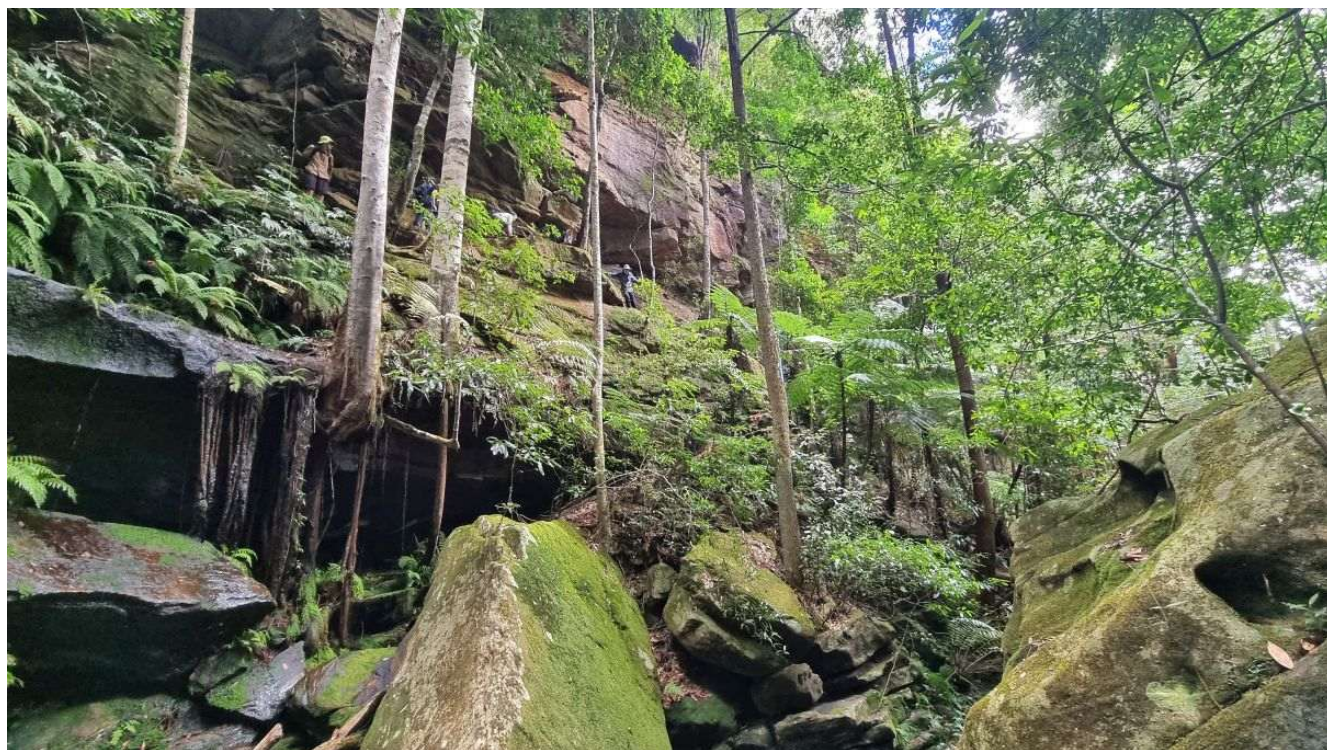
did it on the right by sidling up and past the obstacle and then coming steeply down. The view looking back upstream to a series of cascades framed by Ferns was magnificent.

The next section down a wide rocky platform with running water was carefully walked, whilst taking utmost care not to lose balance on the slippery slimy surface. This brought us to the last, biggest drop, which at first seemed impossible. There was no way straight down or on the right side, but to the left, we spotted a narrow ledge that could be climbed. After passing a couple rather scary narrow bits, where one needed to stay very focused, we came to a dead end, with a 20 metre plus drop below us. However, coming back a few metres, there was a spot only 5 metres or so above a more levelled ground where a descent could be made using a tape. At 1110. We proceeded to set it up, and once everyone was down, left it in place to use on the way back. The descent took about ten minutes. Looking at it from the bottom, a good climber could probably do it unassisted, but we did not want to take any chances.

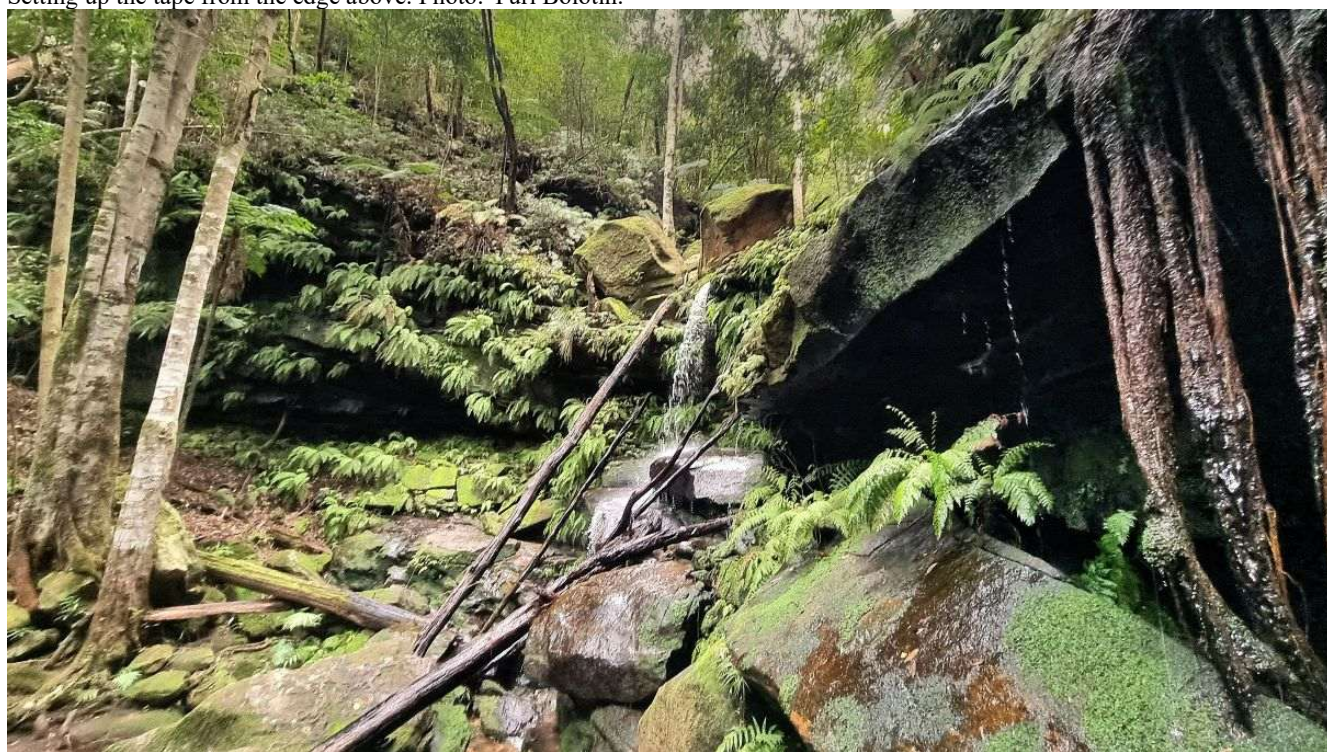
Coming down another ten metres or so, the party gathered underneath the stunning 10 metre waterfall we had just managed to negotiate. The leader was very happy with the outcome, and so was I. That meant our exploration downstream could continue.



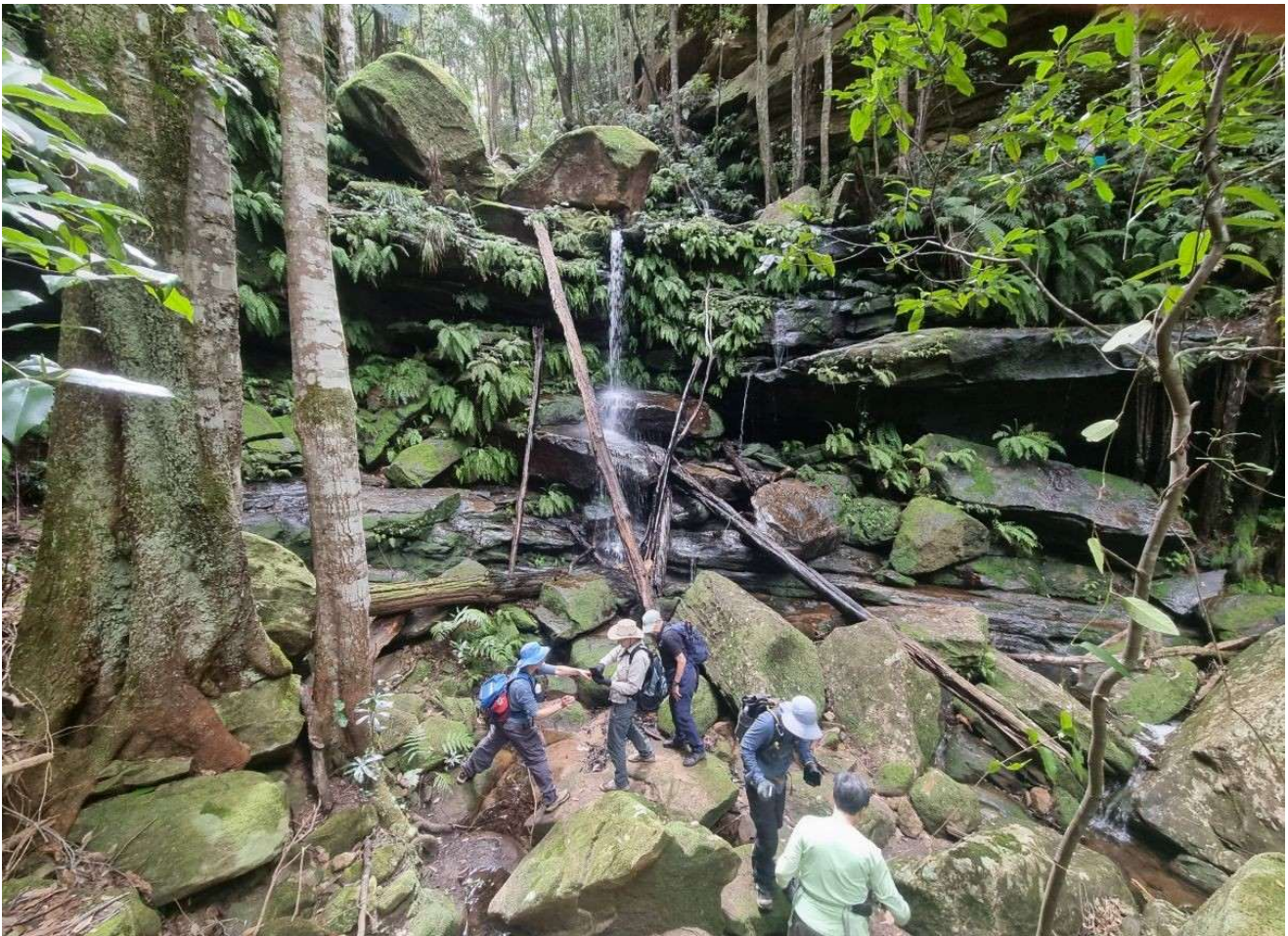
The group above the first drop. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Setting up the tape from the edge above. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Below the main waterfall. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

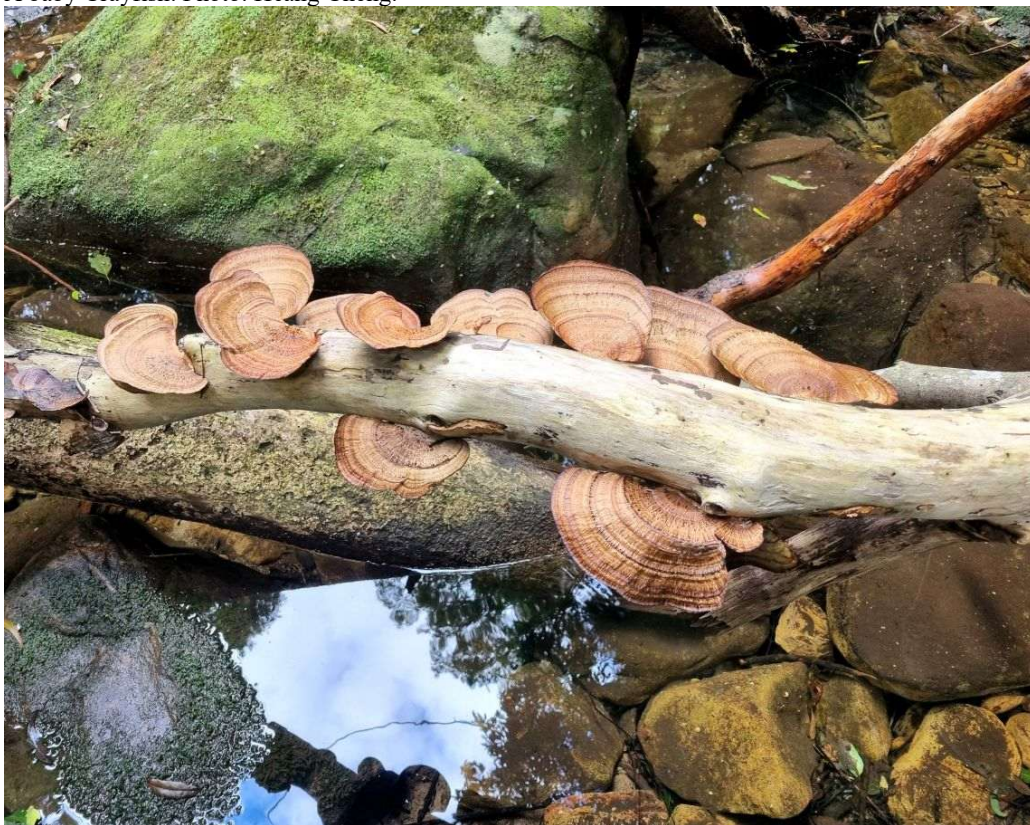


The group below the main waterfall. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

After some time spent on photography (including a baby Crayfish from one of the pools), we were on our way by 1135. The rainforest-clad gorge was very picturesque and easy to tackle. On the way down, we mostly stayed within the bouldery creek bed, carefully maneuvering around the frequent pools, and, by and large, managing to keep our feet dry. At 1146, a 50 metre wide landslide area was passed. It looked reasonably recent but was not too difficult to negotiate.



A baby Crayfish. Photo: Heang Cheng.



Bracket Fungi. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Seventeen minutes later, the group reached the junction with the gully that comes down from the top left corner of the letter “M”. This confluence is incorrectly drawn as being about 60 m further downstream on the topographic map; the proper coordinates are GR 8103 9349, 358 m. Big Coachwood trees dominated the landscape here.

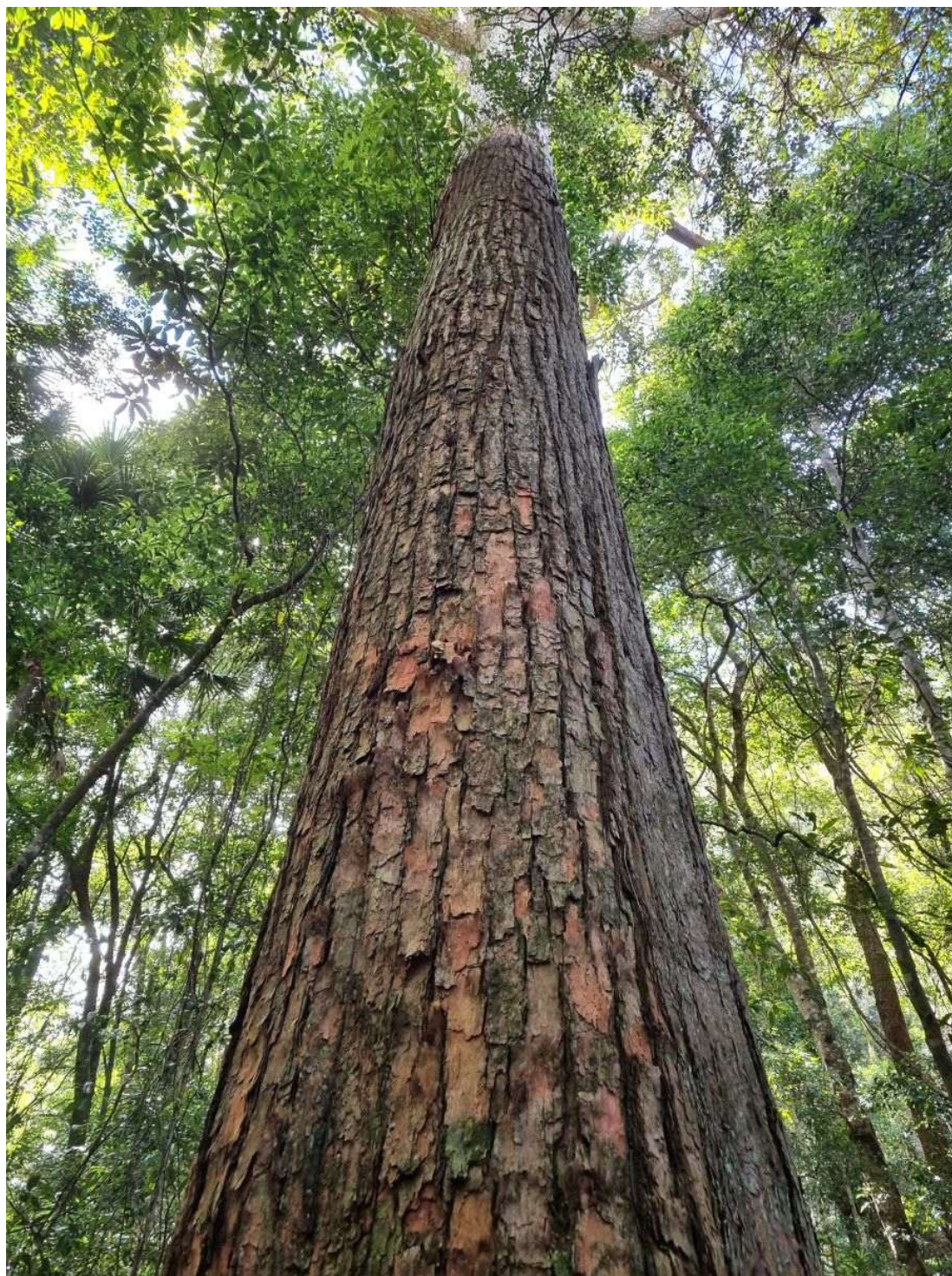


Scott in the Coachwood forest. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

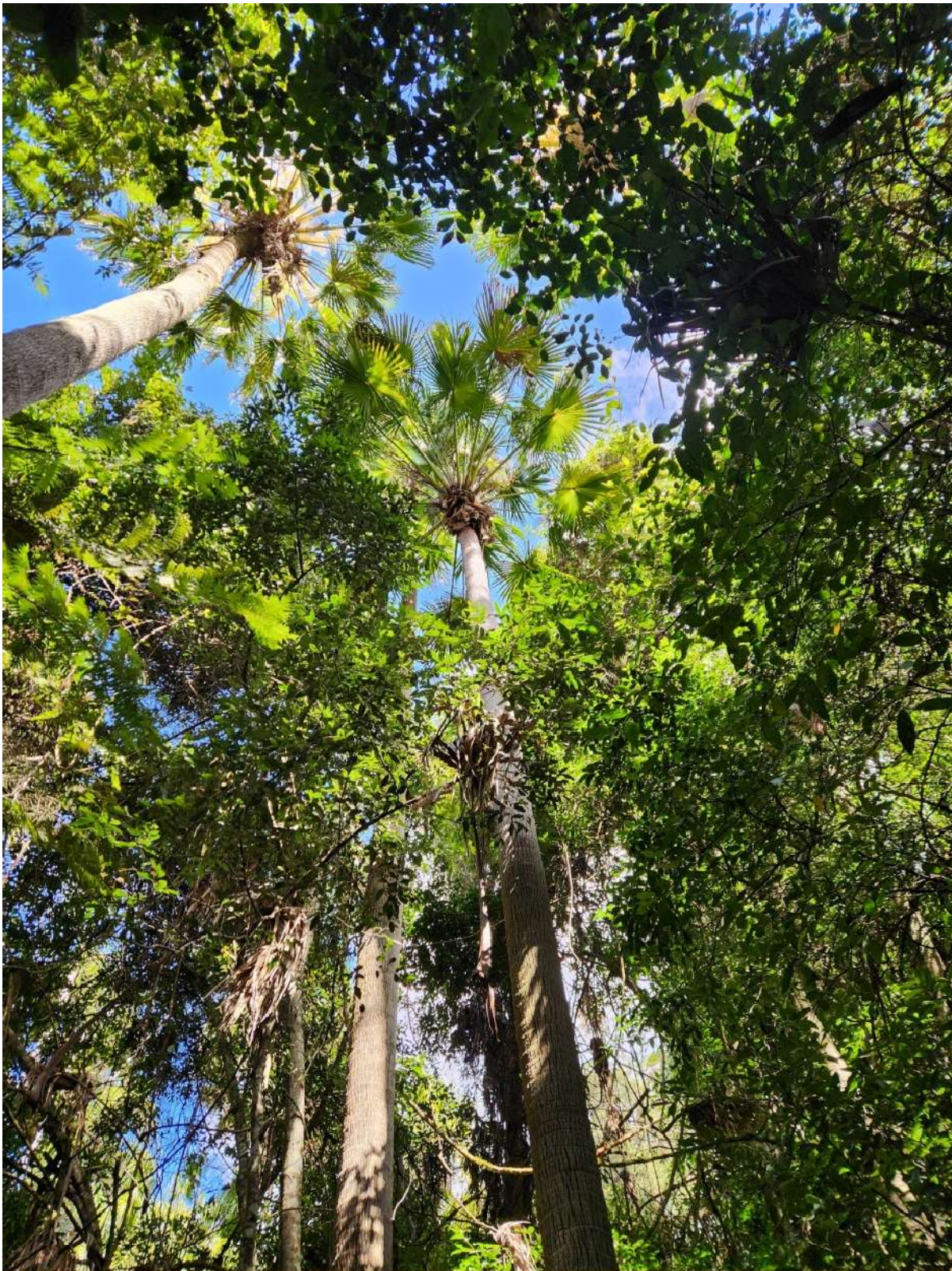


Lianas in the gorge. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Next, we entered the forest of Cabbage Tree Palms; some of the specimens were 10-15 metres high. Amongst them, stood a giant Turpentine, at least 1.5 metres in diameter. The creek was about to plunge down a small cliff line here, and we could see that the next section would be slow. In any case, it was now obvious we would not have enough time to get to the 60 metre waterfall, still about 45 minutes or even an hour away. The decision was made to stop for lunch here and then turn back. At 1230. There are now plans to explore the big waterfall by coming up from the Wheeny Creek junction on another day.



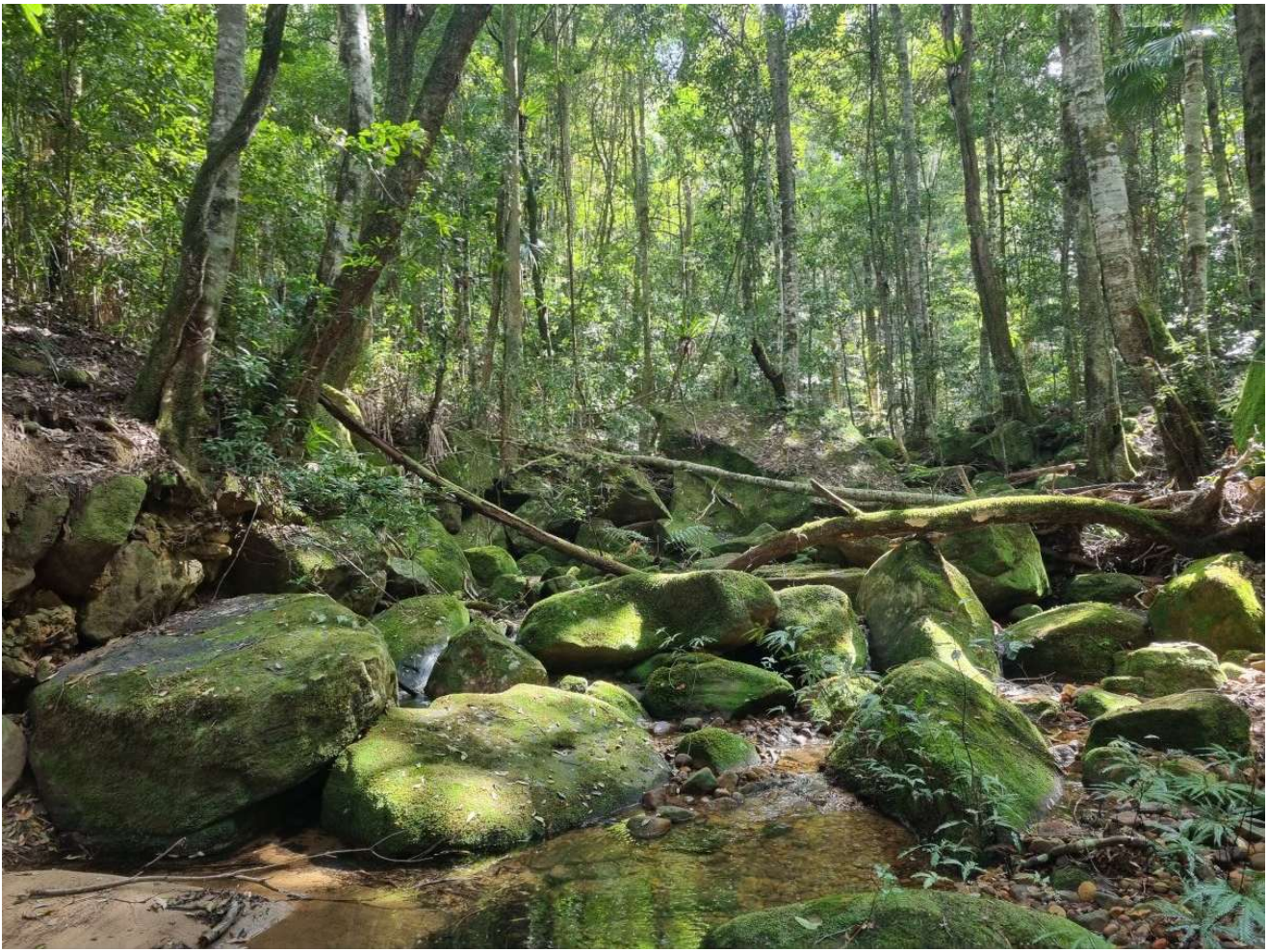
The giant Turpentine. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Cabbage Tree Palm forest. Photo: Bernard Lo.



Scott and Ro in the Cabbage Tree Palm forest. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



M-Gully rainforest. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

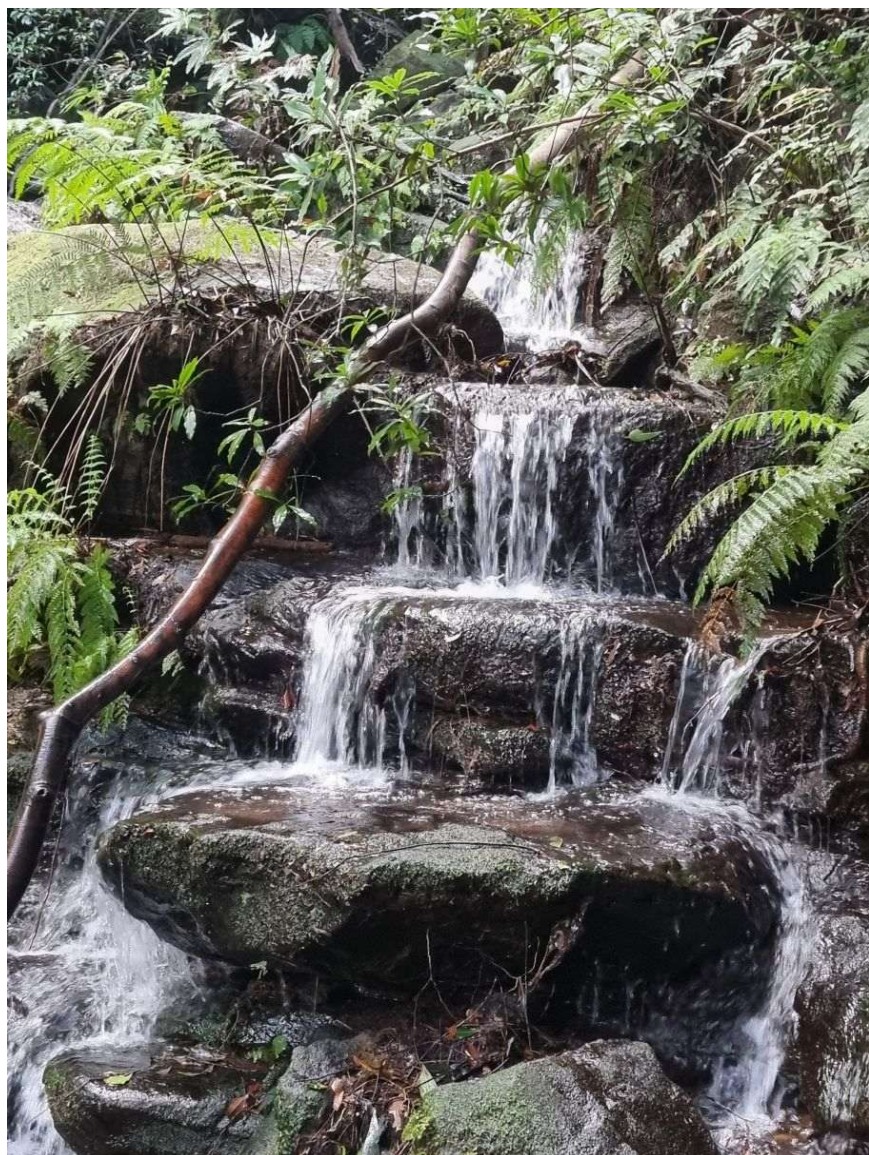
After a 20 minute long meal break, the team headed back up the watercourse, which Bernard and I decided to call M-Gully as in its midstream it is bordered by cliff lines that look like the letter “M” on the topographic and (especially) the Lidar maps.

This time, for a change, we stayed mostly above the creek bed until the tributary junction, probably achieving a faster progress. Soon after, our party was forced back down to the bottom by the steep and scrubby terrain. A single humongous Bracket Fungus was photographed in this section. It was more than 50 cm wide; the biggest I had ever seen.



Yuri underneath a giant Bracket Fungus. Photo: Scott Marshall.

By 1335, we were back at the spot where we had left the tape, and twelve minutes later, the ascent safely made and tape packed away, near the morning tea cave. From here, rather than retracing the way we had come in, we decided to explore more of M-Gully upstream and try another exit, to a ridge on the eastern side.



Cascades on M-Gully. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

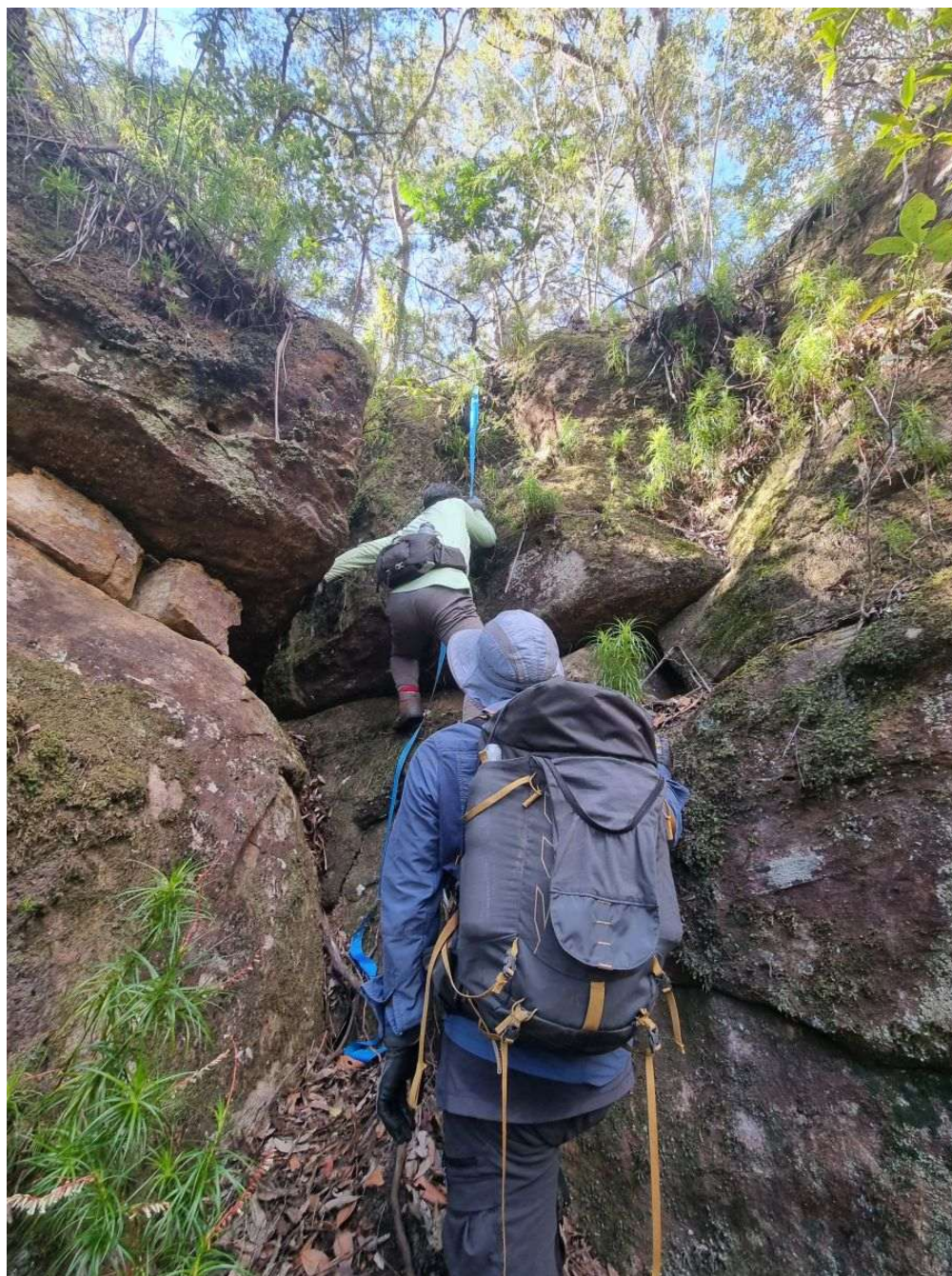


Scott coming up the ravine near the morning tea cave. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Fifty meters into the journey, we were stopped by two giant boulders lodged in the middle of the creek bed, allowing for no direct climbing over them. At 1351. It would have ended up a very short exploration of the gorge, had we not found a way to continue by scrambling steeply on the left-hand side, to gain about 20 metres of elevation, then traversing above the obstacle and finally getting down into the creek on the other (upstream) side of the blockup. At 1401.

The next section of the ravine was very enjoyable – rainforest, gurgling brook, emerald mossy boulders. After only eighteen minutes, the group came to the tributary coming from the east that we were planning to use for exiting.

A short drink stop, and up we went. Getting around an eight metre waterfall at the start was easy (on the left-hand side), but then, rather unexpectedly, a five metre wall barred our progress. Bernard and I spent some time looking around without any success. Heang then climbed a rather tricky-looking chimney and set up the tape. In a few more minutes, we were all up past the obstacle. From 1430 till 1438.



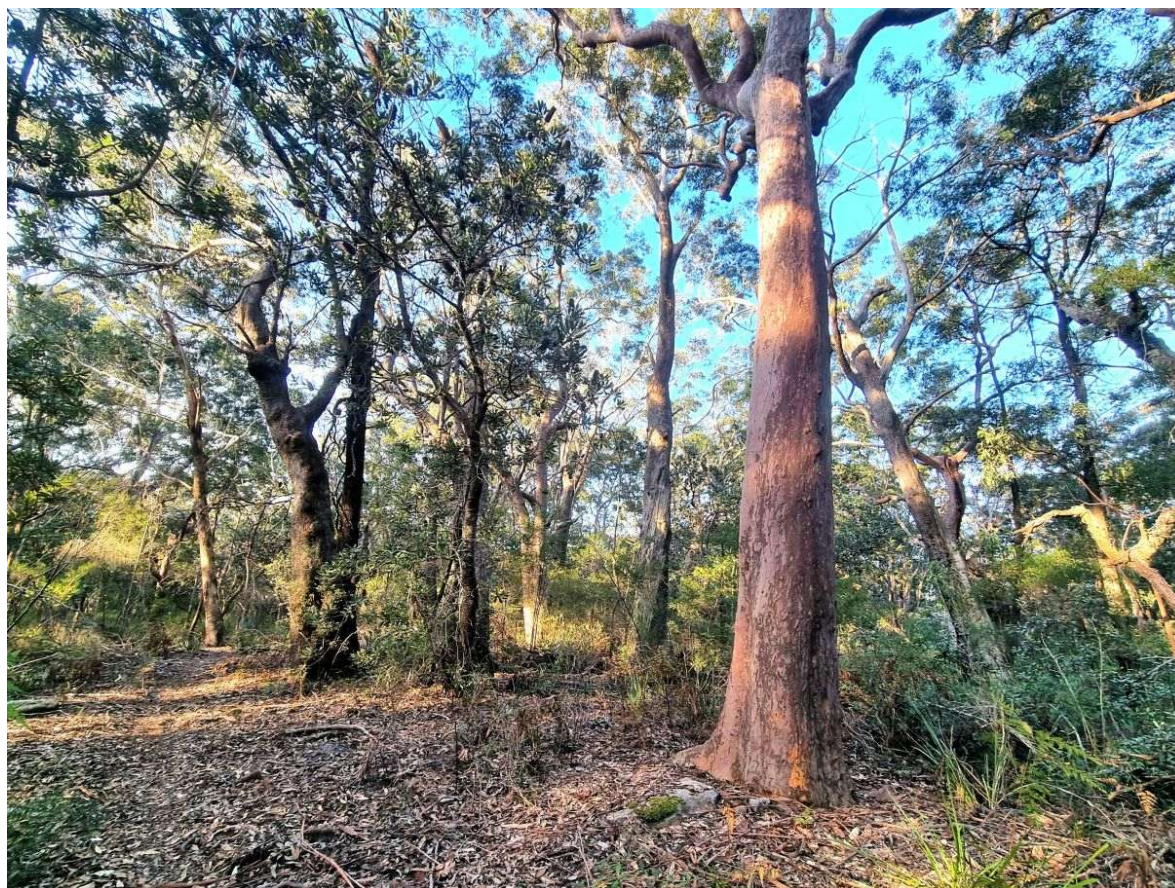
Mary on the tape-assisted ascent. Bernard supervising. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

The rest of the ascent onto the ridge was steep in places but easy. The party made it to the top by 1514. The progress from here was slow due to dense scrub. Advancing northwards, we began to notice, from time to time, some faint remains of old trails put here by timbergetters.

By 1611, we were walking on a much more distinct track. This is where we saw an old stump, the first one of the day. Soon, the trail once again became overgrown, until, finally, at 1634, we reconnected with the well-cleared forestry road used this morning. The journey from here, through beautiful forested glades, magically lit by the setting sun, was very enjoyable. The cars were reached by 1654.



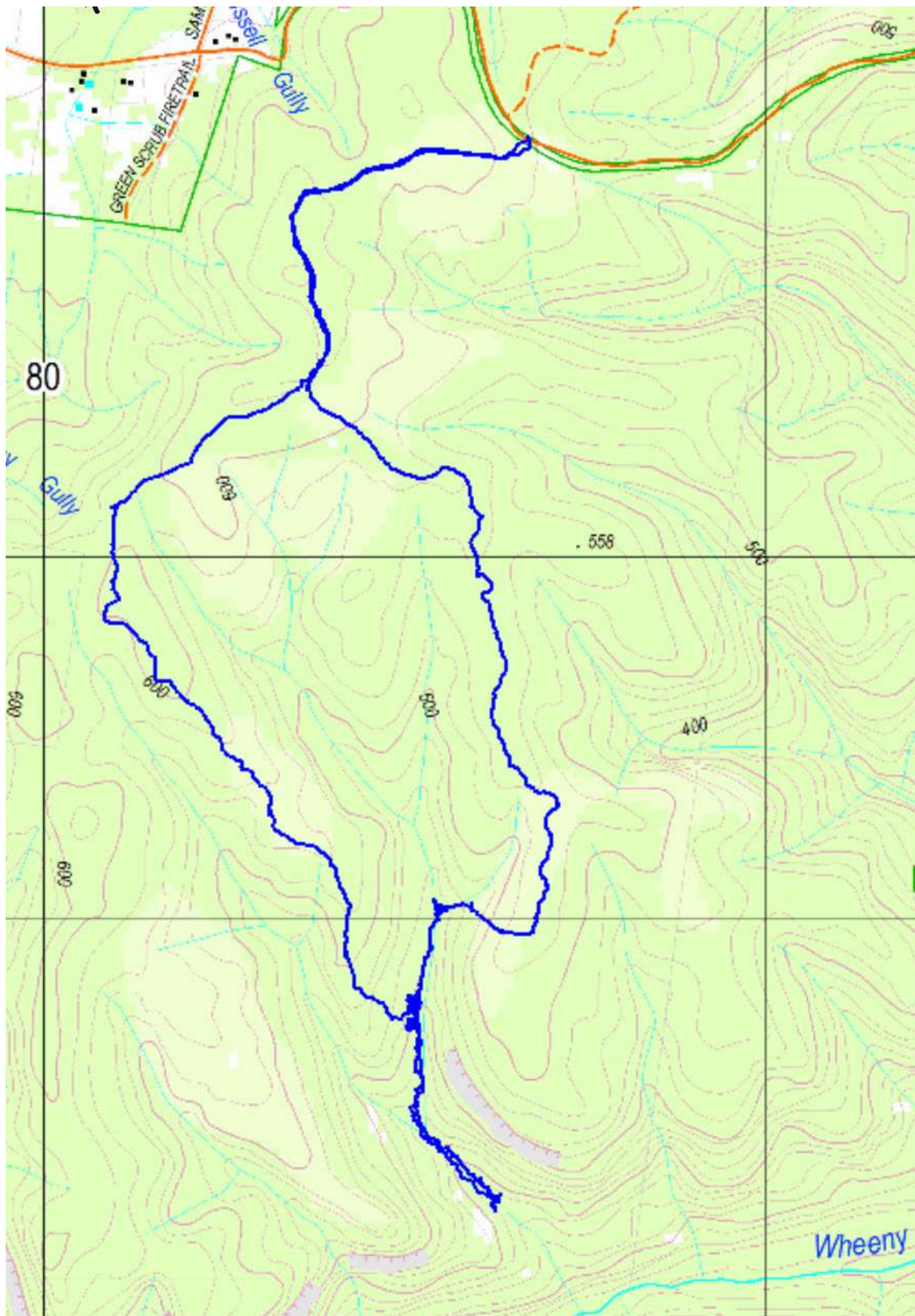
An old stump. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



A forest glade. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Thinking it over now, the trip back from the main waterfall took longer and was not very scenic compared to the way we had come in. In hindsight, I would have rather liked to stay within the scenic M-Gully for another 500 m or so, before climbing out on the ridge. Something to consider for next time.

Trip statistics: total distance 10.74 km; total ascent 462 m.



Walk topographic map. Recorded and prepared by Yuri Bolotin.

Table of Times, Locations and Grid References

Time	Location	Grid Reference	Elevation
0831	Cars parked and started walking	GR 8134 9616	625 m
0914	Turned off-track	GR 8020 9513	590 m

0934	Start of descent	GR 8031 9467	610 m
1018	Start of steep descent	GR 8084 9391	505 m
1043	In M-Gully	GR 8104 9376	423 m
1048-1100	Morning tea in a cave	GR 8110 9375	427 m
1110-1120	Tape-assisted descent (bottom)	GR 8104 9372	410 m
1135	Below the waterfall	GR 8100 9373	400 m
1146	Landslide	GR 8105 9355	372 m
1203	Two creeks junction	GR 8103 9349	358 m
1230-1250	Lunch and turnaround point	GR 8125 9322	270 m
1335	Tape-assisted ascent	GR 8104 9372	410 m
1347	Morning tea cave	GR 8110 9375	427 m
1351	Stopped by boulder blockup	GR 8104 9380	423 m
1401	On the other side of the blockup	GR 8104 9383	427 m
1419	Exit gully	GR 8109 9401	433 m
1430-1438	Tape-assisted ascent	GR 8112 9403	445 m
1514	Top of the ridge	GR 8133 9396	535 m
1611	Old stump and more distinct track	GR 8121 9509	565 m
1634	Back on the old forestry road	GR 8075 9550	620 m
1654	Back at cars	GR 8134 9616	625 m