

The UNEOAC guide to North Eastern NSW

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University of New England Outdoor Adventure Club
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Contents

Preface	8
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Warning	9
----------------	----------

Introduction	11
---------------------	-----------

Geology and Geomorphology	11
Climate	12
Vegetation	13
Fauna	14
Maps	16
Private Property	16
Potential Hazards	17
Outdoor Ethics	18

Mountain Biking	21
------------------------	-----------

Warning	21
Equipment	21
Grading System for Rides	22
Maps	23
Mountain Bike Clubs and Races	23
Code of Conduct	23
Rides In and Around Armidale	24
Point Lookout Area	31
Guy Fawkes River National Park	32
Styx River State Forest	33
Long Point - Oxley Wild Rivers National Park	33
Minbalup - Moonbi Ranges	34
Washpool - Gibraltar National Parks	34
Big Hill Area	35
Budds Mare - Oxley Wild Rivers National Park	35
Mt Kaputar	36
Dorrigo - Coramba - Coffs Harbour	36

Rock Climbing	41
----------------------	-----------

Warning	41
---------	----

Equipment	42
Maps / Guides	42
Dangars Falls	42
Mihi Falls	43
Upper Gara Gorge	43
Bakers Creek Falls	44
Four Mile Creek	44
Ebor Falls	45
Wollomombi Gorge	45
Cathedral Rock	46
Bluff Rock	47
Mt Kaputar National Park	48
Warrumbungle National Park	48
Glenreagh	48

Paddling

51

Warning	51
Code Of Conduct	52
Equipment	52
Grading System For Rivers and Rapids	52
Website Information on Water Levels	54
<i>Westerly Flowing Rivers</i> 54	
MacDonald (Namoi) River	54
Rocky (Gwydir) River	55
Gwydir River	56
<i>Easterly Flowing Rivers</i> 57	
Local Creeks Near Armidale	57
Gara River	57
Manning River	58
Barnard River	59
Forbes River	59
Hastings River	60
Styx River	61
Chandler and Macleay Rivers	62
Oakly River	63
<i>Steep Creeks On The Dorrigo Plateau</i> 64	
Little Murray River	64
Coutts Water	65
Nymboida River (Harness Cask To The Junction) ..	66
Bielsdown River	67
Blicks River	68
Rosewood River	69
Wild Cattle Creek	70
Cooperbrook Creek	71

Bo Bo River	71
Little Nymboida River	72
<i>Northern River Regions</i>	73
Guy Fawkes And Boyd Rivers	73
Bellinger River	74
Nymboida River (The Junction To Jackadgery)	74
Goolang And Blaxland Creek	75
Mann River	76
Clarence River	77
Timbarra (Rocky) River	78

Canyoning

81

Warning	81
Grading System for Canyons	81
Equipment	82
Eastern Dorrigo Plateau	83
Ebor Falls	86
Chaelundi Falls	86
Styx River	86
Wollomombi and Chandler Gorges	87
Elaine's Gorge	89
Bakers Creek	90
Apsley Gorge	91
Rowley's Creek	92
Dangars Gorge	93
Kunderang Brook	94

Caving

97

Warning	97
Ethics	98
Cave Locations and Access	98
Equipment	99
Cave Genesis	100
Upper Manning	101
Timor	102
Tamworth	103
Macleay	103
Ashford	104
Border Rivers	105
Crombie's Cave	105

Warning	107
The Areas	107
The Do's And Don'ts Of Wilderness Safety	109
Grading System for Walks	110
Equipment	110
<i>The New England Gorges 112</i>	
Apsley Region	112
The Lower Apsley	114
Rusden's Creek	115
Rowley's Creek	116
Blue Mountain Creek	117
Dangars Gorge	118
Gara Gorge	119
Cooney Creek	120
The Hillgrove Area	121
Wollomombi and Chandler Gorges	122
The Long Point Area	123
Oaky Gorge	126
The Styx Gorge	127
Aberfoyle River	129
Guy Fawkes River National Park	130
Sara River	133
Henry River	134
<i>The Eastern Escarpment 135</i>	
Werrikimbe National Park	135
Forbes River	138
The Kunderang Brook-Mount Banda Banda Area ..	139
Georges Creek	140
New England National Park	142
The Black Scrub	145
Dorrigo National Park	146
Gibraltar Range National Park	147
Washpool Creek	149
Rocky (Timbarra) River	151
The Upper Clarence	152
<i>The Tablelands 152</i>	
Mount Duval	153
The Upper Styx	153
Cathedral Rock National Park	154
The Silent Pool of the Nymboida River	155
The Upper Macintyre River	156
White Rock Mountain	156

Bald Rock National Park	157
<i>The Border Ranges</i> 158	
The Border Ranges	158
<i>The Western Slopes</i> 162	
Basin Nature Reserve	162
Warrabah National Park - The Namoi Tops	163
Mount Kaputar National Park	164
Warrumbungle National Park	168
<i>The East Coast</i> 170	
Crowdy Bay National Park	170
Hat Head National Park	170
Yuraygir national park	171

Index of Locations

175

Preface

This is the fifth edition of this guidebook. This present edition represents the cumulative knowledge of members of the University of New England Outdoor Adventure Club (UNEOAC), formerly the University of New England Mountaineering Club (UNEMC), over a period of nearly forty years. We don't claim it to be either complete or perfect; however, considerable effort has gone into this guide.

If you have any feedback or corrections for this guide, would like to buy a copy, or just want to know more about the club, write to us:

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Or you can visit our web site:

<http://blog.une.edu.au/outdoor/>

Many changes have occurred since publication of the previous edition and these are reflected in this edition of the guide. Most notably, numerous areas have been designated as National Parks, changing the use of, and access to, these areas. The 1:25,000 maps have now completely superseded the 1:30,000 maps, and the guide has been updated to reflect this. Finally, the number of people enjoying the wilderness has vastly increased. This is both good and bad, resulting in more awareness of our natural environment, but at the same time resulting in greater impact upon that same environment. We ask you to take the greatest care, tread lightly, and follow the creed of "pack it in, pack it out".

Warning

All activities listed in this guide are **dangerous recreational activities**. All activities should only be undertaken by appropriately experienced and well prepared parties, who are aware of all risks and take all appropriate precautions.

This book is intended as a guide only, and should not be used as the sole information source. The contents of this guide have been collated over many years from numerous contributors with various backgrounds, and thus may contain inaccurate information, inappropriate information, or other errors.

Be aware that trip grades and times are an indication only. Any trip you experience can differ significantly from the grade or time indicated in this guide. Be prepared for trips to be harder or longer than indicated in this guide.

Always check that the trip you plan to undertake is compliant with the legal use of the area. The usage and access permissions of areas changes over time, and may not be accurately reflected in this guide.

The authors of this guidebook accept no responsibility or liability for any incorrect information contained in this guide, or for any incidents happening to, or injuries or losses sustained by, any persons caused while, or as a result of, using this guide.

Introduction

This guide aims to describe some of the potential for outdoor recreation within that area of New South Wales which runs south from the Queensland border to the Manning River, and west from the coast to the Warrumbungle and Nandewar Ranges. Within this area there exists a wide variety of topography and vegetation and a correspondingly wide potential for outdoor recreation. Although much of the region has been cleared for agriculture or is subject to intensive forestry operations, relatively large natural areas remain.

The general environmental characteristics of northeastern New South Wales are described in this introduction together with some information which is general to most forms of outdoor recreation in the region. This is followed by sections dealing with six major types of outdoor recreation: mountain biking, climbing, canoeing, caving, canyoning and walking.

Recent interest in **mountain biking** has prompted the inclusion of this activity in this edition of the guide. The area has a multitude of possible rides, and whilst all of these could not be listed here, descriptions of numerous local favourites are given.

The **climbing** section is intended as a general introduction to the scope for climbing in the region. For detailed route descriptions the reader is referred to a number of other guides covering specific climbing areas.

The **padding** section is quite comprehensive, although little emphasis is placed on flat water trips in the more heavily developed areas of the coastal

regions and the western slopes and plains.

A separate **canyoning** section has been included in this edition, distinguishing those walks and climbs involving abseiling descents, scrambling and swimming.

The **caving** section is less detailed in that the actual locations of cave entrances are not given because of extensive vandalism of many of the caves in the region. Interested persons are referred to recognised speleological societies.

The final section, the **walking** section, is by far the largest and most comprehensive. It describes a very wide variety of walks with grades varying from easy to hard

GEOLGY AND GEOMORPHOLOGY

Northeastern New South Wales has a basement of greywacke, cherts, sandstones and volcanics, formed mainly from marine sediments deposited in the Palaeozoic era, 230-600 million years ago. Folding and internal faulting of these materials has occurred over much of the region.

Granites and rhyolites were intruded into the Palaeozoic rocks 215-310 million years ago. Serpentinite intrusions also occurred at this time, particularly along parts of the Peel Fault which runs roughly southwest from near Bingara, through the Tamworth area.

After this phase of instability, a long period of erosion occurred, exposing large areas of granitic rock. Non-marine deposition of sediments in the Mesozoic era, 70-230 million years ago, produced

sandstone, mudstone, conglomerates and coal, mainly to the west of the present-day tablelands region, and in localised areas to the east. Recent evidence suggests that about 120 million years ago, during the Cretaceous period, the whole landscape was uplifted, forming a tableland with an abrupt eastern escarpment.

Eruption of molten lava 12-70 million years ago produced extensive deposits of basalt. Five main areas of basaltic rock exist today: the Walcha-Nundle area, the Armidale-Dorrigo-Glen Innes-Inverell area, the McPherson Ranges, the Nandewar Ranges, and the Warrumbungle Ranges. Exposure of erosion resistant trachyte has produced spectacular rock formations in the Nandewar and Warrumbungle Ranges.

Extensive erosion over the last 65 million years has added sediment to the deep alluvial northwestern plains, and to areas adjacent to most tableland and coastal streams.

Presently, the New England Tableland is undulating upland country, forming part of the Great Dividing Range. A mosaic of granitic rock, basaltic materials, serpentinite and consolidated sediments exists throughout the region, each producing characteristic landforms and soil types.

The tableland lies between 1000 m and 1300 m, with scattered peaks of over 1500 m in the Round Mountain-Point Lookout area. To the south the tableland area narrows, passing into more rugged country in the region east of Nundle. A steep southwest descent occurs to tributaries of the Namoi River. To the north, the plateau narrows before joining the McPherson Range at the Queensland border.

At its eastern extremity, the tableland area ends abruptly at a steep erosion escarpment. Streams flowing eastwards to the Pacific Ocean, such as the Macleay

River and its tributaries, have developed extensive gorge systems with local relief as great as 1000 m. The eastern scarp is less precipitous north of the Gibraltar Range, and in the Manning River area to the south.

With the exception of rugged volcanic peaks in the Nandewar and Warrumbungle Ranges, much gentler slopes exist to the west of the tablelands. Westerly flowing tributaries of the Murray-Darling River System pass through the hilly slopes country before meandering across the flat northwestern plains.

CLIMATE

Most of the rain which falls on the coast and mountains of northeastern New South Wales derives from moist easterly winds which cool orographically and convectively.

Land along the eastern scarp receives from 1800 to 2250 mm of rain per annum, while the lower western slopes on average receive less than 600 mm of precipitation each year. Therefore, streams flowing east generally receive greater amounts of water with less variation in flow than westerly flowing streams.

There is usually a marked summer - autumn rainfall maximum, with minimum precipitation being late winter and early spring. Winds blow predominantly from the east in summer, and from dry inland areas in the west and southwest in winter.

Cold southerly outbreaks during winter occasionally bring light snowfalls to areas higher than 1000 m, but snow rarely accumulates for more than a few days.

Temperatures on the tablelands range from warm to hot in summer, and from cool to cold in winter, with frequent early morning frosts.

VEGETATION

The pattern of distribution of vegetation types in northeastern New South Wales is complex and determined by a large number of environmental factors. The most important of these are the amount of rainfall, soil parent material (rock type), topographic position, available flora and fauna, the influence of fire, and the activities of man. Three general zones can be delineated: the coastal slopes, escarpment and gorges, the tablelands, and the western slopes.

Coastal Slopes, Escarpment and Gorges

This zone has a much greater diversity of forest types than the remainder of the region, primarily because of its relatively high and variable rainfall and the range of elevation zones present. By far the greatest part of the area is covered by eucalypt-dominated sclerophyll (hard-leaved) forests; however, the zone also contains the largest remaining areas of rainforest in New South Wales.

Rainforest tends to occur wherever rainfall is high (above about 1250 mm). Protection from fire and dry westerly winds, and having soil of medium to high fertility, are also important on upland sites.

Along much of the coastline heath, shrub-land and swamp communities occur, separated from the sea by dune systems. In protected coastal sites littoral rainforest, a subform of sub-tropical rainforest, is found growing on sands whose nutrient status has been enriched through wind-borne salts.

In all, seven major forest types occur within this zone. These are:

Sub-tropical Rainforest

This is the most luxuriant of all forest types found in New South Wales. It occurs on fertile soils, where elevations are less than 1000 m and rainfall exceeds 1500 mm. Forests of this type contain a very wide diversity of tree species arranged in two or three layers, as well as many vines and epiphytes. The largest remaining stands of these forests occur in the Border Ranges with smaller pockets in favoured sites along much of the escarpment and in some coastal areas.

Warm Temperate Rainforest

This type of forest tends to occur on sites with lower soil fertility than that required by sub-tropical rainforest. Compared to the subtropical forests the diversity of species present is reduced, there are usually only two tree layers, and vines and epiphytes are less common. The dominant tree species are Coachwood, Corkwood, Crabapple, Sassafras and occasionally some Yellow Carabeen. Quite large areas of this forest occur in the Washpool Wilderness and Werrikimbe National Park, with smaller stands in other areas along the escarpment.

Temperate Rainforest

These forests occur at high altitudes where temperatures are relatively low and rainfall very high. Both structurally and floristically these forests are fairly simple with only one or two tree layers. Antarctic Beech is by far the dominant canopy species. Mosses are abundant.

Dry Rainforest

These forests have floristic affinities with sub-tropical rainforests but are floristically less diverse and structurally simpler. Quite large areas of this forest type occur in the northernmost parts of

the region, usually dominated by Hoop Pine and a number of semi-deciduous species. Small pockets of dry rainforest occur in most of the New England Gorges. Here the forest is poorly structured and contains quite a variety of both hard- and soft-leaved species. Epiphytic orchids are common.

Wet Sclerophyll Forest

These are fairly luxuriant, eucalypt dominated forests which occur on sites which are too infertile, dry, exposed, or frequently burnt for rainforest to establish. There can be up to two tree layers and there is usually a well-developed shrub layer including tree ferns. Dominant species include Blackbutt, Flooded Gum, Brush Box, Tallowwood and Blue Gum. These forests often border rainforest areas and are found along the escarpment to the Border Ranges.

Dry Sclerophyll Forest

These are single layer, eucalypt dominated forests occurring on soils of fair fertility where rainfall is less than 1250 mm per annum. The canopy is thin but continuous and trunk lengths are greater than the canopy depth. There may be a well-developed shrub layer. These forests are very common along most of the coastal strip and on the ridge tops along the escarpment.

Woodland

Open-canopied, eucalypt woodland occurs on sites with lower rainfall or where soil development is limited. There is usually no shrub layer. This forest type dominates on the steep sides of the New England gorges.

The Tablelands

Limited rainfall, cold winters and desiccating winds have favoured the development of eucalypt woodland communities over much of the tablelands. Dry sclerophyll forest occurs in some better sites, particularly towards the eastern margin of the tablelands where rainfall is higher. Small areas of subalpine woodland, dominated by Snow Gum, are found in the higher parts of New England and Werrikimbe National Parks. Heath and swamp communities occur locally.

Large areas of woodland have been cleared for farming, and much of the partially cleared woodland is now afflicted by eucalypt dieback, which has greatly reduced scenic values in some areas.

The Western Slopes

The characteristic vegetation type of the slopes is tall savanna woodland, dominated by eucalypt species, the most common of which is White Box.

A very diverse association of vegetation communities exists in the Nandewar and Warrumbungle Ranges from Snow Gums and low shrubs on the tops, through Ironbark, Scribbly Gum and Cypress Pine on the steeper slopes to Rough Barked Apple and White Box along the lower valleys.

FAUNA

In Australia, three distinct faunal subregions have been recognised. They have been termed Torresian in the north and northeast, Bassian in the southwest and southeast, and Eyrean in the centre. All three subregions meet in northeastern New South Wales, so this area has a very large diversity of fauna.

Faunal diversity is directly related to vegetational diversity. Where a large range of habitat types exists within a

certain area, many different species of mammals, birds, reptiles and insects can be found.

The great vegetational diversity of the coastal slopes, escarpment and gorges supports a highly diverse fauna. The upper Clarence and Richmond valleys represent an extreme example of habitat and faunal diversity. In this area a stable network of rainforest, wet and dry sclerophyll forest and cleared land occurs, and 2 monotreme, 28 marsupial, 12 bat and 3 rodent species have been recorded. The birds, and to a lesser extent reptiles, also exhibit a high level of diversity in this area. Further south, almost one fifth of all Australian bird species have been recorded in the New England National Park.

The Warrumbungle and Nandewar Ranges, each partially included in National Parks, contain an interesting mixture of "eastern" and "western" animal species. Like the Clarence-Richmond area, a large diversity of vegetation types exists within a relatively small area. Twenty-two percent of Australia's bird species have been recorded in the Warrumbungle National Park.

Faunal diversity on the tablelands and western slopes overall is relatively low. Although undisturbed woodland supports a large diversity of species, animal diversity has apparently declined since the arrival of European man, due to habitat alteration by clearing and the disruptive effect of cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and rabbits.

Throughout the region wallabies and kangaroos are the most conspicuous mammals, particularly during the evenings and early mornings. The Red-Necked Wallaby, Whiptail Wallaby and Eastern Grey Kangaroo are commonly seen in areas where there is a mosaic of clear land and dry sclerophyll forest. The Swamp

Wallaby, Parma Wallaby and Red-Necked Pademelon occur in rainforest and wet sclerophyll forest, but are only occasionally seen. Wallaroos and Rock Wallabies occur in rocky areas, particularly in the gorges and the Warrumbungle and Nandewar Ranges. The dingo, Australia's largest carnivorous mammal, is one native species that has attracted considerable attention, since it sometimes kills sheep and cattle. The problem became serious enough to prompt the erection of a dingo proof fence along the gorge-tops in an attempt to protect tableland grazing interests.

The most conspicuous birds are the large soaring birds of prey, the parrots, and cockatoos, the Kookaburra, the larger honeyeaters, and the magpies, currawongs, crows and ravens. The Wedge-Tailed Eagle can be seen over any habitat type, but is most obvious around the peaks of the inland ranges where numbers gather to soar in the updraughts. Others include the Grey Goshawk over the wetter forests, the Brown Goshawk over any timbered country, the Little Eagle and Brown Falcon over more open areas, and the Peregrine Falcon around the gorges. The Yellow-Tailed Cockatoo, Rainbow Lorikeet, King Parrot and Crimson Rosella occur in the sclerophyll forests of the tableland and escarpment. The Galah, Little Lorikeet, Eastern Rosella, Redrumped and Turquoise Parrots occur in the drier woodlands or cleared country, and the Sulphur-Crested Cockatoo occurs sparingly in most habitats, often near water. The Kookaburra, Australian Magpie and Australian Raven inhabit the woodlands and cleared areas, the Pied Currawong and Forest Raven occur mainly in the sclerophyll forests, and the Torresian Crow occurs mainly in the partly cleared areas and valleys of the

eastern escarpment and the Border Ranges. The Red Wattlebird, Noisy Friarbird and Noisy Miner are obvious in the drier forests and woodlands, and the Bell Miner inhabits wet sclerophyll forests. In the denser forests some birds such as the Superb Lyrebird and Eastern Whipbird are heard, rather than seen, and others such as the Brush Turkey may be seen occasionally. Along watercourses the Little Pied Cormorant, White-Faced Heron, Black Duck, Wood Duck and other water birds may be seen.

Among the lizards most likely to be seen are the Lace Monitor, Eastern Bluetongue and Bearded Dragon in the drier forests and woodlands, the Land Mullet in rainforest, and the Common Water Skink and Eastern Water Dragon along watercourses. Snakes which may be seen occasionally include the Eastern Brown Snake in the drier forests and woodlands, the Red-Bellied Black Snake almost anywhere but usually near water, the Rough-Scaled Snake in the wetter forests, and the Copperhead and Eastern Tiger Snake in the high country.

MAPS

Although it is possible to walk using the 1:100,000 maps, a larger scale is preferable, particularly in the more rugged areas. There is 1:25,000 map cover over the eastern part of the state. Not all maps are recently updated: check the dates on the maps you are using. For more general information about the areas, forestry service maps and National Parks leaflets are generally available.

Topographical maps in Australia use the Australian Map Grid (UTM) as well as lat-long. Users of GPS equipment should take note of this. Throughout this guide, UTM map references are used. The appropriate 1:100,000 and 1:25,000 maps

are listed and, where a grid reference is given, the letter following the grid reference is the first letter of the name of the map sheet to which the reference corresponds.

There are many local map agents and outdoor shops that carry stocks of maps covering their surrounding area, and these also offer a wealth of local knowledge. Maps and leaflets can also be obtained from some tourist information and visitor centres.

PRIVATE PROPERTY

Many of the areas described in this guide include land that is privately owned or leased. A number of other areas, although on public land, have no developed public access and thus private land must be crossed in order to visit them. Whenever a trip involves entering private property permission must be sought and obtained. In most cases it is readily given and your courtesy will help those who follow you. If possible the relevant landholder(s) should be contacted some time in advance. There are several reasons for this, the principal one being that it is an additional courtesy as many landholders prefer prior notice to unannounced arrival. There also exists the possibility that the landholder is not permanently resident on the property or is temporarily absent at the time of your visit.

There are a number of methods that can be used to find out who owns or leases a particular parcel of land. The most reliable of these is to inquire at the relevant Land Board Office. Where it is impracticable to contact the Land Board Office, a time-consuming but often successful method is to go through the telephone book, providing you know the name of the property or, if inquiring about leasehold land, the adjacent property. If you

can't find a listing for the particular property you are seeking then try the neighbouring properties. A third possibility is to ring the local telephone exchange or post office and inquire there.

When on private property remember not to disturb stock or interfere with any equipment and always leave all gates as they are found.

POTENTIAL HAZARDS

With common sense, outdoor activities in northeastern New South Wales are rarely dangerous. However, precautions should be taken against a number of potential hazards:

Exposure

Exposure, or hypothermia, is a condition associated with excessive body cooling. Below a certain body temperature, vital organs cease to function properly and death may result. Conditions leading to exposure often occur on the Northern Tablelands during winter. Wet, windy weather at temperatures less than about 10°C is particularly dangerous.

The recognition and treatment of hypothermia is thoroughly discussed in most modern first-aid books and should be understood. However, prevention of the condition is by far the best approach. Carry windproof and waterproof outer garments and thermal under-clothing. Always take a more-than-adequate supply of high-energy food, and practise the ability to light a fire under adverse conditions.

Snakes

The chances of being bitten by a venomous snake are remote. If you see a snake, stay well clear since most species will only strike when threatened or greatly aggravated. If you are in remote areas you

should have sufficient first aid skills to handle snakebite.

The method now favoured is to bind the affected limb from the bite down the limb, then back up to the top of the limb as tightly as for a sprained ankle and to fully immobilise it. Keep the patient quiet and relaxed. Do wash the wound as remaining venom can help identify the "guilty" snake.

Ticks

Ticks live in thick scrub associated with wet and dry sclerophyll forest along the lower escarpment and coastal ranges. They are most common during the drier months in late winter and early spring.

Tiny powder ticks cause small, itchy red lumps on the skin but are not generally a serious problem. However, the larger paralysis tick can cause serious problems if not removed promptly. The most important thing is to get the tick off you, trying to get the head out if possible. Large ticks are best removed from the skin by sliding the open blades of sharp tweezers around each side of the tick and carefully levering out. Do not squeeze or pull the tick as this can inject venom into you.

Walkers are less likely to accumulate ticks if they wear long jackets and



broad-rimmed hats while pushing through thick scrub.

Leeches

Leeches are quite common in the region, frequenting moist shaded locations. They are generally harmless but the loss of blood following the injection of an anticoagulant can be unnerving. The recommended method of removing a leech is to apply salt or a burning match to its body.

Stinging Trees

Within the rainforests of the region there are two trees which can inflict very painful stings. One, the shining-leaved stinging tree, is relatively uncommon, but the other, the giant stinging tree is abundant in some areas. This latter tree has large and attractive lime-green leaves often with numerous small holes in them and are covered with many fine stinging hairs. Direct contact with these leaves causes a great deal of pain and can lead to hospitalisation for very bad stings.



Learn to recognise the leaves and avoid them.

OUTDOOR ETHICS

Northeastern New South Wales is lucky in still having some wilderness and near wilderness country left; however, these areas are not large and many are under threat. Those participating in the outdoors should do their best to protect our remaining natural heritage so that others may continue to enjoy it. In particular, disturbance of the environment should be kept to an absolute minimum.

Rubbish and Pollution

Leave an area at least as tidy and undisturbed as you found it. All rubbish must be carried out. Don't burn it as foil doesn't burn and plastics release toxic gas if burnt. Don't bury it as some animal will probably dig it up when you leave. If you find litter left by inconsiderate others then please remove it.

Toilet sites should be 50 m from water and other sensitive areas and buried 15 cm deep. Soaps and detergents should be used well away from streams and water courses where they will cause pollution.

Flora and Fauna

Minimise disturbance to native vegetation and wildlife. Do not chase or otherwise hassle animals. Rock climbers should make a specific effort to avoid the nests of birds of prey. In some parts of the world rock climbing is the single greatest threat to the continued existence of these birds.

To prevent the spread of weed seeds and plant diseases, clean tent pegs and boots whenever possible.

Fire

Take note of any fire regulations. Campfires should only be used where absolutely necessary (which means an emergency situation), kept as small as possible, and fully extinguished with water before leaving. Always carry your own stove and fuel.

Safety

Do not take unnecessary risks. Inform some responsible person about your trip plans and leave an expected time of return. Notify them when you do return. Do a first aid course and carry a first aid kit. Make sure everyone in the party knows where the first aid kit is packed.

Behaviour

Your behaviour reflects on all who seek to enjoy the outdoors and also on those who aim at its preservation. Try to further the interests of others, not detract from them.

Walkers can aid the National Parks and Wildlife Service by reporting any illegal activity in the Parks of the region. Try to be as specific and detailed as possible in making any report so that the Service can take any required action.

Enjoy!

Most importantly, enjoy our wilderness. We hope this guide serves you well, and we welcome your comments!

Mountain Biking

Mountain biking in the New England region offers many possibilities, and as such the rides listed here are just a small fraction of those possible. The development potential of single track in and around Armidale is one example of this. Extreme fire trail riding is also to be found, primarily in state forests. Many country rides also offer pleasant rides, some verging on “fire trail” quality. Some dual-track and vehicular access tracks in National Parks are permissible for mountain biking: contact the relevant National Parks and Wildlife Service office for details.

It is recommended to have gearing suitable for hills of reasonable steepness and knobby tires for all rides in the region. Always carry plenty of water since conditions can become quite hot, particularly in summer. Also, be aware of the sun and use plenty of sunscreen. Punctures are not uncommon, and the occasional broken chain is possible. Carry a good toolkit, particularly on longer rides. Many of these rides are a long way from help!

WARNING

Mountain bike riding is a dangerous recreational activity. Take care and do not ride beyond your limits. Many accidents have occurred from less experienced riders try to keep up with more experienced riders.

Be aware that the grade or difficulty of rides will change over time, due to changes in track conditions resulting from weather and track use (or lack of). Always check on access permission for the tracks as this can change over time as well.

The authors accept no responsibility or liability for any incorrect information contained in this guide, or for any incidents happening to, or injuries or losses sustained by, riders or other persons caused while, or as a result of, using this guide.

Ride safely and have a great trip.

EQUIPMENT

Besides a mountain bike the following equipment is useful on rides.

Helmet

Do not ride without a helmet. Not only could it save your life, it is also a legal requirement in Australia.

Tool Kit

It is inevitable that your bike will break down on the track. You could avoid a long walk home by carrying a tool kit. Tool kits should at least include a puncture repair kit, spare tube, tyre levers, pump, hex keys and chain tool.

Food and Water

Always ensure you have an adequate supply of water. Hydration packs are great because they also have room for snacks.

First Aid Kit

An accident can happen to any rider. A first aid kit is essential, and especially so if riding in remote areas.

Body Protection

Protection can range from a pair of gloves to prevent a callous to full body armour for serious downhillers.

GRADING SYSTEM FOR RIDES

We have attempted to grade each ride by degree of difficulty with regard to fitness and technical ability. In each there are five grades ranging from Easy to Difficult. Fitness is graded according to how steep hills are or if the ride is particularly long and requires a great deal of stamina. Technical difficulty is graded according to the quality of the track. Rides are classified according to Fitness/Technical difficulty, e.g. M / MD.

Fitness

E	Easy	Generally flat with gentle hills tending to be shorter rides
ME	Moderately Easy	More hills than E
M	Moderate	Tending to longer rides with some steep hills or longer climbs
MD	Moderately Difficult	Many hills and tending to longer rides
D	Difficult	Very hilly with long and/or steep climbs

Technical

E	Easy	Paved or smooth gravel roads that can be ridden with a road or hybrid bicycle
ME	Moderately Easy	Dual-track or fire trail, requires a mountain bike, requires little technical ability
M	Moderate	Dual-track or fire trail with some sections that are loose or rocky requiring some technical ability; single track where technical sections include burms, rocky ground or tree roots
MD	Moderately Difficult	Dual-track or fire trail with considerable technical sections; single track with some technical sections including rock gardens, jumps and steep downhills
D	Difficult	Single track with considerable challenging and technical sections that is difficult to negotiate either up or down! May require a dual suspension or downhill bike

Map

If you don't know the track, it is best to have a topographical map of the area.

MAPS

Many of the 1:25,000 maps referenced for each ride may not show the actual route to be taken. The fire roads, tracks and trails may not be shown. The map will, hopefully, show you where to start and generally where the ride goes. The National Parks leaflets and the Armidale City street map will usually show the track or trail, but not accurately to scale. Check the print and revision date of the map you have: many fire trails that existed on older maps are no longer used and may not be passable (although this does make for interesting exploration).

MOUNTAIN BIKE CLUBS AND RACES

At the time of publication Armidale has an active mountain biking club - the, NEMTB (New England Mountain Bike Club). The club welcomes new members and caters for all levels of riding ability. To become a member of NEMTB you must first become a member of Mountain Biking Australia (MTBA); this covers insurance for NEMTB and MTBA organised races and events. Throughout the year the NEMTB club holds local races, social events and competes in MTBA races. Checkout NEMTB's web site for more information: <http://www.newenglandmtb.com/home/index.php>.

NEMTB uses a web based group forum to share information about rides, bike maintenance, and anything to do with mountain biking in Armidale. See <http://sports.groups.yahoo.com/group/armidalemtb/>.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Respect the rights of others using the track. Always yield the track to those on foot or horseback.

Always leave all gates as you find them.

Control your bike when you are near others and especially when near walkers.

Always carry food, water, a first-aid kit and some cash for the occasional ice-cream.

National Parks, Nature Reserves and State forests generally treat bikes like other vehicles, so you can only ride where you can drive. The important thing is not to ride on walking tracks where you could hit people. In general if it is dual track, such as fire trails, then it is okay to ride.

Tell other people about this code.

Ride lightly and take all your rubbish with you. Avoid lighting fires, especially in National Parks.

Don't frighten animals, and watch for snakes on the trail.

Ride only on formed trails. Don't take short cuts, ride around puddles, or form new trails.

Plan your ride and let others know of your plans and when you intend to return.

RIDES IN AND AROUND ARMIDALE

There are a variety of possibilities in and around Armidale, incorporating the Arboretum (South Armidale), the Lookout (North Armidale) and a hot little track in the reserve just west of the Lookout, off Erskine Street.

Armidale Cycleway

Distance: Approx. 7 km
 Time: 30 minutes
 Difficulty: E / E
 Maps: Armidale Street Map
 obtained from the
 Armidale Information
 Centre

Accessible from the Cycleway

The Cycleway in Armidale runs from Erskine Street in the east end of Armidale, down to the creeklands and along Dumaresq Creek out to the University of New England.

From the cycleway go across Harris Park fields at the western end and up the spectators hill to get you to the northern areas. This hill at the west end of Harris Park is good fun going either up or down and allows you to link up to the Lookout/ Erskine Street area whilst avoiding main roads.

Also there is a fast flat loop that goes past the brick pits along Mott Street and the north side of the Golf Club. Continue straight along into Martin Street, eventually emerging behind Girraween Shopping Centre. The railway crossing is the high point of this journey (watch for trains).

Just past the tip on Long Swamp Road there is a track that connects across to Castledoyle Road, just past the new

estates. The track is windy but flat except for the last bit where you can cut loose, but remember to slow down before you get onto Castledoyle Road. Once on Castledoyle Road turn left and head back into town via a motor-bike track on the eastern side of the road or go right and cruise up to the Imbota Nature Reserve (formerly known as Eastwood State Forest). This (Imbota) is definitely a fun place to ride, but if you are after single track best cruise out to the Pine Forest.

Kookaburra Crest Downhill Course

Distance: 500m + single track
 Time: 1 minute + single track
 Difficulty: ME / MD
 Maps: Armidale Street Map

The track is located on council land at Drummond Park near the Armidale lookout on north hill, the start of the track is best accessed from the corner of Newton and Crest Streets. Please observe the conditions of use, signposted at the beginning of the track.

Designed by track designers Mudcows and constructed in 2004 to host the National Four Cross (4X) championship, it is a class track offering four at a time racing and technical jumping right in the heart of town. Kookaburra Crest downhill course provides 500m of challenging meandering downhill, big air jumps, high speed banked turns followed by a linking single track with additional jumps and a small section of down hill to bring you back for more. Ongoing maintenance of the track is an issue, with the banked turns becoming badly rutted, so take care.

Imbota Nature Reserve (formerly known as Eastwood State Forest)

Distance: Approx. 7 km from Armidale, as long or as short as you like inside the forest

Time: As long or as short as you like

Difficulty: ME / ME

Maps: Armidale 1:25,000

This is a great area within riding distance of Armidale. The reserve has a boundary fence on all sides and it is difficult to get lost. The entire area is forested with little undergrowth resulting in excellent visibility and great trail riding.

You can enter the forest from either Castledoyle Road (764164A) or Long Swamp Road (778175A), both of which can be found from the east end of Armidale. Castledoyle Road leaves the Grafton Road just at the town boundary before the hill going east out of town. Long Swamp Road is accessed from the roundabout that joins Kentucky Street, Long Swamp Road and Canambe Street. Either way, it is about 10 km to the forest along paved road. You can ride to either entrance gate but it is better to drive.

Once inside the forest you will find some gravel roads and National Parks and Wildlife Service maintained fire trails. Riding single track in the Nature Reserve is not permitted. You will soon find the good bits and work out a good circuit. Plan to spend at least an hour inside the forest.

The Pine Forest (Armidale State Forest)

Distance: Approx. 6 km from Armidale, 5 km trails inside the forest and 6 km of single track. Total about 20 km return

Time: 2-3 hours

Difficulty: ME / ME

Maps: Dumaresq 1:25,000

The Pine Forest, or 'The Piney' to the locals, offers the best rides close to the city. Riding consists of forestry trails but more importantly the best single track in town, with potential for more.

Two access routes are described here, the first leads to the western side of the forest. The second, a back way, leads to the top of great single track in the east of the forest. If you're driving for maximum single track time, continue along Rockvale Road to the gate 200 m on the right after the concrete bridge.

Western Access: Take Marsh Street to the cycleway along the right hand side of Rockvale Road to the first Pine Forest entry. Shortly past the grid on your right is the start of the old Lands Department walking track. Slide onto this and follow it through some beautiful forest to the picnic area (be careful when crossing any forest roads). For still more fun, cross the creek approximately 100 m downstream from the picnic area and enter the Pine Forest on the other side through a gate to find lots of jumps, ups and downs, single track and even a medieval hut or two. Ride this till your quads cave in and your mouth gets too sore from grinning, then head back up the track beside Rockvale Road, Box Hill Drive, the Cycleway and home. Alternatively if your legs are too tired, just head back in on Rockvale Road.

Eastern Access: From the east end of the Cycleway, continue right along Erskine Street until a T intersection. Turn left into Cookes Road and power up past the Masonic Lodge and down over a low level crossing turn left onto Hillards Road. Ride to end of this road and continue straight over a grid into private property. Follow the track which is besides a fence, leaving any gates as you

found them. At the time of publication the owners were happy for mountain bikers to use this track, provided they follow the code of conduct. Ride up through the woodland and the jump the fence on the left just after the second gate into the Pine Forest. This is the start of “Old Man Lollbac”.

You can either cross the creek, through the gate under the powerlines to ride up

the forestry trail to the start of more great single track including “Rob’s Undergrad”, “Rob’s Postgrad”, and “Serpentine Track”, or stay on the east of the creek and chase the cows off “Cow Track” See the map for a better idea of forestry roads and single track found in The Piney.

The Armidale Walking Tack – Pine Forest

Distance: 6 km
Time: 15 minutes
Difficulty: ME / ME
Maps: Dumaresq 1:25,000

This is really a touring route to the Pine Forest, but also a great way to explore the roads and trails just north of Armidale.

From the east end of the Cycleway, continue right along Erskine Street. Turn left into Box Hill Drive and power up and along, down (creek crossing via a lovely little wooden footbridge) and up to Apple Tree Drive. Follow the single track a short way on the right-hand side of Rockvale Road to near the top of the hill, turn left onto a dirt road, Lyndon Road, and follow this round a left bend and on along Stoney Ridge Road and down to turn right (scary fast corner) into Arundel Drive. Follow this to the next T-intersection and turn right, then straight along this fast and at times technical track (loose rocks, roots and ruts) to the next T-intersection which is a dirt road called Tre-lawney Road. Turn right and go along this at a leisurely pace to Rockvale Road then left briefly along Rockvale and right into the Pine Forest (751264D). You can ride back into town via the same route, or alternatively along the Rockvale Road bike track.

Gara Dam Reserve (off Grafton Road)

Distance: Approx. 15 km from
Armidale
Time: 1-2 hours
Difficulty: ME / M - MD
Maps: Hillgrove 1:25,000

Turn left at the picnic area just before the Gara River Bridge (842201H). Follow the tracks down to and up from the river, up as far as the official dam area. There is some technical riding above and below the nice little cliff near the dam. From the dam follow the fence line up the hill (west) following a vague vehicle track, turn left (south) at the top fence and cruise down till you see an eroded gully taking shape on your left. Drop into this and follow it down to the entrance gate, ziggin’ and zaggin’ into and out of the little gully. There are no tracks so go where you will.

On the other side of the river (east) the terrain is steeper but there are few trails, the best being beside the river. There is a high-level track and a low-level track. Both are technical and a bit disjointed. If you get too hot riding, have a cool dip in the river about 100 m up from the bridge, or a picnic.

Tilbuster Area

Distance: Approx. 20 km
Time: 1-3 hours
Difficulty: ME / ME
Maps: Armidale City Street Map
Dumaresq 1:25,000

This ride can begin and end anywhere along the Armidale Cycleway but utilises some of the stock routes to the north of the city. There is a nice mix of paved roads, gravel roads, stock routes and Cycleway.

Use the Armidale Cycleway to get to Niagara Street. Go north along Niagara

Street to the bend/junction with Cluny Road.

Follow Cluny Road north from town, past the first turnoff to the right, and as far as the 90 degree bend to the left. Take the dual track/fire road to your right. Follow this to the intersection and turn left. Follow this until it becomes a road that intersects with Blanche's Road (paved). Turn right towards the New England Highway. Puddledock Road is a short distance along the highway back towards town (right or south). Turn left on Puddledock and follow it to the first road to your right (Hoys Road). Take Hoys Road and turn left after the bends onto Biddulph Road. The first right off Biddulph Road takes you up a lane and becomes a stock route. Follow this to an intersection where you can either go straight taking you to Rockvale Road or turn right, then the next stock route left taking you out onto Stony Ridge Road. Turn right here and follow it back to Rockvale Road and then back to town and the Cycleway.

Alternatively, stay on Biddulph Road a bit longer and take a left when you hit the Armidale Walking Track. This will eventually take you along the creek and you will emerge around the Pine Forest. Sometimes this route is covered in long grass.

Mt Duval - Dumaresq Dam

Distance: Approx. 35 km round trip

Time: Allow at least 3/4 of a day.
You could do a fast trip in a ½ day (or in two hours, as per our local cross-country racers)

Difficulty: M / ME - MD

Maps: Dumaresq 1:25,000

Dumaresq Dam is a small dam west of Armidale accessed from the Booroolong

Road. It has a track that circles it and also connects to some tracks that lead to and from Mt Duval. Mt Duval is the highest point near Armidale but is covered with thick bush resulting in few views. However, there is a track up and down that offers a great ride with a good chance of seeing mobs of kangaroos. Take a map or you will surely be geographically misplaced - lost!

You can ride straight from Armidale via a short section of highway or from Link Road turn into Thorndike Lane at the Reservoirs and follow this down to avoid the highway. Faster still, get someone to drop you off at Newholme Road, just before the Duval Creek bridge.

Head west along Newholme Road until you reach Newholme (689339D), one of the properties of the University of New England. Permission must be obtained before proceeding (phone Mr. John Dell at Newholme Research Station on 02 6771 1212) as some idiot riders once trashed John's shearing shed so he likes to know who is around. Go past his house and sheds, through a gate, on and up to another gate. Don't go through this gate but take the track on your right up the long haul onto the mountain (puff, puff) then either come straight back down (grin) very quickly, or continue (very good value also) around the circuitous Mt Duval Trail and back to where you initially went up the mountain.

Now go through the gate, heading west and down toward the creeks that feed into Dumaresq Dam. This is tricky to describe and the tracks here are vague (check your map). Cross (right) the first creek then follow it downstream along a vague dual track (one technical up-hill bit) till you come to an open paddock, veer right and follow the edge of the paddock to another

creek crossing. From here you can either cross the creek and follow the walking track to the parking area, or stay to the left and follow the dam around the eastern side. If you find yourself across the dam from the picnic area you will have to negotiate the track below the dam wall. It can be technically quite challenging with steps and rocks to hop. Once back at the parking/picnic area, there are picnic tables and barbeques. The gravel road leads back to the Booroolong Road (paved). Turn left on Booroolong Road and ride back to Armidale (about 10 km).

Dumaresq Dam - Newholme Downhill Track

Distance: 7 km return

Time: 20 minute return

Difficulty: M / MD - D

Maps: Dumaresq 1:25,000

This is a short section of free flowing downhill with some sweet drops and technical sections. If you don't have a dually it is possible to avoid the drops and still have fun.

Easiest access is to drive to Dumaresq Dam and ride clockwise around the dam. Cross the creek, veer left around the edge of the paddock and follow a vague dual track (check your map) until you reach a cleared fenceline. A gate leads to Newholme. Make sure you do as the sign says and phone Mr. John Dell at Newholme Research Station on 02. 6771 1212 to arrange access prior to your trip. Go through the gate (making sure to leave it as you found it) follow the dual track left uphill till another gate at the base of Mt Duval. The downhill track starts here and links back to the Newholme gate. A quick reconnaissance with some track cleaning may be required as the distance from town means the track is not often

used. After the single track follow the dual trail back to Dumaresq Dam car park.

Bundarra Road Telstra Track

Distance: Approx. 35 km return from the shop at Invergowrie.

Add 17 km each way from Armidale

Time: Allow most of the day

Difficulty: M / M - MD

Maps: Armidale 1:25,000

Yarrowyck 1:25,000

When the telephone company put in new lines they made a nice track through the bush that runs parallel to the Bundarra Road. Bundarra Road winds up and over the Pinnacle, and it is this area where the single track is most fun. A nice view of the west is an indication that you are "over the top".

Start just out of Invergowrie at the junction of Kareela Road and Bundarra Road. The track follows a travelling stock route all the way to Booralong Creek. Alternatively, ride out from Armidale along Bundarra Road, about 20 km.

A short, neat track on the north side of the junction of Kareela Road and Bundarra Road (565243A) takes you to the Telstra line track (look for yellow posts). Follow this west all the way to Booralong Creek (490269Y), a nice spot for lunch or munchies. There is one major technical climb and some mild technical short downs. The track is quite rough and rocky at times (nicer on a duallie), and can become vague but just keep looking for the yellow Telstra markers. If you get totally bushed just go left to the road nearby. Return from Booralong Creek by either reversing the above track or rattling back along the road. The bitumen off the Pinnacle is fun but take care on the fast corners - you're not on road tyres! This

is a nice ride with a beautiful view west towards Mount Yarrowyck.

Invergowrie - Uralla Return

Distance: Approx. 40 km one way
 Time: Allow ½ to full day
 Difficulty: M / E - ME
 Maps: Armidale 1:25,000

This is a pleasant country road ride with a mix of paved and gravel roads and some travelling stock routes (if desired). Uralla has some nice coffee shops so plan on morning or afternoon tea!

Start from the Invergowrie Shop located on Invergowrie Road about 2 km south of Bundarra Road 20 km west of Armidale.

Head south along Invergowrie Road and turn right after the bend at Fardell's Corner. This road continues south for about 4 km to a T-intersection. Turn left and right shortly after at the next road. This road winds along for about 8 km past orchards and small properties until a T-intersection. Turn right and follow the road to another T-intersection, then turn left onto Rocky River Road and follow down into Uralla. If you are keen on some off-road there is a small track to be seen on the left that can afford some fun. Return the same way but watch for a small road to your right about 5 km from Uralla (588156A). This road becomes a travelling stock route that emerges at Northey's Road. Cross the road and continue along the stock route. Make sure to leave gates as you found them. The stock route becomes a gravel road and hits a T-intersection. Turn left and at about 0.5 km turn right. The road will pass a few driveways on your right and you then go through a makeshift gate. Straight ahead is the stock route which goes through to the next road. Turn left onto this road and follow it back, past Fardell's Corner, and to Invergowrie

Shop. At the time of writing the shop had takeaways and coffee and is a fully equipped country store with petrol.

Puddledock Road

Distance: Approx. 40 km round trip
 Time: Allow 2 hours to ½ day
 Difficulty: ME / E - ME
 Maps: Guyra 1:25,000

This can be a loop ride but it is nicer to avoid riding on the New England Highway by getting dropped off at the north end. The ride is all on paved and gravel roads with some nice views through the countryside where there are still some orchards.

A car shuttle is required if you don't plan to ride a loop from Armidale. Puddledock Road begins and ends on the New England Highway. The northern end (750456G) is near the roadhouse/service station at Black Mountain. Check the map since there is a shorter route and a longer route. At the southern end of Puddledock Road you have the option of getting back to town via the highway or via the stock routes off Hoys and Biddulph Roads. See the Tilbuster ride for that description.

Bald Blair - Armidale

Distance: Approx. 50 km one way from Bald Blair School to Armidale
 Time: Allow all day
 Difficulty: M / ME
 Maps: Bald Blair 1:25,000

This is a wonderful ride that has some great views, some great downhill and lovely countryside. It is primarily on gravel roads that have little traffic. The ride is best done if one can get a drop-off either in Guyra or at the start of the ride at Bald Blair School (829551BB). Take lunch with you!

The ride begins at Bald Blair School, approximately 12 km east of Guyra along the Guyra-Ebor road. It is a quaint one-room schoolhouse set just off the road. From here ride south along Greenhills Road, eventually you will join up with Herbert Park Road which joins up with Rockvale Road taking you back into Armidale.

The ride begins in an area of higher elevation and few trees affording some great views of the surrounding countryside. Because Armidale is at a lower elevation, the ride is generally going down, but there are some ups so don't be fooled!

Uralla - Gostwyck

Distance: Approx. 45 km
Time: 3-4 hours
Difficulty: ME / E
Maps: Gostwyck 1:25,000
Salisbury Plains 1:25,000

This is another pleasant country road ride taking in the countryside to the south of Armidale. Aside from pleasant surroundings this ride is a great way to see the wonderful round woolshed and historic church at Gostwyck, one of the early sheep stations in the Armidale area.

Turn east off the New England Highway in Uralla at the Information Centre and follow the signs towards Walcha. Approximately 2 km south of town (565062G) turn left (east) into The Gap Road, which is a dirt road through a grid. Follow this road south until you reach a T-intersection (618973G), turn left (east) into Carlon-Menzies road. Continue to the next T-intersection (684967SP), then turn left (north) into Hillview road which heads towards Gostwyck. Just before you reach the Gostwyck turnoff you should see the round woolshed on your right. Turn left into Gostwyck Road and cross

the white bridge. Gostwyck (646031G) has a beautiful church, particularly in Autumn, and is a good spot for your lunch. Follow the paved road (west) back to Uralla (approximately 11 km back).

POINT LOOKOUT AREA

Cliff's Fire Trail - Diamond Flat

Distance: Approx. 18 km to Diamond Flat
Time: 4 hours but allow all day
Difficulty: MD / M
Maps: Hyatts Flat 1:25,000

Take the Waterfall Way (Armidale to Dorrigo Road) east from Armidale until you reach the turn off to Point Lookout (New England National Park) (this is also the turn off to the trout hatchery). Go to the National Park: it is worth having a look from the lookout and reading the information signs.

The ride starts 2 km along the Point Lookout Road from the Forest Way turn-off, just behind a National Park hut (412253HF). Follow the Cliff's Fire Trail all the way along the escarpment. There are lots of up and down and there may be a few trees to climb over. Continue to Diamond Flat Trail (363180HF) and turn right and proceed to Diamond Flat (356194HF). There is a creek crossing and it is a nice place for lunch. The ride back up the Cunnawarra Trail is very steep and long and could require some walking even for the very fit. Diamond Flat Creek crossing is accessible by car so you can have someone pick you up and take you back up to the top.

Cunnawarra - Petroi - Macleay River

Distance: Approx. 44 km
Time: 6 hours

Difficulty: MD / M
 Maps: Big Hill 1:25,000
 Five Day Creek 1:25,000
 Hyatts Flat 1:25,000

This is a classic must-do ride in this area! The road has great downhill with some terrific views. This is a one-way ride that requires a pick-up at the bottom. Get the maps to avoid taking a wrong turn!

The Cunnawarra Fire Road (393243HF) begins at Forest Way just past the turnoff to Point Lookout National Park.

Follow the Cunnawarra Fire Road down to Diamond Flat. This is the first great downhill. In the valley the road crosses a creek at Diamond Flat (356194HF). Continue along the Diamond Flat Trail and on over Diamond Flat Trig (362173HF), right along Oxley Road and then Petroi Road. From Diamond Flat to Petroi Road is uphill but very ride-able.

The track has great downhill, with hairpin turns and scenic terrain if you have time to look. Once the trail starts down, you will wish there were a few uphill to give your hands a rest from braking!

The last few kilometres are through grazing country where it can get very hot in the summer months. The trail meets the Macleay River at Lower Creek. There is a nice waterhole and picnic area on the other side of the creek under the bridge. This is a good spot for a pickup, or proceed up the Macleay River along the road to George's Junction. This adds about 11 km to the ride making it approximately 55 km.

Wrights Lookout - Thora/Belling (via Killekrankie Mtn)

Distance: Approx. 65 to 74 km

Time: Allow all day (get an early start), probably best done during daylight saving

Difficulty: D / M

Maps: Belling 1:25,000
 Darkwood 1:25,000
 Girralong 1:25,000
 Hyatts Flat 1:25,000

This is a HUGE ride - start early. The ride commences at the same starting point as the Cliff Trail, below the ranger cabin off the road up to Point Lookout. Check the weather for last few weeks before you go. This track is scrubby after storms and has bottomless mud after heavy rain, until you get to the Killiekrankie area. Take care with navigation as there are a lot of tracks in here and you are a long way from nowhere.

From Wrights Lookout follow the Robinsons Knob Trail to Comarra Trail. Turn left and continue along a good fire road to Kilprotay Road. Go left here and follow this road to Horseshoe Road. Veer left and continue along this road, past Killiekrankie Mountain (check out the lookout) then continue along this road for many kilometres. You will have to decide which track you would like to go down to the Upper Thora Road and on to Thora on the Dorrigo-Belling Road for a well-deserved milkshake. Alternatively head straight for Belling. This variant contains one huge downhill for the ultimate grin after a huge day.

GUY FAWKES RIVER NATIONAL PARK

Spring Gully Loop & Lucifers Thumb

Distance: Approx. 15 km loop from Spring Gully to Lucifer's Thumb return

Time: 2-3 hours

Difficulty: ME / M
 Maps: Guy Fawkes River
 National Park leaflet
 Hernani 1:25,000

From Hernani on the Ebor to Grafton Road, follow Hardens Road to Chaelundi Road, then left into Misty Creek Road.

There is a great loop starting at the upper picnic area, Spring Gully Picnic Area, and riding down the road to Chaleundi Rest Area. Leave the bikes here and walk back to the car via the Escarpment Walking Track. There are a few deviations to lookouts, the best of which is to Lucifer's thumb. If you want a huge deviation, then head on down Jordan's trail to the river...yes, to the river! It's a real blast down and a real challenge to ride back out (unfortunately, up the same trail.) Don't do this in summer.

STYX RIVER STATE FOREST

Various

Distance: As long or as short as you like
 Time: Allow a full day to make the drive worthwhile
 Difficulty: ME – MD / ME - MD
 Maps: Big Hill 1:25,000
 Jeogla 1:25,000

Turn left off Kempsey Road near the top of the Big Hill to old Youth Hostel, then along Wattle Flat Trail to Wattle Flat, or alternatively along Boundary Trail to the Forestry Camp.

The Styx River area contains many forest roads that criss-cross the forest providing some great dual track riding and exploring. There is some nice riding around Wattle Flat area, also Spankers Road/Spankers Gully/Pantons Point area. The Falls Road/Electric Road/Honey Gully Road area (off the Kempsey Road)

is a good ride with wild views of the Styx gorge. If you don't mind a steep walk/ride back out (or better still, a car shuttle) then Carters Road, Kunderang East and West Roads off Raspberry Road are a lot of fun (watch out for log trucks as you scream out of the apex of any very fast corners). There is excellent camping at both Wattle Flat and Lower Wattle Flat.

LONG POINT - OXLEY WILD RIVERS NATIONAL PARK

Hillgrove - Oxley return

Distance: Approx. 65 km return
 Time: Allow ½ to full day
 Difficulty: M / ME
 Maps: Enmore 1:25,000
 Hillgrove 1:25,000

Take the Grafton Road east of Armidale and turn off towards Hillgrove. Park the car at Hillgrove. You might want to have a look at the Hillgrove Museum.

The ride follows the road from the village towards Oxley Wild Rivers National Park. It is a scenic country road ride with lots of fast downhills. Once at the park you can choose to continue along the road to the end or enjoy some of the short walks in the park. There are several short walks inside the park to give the legs a change from riding. Immediately inside the park entrance there is a lookout to your left (east). On the right side of the road is the entrance that takes you to the National Park picnic area. Once at the picnic area there is a walking track that leads away from the picnic shelter, down through a "dry rainforest", then around the gorge rim to eventually lead you back to the picnic area for a barbeque or lunch.

MINBALUP - MOONBI RANGES

Various

This is a hostel-style resort high above Moonbi, 23 km out from Moonbi. At this stage riding is on dual (4WD) track only, but the potential for some single track development is definitely there. Spectacular features include huge granite boulders, some Aboriginal paintings and fast open riding. Overnight hostel-style accommodation in a magnificent bush setting is available. Phone Jan Hystek on (02) 6766 9295 for bookings and info on where to ride.

WASHPOOL - GIBRALTOR NATIONAL PARKS

World Heritage Ride

Distance: 60 km. Loop
 Time: 2 days
 Difficulty: MD / M
 Maps: Coombadjha 1:25,000
 Washpool 1:25,000
 Gibraltar Range &
 Washpool National Parks
 Visitors Guide

This is a challenging 60 km loop of National Park trail called the World Heritage Walk in the Visitors Guide. Allow more time if you intend walking any of the optional side walks, an additional 40 km in total. The loop links the two national parks and thus passes through a great diversity of landscapes from spectacular granite to world-class rainforests. Well equipped camp grounds are found at Mulligans Hut Gibraltar Range National Park and at Coombadjha Camping Area in Washpool National Park. The ride can be done as a complete

loop or in sections as detailed in Boundary Creek Falls – Washpool National Park below. A well planned trip is important: follow the Code of Conduct and also inform the National Parks Office at Glen Innes of your plans. This ride is not recommended in summer.

Boundary Creek Falls - Washpool National Park

Distance: Approx. 30 km return
 Time: An easy day, or a very fast ½ day
 Difficulty: ME / M
 Maps: Coombadjha 1:25,000
 Washpool 1:25,000
 National Parks leaflet

Highly recommended for all standards of riders as you can turn around whenever you want. This ride, out and back by the same track, is just one of endless possibilities in the Gibraltar Range/Washpool National Park area.

From Glen Innes turn east off the New England Highway towards the National Parks (1/2 hr). The sign (sometimes missing!) to Boundary Creek Falls is on your left. If you reach the big log with the National Park name on it, do a U-turn and then take the second fire road to the right. Drive along this dirt road approximately 2 km to the falls picnic area.

The ride begins on the North-West Fire Trail (not sign-posted), found at the southern end of the picnic area. Cross the small creek, then immediately around the locked gate. Approximately 3 km out is a short diversion left (700 m) to Duffer Creek Falls. Further on, avoid the National Trail-Timbarra River track on your left and continue on the right branch, up short easy “ups” and down fast super-fun “downs” - with jumps that will take you as high as you dare. At approximately 10 km out is another diversion left to an old

mine site. Somewhere along the way, on your right, you will see a huge rock outcrop - The Haystack - which is better viewed on the way home. The halfway turnaround point is at a major intersection with Moogem Fire Trail. This is a cool lunch spot, right in the midst of a rain forest - beautiful on a hot day. Now turn around and go back, but make sure your lunch has settled because there is a very, very exciting down not far from here. Of course you will know this because you would have crawled up it just before lunch! When you return to the picnic area a swim in the pool below the falls is a great way to cool down.

BIG HILL AREA

Eastern Boundary Fire Trail - Booth Road - Georges Creek

Distance: Approx. 30 km

Time: 3-4 hours ride time plus car shuttle time

Difficulty: D / M

Maps: Big Hill 1:25,000

The Big Hill rides are BIG! Big, long steep downs and some big ups, but overall way more downs than ups.

The road to Kempsey turns off the Grafton Road approximately 40 km east of Armidale. Turn off the Grafton Road right towards Kempsey (if you have time plan a short detour to look at Wollomombi Falls about 5 km closer to Armidale just off the Grafton Road). Start at the ruin at Seven Mile Cutting (229094BH).

Ignore the left and right turn about half a km down the track and continue on to the first major left turn (214064BH). Go left here and down, watching the jumps don't get you too excited. Continue to the next track junction (218045BH), which will allow you to escape to Georges Creek. Ignore the temptation and blast on,

up, down and around, past a vague intersection (difficult to see) on your right (204007BH) and up to the Booth Road intersection on your left (203996BH). There is an old, very overgrown track here but have faith and continue on a couple of hundred m to a newer bicycle friendly track start that links straight into Booth Road then down, down on contours to Georges Creek (alternative pick-up spot). Very nice.

BUDDS MARE - OXLEY WILD RIVERS NATIONAL PARK

Budds Mare - Apsley River

Distance: Approx. 10 km down and back up

Time: Enjoy the view and the ride and take a whole day

Difficulty: D / MD

Map: Rowleys Creek 1:25,000 National Parks leaflet

Drive to Walcha and turn off at the Winterbourne turn-off. Follow the signs to Budds Mare.

Start at the Budds Mare camping area, ride back along the access trail to the Riverside trail, and go down, down, down, hopefully in control, to the Apsley River and along to the four-wheel-drive only picnic/camping area. Then, when the adrenalin has stopped flowing and your heart-beat has dropped down out of the danger zone, start the challenging ride back up the hill. Unless, of course, you remembered to get the gate key from a ranger and you have a four-wheel-drive and a nice person to drive the vehicle down to the river for you.

MT KAPUTAR

Besides the natural beauty to be found at Mt Kaputar there are two particularly good downhill rides. Scutts Track is a closed 4WD track running south while the Barraba Fire Trail, a previous park access route, runs west. These rides require pick-ups at the bottom and there is considerable travel involved, approximately 4 hours via Narrabri, but it is well worth the effort. Make sure to have a walk around the camping areas and to check out all the nice lookouts. It is worth spending several days at Mt Kaputar.

Mt Kaputar National Park lies just to the east of Narrabri, approximately 4 hours drive west of Armidale. Access into the park is from Narrabri only. Both rides listed here begin at the top of Mt Kaputar. There is camping and National Park cabins that can be rented. Check with National Parks on the availability and park access/camping fees.

Scutts Track

Distance: Approx. 25 km
 Time: 5-7 hours
 Difficulty: MD / MD
 Maps: Bilyena 1:25,000
 Kaputar 1:25,000

This fire trail begins at Bark Hut (253455K) and follow Scutts Track all the way to the bottom. There are fast sections and magnificent views and scenery. A short detour can be taken to Scutts Hut but note that the return to the track is very steeply up! You should obtain permission from the property owner at the end of the track.

Barraba Fire Trail

Distance: Approx. 15 km
 Time: 1 hour
 Difficulty: MD / MD

Maps: Kaputar 1:25,000
 Bilyena 1:25,000

The Barraba Fire Trail (279467K) has locked gates and is now maintained as a one way Barraba to Narrabri 4x4 tourist route. Key pickup can be arranged through the Barraba Tourist Information Centre (Queen St Barraba, phone 02. 6782 1255) or the Barraba BP Service Station (Range St Barraba, phone 02. 6782 1622). A limit of 10 vehicles per week applies and keys are not issued after wet weather. Take the Trevallyn Road out of Barraba and first turn off to Horton Falls but continue to the first locked gate. The Barraba Fire Trail terminates at another locked gate at Dawson's Springs Campground and Cabins. Car shuttle time can be drastically reduced if you have two 4x4s, leave one at the start of the Barraba Trail, drive the second to Mt Kaputar with the bikes then ride back down wearing big grins and watching for traffic coming the other way. Return up the Trail to enjoy the views from the summit. Exit the Park via Narrabri.

DORRIGO - CORAMBA - COFFS HARBOUR

Dorrigo - Coramba or Coffs Harbour

Distance: Approx. 65 km to 80 km
 Time: Allow most of the day
 Difficulty: ME - MD / ME - MD
 Maps: Coffs Harbour State
 Forests

The ride begins on the east side of Dorrigo at the junction of the Dorrigo – Coast Road and the Old Coramba Road.

Follow the Old Coramba Road (the sign says not a through road) down to the creek crossing. Pass around the locked gate and up the road on the other side. You will reach a fence that you can pass

around on a narrow track to the left, accessing the road to continue up. When you reach the intersection with a main road, turn right. Follow the road towards Megan. There are several ways to continue down towards Coramba or Coffs Harbour (check the map!). It is possible to go through the forests to the west via Briggsvale, Cascade and the Lower Bobo Road. There are also forest roads through the newly created National Park to the east of the Old Coramba Road. This route would take Corfes Road off the Old Coramba Road through the National Park to Pine Road, Dairyville Road, Upper Orara Road to Coramba Road and into Coffs Harbour. This route comes out past Coramba on the way back in to Coffs Harbour. You should check with National Parks on the track conditions, particularly if it has been wet. The easiest way is to stay on the Old Coramba Road and follow the signs towards Coramba. The ride passes through beautiful forests where there is little traffic and the last 11 km before Coramba is all downhill!

Pine Creek State Forest

The Pine Creek State Forest is cut by the Pacific Highway a few kilometres north of the Bellingren turnoff. On the east side of the highway the forest runs all the way to the Pacific Ocean while on the west side it runs for a considerable distance inland. There are many and varied rides in this forest, the following three are just a small sample!

Beach Ride

Distance: Approx. 30 km
Time: 4 hours or more
Difficulty: ME / ME
Maps: Raleigh 1:25,000

This ride can be accessed either from the Sid Burke Rest Area on the Pacific

Highway (but you have to cross the highway and ride a few kilometres along the highway) or from the road to Mylestom that runs along the Bellinger River. Take the Mylestom/Repton exit off the highway and leave the car somewhere along the river in a nice shady spot.

Ride up the road through Repton. Even though this is uphill it is a beautiful pocket of rainforest and well worth the ride. When you reach an intersection go straight through and you should soon find yourself in forest. Follow the road until you reach the Overhead Bridge Road (should be the next one, 031342R) and turn right. Follow this road all the way to a wet swampy area where there should be a sign indicating the National Park (059357R). If you followed the right turn at the “Y” you will have gone on McCabe’s road, not Overhead Bridge Road, and found yourself about to enter the Bundagee Commune! It’s best to have the map in case the signs have gone walk-about.

Continue along into the National Park. Here the road is like a 4WD track and there may be wet spots but it is worth persevering because further along there is a sandy track to the right. This track takes you out to the beach (you will have to walk your bike through a small bit of sand). The pounding surf will lie before you (take caution swimming, look for rips...be careful!!!). Go back to the start of the sandy track and turn right continuing along as if you hadn’t turned off. The track will go to the end and there may be a faint track veering to the left (082387R). A short ride will give you a view of the inlet with the houses at Sawtell to be seen on the opposite side.

You can return by following this track (possibly many prickly bushes and a soft track) or by the way you came. Ice creams

and takeaways can be obtained from Repton or from Myleston where you can have a swim in the river or the ocean where there is a surf-lifesaving club (safer).

Highway West Ride #1

Distance: Approx. 5 km up to 30 km
 Time: A few hours or all day
 Difficulty: M - MD / M - MD
 Maps: Bellingen 1:25,000
 Raleigh 1:25,000

This ride is accessible from the Sid Burke Rest Area (027362R) along the Pacific Highway at the northern end of the forest. You can leave your car here.

There is a track that runs south parallel to the highway and meets Hunters Road. Follow Hunters Road west running along into Block Nob Road. Block Nob Road runs into Valery Road where you can go north and join in with another part of the forest, or south for a short stretch turning left into Winters Road. Return via Cabbage Tree Road to Hunters Road and back to the rest area. This is definitely a ride where some of the roads are not where they seem so take a compass or GPS or use your head to keep from going in circles! It is great riding and there are bits of single track to be found occasionally.

The northerly section accessed from Valery Road can also be accessed from the northern end. Instead of parking at the Sid Burke Rest Area continue north along the highway and take the left turn after the overhead bridge towards the Kiwi Down Under Farm. The forest is about 4 km from the highway. You should find places to park just off the road across from the sawmill. Be prepared to stay and explore because there is some great single track to be found in this section of the forest. It can be wet and muddy so expect to get dirty! Oh, and make sure you have

some salt on hand for the leeches (they're harmless but gross).

Highway West Ride #2

Distance: Approx. 15 km or more
 Time: 4 hours or longer
 Difficulty: M - MD / M
 Maps: Bellingen 1:25,000
 Raleigh 1:25,000

This section of the forest can be accessed from the North Bank Road which runs between Bellingen and the Pacific Highway along the northern side of the Bellinger River. Either come from Bellingen or take the Bellingen/Raleigh exit from the Pacific Highway, turn towards the ocean (Raleigh), and turn left at the T-intersection, follow until the roundabout where you turn left and cross the Bellinger River. The first left is the North Bank Road. Leave the car anywhere you feel it is safe and gives you the distance you wish to ride (check the map).

Access the forest via Cabans Road. You can ride this road right up to Tower Road and to the fire tower (972330B), or alternatively take Burkes Road across to Tower Road (then turn left and up to the tower). From the tower go west and take some of the fire trails that go off the road to your right (967324B). It is very easy to get lost and the map isn't completely accurate so have a compass and/or GPS and try to keep track of where you are and what direction you're travelling in. You should aim to loop back around to the west and south, coming out along a farm (952325B) and back to one of the forest roads that in fact leads back up to the tower. Don't climb back up to the tower! There are great downhill tracks (961313B) to be found that take you back to the North Bank Road.

Wedding Bells State Forest

- Distance: As long or as short as you like
 Time: A few hours or all day
 Difficulty: MD / MD
 Maps: Coffs Harbour State Forests
 Moonee Beach 1:25,000
 Woolgoolga 1:25,000

The Wedding Bells State Forest lies to the southwest of Woolgoolga, approximately 15 km north of Coffs Harbour. The forest can be accessed from many of the roads in the area: get the map! Several good rides with scary downhills so steep you won't believe they're ride-able can be found between Boyds Road and Eastern Boundary Road accessed from the road to Nana Glen (turn off the Pacific Highway ~15 km north of Coffs Harbour).

Promised Land Loop Ride

- Distance: Approx. 35 km
 Time: 5 hours or all day
 Difficulty: ME / ME
 Maps: Bellingen 1:25,000
 Brooklana 1:25,000

Start this ride in North Bellingen just to the west of the first roundabout you hit coming from Bellingen. There is a shop on the corner and parking along the street to the west.

Follow the street you parked on to the west which becomes the main road on the north side of the Bellinger River. Turn right at Gleniffer Road. Follow this road through the forest and make sure to follow it to the right and do not continue along onto Roses Road! The road will now be quite straight and you should cross the Never Never River at Gleniffer (a couple of houses and a hall). Follow the road to Promised Land, back around through Tallow and back towards Gleniffer. There

is a great lunch spot near the creek in the forest. It is wonderful to sit in the refreshing water on a hot day. You can return the way you came or head back through the forest along Gleniffer Hydes Creek Road. There are lots of forest tracks that can lead you back to either Gleniffer Hydes Creek Road that runs back into North Bellingen or to Glennifer Road.

Rock Climbing

There are four major rock climbing areas in northeastern New South Wales: The Warrumbungles, the New England Gorges, Mt Kaputar, and Glenreagh which is near the coast. Girraween is also an excellent area for climbing, although guide sheets for this particular area are at present no longer available. Many detailed climbing guides have been published and some of these are referred to in the relevant sections. The information supplied in this section is mainly of a general nature and those seeking detailed descriptions are referred to the appropriate guidebooks. These guides may be available at Armidale's outdoor shops, and in some cases at the Outdoor Adventure Club's website at <http://blog.une.edu.au/outdoor/>.

Each area differs distinctly from the others in the type of climbs offered and in the style of climbing required. The climbs in the Warrumbungle and Kaputar areas share some common characteristics; however, the New England area contains a range of rock types and routes. Where the rock consists of interbedded sediments the streams have generally cut spectacular gorges with rock faces several hundred meters in height, such as at Dangars and Wollomombi. However, except at the waterfalls, these faces are treacherous due to rotten rock. Where there is sound rock there are several long high quality climbs in drought times. Other gorges, such as Gara, are cut into granite and, although they lack very large faces, the rock is often sound away from the watercourse and offers good climbing. At Ebor the cliffs are basalt, providing climbers with very strenuous crack and face lines.

Besides the areas described in this section there are a huge number of rock faces in northeastern New South Wales which have not yet been subjected to any serious scrutiny from climbers. Let us know the results of your explorations!

One final word on conservation of specific relevance to climbers. Many birds, particularly birds of prey, nest primarily on cliffs. In some areas the greatest threat to the continued survival of these birds is that posed by climbers. Please do not disturb nesting birds or their nests; it might be your climb but it's their home. Plants such as orchids and reptiles also have a right to be there, so please treat them with respect.

WARNING

Climbing is an inherently dangerous sport. Climbing safety depends on numerous factors including your own judgement, competence, fitness and experience, as well as the standard of ropes and other equipment. Safety can also be influenced by factors outside of a climber's direct control, such as weather. Beginners should ensure they spend adequate training time under competent instructors. Utmost care should be exercised by all standards of climbers at all times.

The authors accept no responsibility or liability for any incorrect information contained in this guide, or for any incidents happening to, or injuries or losses sustained by, climbers or other persons caused while, or as a result of, using this guide.

Climb safely and have a great day.

EQUIPMENT

Climbers are usually very particular about their equipment, and for good reason. Typical climbing equipment includes:

Ropes

Climbing ropes need to be checked regularly. A rope bag makes life easier as well as protecting the rope. Rope protectors should always be used if the rope is passing over an edge.

Harness and Belay Device

Ensure harnesses fit well, and are in good condition. Every harness should have a belay/abseil device so you are never caught without one.

Climbing Shoes

Sounds too obvious but the best of us forget them from time to time.

Chalk Bag

Don't leave home without a chalk bag and your toothbrush.

Helmet

A helmet is a good idea especially for leading or abseiling where the rock is loose.

Rack

The guides for each climbing area will outline what you will need on your rack.

Safety Gear

A first aid kit is essential, and strapping tape is useful.

Food and Water

Always have an adequate supply of food and water.

MAPS / GUIDES

The topographic maps are useful to locate the general climbing areas, whilst the guides give specific route locations and descriptions. A number of climbing and bouldering guides are freely available on the UNEOAC website, see <http://blog.une.edu.au/outdoor/>. For climbers not familiar with the area, maps and guides are best used in conjunction with each other.

DANGARS FALLS

Maps: Enmore 1:25,000

Guides: *A Climber's Guide to the Waterfalls (New England Tablelands)* (ed. Al Stephens)

Dangars is one of the more spectacular of the climbing areas in New England due to the depth and steepness of the gorge. Climbing there is like being on the inside of a giant mixing bowl.

Access. From Armidale follow Kennedy Street and then the Dangarsleigh Road south for 19 km to the Dangars Falls picnic area. The route is sign-posted at major intersections. There is a track from the car park to the bottom of the falls.

The Climbs. The climbs at Dangars tend to be of a more serious nature than those at other areas due to their length and the difficulty of retreat. The rock is greywacke and weathers easily, being sound only on the waterfall face where it is usually of excellent quality. Yellow rock should be avoided! The rock is extremely slippery when wet! Windy days are not good for climbing as the spray from the falls can carry quite some distance.

Dangars has some of the longest climbs in the New England area being up to 200 m in length. The grades of most climbs are from grade 13 up to harder routes of about grade 20. The major problem on most climbs is arranging adequate protection and runners tend to be spaced out.

MIHI FALLS

Maps: Hillgrove 1:25,000
 Guides: *A Climber's Guide to the Waterfalls (New England Tablelands)* (ed. Al Stephens)

This is one of the less often visited climbing areas in the New England Region, as it requires a 3+ km walk in.

Access. From the Dangars car park follow the signed track for 3 km to Mihi Falls Lookout, then walk around to the head of the gully. Access to the climbs is difficult, involving steep scrambling down the gully (full of stinging nettle) at the true head of the gorge or abseiling down sections of the falls.

The Climbs. The rock at Mihi is greywacke, as at Dangars, and although extremely sound on the face of the falls, tends to be rotten elsewhere. The climbs are generally around 80 to 100 m in length and are graded from 11 to 16. They are not marked and are difficult to locate if you are unfamiliar with the area.

UPPER GARA GORGE

Maps: Hillgrove 1:25,000
 Guides: *Climbs of Upper Gara Gorge: A climber's guide to The Gara Boulders, The Fortress & The Bastille* (ed. Gordon Low); *Bouldering Guide to New England* (ed. Ben Christian)

These areas (upper and lower Gara Gorge) are probably the best climbing areas in the New England Region with good rock and a host of lines. Upper Gara has many excellent venues for bouldering, sport climbs and traditional climbs.

Access. Access is via Castledoyle Road which leaves the Grafton Road just out of Armidale. Continue to Oxley Wild Rivers National Park, drive past the "Blue Hole" and park at the second carpark. All climbing areas are within walking distance from here.

The Climbs. The rock is granite and is generally sound. There are quite a number of outcrops yielding wall, chimney, jam and off-width climbs. There are climbs of a wide variety of grades at each of the outcrops, most being either one or two pitches. Grades range from 13 to 29. The bouldering near the car park and around the water-course is excellent, with more than 100 problems now described

Specific area locations are:

on the west:

The Boulders	852138H
Nettle Buttress	862132H
The Bastille	857133H

on the east:

The Fortress	856134H
The Sea Cliffs	857134H
The Kitchen	857134H

LOWER GARA GORGE

Maps: Enmore 1:25,000
 Hillgrove 1:25,000
 Guides: *Yellow Wall and Nearby Cliffs (Pineapple Rough, Colony Wall, Grey Wall & Pinnacle Ride)* (ed. Gordon Low); *A climber's guide to The Three Sisters (Gara Gorge)* (ed. Al Stephens)

These areas (upper and lower Gara Gorge) are probably the best climbing areas in the New England Region, with good rock and a host of lines. Lower Gara has sport, and traditional single and multi-pitch climbing.

Access. Access to the gorge is through private property, and permission must be obtained prior to entry. There is climbing areas on both sides of the gorge and it is best to approach the gorge from the side you wish to climb on.

From the west access is by way of Castledoyle Road which leave the Grafton Road just out of Armidale. About 2 km before the “Blue Hole” turn right and proceed to “Kenwood Park” (842130H) Obtain permission from the owner before driving to the cliff.

From the east the gorge can be approached by way of Gara Road which leaves the Grafton Road about 20 km east of Armidale. Follow Gara Road to its end at “Silverton” (874143H). Obtain permission from the owner before driving to the cliff

The Climbs. The rock is granite and is generally sound. There are quite a number of outcrops yielding wall, chimney, jam and off-width climbs. There are climbs of a wide variety of grades at each of the outcrops, with a great number of multi-pitch compared to upper Gara. Grades range from around 8 to 26.

Specific area locations are:

on the west:

Persian Carpets	858123H
Dome Wall	862116H
Sweetheart	861112E
Wallaby Rocks	859107E
Three Sisters	865096E

on the east:

Yellow Wall	856135H
Pineapple Rough	866128H

Colony Walls	869111E
Grey Wall	875104E
Pinnacle Ridge	877102E

BAKERS CREEK FALLS

Maps: Hillgrove 1:25,000

Guides: *A Climber's Guide to the Waterfalls (New England Tablelands)* (ed. Al Stephens)

This was one of the first climbing areas developed in the New England area, and is a good spot for beginner trips.

Access. The area lies at the head of Bakers Creek Gorge, about 24 km east of Armidale. From Armidale take the Grafton Road and turn off at the Bakers Creek Falls signpost. Cars should be left about 200 m past the bridge over Bakers Creek. The falls are a short walk across the paddock to the southwest.

The Climbs. The Falls occur in granite that is relatively hard and unweathered compared to the sediments at the heads of many of the other gorges. The climbs are located on and around the waterfall itself where the rock is quite smooth. Most climbs are around 60 m in length and generally require one or two pitches and a wide range of equipment. There are about ten climbs in all which are graded from 6 to 20 and are of good quality.

FOUR MILE CREEK

Maps: Hillgrove 1:25,000

Guides: *A Climber's Guide to the Waterfalls (New England Tablelands)* (ed. Al Stephens)

This gorge is rarely visited and limited in scope. It is located on private property.

Access. Follow the Long Point Road from Hillgrove for approximately 6.5 km. Turn right immediately after the concrete

bridge and drive to “Oaklands” (997147H,) to ask permission. Drive back to the creek, park near the gate, then follow the creek approximately 800 m to the gorge. To enter the gorge walk down the steep spur on the left of the falls or abseil in.

The Climbs. The rock at the head of the Four Mile Creek Gorge is granite but generally the quality is poor. There are only two worthwhile routes. The first is a classic chimney, straight up the waterfall course. It is 110 m in length and is graded 12. The second is a fierce off-width, several hundred meters downstream from the waterfall. It is graded 20 and is 130 m in length.

EBOR FALLS

Maps: Ebor 1:25,000

Guides: *A Climber's Guide to Ebor Falls* (ed. Al Stephens)

The cliffs at Ebor offer a large number of short, but difficult climbs, and the basalt provides a bit of variation from the rock at the other climbing areas in the region. This is one of the most popular climbing area in this region.

Access. The cliffs are directly below the lookout platforms at Ebor Falls, which are reached by way of a well sign-posted road which leaves the Armidale - Grafton Road 200 m west of Ebor.

The Climbs. Ebor is a crack-climber's dream come true. The columnar basalt provides many short (up to 20 m), but direct and very strenuous, crack climbs, which are classic in appearance. Many beautiful wall climbs exist here as well. One problem on many climbs is getting off the dirt and grass slopes at the top. The climbs are graded from 15 to 26.

WOLLOMOMBI GORGE

Maps: Jeogla 1:25,000

Guides: *A Climber's Guide to the Waterfalls (New England Tablelands)* (ed. Al Stephens)

Although very spectacular, with many sheer faces this gorge is very disappointing as the rock is very rotten. However, the Chandler-Wollomombi Ridge is a classic climb/walk ridge.

Access. Wollomombi Falls are about 40 km east of Armidale, just off the Grafton Road. A sign-posted track leads to the falls lookout. Access to the gorge floor is very tricky with rotten rock and a number of bluffs. The routes down are described in the Bushwalking section of this guide.

The Climbs. The falls occur in metamorphosed mudstone which weathers rapidly and is sound only near the watercourse. The quality deteriorates very quickly as you move away from the stream. The rock becomes very greasy when wet so routes up the waterfall face can only be attempted when the falls are dry, which seldom happens. Five climbs have been put up around the falls. Two of these follow lines up rotten slabs opposite the falls. The Chandler-Wollomombi Ridge follows a knife-edged spur between the two streams. Although technically easy (about grade 8) this is an exposed and dangerous route and should only be attempted by experienced climbers. Two other climbs go straight up the watercourse. They are high quality climbs but can be climbed only when the falls are totally dry.

Chandler-Wollomombi Ridge

The party will need a few jam nuts (hexes 6 to 9 or similar size nuts) and 10 slings and carabiners. Don't underestimate this trip. Parties have been benighted. However, a small, very experienced and

fit party could complete the round trip in under five hours.

See Canyoning section for access to the bottom of the gorge. Access from the east is recommended. From the foot of the ridge swing up through the bushes and rotten hand holds along the crest of the ridge. Soon you will be confronted with a steep wall. From this point either move right 2 m then up a rotten chimney containing a bush and loose blocks, or (easier) move left 10 m till you come to a groove in a corner. This is the only place where you will need jam nuts. Climb the groove (about 5 m) to the crest of the ridge. Both routes lead to the same point on the ridge.

Continue up and along the ridge using the slings and carabiners as running belays. The ridge is very narrow in parts, with sheer drops on either side. A step in the ridge is the first and major obstacle. It looks worse than it is. Running belays are difficult to arrange here, so don't fall off. Further along the ridge there are two large "gendarmes". These can easily be negotiated on the right-hand side. Eventually you will come to a large saddle full of vines and creepers. There is a choice of routes from the saddle but all are loose and dangerous for the first 30 m. The best route is at the extreme left side of the saddle. Again, swing up through bushes and loose hand holds, gradually moving to the right. At this point the drop off into the Chandler (on the right) is frightening. A few short walls, a little more scrambling and you will be back on the gorge rim. Step on to the walking track and follow this via spectacular lookouts back to the car park.

CATHEDRAL ROCK

Maps: Maiden Creek 1:25,000
Ebor 1:25,000
Ebor 1:100,000

Guides: *A Climber's Guide to Cathedral Rock* (ed. Al Stephens)

There are numerous slabs and walls, many unexplored, in this very scenic area.

Access. From the Armidale-Grafton Road, about 6 km southwest of Ebor, follow the signs to the campground. The scenic walk to the rocks takes about 30 minutes.

The Climbs. Cathedral Rock has produced only limited climbing to date, mainly due to the popularity of other climbing areas in the New England. Most of the protectable crack lines and chimneys have received a first ascent, grades 12-24. The unprotected north facing walls and faces remain unclimbed.

MT YARROWYCK

Maps: Yarrowyck 1:25,000
Bundarra 1:100,000

Guides: *A Climber's Guide to Yarrowyck* (ed. Al Stephens); *Mt Yarrowyck Bouldering Guide* (ed. Ben Christian and Gordon Low)

This area is better known these days for its superb bouldering, but there are many superb climbs on the main cliffs above the boulders. Although climbing here can be blazing hot in summer it is a great place on a warm winter's afternoon.

Access. From Armidale follow the Bundarra Road to its junction with the Uralla-Bundarra Road. Turn right and proceed 1 km to the car park. Follow the

walking track to the steel walkway, then go up through the scrub to the cliffs.

The Climbs. The rock is granite, low angled and clean. There are many lines from grades 12 to 22. About half the climbs are single-pitch and none exceed two pitches. Placing protection can be much harder than the climbing. Boulder problems start at the rock garden next to the car park, and continue along the upper track that leads to the Aboriginal rock art site. The boulders themselves are on private property, and you must obtain permission from the landholder. You must not climb on any boulders inside the Mt Yarrowyck Nature Reserve.

MOONBI

Maps: Bendemeer 1:25,000

Moonbi 1:25,000

Guides: *A Climber's Guide to Moonbi & Environs*

(eds. Kevin Moore & Al Stephens)

The Moonbi area presents a lot of exposed granite cliff lines, mainly slabby in nature and much of which has now been explored.

Access. The town of Moonbi is located about 20 km north of Tamworth on the New England Highway. With the exception of the Moonbi Common (136688B) and the Kootingal Tip (129611M) all climbing areas are located on private property. Access must be arranged with the landholder prior to climbing.

The Climbs. In the early years most of the interest concentrated on The Chook Farm (Anteater Buttress and the boulders above) due to easy access and obvious quality. Other areas of note include Moonbi Gap, which its multi-pitch slab climbing, while the Moonbi Common and

Kootingal Tip provide shorter well protected crack and face climbing.

STONEHENGE

Maps: Stonehenge 1:25,000

Guides: *Stonehenge Bouldering Guide* (eds. Brendan Heywood & Todd Free)

A quality New England bouldering location, solid granite with great access.

Access. Located at the Stonehenge Recreation Reserve (783908S) about one hours drive north of Armidale, or about 5 minutes drive south of Glen Innes on the New England Highway.

The Climbs. Stonehenge is a great bouldering spot with more than 60 problems on some cool shaped rocks. The rock is typical New England granite with lots of crimps, flakes and great friction. The easy access and close proximity of the boulders to one another makes for excellent New England Bouldering.

BLUFF ROCK

Maps: Mole River 1:50,000

Guides: There is no guidebook for this cliff. Enjoy your adventure!

This prominent bluff is one of the most easily accessible climbing areas in the northern part of the New England Tablelands.

Access. The Bluff lies just to the west of the New England Highway, 24 km south of Tenterfield (025728MR).

The Climbs. The rock is granite and is generally clean. There are a number of climbs from 11 to 22. The climbs are up to 100 m in length.

MT KAPUTAR NATIONAL PARK

Maps: Horton 1:100,000
Mt Kaputar 1:25,000

Guides: *Kaputar* (Mark Colyvan,
Wild Publications)

In recent years climbing at Kaputar has quietened down due to the lack of Sports climbs. However, the area has a lot to offer with many cliffs containing traditional climbs. There are also kilometres of unexplored cliff lines.

Access. Park Headquarters at Dawson's Spring are 50 km by road east of Narrabri. The northern part of the Park can be reached by taking the Bingara Road from Narrabri. This road crosses the range at Killarney Gap, 40 km from Narrabri.

The Climbs. There are a large number of distinct climbing areas within the Park. Those which have been most developed are in the southern section of the Park, which is also the most accessible. The major areas here are the Governor and Eulah Rock. Most of the climbs involve 1 or 2 pitches with only a few of 3 pitches. Grades vary from 13 to 26.

WARRUMBUNGLE NATIONAL PARK

Maps: Warrumbungle National
Park Tourist Map 1:40,000

Guides: *The Warrumbungles*
(ed. Mark Colyvan, Wild
Publications)

The Warrumbungles is one of the best known climbing areas in Australia with relatively good rock, spectacular outcrops and many long lines.

Access. The Park Headquarters at Canyon Camp is about 35 km west of Coonabarabran. There are two well-sign-posted roads to the Park.

The Climbs. There are a large number of cliffs in the Park and although a great number of routes have been put up there are still many lines yet to be done. The rock is trachyte and is generally sound, providing good climbing. There are many long multi-pitch routes, some of which are classics of Australian climbing. There are also a number of shorter routes. The where is the missing page climbs vary widely in difficulty, from those of grades 10 and below, to long difficult routes of grades 20 and above.

GLENREAGH

Maps: Glenreagh 1:25,000
Dorrigo 1:100,000

Guides: *A Climber's Guide To
Coffs Harbour/Glenreagh*
(ed. Sally Goode)

A great climbing area to escape the harsh New England winter, and crank on a multitude of well protected sandstone sport routes.

Access. There are several developed areas: The Fun Parlour, Wonderland, Fort Knox and God's Cliff. Access is via forest roads to all these areas. See guidebook for details.

The Climbs. There are a wide range of climbs, graded from 6 to 26. It can be very hot climbing here in summer but perfect in winter.

Paddling

The New England area provides a wide range of paddlable rivers, grading from leisurely streams suitable for beginners to some of the wildest water in Australia. Although many of the easier rivers can be paddled year round, the best time for the wilder rivers is usually from February to April. This is a consequence of the predominantly summer rainfall, but heavy rain and floods can occur at any time of the year.

The coastal rivers are fairly warm all year round, but gear is advisable in winter. The rivers on the tablelands are cool in summer and some warm clothing is recommended. However, from April to late October water temperatures can be near freezing, making thermals, wet suits or their equivalent essential. The ability to eskimo-roll is a great advantage in such conditions. Parties paddling on tableland rivers in winter should be aware of the risk of exposure and know how to recognise and treat it. A buoyancy vest and helmet must be worn at all times.

Beginners are strongly advised against attempting the more difficult rivers. The Macleay River below Georges Creek is a good first trip, followed by the upper reaches of the Macleay from Carters Road or Kunderang West. The Hastings and MacDonal Rivers and the Wattle Flat trip on the Styx River provide trips of intermediate difficulty. For those with more experience the Nymboida River and the steep creeks on the Dorrigo Plateau will provide challenges to even the best paddlers, with the Gwydir River providing some of the most ferocious whitewater in Australia.

In this section of the guide the trips are organised into westerly flowing rivers, easterly flowing rivers, steep creeks on the Dorrigo Plateau, and northern region rivers. Within each section the rivers are taken in a south to north sequence.

WARNING

Kayaking and canoeing are dangerous activities. Each paddler must take responsibility for themselves and make their own decisions. River safety is a real issue and a number of good books exist explaining the dangers and rescue procedures - read them. It is recommended that you complete a Swift Water Rescue Course and a First Aid Course. Use the knowledge of more experienced paddlers to learn. Nothing can replace experience and good judgement.

Rivers are always changing and this guidebook may not be up to date with all the changes in a river. Dangers such as fallen trees and fences may be new features and major floods may change a rapid. Before paddling a river always get up to date information from locals or other paddlers who may have paddled the trip recently. Never paddle alone, groups of at least four offer the most safety.

In general you should stay off the river during periods of high water levels. Only very experienced paddlers who know all the risks should attempt to paddle flooded rivers.

Always be prepared to portage a rapid. All rivers will have a rapid on it that will be too challenging or dangerous for certain individual paddlers. It can often take more guts to portage a rapid than to follow some more experienced or more fool

hardy paddler off a drop where you get the “thumping” of your paddling career. If in doubt, walk.

The authors accept no responsibility or liability for any incorrect information contained in this guide, or for any incidents happening to, or injuries or losses sustained by, paddlers or other persons caused while, or as a result of, using this guide.

Paddle safely and have a great trip.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Respect the locals and landholders as other paddlers will want river access in the future. Kayaking and canoeing are regarded as activities that have low impact on the environment. Strive to keep it this way - remove all your rubbish and keep camping and access impacts to a minimum.

EQUIPMENT

Canoe or Kayak, and Paddle

Ensure that your canoe or kayak is in good condition (which is less of an issue with modern plastic boats) and that they contain adequate buoyancy.

Spare Paddle

Buy a break-down paddle, or make your own and carry as a spare, in case of a break to your primary paddle.

Life Jacket / Bouyancy Vest

Always wear a well fitting and approved life jacket / buoyancy vest.

Helmet

Always paddle with an approved helmet. Kayaking without a helmet is a completely unnecessary risk.

Spare Warm Clothes

Always carry spare warm clothes, as even on a summers day an afternoon storm can result in cold conditions.

Appropriate Footware

Footware should always be worn whilst paddling, and is also needed for emergency walk outs. Suitable footware includes neoprene booties, river sandals or old runners.

Duct Tape and Repair Kit

You will appreciate having packed duct tape and a repair kit if they are needed.

Safety Equipment

A throw bag and other rescue equipment are essential. You should also carry a first-aid kit, kept in a waterproof container or small dry-bag, as well as sunscreen.

Laminated Map and Compass

A laminated map as well as a compass can be useful for a walk-out.

Food and Water

Always carry adequate food and water.

GRADING SYSTEM FOR RIVERS AND RAPIDS

The International Canoeing Federation grading system applies both to individual rapids and to sections of river.

In this guide the grade of a river describes the standard of a fairly typical rapid on that river section. Where the occasional rapid of a higher grade occurs, this has been described and shown in (). The grading system is a subjective one and is also dependent on water level. Please note that the ICF grading system

uses roman numerals I - VI but in this guide we will use 1 - 6 for readability.

Grade 1: Easy

Fast moving water with ripples and small waves. Few obstructions, all obvious and easily missed with little training. Risk to swimmers is slight and self-rescue is easy.

Grade 2: Novice

Straightforward rapids with wide, clear channels which are evident without scouting. Occasional maneuvering may be required, but rocks and medium sized waves are easily missed by trained paddlers. Swimmers are seldom injured and group assistance, while helpful, is seldom needed. Rapids that are at the upper end of this difficulty range are designated “grade 2+”.

Grade 3: Intermediate

Rapids with moderate, irregular waves which may be difficult to avoid and which can swamp an open canoe. Complex manoeuvres in fast current and good boat control in tight passages or around ledges are often required; large waves or strainers may be present but are easily avoided. Strong eddies and powerful current effects can be found, particularly on large-volume rivers. Scouting is advisable for inexperienced parties. Injuries while swimming are rare; self-rescue is usually easy but group assistance may be required to avoid long swims. Rapids that are at the lower or upper end of this difficulty range are designated “grade 3-” or “grade 3+” respectively.

Grade 4: Advanced

Intense, powerful but predictable rapids requiring precise boat handling in turbulent water. Not recommended for open canoes. Depending on the character of the river, it may feature large, unavoidable waves and holes or constricted passages demanding fast maneuvers under pressure. A fast, reliable eddy turn may be needed to initiate maneuvers, scout rapids, or rest. Rapids may require must make moves above dangerous hazards. Scouting is likely the first time on the river. Risk of injury to swimmers is moderate to high, and water conditions may make self-rescue difficult. Group assistance for rescue is often essential but requires practiced skills. A strong eskimo roll is highly recommended. Rapids that are at the lower or upper end of this difficulty range are designated “grade 4-” or “grade 4+” respectively.

Grade 5: Expert

Extremely long, obstructed, or very violent rapids which expose a paddler to added risk. Drops may contain large, unavoidable waves and holes or steep, congested chutes with complex, demanding routes. Rapids may continue for long distances between pools, demanding a high level of fitness. What eddies exist may be small, turbulent, or difficult to reach. At the high end of the scale, several of these factors may be combined. Scouting is recommended but may be difficult. Swims are dangerous, and rescue is often difficult even for experts. A very reliable eskimo roll, proper equipment, extensive experience, and practiced rescue skills are essential.

Grade 6: Extreme and Exploratory

These runs have almost never been attempted and often exemplify the extremes of difficulty, unpredictability and danger. The consequences of errors are very severe and rescue may be impossible. For teams of experts only, at favorable water levels, after close personal inspection and taking all precautions. After a grade 6 rapid has been run many times, it's rating may be changed to an appropriate grade 5 rating.

WEBSITE INFORMATION ON WATER LEVELS

The New South Wales Government web page (<http://waterinfo.nsw.gov.au>) has stream and river levels for many of the major rivers of New South Wales. The web page is a little limited for use on the Dorriggo Plateau in that the Bielsdown and Charlestead gauges are the only ones on the plateau. A lot of people will use the Nymboida River gauge, which is located at Pollocks Bridge (not Platypus Flat); however, river levels are a couple of days behind the Plateau if they have had heavy rain.

The Bureau of Meteorology (<http://www.bom.gov.au/weather/nsw>) will be able to tell you if it has rained and where.

The Nymboida Canoe Centre (<http://ceinternet.com.au/~canoe>) has these links and others, as well as flow rates for Goolang and Blaxland Creeks.

Westerly Flowing Rivers

MACDONALD (NAMOI) RIVER

Maps: Bendemeer 1:125,000
Hanning 1:25,000
Kingstown 1:25,000
Walcha Road 1:25,000
Watsons Creek 1:25,000
Welsh 1:25,000

The MacDonald can be paddled over a considerable distance and offers trips of a variety of standards. It requires less rain to reach a paddlable level than many other streams in the region.

Access. Good access is provided to the upper and middle sections of the river by roads that follow it quite closely; the Oxley Highway upstream of Bendemeer and the Bendemeer-Bundarra Road downstream. However, there is very little access through the Namoi gorge. The end of the gorge trip is reached from Bendemeer by taking the road through Watsons Creek from the Bundarra Road.

Congji - Bendemeer (Grade 3)

This trip begins at a low level bridge (366788WR) off the Oxley Highway, about 15 km towards Walcha from Bendemeer. A river level of 10 to 30 cm below the bridge provides good paddling. If water is flowing over the bridge, the first few kilometres may be dangerous because of the willows that clog the river.

The first section of the river is flat with occasional grade 2 rapids. Then the river opens up with many grade 2 and 3 rapids, some in sections 800 m long, providing very pleasant paddling. At good water levels the trip takes 5 to 6 hours. It is not recommended for beginners.

Downstream of Bendemeer (Grade 2)

Downstream of Bendemeer the river can be paddled for quite a distance. The most interesting section is in a small gorge-like area a few kilometres downstream. Here the rapids are of grade 2 and 3 standard, but are relatively straightforward at normal river levels.

The road leaving Bendemeer on the Tamworth side of the river follows it fairly closely, allowing free access. This section is suitable for those with a little experience, but is not recommended for complete novices.

Namoi Gorge (Grade 4)

About 40 km downstream of Bendemeer the river leaves the Bendemeer-Bundarra Road near "Retreat" (187104K), which is aptly named as several kilometres below here the river enters a granite gorge where it drops over 300 m in about 20 km. A trip through the gorge can be begun at "Retreat", or alternatively from the end of a rough track near Bald Rock Mountain (088190K) about 12 km downstream. From this latter starting point it is necessary to drag the boats about a kilometre to the river.

The gorge begins with very closely spaced grade 2 and 3 rapids that gradually increase in size. There are only occasional portages and the paddling is very enjoyable. One enthusiastic paddler has described this section as "the last great rapid in the sky".

About 5 hours into the gorge the river begins to flatten out a little and is reminiscent of the section upstream of Bendemeer. However, after a few kilometres, it again begins to drop steeply with numerous large rapids and portages. When the river eventually flattens out it is a further 6 km paddle to the finishing point near

the junction with New England Creek (993114We).

This is a difficult and tiring trip and is recommended only for experienced paddlers carrying a minimum of gear. Although it can be done in 2 days, it would be best to allow 3 days for the trip. It is not advisable to attempt the gorge at high river levels as some sections would then approach grade 5 to 6.

ROCKY (GWYDIR) RIVER

Maps: Balala 1:25,000
Yarrowyck 1:125,000

The Rocky is only paddlable after rain, but if there is too much water some sections of the river can become extremely dangerous. There are two worthwhile whitewater trips, the first being a long, hard day trip and the second a shorter, easier afternoon trip. The two trips could be combined as a 2 day trip, but the portages may be difficult with loaded boats.

Access. The uppermost limit for canoeing is the Rocky River Bridge on the Uralla-Bundarra Road, 8 km from Uralla (522148B). The lower sections of the river are approached by way of the Armidale-Inverell Road.

Rocky River Bridge - Booralong Creek (Grade 2 (4))

At the Rocky River Bridge the stream is broad and shallow with a sandy bed. The best level for paddling is when the average depth of water here is about 50 cm. If there is much less water, then the first 5 km will require a lot of walking. If there is much more water, the gorge section could be very dangerous.

The first 5 km of the trip is flat water with a moderate current. After this, the river drops into a gorge with grade 2 and

3 rapids and later some grade 4 rapids. Trees may be a hazard, necessitating portages. About 6 km into the gorge there is a nasty 4 m sidespill fall and this may be difficult to portage at high river levels. Campsites are numerous along the river.

The trip ends at Booralong Creek (490262Y), the first major creek on the right after the gorge. Boats must be either dragged about 800 m up the creek or across neighbouring paddocks to the Armidale-Inverell Road.

Booralong Creek - Gwydir River Bridge (Grade 1)

This trip can be done at fairly high river levels, but is very slow at low levels. The river height can be gauged at the rapid just upstream of the Gwydir River Bridge. The river is at a good level if this rapid is runnable in the middle; it is too high if the rapid is washed out and it is too low if it is only runnable on the river right (facing downstream).

Begin the trip at the bridge over Booralong Creek on the Armidale-Inverell Road and finish at the Gwydir River Bridge on the Uralla-Bundarra Road. The trip is about 10 km long and takes 2 to 3 hours. Hazards include trees and fences that cross the river.

From the Gwydir River Bridge to Copeton Dam the river is not particularly interesting.

GWYDIR RIVER

Maps: Copeton Dam 1:25,000

The trip from Copeton Dam to Horse Stealers Creek is considered to be one of the best big water trips in Australia. This should only be attempted by parties of very experienced paddlers. Water is only released from Copeton Dam for the purpose of irrigation, hence there is virtually no water flow from mid-March to

November. When it does flow the river often resembles a whitewater funpark, with paddlers from all over the country converging on it.

River levels can often be obtained from the Dam Authorities with levels between 1,800 and 5,000 ML/d providing the best paddling. Trips are possible at levels as low as 700 ML/d and as high as 10,000 ML/d. Any levels over 5,000 ML/d are considered extremely serious and should be reserved for extremely good paddlers or for people asking for an extremely horrendous trashing.

Access. The put-in point is about 1 km below the dam wall, which is about half an hour from Inverell. A locked gate blocks the access to the put-in point near the dam wall; however, access can be found by following some of the tracks that leave the Inverell Road opposite the entrance to the camping area. These roads are accessible by two wheel drive vehicles. The trip finishes at Horse Stealers Creek, about 16 km downstream. Access to this point is through private property and requires both permission from the landowner and a 4WD. In the past, the landowners have required a small fee for upkeep of the track or you can arrange for them to pick you up at the end of the trip for a larger fee. This later option has been popular with paddlers and, if available, is certainly recommended as it greatly reduces the car shuttle.

Copeton Dam - Horse Stealers Creek (Grade 5(6))

The trip is a long day trip or for some parties, a two day trip. The section contains many grade 3 and 4 rapids with several grade 5 and 6 which should be treated with extreme caution. The river is such that the hardest rapids are at the beginning of the trip, gradually getting

easier towards the end. To shock you into this realisation, one of the biggest series of rapids of the day is the first set consisting of “Double Trouble”, “More Trouble” and “Real Trouble”. The other major rapids include “A”, “B”, “C”, “Umbrella Falls”, “Big Mother”, “Three Blind Mice” and “Satan’s Surf”. Care should also be taken in several places such as at “The Triffids” where the abundance of trees in the rapids make for very dangerous paddling.

Two grade 6 rapids also exist about 500 m after “Satan’s Surf”, those being “Dead End Falls” and “Sapphire Falls” which are about 400 m apart. “Satan’s Surf” can be recognised as a 200 m, tree-lined section of large waves and stoppers that goes around a leftward sweeping bend. Both of the grade 6 rapids should be portaged on the right-hand side.

Other large rapids after these include the “S-Bend”, “Tombstone” and “The Equalizer”. Although it is difficult to describe each of the rapids, scouting and portaging is relatively easy. The ability to catch small, fast eddies and to be able to eskimo-roll quickly is very important as the river is notoriously full of natural, boulder sieves. After “The Equalizer” the river flattens out suddenly and the final part of the trip involves paddling through long pools and eerie, tree choked rapids. Caution should also be taken with the pull-out point as it can be easy to miss due to the number of different channels at this point and the overgrowing trees. The pull-out point is about 1 km after passing a huge rock slab, “Sliding Rock” on the right.

Easterly Flowing Rivers

LOCAL CREEKS NEAR ARMIDALE

Maps:

Armidale 1:25,000

Dumaresq 1:25,000

Hillgrove 1:25,000

After very heavy rain a number of the creeks near Armidale are paddleable for short periods.

Access. Access is gained via the numerous roads of the area.

Dumaresq Creek (Grade 2)

Dumaresq Creek can be paddled from Dumaresq Dam (about 9 km upstream of Armidale), through the University and into the town. Fences, floating logs and low level bridges are major hazards, making the trip unsuitable for inexperienced paddlers. Although some rapids approach grade 3 the trip is not particularly interesting.

Commissioners Waters (Grade 1)

This is an easy trip from the Brookstead bridge (779206A) on the Waterfall Way (Armidale to Dorrigo Road) to the junction with the Gara River, and then onwards to the Blue Hole. Trees may be a problem, necessitating a few portages. There are two probable portages: the first where small trees block all channels, and the second around a very rocky drop. Below the junction with the Gara River there is a tree-clogged stretch that is best negotiated down the right-hand side.

GARA RIVER

Maps: Enmore 1:25,000

Hillgrove 1:25,000

Much of Gara River is contained within the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park. This river offers limited paddling opportunities to all but extremely experienced paddlers.

Access. Blue Hole is the local name of a picnic area on the upper parts of the Gara River. To reach Blue Hole head east out of Armidale on the Waterfall Way (Armidale to Dorrigo Road). Just out of town turn right into Castledoyle Road, and follow this for approximately 15 km.

Waterfall Way - Blue Hole (Grade 2)

The trip from just upstream of the Gara Bridge (846201H), on the Waterfall Way (Armidale to Dorrigo Road) to the Blue Hole (848145H), takes half a day. There must be at least 0.5 m of water under the bridge for the trip to be worthwhile. The black berries that overhang some rapids can be a problem. There is a small side-spill fall which may require portaging.

Blue Hole onwards (Grade 5 (6))

Downstream of Blue Hole the river offers scope for some very serious steep creek kayaking with continuous grade 4, 5 and 6 rapids for the next 10 or so km. Several of the major waterfalls in the top end of the gorge have been paddled but at the time of writing no one has ventured past the first kilometre. The trip downstream of Blue Hole should be reserved for extremely experienced paddlers and could only be paddled during flood. This trip would include either a long and steep walkout, or a long and flat paddle out.

MANNING RIVER

Maps: Bowman 1:25,000

Knorrit Flat 1:25,000

Tibbuc 1:25,000

The Manning is a pleasant and easy river and generally has enough water for paddling. To paddle the upper part of the river there needs to be at least 15 cm of water over the last splash crossing on the Curricabark Road (see below).

Access. From the north, the Manning is approached via Nowendoc. The Nowendoc-Gloucester Road provides access to the upper part of the river, while the Nowendoc-Wingham Road runs near to the river's lower reaches.

Curricabark Road - Barnard Junction (Grade 2)

The start of this trip is reached via the Curricabark Road which leaves the Nowendoc-Gloucester Road at 932715B, about 12 km north of Barrington. The river is crossed at a bridge (876783T) 5 km upstream of "Coneac" and then again at two causeways. These can be avoided if the river is high by going right through a gate before the first crossing. After the second crossing, turn left up a track which comes back down to the river after 2 km. This is the start.

From the start it is a two day paddle to the Barnard Junction. The pull-out point is 200 m upstream of the junction at a causeway at 976822T. If coming from Gloucester, this point is reached by taking a track which leaves the main road 0.5 km north of the third (and last) bridge across the Manning.

For the first 10 km the river alternates between sections of grade 1 and 2 rapids and slower sections with occasional gravel races. About 1.5 km below "Coneac" there is a fall at the bottom of a fast chute and this should be inspected before it is attempted. The end of the first day is at a public camping area just past

the first bridge on the Gloucester-Nowendoc Road. The distance paddled on the first day is 20 km.

The second day is slower and less exciting with infrequent grade 1 and 2 rapids. The distance covered is 17 km.

Barnard Junction - Cundle Flat (Grade 2)

This is a short (12 km) and easy day trip with only occasional grade 1 and 2 rapids. However, because of the excessively long car shuttle, the trip is better included as part of a longer trip down the river. Tracks along the river are only passable when the river is at a very low level. Alternatively, Cundle Flat is reached by turning off the Nowendoc-Wingham Road at 160767KF, about 8 km towards Nowendoc from Mt George. After 2 km this road crosses the river at Knorrit Flat. Cundle Flat is 8 km upstream from the Knorrit Flat Bridge.

Cundle Flat - Knorrit Flat (Grade 2 (3))

This is an undemanding day trip of 13 km, with an easy car shuttle. The rapids are mostly grade 1 and 2, with one grade 3 about 1 km upstream of the Knorrit Flat Bridge. The major hazards are overhanging trees and numerous flood channels which can make navigation a challenge.

Below Knorrit Flat the river is generally easy and there are many access points for those wanting a gentle paddle.

BARNARD RIVER

Maps: Giro 1:25,000
Tibbuc 1:25,000

The Barnard is a major tributary of the Manning but it requires some recent rain to be paddlable.

Access. From the north take the Gloucester Road from Walcha, and from

the south the Nowendoc-Walcha Road from either Barrington or Gloucester. The road crosses the Barnard at 956841T. This is a good spot to end a trip although it is possible to paddle downstream from here to the junction with the Manning and beyond.

Corroboree Flat - Bridge (Grade 2 (3))

This is a long (30 km) day trip beginning at “Corroboree Flat” (817958G). The starting point is reached by following the gravel road that leaves the Gloucester-Nowendoc Road at 928881G (about 6 km towards Nowendoc from the bridge). It is advisable to ask permission at “Giro” (863897G) on the way to the start, and again at “Corroboree Flat”.

The river is of grade 1 and 2 standard, with a few grade 3 rapids, these being more common towards the end of the trip. Overhanging trees are a moderate hazard at high river levels, and at these times this trip should not be attempted by inexperienced parties.

The trip can be shortened by starting at “Giro” or from off the road a few kilometres downstream of “Corroboree Flat”. Alternatively, it would be possible to do the trip over 2 days, but be sure to obtain permission before camping.

FORBES RIVER

Maps: Birdwood 1:25,000
Yarras 1:25,000

The Forbes is an excellent river for moderately experienced paddlers but it requires plentiful rain before it is really paddlable; in fact, it is most enjoyable when there is a flood warning broadcast for the Lower Hastings.

Access. The Forbes is a tributary of the Hastings and is reached by turning onto the Forbes River Road from the Oxley

Highway (374240Y). Follow the road through Yarras and for about 20 km up the valley until the turn-off to the Forbes Forest Road is reached. The start is a few hundred meters further up the valley from this intersection (348367B). It is possible to gain access to the river further up the road; however, logs in the stream make this section rather unpleasant.

Forbes Forest Road - Yarras (Grade 2 (3))

This is a moderately long day trip for most parties but it is well worth doing. The river level can be gauged at the bridge on a side road at Birdwood (371325B). For the river to be paddleable the water should be lapping the underside of this bridge; at higher water levels the trip can be rather exciting. A shorter day trip can begin at this bridge. At normal levels the rapids are mostly grade 2, with a few grade 3, but with more water there are many long grade 3 rapids. When the river is at high levels it should not be attempted by inexperienced paddlers.

HASTINGS RIVER

Maps: Yarras 1:25,000

The Hastings offers a number of enjoyable trips of differing standards but the river is only paddleable after recent rain.

Access. For most of its length the river runs alongside the Oxley Highway and thus it can be approached from either Walcha or Wauchope. The uppermost access is reached via a gravel road sign-posted to Mt Seaview. This road leaves the Oxley Highway at 297252Y, about 2 km before the highway reaches the river flats, when travelling from Walcha. Other access points are at the bridge on the Forbes River Road (377245Y), at Ellen-

borough (486213Y) and at Long Flat (517220Y).

Mt Seaview - Yarras (Grade 2 (3))

The start of this trip is at the bridge across the Hastings about 1 km from the highway down the Mt Seaview Road (291258Y). It is possible to start further upstream by continuing along Mt Seaview Road, but ask permission from the bed and breakfast holders about 1.5 km past the bridge.

If the river is more than 30 cm below the bottom of the bridge many rapids will be fairly rocky, but at levels higher than this the river provides very pleasant paddling with a few good grade 3 rapids. If water is flowing over the bridge then some rapids become quite difficult and would not be suitable for inexperienced paddlers. The trip takes between 3 and 6 hours.

Yarras - Ellenborough (Grade 1 (3))

This section of river consists mainly of flat water with occasional gravel races. There is a long grade 3 rapid shortly before Ellenborough, and at high levels this could be dangerous for inexperienced paddlers. Other hazards include some fences and overhanging trees. The trip takes from 5 to 7 hours.

Ellenborough - Long Flat (Grade 1)

This is a fairly short day trip of flat water and some gravel races. It is a rather uninteresting stretch for experienced paddlers but quite enjoyable for novices.

STYX RIVER

Maps: Ebor 1:25,000
 Hyatts Flat 1:25,000
 Jeogla 1:25,000
 Big Hill 1:25,000

The Styx is one of the most beautiful and varied rivers in the region, although for most of its length it is a difficult river to paddle. Only the trip from Wattle Flat to the Kempsey Road is recommended to the average paddler as the others involve much portaging.

Access. The Styx is approached by travelling east from Armidale along the Grafton Road and then the Kempsey Road. The road crosses the river about 55 km from Armidale. Approximately 4 km past this bridge the Forest Way leads off to the northeast. Starting points for most of the trips described below lie at the ends of fire roads diverging from the Forest Way.

The Trout Hatchery - Nelsons Fire Road (Grade 4 (5))

This is a fearsome section of river, dropping over 300 m in 11 km. It is only paddleable when the river is in flood and should be approached with extreme caution.

The starting point is at a causeway (348282E) over the Serpentine Creek on the Point Lookout Road. About 20 to 30 cm of water should be flowing over the causeway for the river to be paddleable. The pull-out point is at the end of Nelsons Fire Road that is off the Forest Way (300213H). As the pull-out point can be easily missed, it should be inspected while doing the car shuttle. Intermediate access is available at Dinner Flat (328234H).

For the first 5 km the river is of grade 3 standard, with the exception of two major waterfalls. The first fall (a 30 m

drop) occurs 2 km from the start, and the second fall (a 60 m drop) after a further 3 km. After the second waterfall the river becomes more difficult with some rapids approaching grade 5 including some excellent waterfalls. Portages may be required around some of these falls.

This trip should only be attempted by small parties of very experienced paddlers, allowing at least 10 hours for the journey.

Nelsons Fire Road - Wattle Flat (Grade 2 (3))

This is a longish day trip of intermediate difficulty with rapids mostly of grade 2 and 3. The starting point is at the end of Nelsons Fire Road as described above. The finish is at Wattle Flat (243164J) which is reached by following sign-posted fire roads from the Forest Way.

The river is fairly straightforward with two exceptions. The first is about 8 km below the start, where there is a long rapid curving around to the left. The bottom is not visible from the top and is a very nasty side-spill fall; a strongly recommended portage. Less than 1 km further downstream there are two waterfalls followed by a canyon section, necessitating a long arduous portage over a ridge which is to the right of the river when facing downstream.

Wattle Flat - Kempsey Road (Grade 3(4))

This is a good day trip taking about 4 hours, providing there is sufficient water. A level of 1 m on the gauge just downstream of the bridge on the Kempsey Road (197156J) should be considered the minimum for paddling: 1.5 m is a good level for paddlers of average ability; levels over 2 m provide exciting paddling for experienced parties.

Most rapids are of grades 2 and 3, although at high river levels some rapids approach grade 4. There is one probable portage (Grade 5+), “The Cascades”, a few hundred metres upstream of the bridge. At river levels of 2 m or higher it may not be possible to get back into the river after this portage. In this case, boats must be dragged up the ridge on the right and then down to the bridge.

Barjo - Carter’s Road (Grade 6)

About 1 km below the Kempsey Road the Styx enters a steeply dropping canyon section with three waterfalls of approximately 40 m each. This section is definitely grade 6! Below the canyon section the river flows through a spectacular gorge which provides some serious paddling for experienced kayakers. This section requires at least 1.2 m of water at the gauge on the Kempsey Road. If the level is above 1.7 m then the first 8 km of the gorge would be extremely dangerous.

Access to the gorge is difficult and boats must be dragged or carried almost 3 km to the river. The start is reached via the Kempsey Road. About 50 km from Armidale the road crosses a dingo fence at a grid. Just before the grid is reached turn right along Williams Road. About 200 m past the fourth gate a rough track diverges to the left and this should be followed until vehicular progress is no longer possible. From here it is necessary to drag the boats along the track for about 1.5 km until another track heads off to the left near an old log dump (158120J). Follow this track until it ends at the top of a ridge. This ridge should be followed down to the river at 171127J. It takes about 3 hours to reach the river from the cars.

The first 8 km of the trip has numerous grade 3 and 4 rapids, with occasional grade 5 and frequent portages. Travel is extremely slow, with the first 4 km taking about 5 hours. It is easiest to do the trip without having to carry camping gear. In this case, a car should be left at the locked gate on Bob’s Fire Road (165085BH). Leaving the boats by the river it is a very steep climb out of the gorge, taking 2 hours to reach the car.

From about 135085BH the river becomes easier with numerous grade 3 rapids extending nearly all the way to the junction with the Chandler River. Carters Road reaches the Chandler 2 km below the junction (077020BH). This is a scary 4WD road and it would be a very long haul if the boats had to be carried up it. Access points for 2WD vehicles are at West Kunderang (one day downstream), East Kunderang (one and a half days downstream), and Georges Junction (two and a half days downstream).

CHANDLER AND MACLEAY RIVERS

Maps: Big Hill 1:25,000
Carrai 1:25,000
Comara 1:25,000
Five Day Creek 1:25,000

These rivers offer good paddling for the inexperienced. The level of the Macleay at Bellbrook can be obtained from the Bureau of Meteorology home page. Levels of 1.3 to 2 m are recommended for the Chandler and 0.9 to 1.5 m for the Macleay from Kunderang West downstream.

Access. From Armidale travel east along the Grafton Road and then turn down the Kempsey Road. About 20 km down this road Raspberry Road turns off to the right. Raspberry Road provides access to the Chandler and the upper parts

of the Macleay River. Approach the lower part of the Macleay by continuing along the Kempsey Road until the Macleay is reached at Georges Junction (224974Ca), about 80 km from Armidale. The road follows the river from Georges Junction downstream.

Carter's Road - Kunderang West (Grade 2)

Carter's Road leaves Raspberry Road about 20 km from the Kempsey Road. After 2 km the road begins to drop very steeply to the river with numerous extremely tight hairpin bends. A 4WD vehicle without a trailer is necessary to drive to the river, otherwise it is best to drag the boats down the ridge. The finish of the trip is at the end of a private road that is a continuation of Raspberry Road. There is a locked gate on this road at 085888Ca. The owner has permitted paddlers access and enquiries about the current owner can be made by telephoning the Jeogla Post Office.

The trip can be paddled either as a moderately long day trip or as an easy 2 day trip. Most of the rapids are grade 2, interspersed with long pools.

Kunderang West - Georges Junction (Grade 2)

This is an easy 2 day trip, although it can be paddled in one long day. This is a very pleasant trip suitable for novice paddlers. The only drawback is the relatively long car shuttle.

Downstream from Georges Junction (Grade 2)

Below Georges Junction the Macleay provides easy paddling with occasional grade 1 and 2 rapids. This section is well suited to beginners, the greatest hazard being overhanging trees. However, begin-

ners should avoid the river if the level at Bellbrook is above 2 m. At such levels the current is very strong and may present serious difficulties.

For an easy day trip beginning at Georges Junction the recommended pull out points are 6 km downstream at Middle Creek (275982B), or at the point of the big bend past the Dyke River, another 4 km downstream (295005F). Below the Dyke River there are only very occasional grade 1 gravel races. Further down the river there are many possibilities for beginners trips, made easy by the fact that the road follows the river fairly closely. These lower stretches are covered by the Comara map.

OAKY RIVER

Maps: Jeogla 1:25,000

Relatively little is known about the Oaky as it is only paddleable after heavy rain.

Access. The river is approached by way of gravel roads branching from both the Grafton Road and the Kempsey Road.

Wanderriby - Wakefield Road (Grade 2)

This is a short trip (about 3 hours) with most rapids being grade 2 and 3. There is one small waterfall that may require portaging and overhanging trees are a hazard.

The river is reached by taking the Grafton Road for 63 km from Armidale and then Tanners Road for 14 km to "Wanderriby". Follow the rough track past the farm (after asking permission) for 3 km to the river (227232J). The pull-out point (181233J) is at Wakefield Road, which leaves the Grafton Road about 50 km from Armidale.

Shepherd Flat Creek - Kempsey Road (Grade 2)

The start of the trip is approached via "Rocky Cottage", 2.5 km past the Oaky Bridge on the Kempsey Road. It is a half day paddle from here to the bridge. The major hazards are a 5 m waterfall and a wire-mesh fence across the river.

Steep Creeks On The Dorriggo Plateau

Any creek or river on the Dorriggo Plateau has to lose about 700 m in altitude before it reaches the sea. This, along with the Plateau being one of the highest rainfall areas in the state (receiving over 2,000 mm each year), means this area has some of the best steep-creek kayaking in Australia.

Since the mid-1970s small sections of the following rivers were kayaked but most of the first, full descents occurred after the introduction of plastic kayaks in the late 1980s. Further possibilities were realised with the development of the shorter, plastic kayaks in the early 1990s. Many first recorded descents were made in the early 1990s as a result of friendly competition between groups of local rafting guides.

As virtually any of the creeks coming off the Dorriggo Plateau can be paddled if the water level is right, many more creeks have no doubt been paddled since the writing of this section. The best times for paddling are during the flood seasons which usually occur sometime between January and May. Easter is usually a time for good water levels.

LITTLE MURRAY RIVER

Maps: Dorriggo 1:25,000

The Little Murray River is one of the best steep creeks on the Dorriggo Plateau and is one of the first that can be paddled during periods of rain.

Access. The river has relatively easy access of several side-roads off the Waterfall Way (Armidale to Dorriggo Road), and then off the Doggiro-Bostobrick Road. There are two easy access points to the river for judging water levels. The first is on the Dorriggo-Bostobrick Road at 662510D with the other being on Deervale Road at 648450D which comes off the Waterfall Way approximately 5 km from Dorriggo. Water levels can be judged at the bridge here - just too high to paddle under the bridge means a good water level.

Fernbrook Loop Road -Johnsens Road (Grade 4(6))

This is the steepest of the sections on the Little Murray River and is distinctive for its canyon-style paddling. It is highly recommended for relatively experienced paddlers. This section is very dependent on water levels, best judged from the take-out point. A basic rule for water levels is that the gauge at Platypus Flat on the Nymboida should be over 2 m.

Access to the river is by dragging the kayaks about 500 m through private property from Fernbrook Loop Road which leaves the Waterfall Way (Armidale to Dorriggo Road) approximately 15 km west of Dorriggo. The take-out point is where the river runs close to Johnsens Road which leaves the Waterfall Way about 10 km west of Dorriggo. Suitable take-out points are at the end of the small forest tracks that leave Johnsens Road about 500 m after there is a fork in the

road and Johnsens Road turns sharply to the left.

Although only about 8 km in length, this section offers clean, narrow drops through beautiful rainforest surroundings including large stands of Antarctic Beech. The rapids are mostly of grade 3 to 4 in standard with several being more difficult and three huge waterfalls that are compulsory portages. Care must be taken on the lead up to the first large waterfall which is early in the trip. A distinctive, guttery-style grade 3 rapid leads to a small eddy at the top of the fall. Either catch this crucial eddy and make the difficult portage over the waterfall using ropes or take the high portage on the right above the guttery, lead-up rapid. This option is longer but safer. The end of the trip is marked by an awesome, chasm-waterfall below a man-made weir. The walk-out is made more difficult if it is raining due to the fact that you have to carry several kilograms of leaches on each foot.

Johnsens Road - Deervale Road (Grade 4(5))

The take-out for this section is about 5 km down Deervale Road which leaves the Waterfall Way (Armidale to Dorrigo-Road) about 5 km west of Dorrigo. This 5 km section provides quality rapids of grade 3 to 4 standard. One large rapid that is mostly portaged exists about 500 m above the bridge on Deervale Road and can be seen from the road.

Deervale Road - Bostobrick (Grade 3 (4))

The take-out point for this section is at the bridge on the Dorrigo-Bostobrick Road (662510D) with the section of river being about 12 km in length. The trip offers paddling mostly of grade 2 to 3 standard with two grade 4+ rapids near

the start of the section. The nature of the river is such that the biggest rapids are at the start and finish off the section with trees posing a problem in some places.

Bostobrick - Nymboida River (Grade 3 (4))

This 3 km highly recommended section is often used as an alternative start to the Moonpar Road to Platypus Flat section on the Nymboida River. Paddling is only possible with water levels at Platypus Flat that are above 0.8 m (see section on Nymboida River). Extreme caution should be taken if the river levels approach or exceed 1.2 m. This is a great section of river that drops almost continuously in parts; however, the potential for kayaks becoming pinned means that the section is only suitable for experienced paddlers. Most of the paddling is of grade 2 to 3 standard with two excellent grade 4 rapids. Once the Nymboida River is reached a further 11 km of the Nymboida River must be paddled to reach Platypus Flat or the bridge on Mills Road (see section on Nymboida River).

COUTTS WATER

Maps: Dorrigo 1:25,000
Hernani 1:25,000

Coutts water starts as a small trout stream running through farm land, but quickly drops into a gorge to provide some excellent creeking. There has only been one known descent of this trip: there is little information regarding paddling times, so potentially be prepared for a night out.

Access. The trip begins where the Waterfall Way crosses Coutts Water at 495422H (marked as the Numboida River on the map). The takeout point is at the Harness Cask (see Nymboida River section).

Coutts Water - Silent Pool (Grade 5)

This trip has a number of waterfalls around 2-3 m high, but unfortunately fallen timber and logs has made a number of drops unrunable. This is a true wilderness trip for very experienced kayakers. There are two major portages around the 100 m Rob Roy Falls (520445D) and the Silent Pool (543465D). Both portages are easiest on the river right. The silent pool must be portaged from the junction with Deer Park Creek, as the river drops quickly into an unpaddleable canyon.

NYMBOIDA RIVER (HARNES CASK TO THE JUNCTION)

Maps: Clouds Creek 1:25,000
 Dorrigo 1:25,000
 Dundurrabin 1:25,000
 Glenreagh 1:25,000

The Nymboida River is one of the most popular whitewater rivers in Australia due to the high quality rapids and beautiful scenery. Around 130 km of whitewater provides many sections for paddlers, catering for all abilities. As with all of the rivers in this region, the best water levels are usually found between December and May, depending on the season, with Easter usually being a fair bet for good water levels.

Access. The Nymboida is accessed by a series of forestry roads to the west and north of Dorrigo. Although these roads are usually well maintained they can become very slippery after rains, and watch out for logging trucks.

Harness Cask - Moonpar Road (Grade 3)

This is an interesting day trip and is recommended for intermediate paddlers or when the lower sections of the river have too much water for safe paddling. The trip can start where the river passes under the Tyringham-Dorrigo road (600542Dun) which joins the Armidale-Grafton road at Tyringham. The trip can also be extended by travelling 200 m towards Dorrigo from this bridge and travelling upstream along Harness Cask Road to Harness Cask (573513Dor). This road follows the river and provides many put-in points. The trip ends where Moonpar Road crosses the river at 651531Dor. Moonpar Road turns off the Tyringham-Dorrigo road just west of Bostobrick, approximately 5 km from the put-in bridge. The rapids are mostly of a grade 2 to 3 standard but are quite rocky. About 3 km below the bridge there is a 200 m section of steeply dropping river which may require portaging. The basic trip is 7 km in length, taking 3 to 4 hours with the extended trip from Harness Cask taking an extra 2 hours.

Moonpar Road - Platypus Flat (Grade 4)

This section of river is for experienced paddlers only. Start at the bridge on Moonpar Road (as for above) and the trip finishes at the bridge on Mills Road or a further 1 km downstream, at Platypus Flat picnic area (703605Dun) which is found by continuing along this road. Platypus Flat may also be reached via Cascade if there is heavy rain and the access roads are too boggy. A better start for this section of river is by paddling down the Little Murray River as it provides bigger, more constant rapids; however, both are enjoyable (see section on Little Murray

River). The best water levels are when the gauge at Platypus Flat reads over 0.7 m.

The section of river is 14 km in length and can be done as a long day trip, depending on the levels of paddling experience. Progress is often slow due to the high number of rapids, which depending on ability may result in more than one portage, although all rapids are often run. The first 3 km of the river is usually very rocky and if there is enough water to paddle comfortably here, there is often too much water further downstream. For this reason, another place to start is below the Little Murray River by way of any of the logging roads that approach the river from Moonpar Road to the north although this does require some boat dragging.

The rapids below this section are mostly of a grade 3 to 4 standard with some possible grade 5, mostly consisting of steep, clean drops. In summary, if you paddle this section of river when the gauge is around 1.1 m at Platypus Flat you will be experiencing some of the best whitewater paddling in the country.

Platypus Flat - Cod Hole (Grade 3 (5))

This trip is a very popular, 9 km, one day trip that starts at Platypus Flat (as described above) and finishes at the Cod Hole which is at the end of Cod Hole Road (713664Dun). Water levels can be gauged at both sites and for enjoyable paddling these levels should be between 0.5 and 3.0 m, although the river can be paddled down to about 0.2 m and as high as you are crazy enough to paddle. The river is very scenic and is classified as one of the best day trips in northeastern New South Wales.

Most of the rapids are of grade 2 to 4 standard with three main rapids requiring scouting and mostly portaging. “Lucifers’

Leap” and “Rockbar” are about 2 km below the start and are possible grade 4 to 5 rapids, depending on the water level. They are only about 70 m apart. The “Devil’s Cauldron” usually also requires portaging unless the river is high enough to run the river left channel or low enough to run the centre chute. This rapid is found about 5 km downstream of Platypus Flat and can easily be seen upon approach.

This section is frequently commercially rafted and water levels can sometimes be found by contacting the rafting companies based in Coffs Harbour.

Cod Hole - Junction (Grade 4(5))

The pull-out point for this trip is the junction of the Nymboida and Little Nymboida Rivers which can be accessed by use of Black Mountain Road on the eastern side of the river. Allow about 2 hours each way for the car shuttle.

This section is about 16 km in length and is one of the classic whitewater touring sections in Australia. The river flows through a beautiful, steep-sided valley, featuring pockets of rainforest and towering granite cliffs with the river itself having a magnificent series of rapids. The rapids are mostly of grade 1 to 4 in standard with some approaching grade 5. This section is a long day trip or a comfortable two day trip with many campsites. The section is for experienced paddlers.

BIELSDOWN RIVER

Maps: Dorrigo 1:25,000

This river passes through Dorrigo and often catches paddlers attention with the slalom gates that are usually hanging above the river, right beside the road. This river has several paddlable sections with the best being from Billings Road to the Nymboida River.

Access. The upper sections of this river are easily accessed around Dorrigo. The lower section will involve the use of forestry roads to get access to Platypus Flat.

Dorrigo - Dangars Falls (Grade 2)

Paddling can begin at the Dorrigo Golf Course but the section of river from here to the township is of a poor quality unless you like bashing through thick masses of privot trees that clog the river. Rapids are of grade 1 to 2 standard, taking 1 to 2 hours. High water levels are required.

The trip from Dorrigo to Dangars Falls contains many grade 2 rapids with a man made weir that is quite dangerous behind the Dorrigo Abattoirs and a grade 3 rapid “The Cascades” directly above the 30 m Dangars Falls. Dangars Falls anxiously awaits its first descent by kayak, make sure you send us a photo if you decide to run it. This section takes 1 to 2 hours. Once again, high water levels are needed and over-hanging tress may make this a very difficult run.

Below Dangars Falls (Grade 3)

The section after that described above is much more serious with several grade 3 rapids and one waterfall approximately 200 m downstream of Dangars Falls that should be portaged. This section also takes 1 to 2 hours with the pull-out point being at the next bridge.

Billings Road - Nymboida River (Grade 5)

The only section of the Bielsdown River that is of a high quality for paddling is the section from Billings Road to the Nymboida River with it being one of the best steep creeks in the region.

The put-in point is off Billings Road which is about 4 km out of Dorrigo on the road to Megan/Cascade. The short drive down Billings Road saves paddling the couple of kilometres of flat water at the start of the trip. The take-out point is at Platypus Flat on the Nymboida River (see section on the Nymboida River).

Although rumours exist of a descent in the mid-1970s, the first recorded descent of this section was only completed by Melbourne and Brisbane paddlers in early 1997. The section is a very long day, taking competent parties at least 8 hours. Less experienced parties should allow for 2 days. Approximately 14 km are paddled on the Bielsdown River, followed by about 6.5 km on the Nymboida.

The river is a drop-and-pool river, consisting of long, flat pools interspersed by some awesome grade 2 - 5 rapids. Many of the harder rapids consist of deep, clean waterfalls of 4 to 6 m in height, all of which are runnable. There is one almost definite portage, a 15 m high waterfall, about two thirds of the way down the Bielsdown which is best portaged on the right. Take care at the lead-in to this rapid. Once the Nymboida is entered, there are some of the best rapids the Nymboida has to offer still to paddle. Allow at least an hour for this section.

As a rough estimate, if the water levels at Platypus Flat on the Nymboida are above 1.1 m, then the water levels in the Bielsdown should be high enough. This depends on how localised the rainfall in the area is. This section is highly recommended for experienced paddlers.

BLICKS RIVER

Maps: Dundurrabin 1:25,000
Marengo 1:25,000

This is a popular river with most groups paddling the section from Dundurrabin to the Nymboida River, near Platypus Flat. The sections higher up offer paddling of a high quality and difficulty but require more rain to flow. Paddling on the upper sections is quite serious with many rapids up to grade 6 in standard. Trees also pose as a problem on several sections.

Access. Higher put-in points can be found on the Merango Road from Hernani or from any other road that goes down to the river such as the un-named road that leaves the Armidale-Grafton Road at 521551D. Water levels can be seen most easily from the bridge on the Armidale-Grafton Road, near Dundurrabin.

Hyland Road Turnoff - Above Dundurrabin (Grade 6)

This is the steepest, narrowest and most dangerous section mentioned and is about 15 km in length. The gradient of the river averages about 45 m/km, dropping from about 1030 m to 700 m in altitude. The take-out point is on the track at 520566D. The best water levels are between 1.1 and 1.3 m at Dundurrabin.

This is a very serious section of river, suitable only for extremely experienced paddlers. Paddling is canyon-style with most of the river being less than a boat-length wide. This would make this section extremely dangerous if the water level is over the river banks. Many of the rapids require scouting with up to a total of about 12 portages around big drops. Most of the paddling is of grade 4 to 5 standard with paddlers needing to be able to run drops of up to 4 m. Some of the large rapids are impossible to portage.

The Section Immediately Above Dundurrabin (Grade 4)

This 8 km long section offers excellent, technical paddling with rapids of grade 3 to 4 standard. The best water levels are between 0.8 and 1.5 m at Dundurrabin. The most notable rapid of the trip is a grade 4+ rapid (Dundurrabin Falls) which is several hundred metres upstream of the bridge.

Dundurrabin - Nymboida River (Grade 4)

This section is approximately 22 km in length and is usually completed as a day trip; however, it may take 2 days for less experienced groups who opt to inspect many of the rapids from the bank. The pull-out point is near the Nymboida River Junction which is reached by driving back towards Dorrigo and onto Moonpar Forest Road near Bostobrick and then onto Mills Road. Alternatively, paddlers can continue down to Platypus Flat on the Nymboida (see section on Nymboida River). Levels on the gauge at Dundurrabin are best above 0.6 m, and for more experienced paddlers at levels above 1.1 m.

Most of the rapids on this section are rocky and are up to grade 4 in standard although several grade 5 waterfalls are found. Campsites are scarce.

ROSEWOOD RIVER

Maps: Bellingen 1:25,000
Brooklana 1:25,000

This river drops from Dorrigo National Park to join the Bellinger River near Thora. The upper sections have not been paddled due to the fact that the river drops around 200 m per kilometre.

Access. Access is gained by travelling along the scenic gravel road from the rainforest centre to the Never Never

Picnic Area. Access to the take out requires a trip down the Dorrigo Mountain to Thora.

Dorrigo National Park - Summervilles Road (Grade 4)

The put-in points are found by lowering the kayaks down about 400 m in elevation to the river from the walking tracks that leave Never Never Picnic Area in the Dorrigo National Park (805408Br). The carry in takes about two and a half hours. From Never Never Picnic Area take the walking track to Cedar Falls before heading due south down a ridge to a saddle. The river has been paddled after dropping off the east side of the saddle. The river is very steep at first and should only be attempted by experienced parties with the rapids becoming easier as the river flows out into the Bellinger Valley. Water levels should be such that there is just enough water to float the kayaks. Any more and the river could be extremely hazardous. After about 500 m of paddling the first portage is reached with abseiling gear making the portage quicker and easier. There are several other portages around gutter-style drops with the rest of the paddling being grade 2 to 4 pinball-style rapids through the most awesome, untouched rainforest you will ever see.

The take-out is on Summervilles Road near Thora. River levels at the finish are deceptive as many creeks join the river during the last half of the trip. A good, low water level is if the water level is about 10 mm over the concrete bases of the bridge. If the grass island downstream of the bridge is under, the water level is likely to be too high.

WILD CATTLE CREEK

Maps: Brooklana 1:25,000
Dundurrabin 1:25,000

Wild Cattle Creek flows through the tiny village of Megan on the Dorrigo-Cascade Road, north of Dorrigo.

Access. Megan is reached by heading north out of Dorrigo past Dangars falls.

Slingsbys Road - Megan (Grade 4)

The highest put-in points are after a 1 km walk through the National Park off Slingsbys Road for a paddle down to Megan. This section can only be paddled at high water levels but would be dangerous if the water level was too high to paddle beneath the bridge at Megan. The section contains narrow, steep drops and chutes with trees posing a problem in places.

Megan - Nymboida River (Grade 4)

The section from Megan to the Nymboida River is about 16 km in length and should only be attempted by experienced parties. This section is not highly recommended as the portages are long and many of the rapids are quite dangerous due to the abundance of rocks in critical places. This section contains many rapids of a grade 2 and 3 standard with some being harder. A rope and possibly abseiling gear can shorten some of the portages, one of which can take up to two and a half hours. This trip can be done as a very long day trip for experienced parties. From the Nymboida River Junction it is about a 2.5 km paddle down to the bridge on Mills Road (704598D), or a further kilometre to Platypus Flat. Water levels are best if the tips of the old bridge pillions below the Megan Bridge are just sticking out of the river.

COOPERNOOK CREEK

Maps: Brooklana 1:25,000
 Moleton 1:25,000

This is an excellent, rainforest-clad, steep creek. Take one look at this creek from the road at good water levels and you will see why paddlers have drooled over it for years. It is a creeker's dream. Paddling must be soon after heavy rains as the small catchment means good water levels don't last long.

Access. This creek crosses the Megan-Brooklana Road at 823486B.

Megan-Brooklana Road - Bo Bo River (Grade 3 (6))

The best put-in point is on the Megan-Brooklana Road or at the bottom of a steep ridge which is about 500 m east of the river crossing. The second option puts in below a spectacular, 30 m waterfall. Care must be taken to portage a grade 6 rapid soon after this. Cooperbrook Creek is fast, tree infested and quite scary to scout with many grade 2 to 3+ drops and

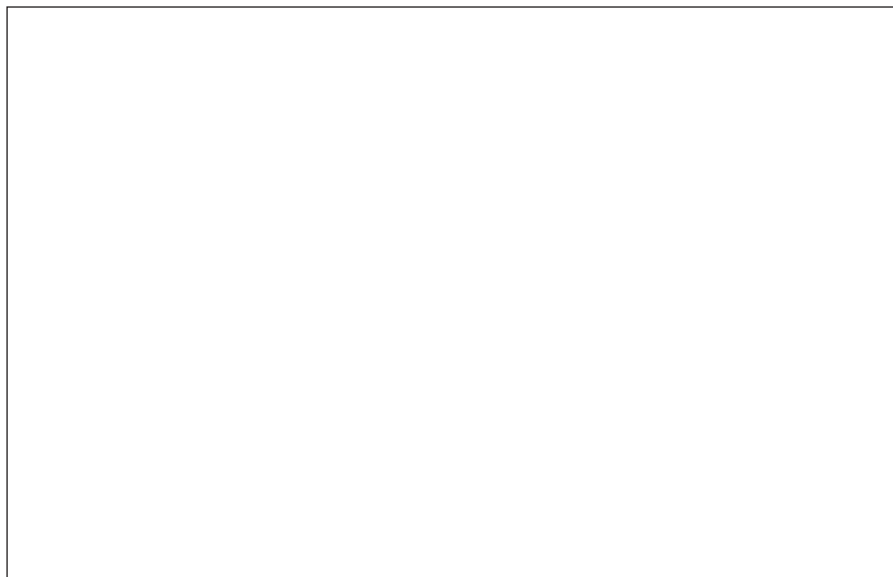
clean rapids. Take-out points exist off Kritons Road or by continuing until the Bo Bo River is reached. The section between Kritons Road and the Bo Bo is also quite enjoyable. The pull-out point after this is at the bridge (853536M) on the Cascade-Ulong Road. The paddling is superb creeking for experienced paddlers with narrow, steep drops in a beautiful rainforest setting.

BO BO RIVER

Maps: Brooklana 1:25,000
 Moleton 1:25,000

The Bo Bo River offers some very varied trips from easy grade 1-2 flats up to grade 3-4. Care for trees and fences should be taken in the upper stretches and only experienced kayakers should attempt the lower section.

Access. The upper section of the Bo Bo is accessed via the Ulong-Megan Road and the Ulong-Cascade Road. The lower section is also accessed via the Ulong-Cascade Road. This section finishes at the junction of the Little Nymboida River



which requires both a good 4WD and map.

Brooklana - Lower Bo Bo Bridge (Grade 2)

This section of river is approximately 5 km in length and takes around 2 hours to paddle. The river consists of tree-lined pools and small rapids of a grade 1 and 2 standard. The car shuttle takes about half to three-quarters of an hour. The sections of river above Brooklana have been paddled and are reputedly worthless.

Start at the bridge to Brooklana on the Ulong-Megan Road (865515B). The water level needs to be high enough to paddle under the bridge without scraping the bottom of the river. If it is high enough to paddle into the surrounding paddocks, paddling is likely to be dangerous.

Some blind corners lead up to a small, grade 2 waterfall about 1 m in height, followed by grade 1 and 2 rapids. Towards the end of the trip a long, shallow pool leads to a high railway bridge where a man-made channel has been cut through the rock. This rapid can approach grade 3 at higher water levels. The take-out is about 50 m below this point at the low-level bridge on the Ulong-Cascade Road (853536M).

Bo Bo Gorge (Grade 4)

Situated on the Eastern Dorrigo Plateau, the Bo Bo Gorge is a creeker's dream. The section is approximately 16 km in length and consists of long, rainforest clad pools, separated by steep rapids. Most of the rapids are either waterfalls or narrow channels and chutes carved into a solid rock bed, resulting in tight and technical paddling of about grade 3 to 4 in standard.

All up, there are about 1-5 portages that are quite easy except for a 30 m

waterfall about two-thirds of the way through the trip. It can be portaged on the right and can be quite tricky if it is wet. To say any more about the creek would spoil the experience, but generally if you can't see the next eddy, get out and look.

Start at the causeway on Frog Hollow Road where there is a gauge on the right-hand side of the river. Paddling requires a minimum level of about 0.28 m. To reach Frog Hollow Road take the Cascade Road from Ulong. After crossing the Bo Bo River, drive through the pine plantation for about 3 km. Frog Hollow Road turns off on the right and crosses the Bo Bo River (836563M).

The take-out point is at the junction of the Little Nymboida River. This point is a little harder to find so you'll need a 4WD, a good map and possibly a chainsaw. To reach the take-out, drive through the village of Ulong, continuing through Timmsvale on the Timmsvale Road. Alternatively the take out can be reached by driving across the river at Frog Hollow Road. An unmarked road turns off on the left and goes all the way to the junction. The last 500 m is very steep and is best walked. Allow a whole day for the paddle, including about 2 hours for the car shuttle. Enjoy!

LITTLE NYMBOIDA RIVER

Maps: Glenreagh 1:25,000
Moleton 1:25,000

The Little Nymboida River flows from near Lowanna to join the Nymboida River at what is usually (and imaginatively) called "The Junction". Several sections have been paddled between Lowanna and Battery Road. Parties have reported good rapids, but problems with trees overhang-

ing the river and access points being difficult to find.

Access. Access is from a number of forestry roads around Ulong and Timmsvale. The appropriate map is essential.

Battery Road - Bo Bo River Junction (Grade 5).

This 9 km section offers very difficult, canyon-style paddling including many portages around large waterfalls. Begin near the Gravel Pit on Battery Road (837625M), north of Timmsvale, and finish at the Bo Bo Junction (815671M) via a series of un-named forestry roads:

Bo Bo River Junction - Nymboida River Junction (Grade 4)

The most popular section is from the Bo Bo River junction (815671M) to the Nymboida River junction (764733G). This is an excellent section of river to paddle when the Nymboida is too high for safe paddling (above about 2.5 m at Platypus Flat, see section on Nymboida River). The Little Nymboida River can be paddled in very high water due to the more open nature of the surrounding gorge.

This section is about 17 km in length but can be paddled in under 4 hours by experienced parties at high water levels due to the continuous nature of the rapids. Access to the put-in is via forestry roads through Ulong and Timmsvale. The take-out point is off Black Mountain Road via Lowanna. Expect the car shuttle to take around 2 hours each way.

In terms of paddling, after an easy first few kilometres a large rapid “The Gimp” or “Dave’s Hole” (grade 4) is met, followed by several other wide, fast grade 3 rapids, all of which can be portaged with relative ease. After these rapids, the pad-

dling comprises of an almost continuous grade 2 to 3 wave train that makes for some of the most enjoyable paddling to be found anywhere.

Northern River Regions

GUY FAWKES AND BOYD RIVERS

Maps: Buccarumbi 1:25,000
Chaelundi 1:25,000
Dalmorton 1:25,000
Guy Fawkes 1:25,000
Marengo 1:25,000

After rain the Boyd River provides relatively gentle paddling through pleasant country. The Guy Fawkes can be difficult to reach by road.

Access. The upper reaches of the Guy Fawkes are at Ebor Falls near Ebor, on the Armidale-Grafton Road. Although there is no vehicular access to the sections of the Guy Fawkes further downstream than Ebor Falls, the river can be reached relatively easily by foot. Approach the river along the Armidale-Grafton Road, turning onto Marengo Road at Hernani (about 90 km from Armidale). “Marengo Station” is 20 km along Marengo Road and from here a long gradual ridge can be followed to the junction of the Guy Fawkes and Marengo Creek (325668M). Approximately 50 km downstream, the river, now the Boyd, reaches the Old Grafton Road (313988D). This is the start of the paddleable section of the river.

The Old Grafton Road leaves the Gwydir Highway 35 km east of Glen Innes. It is a further 40 km to the Boyd River. The road then follows the river to its junction with the Nymboida.

Ebor Falls - Marengo Creek (Grade 5)

Access below Ebor Falls is relatively straight forward but can be time consuming. Give at least 3 to 4 days to complete the trip. Rapids reach solid grade 4 and some are grade 5. Take rope gear as some portages require difficult maneuvering.

Marengo Creek - Old Grafton Road (Grade 2)

With sufficient water this is an excellent trip, with frequent rapids of Classes 1 and 2. Three days should be allowed for the trip. The river changes its name to the Boyd at the junction with the Sara River, 30 km from the starting point.

Old Grafton Road - Nymboida (Grade 2)

This is an easy two day paddle, with fairly frequent grade 1 and 2 rapids. The pull-out point is at Buccarumbi Bridge (602993B), just downstream of the junction of the Boyd and the Nymboida. The road follows the river closely, making a number of day trips possible on this section of the river.

BELLINGER RIVER

Maps: Bellingen 1:25,000
 Darkwood 1:25,000

The Bellinger rises in the New England National Park and flows through a very beautiful valley. After rain it provides some easy and pleasant paddling.

Access. The river is followed closely by roads for most of its length. The upper section of the river is reached by starting at Thora, at the base-of the Dorrigo Mountain. From Thora, take the road signposted to Upper Thora. The road up the valley crosses the river numerous times, providing access to the river at regular intervals.

Dardanelles Bridge - Thora (Grade 2)

The uppermost reliable access to the river is at the Dardanelles Bridge (624306D), about 22 km (or eleven bridges) upstream of Thora. From here it is an easy 2 day trip to Thora with many grade 1 and 2 rapids. When the river is high some rapids approach grade 3. Hazards include low-level bridges and the occasional floating water pump! There are numerous campsites but be sure to ask permission before camping, as some landowners do not welcome visitors.

For a short day trip start at the eighth bridge (665327D) and finish at the Orama church (702328D). The trip is only 8 km in length but it features some of the best rapids on the river.

Thora - Bellingen (Grade 2)

Downstream of Thora the valley opens out and the river has only occasional gravel races. When compared with the upper section the lower reaches are relatively uninteresting. One rapid of note occurs just below Thora. Also watch out for trees. Bring the fishing rod for this section.

NYMBOIDA RIVER (THE JUNCTION TO JACKADGERY)

Maps: Buccarumbi 1:25,000
 Clouds Creek 1:25,000
 Glenreagh 1:25,000
 Gundahl 1:25,000
 Jackadgery 1:25,000
 Nymboida 1:25,000

Whilst the upper section of the Nymboida offer some of the most popular whitewater in the country, the lower sections offer some of the best canoe touring.

Access. The Junction can be reached via sealed and forestry roads heading south from the township of Nymboida on the Armidale-Grafton Road.

Buccarumbi is reached by turning off the Armidale-Grafton road just north of Nymboida township onto Frickers Road, then right onto Glens Creek Road and left onto Old Grafton Road. This brings you to the Buccarumbi Bridge.

Jackadgery is easiest reached by heading west out of Grafton on the Gwydir Highway towards Glen Innes.

Little Nymboida Junction - Nymboida Township (Grade 2)

The take-out point for this trip is at Pollocks Bridge on the Armidale-Grafton Road, south west of Nymboida township.

This section of river is 22 km in length. Most of the rapids are of a grade 1 and 2 standard with an easy grade 3 at the halfway point. This trip can be hard going if the water levels are low. A gauge also exists at Pollocks Bridge (this data is available from the Bureau of Meteorology) with levels of above 0.8 m providing the best paddling. River access can also be gained at the halfway mark via a 4WD track on the right bank of the river.

Nymboida - Buccarumbi (Grade 2)

This is a long (20 km) but easy day trip suitable for most paddlers. The height of the river can be gauged by paddling to a weir that is 5 km downstream from the bridge at Nymboida. The trip should not be continued unless there is sufficient water flowing over the weir. This weir is a definite portage! This section of river consists of a series of long pools separated

by occasional grade 1 and 2 rapids and one easy grade 3 rapid. As the river is really only accessible at the start and finish, an early start is advisable.

Buccarumbi - Jackadgery (Grade 3 (4))

This is a good weekend trip about 40 km in length. The trip is most enjoyable with a river level of 1.5 to 2.0 m at Jackadgery gauge. On the first day the river alternates between long pools and grade 2 rapids. Towards the end of the first day a grade 3 to 4, double stage rapid “Cunglebung Creek Falls” is encountered. On the second day, the gorge is reached with some grade 3 rapids. There is a long pool at the Mann River junction followed by “Bridal Veil Falls”. This is only paddleable at high levels and then it is of a fairly high grade. “New Zealand Falls” (1.5 to 2 m drop) is reached a few kilometres after this and is best tackled on the right. Care should be taken on the approach to this rapid at high water levels. The trip takes two full days and the car shuttle is a relatively long one. An inexperienced party should allow three days for the trip.

GOOLANG AND BLAXLAND CREEK

Maps: Blaxlands Flat 1:25,000
 Coutts Crossing 1:25,000
 Nymboida 1:25,000

Goolang Creek is the outfall of the Nymboida hydroelectric powerstation and is frequently used for slalom and wildwater competitions. Goolang Creek flows for 6 km from the powerstation to a road bridge where it becomes Blaxland Creek. The creek is a very good site for paddlers of all abilities; however, the creek is shallow, fast and the rocks are sharp, hence paddlers should wear ade-

quate safety equipment and especially avoid standing up midstream.

The creek has a riverside campsite that offers cabins, hot showers and barbecues as well as general campsites. Caretakers collect fees for the upkeep of the course. The caretakers can also be contacted for river levels as the creek does not always flow at full capacity.

Access. The camping ground is sign posted as Nymboida Canoe Centre and is approximately 40 km from Grafton on the Armidale Road.

Power Station - Gooseneck (Grade 2(3))

The trip starts directly below the power station (749892N) at the “Tailrace” rapid (grade 2-3). The next two kilometres of water is mainly grade 2 and includes the “Playhole” and the more difficult “Tennis Court” (grade 3) rapids which are close to the campsite, and “Corkscrew” and “Gooseneck” rapids which are approximately 2 km below the power station and are the last major rapids.

Gooseneck - Goolang Creek Bridge (Grade 2)

Access to the river off the road can be gained just below “Gooseneck” rapid and from here to the bridge on the Armidale-Grafton Road (793912B) is a great trip for paddlers from competent novices upwards. The creek is swiftly flowing with many grade 2 rapids and a few overhanging trees. The trip is about 4 km in length.

Blaxland Creek Junction - Deadmans Bridge (Grade 2)

From the bridge on the Armidale-Grafton road (see above), a 24 km trip exists to “Deadmans Bridge” near Coutts Crossing. Alternatively the trip can be

shortened by access to “Rocky Rapid” by turning into a TSR gate at Skinners Swamp, about 4 km before Coutts Crossing. Above “Rocky Rapid” (grade 2) the river moves swiftly but with few rapids of significance. A sign on the left bank heralds “Rocky Rapid”, which can be portaged on the right. From here on the river continues to flow swiftly with one grade 2 downstream. This is a good trip for paddlers of all abilities.

MANN RIVER

Maps:

- Camelback 1:25,000
- Cangai 1:25,000
- Coombadjha 1:25,000
- Carnham 1:25,000
- Gundahl 1:25,000
- Jackadgery 1:25,000
- Mount Wellington 1:25,000
- Yellow Jacket 1:25,000

The Mann is a major tributary of the Nymboida, the junction being 11 km upstream of the bridge at Jackadgery. The river requires some recent rain to reach a paddleable level.

Access. The Old Grafton Road leaves the Gwydir Highway 35 km east of Glen Innes and crosses the Mann in its upper reaches. The road runs parallel to the river for a few kilometres and the starting point for the upper Mann trip is reached 24 km from the highway. The next reliable point of access downstream is not until the Jackadgery Bridge on the Gwydir Highway.

Old Grafton Road - Jackadgery (Grade 4)

This is a 3 to 4 day trip, much of which is through some rarely frequented wilderness country. For the first 1.5 to 2 days, the rapids are of grade 2 standard. Several kilometres upstream of the Nymboida

junction, the river runs into a gorge with rapids approaching grade 4. The gorge is dangerous at high levels and it is therefore not advisable to attempt the river if it is high and still rising.

It is a half-day paddle from the Nymboida junction to Jackadgery, as described above in the section on the Nymboida River.

Yellow Jacket and Mount Wellington maps cover the bulk of the trip with Gundahl and Jackadgery maps sharking the section below the Nymboida Junction.

Jackadgery - Lillydale Bridge (Grade 2(6))

This is a 3 to 4 day trip beginning at Jackadgery on the Nymboida (the river here is often called the Mann) and finishing at Lillydale Bridge on the Clarence (681315J).

From Jackadgery to the Clarence junction the rapids are of grade 1 and 2 standard, with the exception of a larger rapid at Mulligan's Bluff, 13 km below Jackadgery. However, 2 km below the junction the Clarence gorge is reached. This should be approached with extreme caution as it has claimed several lives. The main fall should be portaged on the right. Below the gorge it is a long (30 km) but easy paddle to Lillydale Bridge. The finish is only 15 km along a gravel road from Jackadgery. This road leaves the highway just across the Jackadgery Bridge on the Grafton side.

Jackadgery, Cangai and Coombadhja maps are needed for the gorge section.

CLARENCE RIVER

Maps:

- Baryulgil 1:25,000
- Carnham 1:25,000
- Mallanganee 1:25,000

- Paddys Flat 1:25,000
- Pretty Gully 1:25,000
- Tunglebung 1:25,000
- Yates Flat 1:25,000

The Clarence provides rather disappointing paddling for a major stream. However, the scenery is pleasant and the upper section is characterised by plentiful wildlife, with the odd platypus sighting not uncommon. The river should be avoided when the water level is high.

Access. The upper part of the river is reached from the Paddys Flat Road which leaves the Bruxner Highway about 2 km west of Tabulum. Below Tabulum the Tabulum - Baryulgil Road runs fairly close to the river providing a number of access points.

Paddys Flat - Hootens Crossing (Grade 2)

This is a very easy 2 day trip with rapids of grade 1 and 2 standard. However, overhanging branches are often a hazard and may necessitate portages. The trip begins where Paddys Flat Road crosses the river (431229PF). The pull-out point is at the bridge on the Duck Creek Road, which leaves Paddys Flat Road 11 km from Tabulum.

Hootens Crossing - Tabulum (Grade 2)

This is an easy day trip but it is not particularly interesting. There is one long rapid of grade 3 standard and bushes and trees may be a danger.

Tabulum - Baryulgil (Grade 2)

From Tabulum it is a gentle, but very long (55 km) paddle to Baryulgil. The river is fairly flat with occasional grade 1 and 2 rapids. The end of the trip is at a bridge across the river 4 km west of

Baryugil on a gravel road through “Yugilbar”.

Below Baryugil it is a further 16 km to the junction with the Nymboida (Mann) River (542526C). Below the junction the Clarence enters a gorge as described in the section on the Mann River.

TIMBARRA (ROCKY) RIVER

Maps: Bulldog Rock 1:25,000
 Drake 1:25,000
 Mallangenee 1:25,000
 Malara Creek 1:25,000
 Sandy Flat 1:25,000
 Spirabo 1:25,000

The Timbarra is a tributary of the Clarence River. It flows through rugged, mountainous country to the east of Tenterfield. After rain the upper part of the river provides difficult paddling, whereas the lower section is easier.

Access. The upper part of the river can be reached from Tenterfield by way of the Billyrimba Road (not the Billyrimba Fire Trail), which leaves from the southeastern corner of the town. Access to the junction of the Timbarra and the Clarence is via Tabulum on the Bruxner Highway.

River Gauge - Tara Hills (Grade 3)

When the river is high an exciting day trip begins at the river gauge (263625Sp), 9 km upstream of the point where the Billyrimba Fire Trail meets the river. There are a number of hard grade 3 rapids as well as several more difficult ones, which may necessitate portages. The trip finishes just past “Tara Hills” (337702B). The total distance paddled is 18 km, taking about 5 hours.

Tera Hills -Tabulum (Grade 1)

Below “Tara Hills” the river flattens out, but there are still fairly frequent gravel races and a few small drops. For most of the trip the river flows through very pleasant forested country. The condition of the road along the river is very poor, and it is probably not passable in wet weather. Thus the car shuttle would be very long for a trip starting at “Tara Hills”.

A better starting point would be about 30 km (or 2 days) upstream of Tabulum. To reach this point follow the Rocky River Road from Drake on the Bruxner Highway until it joins the river. Finish the trip by paddling 1 km up the Clarence from the junction to the highway bridge. Alternatively, leave the river at the bridge on the road to Alice (leaves the Bruxner Highway 3 km west of Tabulum).

Canyoning

Canyoning could best be described as the descent of steep creeks as they flow from the mountains. It usually involves abseiling, swimming, scrambling and a long walk out at the end of the day. The canyons of the New England and Dorrigo plateau vary as greatly from each other as they do from the popular slot type canyons found in the Blue Mountains. The canyons described here are generally more open gorges, often involving multi-pitch abseils and dramatic exposure. The Dorrigo plateau features dense rainforest, while the New England gorges have drier

WARNING

Canyoning is a dangerous recreational activity, and canyoning trips should only be undertaken by experienced, well prepared parties, who are aware of all the risks. Beginners should spend adequate time under competent instructors before attempting any of these trips. Please note that we have used a different grading system to that in the walking section. An “easy” abseil is still not for inexperienced parties.

GRADING SYSTEM FOR CANYONS

We have attempted to grade each canyon by degree of technical difficulty and by length to complete. Some canyons have a mixed difficulty grade, for example E/M. Many gorges can be completed in different combinations of sections so each section is graded separately. Grades are provided as a guide only, see the route description for more information.

Difficulty

E	Easy	Single pitch abseiling, may involve easy scrambling requiring use of hands for balance and support
M	Medium	May require abseiling through waterfalls or into plunge pools, some bouldering
H	Hard	May require multi-pitch abseils, hanging belays, abseiling through fast moving water, which may be very cold. May also require unprotected climbs
X	Extreme	Potential for all of the above with additional risk factors that will complicate the descent. Very hazardous. Should only be attempted by an expert group

Length

Short	Can be completed in a couple of hours
Half-day	Can be completed in a morning or afternoon
Long	Early start and possible walk out in the dark

Many abseil anchors are of dubious quality or have been in place for many years. Be prepared to test, back up or alter anchors to make them safe - many anchors have been in place since the first descent. In some canyons only one anchor exists, as the “back up” was removed by the last person. It is wise to treat all anchors with suspicion.

Slings deteriorate rapidly and have probably been burnt by the last party pulling their rope through so carry plenty to replace them - your life is worth more than a few dollars worth of nylon! Please remove old slings, and always sling trees so they don't get damaged by ropes.

It is advisable to carry a rock climbing rack, and plenty of tape to save becoming stuck on a ledge. All members should have equipment and skills to perform vertical rescue.

An appropriate self-belay system (such as a trailing ascender belay that allows SRT) should be used by the first abseiler, or for all members of the party on sustained or technical descents. A person belaying at the bottom of the pitch, in a stance sheltered from rockfall, is effective on short abseils for the remaining party. When abseiling keep long hair and loose clothing well away from the abseil device.

Waterjumps in canyons can be very dangerous: thoroughly check for rocks and submerged logs and always safety jump. If in doubt, do not jump.

The water in these gorges may be very cold, as they receive very little sunlight. There are also frequently strong winds in exposed positions. This can easily lead to hypothermia. Add a late start and/or any number of minor difficulties and an overnight stay is likely. Be sure that your party has adequate clothing: wetsuits for the day and thermals for the night. Sum-

mer-time is safest for avoiding hypothermia but it also brings variable weather conditions, such as afternoon thunderstorms, so beware.

Rain or wet conditions can cause canyons to become extremely dangerous. Flash flooding can occur from rain upstream in the canyon. Obtain accurate weather reports prior to your trip and watch for changes.

The nature of the riverbed and the inaccessibility of these canyons causes serious evacuation problems. Be prepared to deal with all possibilities and avoid large parties. Start early and don't underestimate the time needed for your trip.

Canyoner's should always check with National Parks to ensure that canyoning is still allowed in the area, and if crossing through private land always ask permission from the land-owner first.

The authors accept no responsibility or liability for any incorrect information contained in this guide, or for any incidents happening to, or injuries or losses sustained by, canyoners or other persons caused while, or as a result of, using this guide.

Canyon safely and have a great day.

EQUIPMENT

Carrying appropriate equipment on canyoning trips ensures that safety and enjoyment are maximised. Some equipment considerations are listed below.

Ropes

There are special canyoning ropes that float and are semi-static. Carrying two short ropes is better than one long as you can share the load more easily and shorter pitches may not require both ropes. Know the accepted knot to tie two canyoning ropes together, ensure tails at least 20cm long and dress the knot as tight as pos-

sible. Make sure the two ropes do not get twisted, and before the last person descends, test the ropes to ensure recovery is possible. Before the first abseil soak the canyoning ropes in water, this helps cool the abseil device and prolongs rope life.

Abseil Devices and Harness

It is recommended that you use a line device designed for double rope abseils such as a rappelling rack or gold-tail. In particular these are easier to unclip when in the water while wearing gloves. It is good to know how to abseil without a device on Munter (Italian) Hitches for emergencies. A plate device, such as a stitch-plate, is not ideal for canyoning but useful for a belay on exposed down-climbs. All members of the party must have their own abseil equipment.

Special canyoning harnesses are available but an ordinary climbing harness is sufficient.

Helmets

Properly fitted helmets are essential for any abseiling trip. Don't take them off.

Clothing

Even if the water is only slightly cold long periods in water can cause hypothermia. Wear either a wetsuit or thermals. Some choose to wear shorts over their wetsuit to protect it from damage.

Footwear

Wear sneakers or dunlop volleys which are comfortable and grip well when wet. Hiking boots generally have poor grip on wet rock, are heavier, and harder to swim in and so should be avoided.

Gloves

Fingerless leather gloves are best when working rope with cold wet fingers. If you cut the fingers off gloves ensure they won't rip down a seam.

Packs

As you descend, equipment tends to move from person to person so take packs with a bit of spare room. Even if you don't need to swim a dry bag is a good form of moisture protection but you can get away with plastic bags and rubber bands. A dry bag also helps you float.

Safety Gear

Always carry a first aid kit and make sure that you can use it. Carry a knife for cutting slings. Always have extra food and fluids. Always have a set of prussick loops and know how to use them. If there are any exposed anchors then use safety lines when setting up. Always carry a light in case you take longer than planned.

Food and Water

Always carry an adequate supply of food and water.

EASTERN DORRIGO PLATEAU

Maps: Moleton 1:25,000
Brooklana 1:25,000

With the exception of Mobong Falls, all of these canyons are located on the eastern escarpment of the plateau overlooking the Orara and Bellinger valleys.

The area is shrouded in spectacular rainforest and supports fragile ecosystems. Please take all possible care to avoid damage to these creek systems. All these canyons can be approached with the intention of returning to vehicles via steep ridges or by car shuttles with slightly longer walks downstream to reach local

roads. Most of the roads are quite rough and 4WD is recommended, especially if there has been recent rain. As trees are common anchors, be sure to check sturdiness and use slings to avoid damaging them.

The Wayper Creek, Bangalor Creek, and Urumbilum River Canyons are all located in the Bindarri National Park. Permission must be sought from National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) head office in Coffs Harbour (phone 02 6652 0900) prior to any canyoning, abseiling and rock climbing in the Bindarri National Park. Such activities threaten a number of the rare and significant species found in these highly sensitive environments. Failure to seek permission from the NPWS will jeopardise the future of these activities for yourself and others.

Access. Access details are given individually for the different trips.

Mobong Falls (M, Half-day)

Access. From Cascade (796553M) take the Moses Rock Road heading northwest. Follow this for approximately 5 km till you reach Orange Trees Forest

Road (769576M). Follow this to the north until a right-hand turn at 782623M leads down a rough dirt track to the top of a spectacular 65 m waterfall (801618M).

The falls have been abseiled on the left-hand side off artificial anchors (2 pitch) and the right-hand side over exposed overhangs (long rope required). From here it is only a short walk to the Bo Bo River. Return walk is by the ridge (806628M).

Mirrum Creek (E/M, Long)

Access. From Langleys Forest Road (937565M), numerous unmarked logging tracks lead down to the exit and entry points. These enable you to reach the creek above where it steepens (approximately 950561M).

There are several small waterfalls just downstream which require an abseil of 20 m or a very slippery climb down. Two larger waterfalls and a steep slippery boulder garden are encountered until exit is possible to the south where a major tributary is met (959552M). Exit up the ridge (959551M) to the logging track (955545M), a 400 m ascent, where a car may be left.

Wayper Creek (M/H, Long)

This canyon is located in Bindarri National Park. Prior to attempting this trip contact must be made with the Coffs Harbour National Parks and Wildlife Service office (phone 02 6652 0900) to seek permission.

Access. There are 2 approach routes, one from the top of the plateau from Ulong, and the second from the bottom through Dairyville, upper Urumbilum River and up Pine Road Both may require 4WD after rain. The forest roads are confusing so a map is required. A car shuttle is necessary and permission from

property owners in the Lower Wayper is required. From Ulong take the Coramba Road south for approximately 2 km then turn right onto the Brooklana Road and follow till you reach Corfes Road From the Sawmill (890534B) follow Corfes Road which forks at (919505B). This fork goes north, the other continuing east. To reach the head of the gorge take the northern fork, or continue east to come into the gorge further down.

The creek is brilliant with numerous abseils, swims and water jumps. The rainforest is also superb. The trip is a long day so make sure you start early.

Bangalore Creek (M, Long)

This canyon is located in Bindarri National Park. Prior to attempting this trip contact must be made with the Coffs Harbour National Parks and Wildlife Service office (phone 02 6652 0900) to seek permission.

Access. As for Wayper Ck except continue south onto Range Road and follow to Bangalore Road on the left-hand side. A short drive leads to a walking track just above the creek.

Start at 921483B. A car shuttle is required, or alternately access is possible from Jersey Bull Road to the north with a 500 m walk out to vehicles.

Stunning scenery, approximately 8 abseils and water jumps make this trip one of the most popular canyons in the area. At the junction of Urumbilum River there is an interesting pot hole in the last constriction. This would be very dangerous at high water.

Exit is the same as for Urumbilum Creek. Go up a steep ridge (937479B) from Bangalor and Urumbilum Junctions to Bangalor Road. Alternatively, for access to Jersey Bull Road you can exit at the ridge (934478B) immediately after

the second last abseil, a large pool with a cave and log spanning the falls. Walk up the ridge and then old logging tracks to a power line easement.

Urumbilum River (M/H, Long)

This canyon is located in Bindarri National Park. Prior to attempting this trip contact must be made with the Coffs Harbour National Parks and Wildlife Service office (phone 02 6652 0900) to seek permission.

Access. As per Wayper Creek from Ulong, but turn off Corfes Road onto Range Road (920506B). Follow this till you hit Urumbilum Creek Road and turn left onto it (911462B). Walk downstream from the bridge (936455B) if you can do a car shuttle. Alternatively use Bangalore Road and enter the canyon from Falls Road (928463B). This is a good spot to park for a return walk along Bangalore Road.

This is also one of the more popular canyons in the area due to its beautiful scenery and challenging abseils. The major waterfalls are marked on the map. After the first abseil (934463B) the creek runs into an enclosed canyon with poor anchors. This is best entered by traversing about 50 m around on the right-hand side to a large tree.

Six major waterfalls are descended and 55 m ropes are handy, although 50 m ropes are often used. Below Mirrong Falls (the fifth abseil) the creek flattens out for over 500 m until the next constriction is reached. There are two more abseils here.

Exit is easy, although steep, up many of the ridges on the western side of the river to Bangalore Road. It is possible to join Bangalore Creek and walk downstream to the first bridge if you have a driver (948494B).

Gleniffer Falls on the Never Never River (X, Long)

This canyon is for very experienced parties only.

Access. Via the many roads north of the falls, either Whitneys Road (883496B) or Farleys Road (894492B). A very large car shuttle through Dorrigo is needed. The exit from the canyon is to continue downstream to the Promised Land Road (907411B).

The country in this area overlooks the Bellinger Valley and is dominated by the huge tower on Mount Moonbil. To the east of Moonbil is Mount GooberGoober and just to the south the Never Never River emerges and plunges 360 m over Gleniffer Falls (897442B) into the Promised Land.

This awesome waterfall is the most serious canyon in the area and only received its first decent in 1994. The river has a significant catchment and the canyon is quite narrow, hence the canyon should only be attempted at very low water levels.

Be prepared for big abseils into turbulent pools and an unprotected rock climb onto a block on the right-hand side for the second abseil. At the bottom of the second abseil stay attached to the rope for a climb on the left-hand side (serious) where piton anchors should be found on a ledge. The anchors for the fourth abseil are on the right-hand side. Below, on ledges level with the pinnacle, climb over the ridge on the right-hand side to sling the pinnacle. By doing this you avoid the treacherous slot. This path follows a series of abseils down vegetated ledges beside the arete away from the actual falls. The descent then continues straight down the wall into the pool below.

All up eight pitches are needed with many suspect anchors. A full rack should be taken along with a lot of slings.

EBOR FALLS

Maps: Ebor 1:25,000

A small part of the upper reaches of the gorge around Ebor Falls is contained in Guy Fawkes River National Park.

Access. The falls are reached by way of a well sign-posted road which leaves the Waterfall Way (Armidale to Dorrigo Road) just west of Ebor.

Ebor Falls (E/M, Half-day)

There are two falls: the upper and lower, both close to the picnic area / car park. Both falls can be abseiled, with the lower falls being approximately 80 m in height. Tree anchors are available. There are some constrictions further downstream.



CHAELUNDI FALLS

Maps: Chaelundi 1:25,000

Chaelundi Falls is located within the Guy Fawkes River National Park.

Access. From Ebor drive towards Grafton past the Coffs Harbour turn off. Take the Marengo Road from Hernani, and follow logging roads to the Chaelundi Rest Area. An alternative route is to take Sheep Station Creek Road from Dundurrabin.

Chaelundi Falls (M, Short/ Half-day)

From the car park at the Chaelundi Rest Area a track leads 500 m to a lookout directly above the falls. The water fall drops roughly 200 m and requires about 4 pitches using two 50 m ropes. The pitches are immediately after each other and most pass through the waterfall. After the last abseil follow the creek down through some large boulder gardens for a few kilometres before exiting to the left and up via Lucifer's thumb.

Alternatively, for a quick exit avoiding the walk downstream, you can scramble directly up a gully to the south and end up back on the Lucifer's thumb walking track.

STYX RIVER

Maps: Jeogla 1:25,000

Below the Kempsey Road the Styx enters a spectacular canyon with three major waterfalls, which makes for a challenging descent. After about 1.5 km the canyon opens out a little to form a steep-sided gorge with towering rock bluffs and dense rainforest. Proceeding downstream the gorge slowly widens and dry sclerophyll forest eventually dominates.

Access. From Armidale, follow the Grafton Road through Wollomombi and turn-off at the Kempsey Road.

Styx River (X, Long)

The canyon starts just downstream of the bridge (198155J) on the Wollomombi-Kempsey Road. Take the first right after the bridge to the top of the first fall.

There are several very large abseils, one into a slot using chockstone anchors. The canyon is very hazardous. The gorge flattens out for a short time until a sharp left-hand bend marks the largest waterfall (probably two pitches).

Soon after, exit is possible up a ridge on the left-hand side. Water in the Styx River is very cold even in summer so wear a wet suit! This canyon is for very experienced parties only.

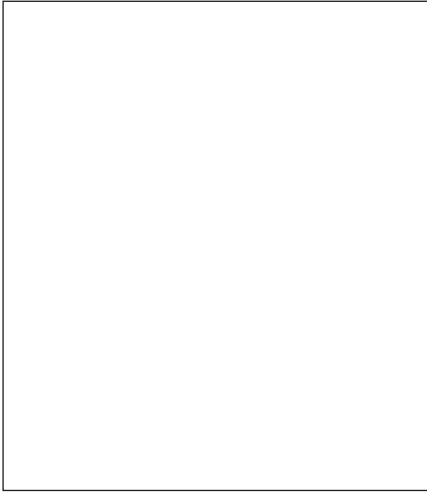
WOLLOMOMBI AND CHANDLER GORGES

Maps: Jeogla 1:25,000

The Wollomombi and Chandler Rivers meet in the upper section of a dramatic gorge system, below the junction of these streams, the Chandler flows through a canyon known as the "Inaccessible Gulf". Huge waterfalls and gorges make this a favourite playground.

All of these trips are hard to extreme, and should only be attempted by very experienced canyoning parties who can move quickly.

To start a canyoning trip there are four alternatives to get to the bottom of the gorge proper. You can approach from the east (recommended), west (not recommended), or abseil down Chandler Falls (highly recommended), or Wollomombi Falls (extreme). Be warned that getting to the river junction is only half the trip, the traditional exit moves from the gorge



are either downstream via the Inaccessible Gulf or to climb the Wollomombi-Chandler Ridge (see climbing section): both are long and demanding. The Chandler Falls-Inaccessible Gulf combination is a classic.

Note that after heavy rain when the falls are pumping (significant flows can be seen either side of the second Chandler Falls belay station from the lookout) a strong turbulent current forms in the sheer-sided Inaccessible Gulf pool, making the 50 m swim very dangerous. Parties are strongly advised not to attempt the canyon under such circumstances.

A number of tributaries in the lower (downstream) section of the Chandler gorge, namely Green Gully and St Helena Creek, also offer challenging canyoning.

Access. The turn off to Wollomombi Falls is 38 km east of Armidale on the Waterfall Way (Armidale to Dorrigo Road).

Chandler Falls - Inaccessible Gulf (H, Long)

This is a long day trip involving a steep descent, some long swims, a number of abseils and a steep climb out of the gorge at the end of the day.

From the Falls Lookout follow the track over the Wollombombi River bridge to the last lookout. From the lookout, walk along the lip until you can descend into the Chandler River and follow this downstream until a large waterfall is reached (085215J). Two ropes are required for the first abseil (40 m).

During even moderate flows scrambling from the plunge pool of the first abseil to the start of second abseil can be hazardous. Stay on rope until safe: 55 m ropes are useful here. The second and third abseils also require double ropes, and are both directly into deep pools. Rock-hopping leads to a 10 m abseil, with further swimming and scrambling before the junction with the Wollomombi River is reached.

At this point you can continue downstream via the Inaccessible Gulf (described below) or via climbing the Wollomombi-Chandler ridge (see climbing section).

To exit via the Inaccessible Gulf follow the Chandler River downstream for 2 to 3 hours until a large water-shute is reached (069203J). Two ropes are required for an overhung 40 m abseil into a sheer-sided pool. There is a 50 m swim which leads to the top of a 15 m waterfall.

It is possible to leave the gorge at this point by scrambling up a very steep forested gully on the northwest side to the ridge above “the Inaccessible Gulf” (067204J). To continue down the gorge a 15 m abseil is again required, into a steep sided pool. The descent is on the eastern side of this fall. Continue down to the

metal steps at the bottom of the ridge track (064206J), and follow this track back to the car-park.

Wollomombi Falls from the East - Safer (H, Long)

From the Falls Lookout, follow the National Parks trail northeast, over the Wollomombi and Chandler Rivers. Follow the southern edge of the gorge to the top of the prominent ridge at 077213J. To the immediate south of the ridge there is a vegetated gully (076213J) which can be followed to the gorge floor. About one third of the way down this gully develops into a steep scree slope and considerable caution is required to avoid dislodging loose rocks. Ropes are not required but only one member of the party should be on the scree at any one time.

From the bottom it is an easy scramble over large boulders to the Wollomombi Chandler Ridge and the base of Wollomombi Falls, providing that the river is not in flood. It is possible to penetrate some distance up the Chandler Gorge, which has three major waterfalls; however, some swimming is necessary to get to the falls. The first of these can be negotiated by scrambling up the left-hand side, but an abseil is recommended for the return (see Chandler Falls below).

Exit via the Inaccessible Gulf (as per Chandler Falls - Inaccessible Gulf) or via climbing the Wollomombi-Chandler ridge (see climbing section).

Wollomombi Falls from the West - Dangerous (X, Long)

Getting to the gorge floor from the Falls Lookout is difficult and dangerous. The rock is extremely rotten and the route is constantly eroding away. Most of the gullies end in scree slopes above steep bluffs. A rope and brown trousers may be

needed on some sections of the descent, which is constantly deteriorating as it erodes.

From the car park walk 100 m towards the falls where there is a long grassy platform slightly below the rim of the gorge. At the far end of the platform is an obvious gully.

Stay on the spur making a few detours around minor obstacles until you reach a small saddle. The spur bluffs out beyond the next high point past the saddle. From the saddle move right, then down and to the right until you arrive at a steep, slippery watercourse. A scrubby steep ridge to the left of the watercourse avoids this steep section of the gully. Once below this section continue on down the watercourse, until you arrive at another steep section close to the gorge floor. From here either climb down the gully if dry or move left (safer) into bushes and scree, follow this down then cross the watercourse again and continue down to the gorge floor.

Exit via the Inaccessible Gulf (as per Chandler Falls - Inaccessible Gulf) or via a climb of the Wollomombi-Chandler ridge (see climbing section).

Wollomombi Falls (H/X, Long)

An awesome undertaking considering at 220 m Wollomombi Falls is the highest waterfall in New South Wales. From the Wollomombi Falls Lookout follow the National Parks trail to the bridge over the Wollomombi River. Some very pleasant scrambling along the left side of the stream enables the top of the falls to be reached (this is a lovely short trip in itself). The first anchor is a large block on the right-hand side of the falls. Blackberry covered ledges and anchor locations will ensure you feel the exposure. About four pitches are required on the main falls. Be careful when retrieving ropes from the

fourth pitch, as they often get caught on the jagged non-vertical cliff. Two additional pitches make for a safe descent to the river. Also, when the falls are flowing spray-drift increases exposure on these lower belay ledges.

Exit via the Inaccessible Gulf (as per Chandler Falls - Inaccessible Gulf) or via climbing the Wollomombi-Chandler ridge (see climbing section).

Green Gully (H, Short)

From the campground at Wollomombi Falls walk along the dog fence to Green Gully (218055J).

Descend down through an old mine shaft and out through a window in the cliff face. The second fall is approximately 90 m, with 6 abseils in total. It is generally dry except after rain and there are lots of loose sharp rocks on the first abseil, which can be a risk to ropes and people. Take care!

Exit via Green Gully spur or the walking track 1 km upstream on the Chandler River.

St Helena Creek (H, Long)

Continue past Green Gully for approximately 1.5 km along the dog fence until you reach St Helena Creek. Start at 214043J. The creek drops very quickly at first requiring approximately 8 abseils. Anchors are very scarce and are usually rocks in or around water, so long tapes are necessary plus two 60 m ropes. This is a demanding day with swimming, rock hopping and abseiling, and will take 6 to 10 hours depending on the party size.

Exit the same as Green Gully.

ELAINE'S GORGE

Maps: Jeogla 1:25,000
Hillgrove 1:25,000

Of the well-known locations for trips in the area, this small tributary of the Chandler River is considered to be second only to the Wollomombi-Chandler Ridge (climbing section) in degree of difficulty and reward for effort. It is known locally as Elaine's Gorge, after the original UNEMC explorer, but is named on the maps as Kirkwoods Creek.

Elaine's Gorge consists of a series of small waterfalls and canyons. The canyons are mostly continuous from the foot of one waterfall to the head of the next, and are up to 30 m deep. The chasms vary in width from 2 to 7 m, and the narrower ones are occasionally jammed by giant chockstones. It is a canyoner's delight! Two 30 m ropes are required for this trip.

Three trips are described here, the first a walk, the second is the major canyon trip and the third is a shorter version of the canyon trip.

Access. 25 km east of Armidale on the Waterfall Way (Armidale to Dorrigo Road) turn right and travel to Hillgrove. From there follow the Long Point Road to "Eastview" (002168 H) where permission should be sought. Take the first turn left after "Eastview" and walk east from the end of this track. After about 1 km the head of Elaine's Creek is reached.

Upper Falls - Chandler River - Lower Falls (M, Half-day)

This walk is a good reconnaissance for more difficult trips in the area. Starting at 029154H, descend to the Chandler River by either the northern (040151H) or the more difficult southern (033142H) ridges adjacent to Elaine's Gorge. From the junction of the two streams it is possible to walk up Elaine's Creek for about 1 km before the lower waterfall forces a retreat up the steep side of the southern ridge.

Upper Falls - Canyon - Lower Falls (H, Long)

This very difficult trip begins at the upper waterfall (029154H) in Elaine's Gorge. From here it is possible to abseil and swim all the way to the Chandler River. Two climbing ropes and equipment for up to fifteen abseils are required!

The journey should only be attempted by small experienced parties.

Depending on the water-level, even a dawn start may not ensure an easy exit before dark. The trip takes approximately 6 hours for small parties and up to 10 hours for large parties. The alternatives are several roped pitches up the steep, loose sides of the gorge, or an uncomfortable bivvy with a definite risk of exposure in certain canyon sections. Progress is much more rapid when the water level is low. Exit from the junction with the Chandler River up either the north or south ridges of Elaine's Gorge is best.

Southern Ridge - Canyon - Lower Falls (H, Long)

A shorter version of the canyon trip described above is to follow the long southern ridge (033142 H) for about 500 m towards the Chandler River from the dingo fence. At this point, zig-zag down the steep gorge side to Elaine's Gorge. From here it is spectacular canyoning to the Chandler River junction. Two climbing ropes and equipment for up to ten abseils should be carried.

BAKERS CREEK

Maps: Hillgrove 1:25,000

Bakers Creek Gorge is 24 km east of Armidale. It is a steep sided gorge that runs from north to south and is around 600 m deep. Such characteristics not only test the occasional canyoner but also activities of gold miners, with the aban-

doned tramways and large-scale subterranean shafts a testament to this continuing struggle.

Access. Head towards Hillgrove by taking a right turn from the Armidale-Grafton Road, 23 km (921212H) east of Armidale. Follow this for a couple of kilometres. Cross Bakers Creek Bridge (934206H) and park the car approximately 150 m from the bridge. The falls are only a short walk directly across the paddock.

Bakers Creek Falls (E/M, Short)

With its easier access and grade this gorge provides a good initiation into canyoning in the New England. If you need the practice abseil the falls, otherwise climb down the gully at the left-hand side of the falls. Watch your hands on the sword grass. Boulder hop downstream about 1 km where a series of waterfalls are encountered. Use a tree anchor for the first abseil and then swim the 50 m pool. Travelling down the river a 30 m waterfall is encountered, but from here the going becomes much easier. Exit routes are given in the bush-walking section.

Do not continue past the canyon (934194H) further along Bakers Creek Gorge. Active mining is operational approximately 1 km further down from this point.

APSLEY GORGE

Maps: Apsley 1:25,000

Apsley Gorge National Park covers an area of 6,600 ha in the gorges of the Apsley and Tia rivers. Both rivers have large and accessible waterfalls at their heads, but their spectacular gorges are difficult to penetrate. As the Park is surrounded by private land permission must

be sought before entering it except at the picnic areas by the two waterfalls. The Park extends downstream to the junction of the Apsley and Trinidad Creek.

Access. Apsley Gorge is reached by travelling 20 km east of Walcha on the Oxley Highway.

Apsley Falls (M, Half-day)

This canyon is reached by parking at the Apsley Falls Lookout. Then walk to the top of the falls (824641A). Two 80 m ropes are the minimum. Up to three pitches may be needed, using trees and pegs as anchors.

The canyon ends up in a very large plug hole which would be dangerous in high water. A narrow slot opens up where steep ridges can be ascended or an exit can be found by continuing further downstream. Care should be taken on the ascent as the ridges are usually steep and loose. The ridge at 822635A is a good exit.

Apsley Canyon (M, Half-day)

About 1 km downstream from the campground there is a very steep route, down to the gorge floor (818635A). Great care is needed. The route begins on a small rock-strewn spur, continues down a steep grass slope and then follows a creek bed to the river. Moving downstream for about 20 minutes you will reach a steep sided canyon with approximately a 100 metre swim between huge rock walls 20 m apart. There are good water jumps off the waterfall at the head.

The route back to the rim is the reverse of the above .

Oneo - The Lower Canyon (M, Long)

Access to the gorge is through "Oneo" (847602A) 24 km southeast of Walcha. Permission must be sort from the landholder beforehand.

From "Oneo" follow an indistinct ridge to the northeast until it begins to drop steeply (865623A). To descend into the gorge follow the ridge closest to Wilsons Creek. There is an excellent swimming hole about 100 m downstream of the base of the ridge. The canyon is about 3.5 km upstream of here (845616A). Travel upstream is fairly slow, with many swims being necessary. There are also a few small waterfalls, which can be negotiated by high traverses. The canyon itself is well worth the visit with vertical rock walls over 100 m high and only about 20 m apart. A good exit ridge is about 2.0 km downstream of the canyon at 861625A.

Stoney Creek Canyon (H, Long)

This walk begins at 836614A. Stoney Creek Falls are approximately 70 m high, and there are 6 other abseils between the falls and the Apsley River, some up to 35 m. Take great care with the last fall as the rocks are very sharp and ropes can be easily ruined.

Continue through to Apsley Falls campground as per Apsley Canyon trip. This takes 6 to 10 hours. Water in Stoney Creek is cold, so wet suits are handy, even in summer.

ROWLEY'S CREEK

Maps: Rowley's Creek 1:25,000
Apsley 1:25,000
Walcha 1:25,000

This area is a declared wilderness area within Oxley Wild Rivers National Park.

The vegetation is a combination of dry sclerophyll forest and large patches of dry rainforest. The stream is unusual in that it often flows underground for long stretches. It is advisable to telephone the relevant landholders and the National Parks before undertaking any trip in this area as all access is either through private property or National Park.

Access. Take the Moona Plains Road from Walcha showground for approximately 45 km, following the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park signs. Take the turnoff (939692A) and follow to “Jiskadale” (951722RC).

Upper Rowley’s Creek Gorge (M, Long)

This is a long day walk suitable only for small fit parties with some rock climbing experience. Ropes may be helpful but are not necessary.

From “Jiskadale” it is possible to drive along the track that runs westward to the head of Rowley’s Creek (914723RC). A number of streams enter the head of the gorge and care should be taken in accurately locating the route described below. Between the two creeks shown on the map at 908729RC and 909729RC there are two steep ridges. It is possible to descend the most westerly of these for quite a distance before a 40 m bluff is encountered. This bluff can be avoided by traversing across steep slopes to the eastern ridge. Alternatively, the bluff can be negotiated by way of an abseil requiring two 50 m ropes.

Travelling down the gorge is a matter of walking over and around large boulders with some swimming or traversing of the larger pools. The gorge begins to open out after the junction with Redman’s Creek and walking becomes easier.

The recommended exit from the gorge is the southerly ridge (934772RC). Two bluffs, each of about 10 to 15 m, have to be negotiated in the ascent of this ridge. These require some rock climbing skill and as the rock is loose, so make sure your helmets are secure.

An alternative but more difficult exit is up the ridge (910761RC) before Redman’s Creek. Although there are no bluffs this is a long, difficult and tiring ascent.

DANGARS GORGE

Maps: Enmore 1:25,000
Gostwyck 1:25,000
National Parks leaflets

Dangars Gorge has some excellent summer trips involving rock-hopping, swimming and no rope work.

Access. From Armidale, follow Dangarsleigh Road and the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park signs for approximately 20 km to the Dangars Falls car park.

Dangars Falls - Mihi Ridge (M/H, Long)

This trip should not be attempted if the water is high. Descend to the bottom of the falls via the track down the steep gully just down from of the carpark. Once at the bottom swim the first large pool and continue downstream. This involves negotiating one 10 m waterfall, this can be done easily on the right-hand side if the water isn’t too high. There is lots of bouldering and swims involved.

It is possible to exit up McDirty’s Creek (808052E), or continue on down Salisbury Waters. The gorge opens out and walking becomes easier. Eventually, Mihi Gorge joins Salisbury Waters at a right angle at (9825043E). To leave the gorge, find the walking track on your right, and return to the car-park.

For the whole trip allow 5 to 10 hours depending on the party size.

Mihi Gorge (M, Long)

From the Dangars Falls car park, follow the well signed walking tracks for about 4 km to Mihi Falls (788033G).

Although close to Dangars Gorge, Mihi Gorge has a very different character. The head of the gorge is more rugged with many large boulders, but further downstream the sides are not as steep as Dangars. Considerable stream banks exist, which is unusual so close to the head of a gorge.

To descend into the gorge scramble down the obvious gully from the dingo fence at the very head of the gorge or, alternatively, abseil down Mihi Falls. Once at the bottom, a large overhanging rock blocks the gorge and a 7 m abseil is necessary. Further rock-hopping leads to the second set of falls. These are about 50 m down rocks which slope at 45°, and ropes may be required for a descent if water is flowing down the route. Alternatives include a 20 m abseil just upstream of the falls, or a scramble along the southern edge of the gorge followed by a descent to the gorge bottom below the waterfall.

There is an enormous landslip above the falls on the northern wall of the gorge. Travel below this is best avoided after heavy rain. It is possible to climb out of the gorge on the southern side just above the second fall. Below the second falls, the walking soon becomes easier. To avoid a very long day, a possible exit from the gorge is to take the Salisbury Waters track from the junction of Mihi Creek and Salisbury Waters.

Mihi Falls (M/H, Long)

Access is the same as Mihi Gorge, but cross the dog fence and walk to the top of the Mihi Falls. The unique zig-zag shaped falls and gorge proper are negotiated in 5 magnificent abseils, requiring 2 x 50-60 m ropes, and approximately 1 hour of boulder hopping.

From a small bluff located perhaps 20 m to the south west of the first waterfall a fixed anchor can be found. Note the first abseil is slightly awkward to start. Abseil directly down to the pool, cross the pool to find the anchors for the second abseil. Stay on rope until safe: 55 m ropes are useful here. Also be aware of rockfall danger from those on the first abseil.

The second abseil is directly down to a ledge at 10 m, then continue directly down to an impressive overhanging section at the edge of the falls. Again stay on ropes and climb diagonally across slippery rock to a small bluff. Belay the remaining party from a safe position.

The third abseil is directly into another pool, which can be easily climbed around or swum. To start follow the obvious bluff-line about 10 m from the second abseils' endpoint. The fixed belay provides an easy abseil into another pool.

The fourth abseil should not be attempted when water levels are high, as it follows the direct line of the waterfall. If unsafe to continue, it is possible to exit via the obvious gully at the very head of Mihi gorge to the dingo fence. Otherwise start at the fixed anchors at the lip of the waterfall and proceed down a long slot. Finally stay on rope to climb over then abseil down some large blocks at the base of the falls. Boulder hop down the gorge. About 25 minutes from the fourth abseil you must carefully downclimb a reasonably well pro-

tected slot. Packs can be slid or lowered down. Further boulder hopping brings you to another waterfall.

The fifth abseil is accessed via a slot on the far left-hand side. Climb down the slot to the main slab, then facing away from the pool below, you will find a small cave. Climb through the cave to the main waterfall and abseil off the fixed anchors to the big pool and then down the river. This is the last abseil. Boulder hop downstream, you should wade through a pool, then proceed about 250 m to reach the first exit ridge on your left. Climb a steep ridge, around 400 m to join the Dangars - Salisbury Waters track. Return in the direction of the Dingo fence (45 minute walk) otherwise you will end up at Salisbury Waters.

KUNDERANG BROOK

Maps: Kemp's Pinnacle 1:25,000
Banda Banda 1:25,000

Kunderang Brook consists of a fairly steep gorge with numerous small waterfalls and canyon sections through rainforest patches and Eucalypt scrub.

Access. From the west the area can be approached from the Oxley Highway by way of the Kangaroo Flat Road then Mooraback Road which leads to the Racecourse Trail. It is a long drive into the area, to ensure enough time for the canyon you might need to camp the night before at Mooraback Camping Area.

Kunderang Brook (H, Long)

The canyon starts from the Racecourse Trail, leave the cars at 312560BB and walk east to Kunderang Brook, boulder hopping down-stream to the first abseil. Two fifty metre canyoning ropes are required for this trip, the canyon involves approximately 10 abseils using tree anchors, unprotected down-climbing and

some swims. Progress is slowed when the water level is high, due to slippery rock. Exit immediately after the last 30 m abseil (326582KP), walk up the long ridge tending south west to 310570KP. Return to cars via the Racecourse Trail.

Caving

This section of the guide is directed to the competent caver, rock climber, or bushwalker who wishes to know what equipment and techniques are required to explore the caves of northeastern New South Wales, or who wish to form an impression of what the caves themselves are like. Although the region does not have as many caves as some others in the Eastern Highlands, it does nevertheless contain some interesting cave areas which are worthy of description. For those wishing to learn more about the “art” of caving, the Australian Speleological Federation Handbook is recommended.

WARNING

The cave areas of the northeastern New South Wales can be grouped into two broad categories, horizontal and vertical cave systems, both with their own risks and hazards. Horizontal caving may include crawling or squeezing through narrow passages, water sections, and some climbing. Vertical caving involves advanced technical expertise in the use of ropes or ladders to ascend and descend vertical pitches.

Caves in this regions are often remote and lack direct access to emergency services. Consequently cavers must be self-reliant, well prepared and competent. Generally a caving party should be a minimum of four persons, with at least one member holding a current first-aid certificate, and all members aware of correct emergency procedure. When planning a caving trip the cave leader should be aware of the potential hazards associated with the cave and ensure the party is adequately pre-

pared. It is a team members responsibility to remain alert and in communication with the cave leader.

A number of limestone caving areas on the northeastern New South Wales contain foul air, which has the potential to inhibit caver function and thus increase risk and cave hazard. Foul air is defined as an atmosphere that contains greater than 0.5% carbon dioxide and/or lower than 18% oxygen by volume. Brief exposure to foul air causes increased breathing and heart rate, whilst prolonged exposure may cause clumsiness, dizziness and even severe headaches. Prolonged exposure to high concentrations of foul air can result in unconsciousness and death. In the absence of sophisticated testing equipment, a flame extinction test confirms the presence of low oxygen concentrations, a significant component of foul air. The flame test can be undertaken by lighting a safety match or butane cigarette lighter into the suspected foul air. If the flame is extinguished foul air is present. Note that the flame test is not an accurate indication of carbon dioxide concentration, the main stimulus for increased respiratory rate in the human body. If foul air is suspected and a flame test fails to remain alight, members should immediately begin to exit in an orderly manner. Inexperienced foul air cavers must be guided to safety without panic.

Another potential cave hazard, although fortunately rare in Australian caves, is exposure to the potentially fatal fungal infection call Histoplasmosis. In Australia the fungus *Histoplasma capulatum* has only been found to occur in caves with uncomfortably high humidity and temper-

ate in association with dried guano of the Bent-wing Bat (*Miniopterus schreibersii blepotis*). Only one caving area in the New England has ever reported Histoplasmosis infection. Infection occurs when cavers breath in fungal spores adhered to dust particles. So caves with wet or damp guano have a greatly diminished chance of causing infection. Degree of infection may vary, depending on the level of exposure and your state of immunity. In the majority of low exposure cases the disease may go unnoticed; however, acute to chronic infection can lead to Pulmonary Histoplasmosis, a severe infection of the lungs that without adequate treatment can be fatal. Cavers should remain vigilant and assist with early diagnosis. The best prevention is to avoid known sites of exposure.

Caving is an inherently dangerous and risky activity made safer by organisations of experienced cavers with the right

knowledge, training and equipment. If you wish to go caving we strongly recommend that you join a caving club.

The authors accept no responsibility or liability for any incorrect information contained in this guide, or for any accidents happening to, or injuries sustained by, cavers or other persons while, or as a result of, using this guide.

Cave safely and enjoy the experience.

CAVE LOCATIONS AND ACCESS

The caves of northeastern New South Wales have suffered greatly at the hands of vandals. In order to protect them from further damage no details of the precise locations of cave entrances will be given in this guide. In some instances access to caves in the region is restricted even if the location is known. For example the Willi Willi Bat Cave is now under the control

ETHICS

The minimum acceptable standard of behaviour is that set out in the Australian Speleological Federation's Code of Ethics. The key points are:

No rubbish should be left or buried in a cave, and if possible, rubbish left by others should be removed.

Avoid faecal pollution by preparing yourself beforehand.

Names or other inscriptions should never be written on cave walls.

Formations should not be removed from caves, even smashed ones.

Do not publicise the exact locations of cave entrances unless there is nothing to be gained by restricting information.

Do not open up squeezes as they provide natural protection against vandalism.

Don't touch formations.

of the National Parks and Wildlife Service and can only be visited at certain times of the year by speleologists who have received permission to conduct research in the cave. Another example concerns the caves at “Isis River”, where the landowner will only admit Speleology Clubs.

Because of such restrictions, it is advisable to go caving with one of the established speleological societies in the area. These are:

- UNE Outdoor Adventure Club, c/o Sport UNE, University of New England, Armidale, 2351
- Kempsey Speleological Society, 2 Albert Street, Kempsey, 2440
- University of Queensland Speleological Society, c/o The Union, University of Queensland, St. Lucia, 4067.
- Newcastle and Hunter Valley Speleological Society inc., P.O. Box 15, Broadmeadow, New South Wales, 2292.

EQUIPMENT

The caves in northeastern New South Wales are mostly small, tight, warm and dry. The equipment required to explore these caves includes:

Lighting

It is usually prudent to carry three sources of light for safety. For regular cavers, the miner’s wet cell headlamp torch is recommended, but unfortunately these are very expensive. There is a good range of quality headlamps available from outdoor shops. Helmet clips for attaching them are sold separately. Candles are also

useful for markers and for testing air quality.

Helmets

A helmet with a four-point attachment chinstrap should be worn for any vertical caving. A construction worker’s helmet is not suitable for vertical caving. Some construction helmets are suitable for horizontal caving, although in small caves and tight passages the ridged peaks and wide rims tend to catch, and the chin straps supplied may choke a caver who is caught in a squeeze. Unfortunately, models without the wide rims are often difficult to obtain. Climbing helmets are ideal for caving, provided that a headlamp can be attached to the front.

Ropes and Ladders

Some of the caves in the area have short vertical sections requiring the use of either ladders or single rope techniques (SRT). The tightness of many of the caves in this area largely precludes abseiling and the use of jumars. Thus electron ladders are still favoured in these caves. If using ladders, a belay rope should always be employed. As limestone is very abrasive, care should be taken when using ropes so as not to damage them.

Clothing

Cave temperatures are commonly 15-20°C and thus a shirt and shorts worn under overalls are sufficiently warm for most conditions. However, it should be remembered that a long enforced stay underground can arise through injury, and warmer clothing will be needed under these conditions. If the cave is wet then thermals or a wetsuit may be needed.

Boots

The most suitable types are medium weight bushwalking boots. Sandshoes are adequate for easier caves but tend to slip on mud banks or wet limestone.

Butane Cigarette Lighter

There is a danger of four air in limestone caves (see warning). A cigarette lighter should be used as a test in low-lying pockets. If the lighter can't support a flame, the party should begin to exit immediately without rush or panic.

Food and Water

Always have an adequate supply of food and water.

CAVE GENESIS

In this region, sizeable caves are almost entirely confined to limestone. However, geologically the area consists mainly of granitic intrusions and noncalcareous sediments and has relatively few limestones compared to many other regions. Nevertheless, limestones do occur in two belts of Palaeozoic rocks which lie on the western and eastern margins of the New England Tablelands. The western belt runs north from Barrington Tops to Manilla and includes limestones at Isaac's Creek, the Isis River and Moore Creek. The eastern belt runs

from Kempsey to Kunderang and includes the Moparra, Willi Willi and Stockyard Creek limestone areas. In addition there are some limestones on the northern margin of the Tablelands such as that at Ashford Road. These limestones generally outcrop in narrow belts up to 5 to 12 km long. The caves in these limestones have generally been formed by solution along joints and faults, and less often along bedding planes. Very often cave areas within the one region are very similar in their geology and occur in country with similar topography and vegetation.

The caves in the region show evidence of four different modes of development. Many have had a complex history with more than one type of development occurring over time. These four basic types of development are:

Nothephreatic

This term refers to cave development below the water table where there are no strong directional currents. These caves begin as small solution tubes along planes of weakness and may join to form a spongework of variable-sized cavities. Under favourable conditions quite large passages can develop. Spongework of this type can be found in Main and Helictite Caves at Isaac's Creek.

Dynamic Phreatic

This type of development occurs where groundwater moves quickly through cave passages under an hydraulic head. Both erosion and relatively rapid solution of the passage walls occur. Certain parts of Helictite Cave at Isaac's Creek display evidence of this type of development.

Vadose Flow

Where air spaces are present any underground streams will flow under the influence of gravity giving rise to distinctive solutional features such as horizontal grooves where the stream has cut into the cave wall on the outside of bends. As the stream cuts its way down to the present the limestones are similar in age and type.

Vadose Seepage

Water seeping down through planes of weakness in the limestone may dissolve the rock to form relatively simple vertical shafts. However, these are often blocked by rockfall or earth-fill, since there may be no underground stream to remove debris from the shaft. TR-19 at Isaacs Creek is a shaft of this type.

UPPER MANNING

Maps: Upper Manning 1:100,000
Ellerston 1:100,000

This region includes the Barrington, Barry and Glenrock Cave areas which are situated in tributary valleys of the Manning River. The caves are located near the valley floors in areas of high relief and have developed in relatively small lenses of Devonian limestone.

Barrington Cave

This cave is located in the valley of Limestone Creek about 50 km northwest of Gloucester. It is an easy cave to enter but has a 13 m ladder pitch at the bottom. This pitch is wide and overhung and single rope techniques can be used. About 3 m above floor level a side passage leads off into a long squeeze. The cave has a large bat population which appears to be a maternity colony. There are several smaller caves nearby.

Barry Cave

This cave lies to the northwest of Barrington Cave near the head of the Barnard River. The cave has a vertical fissure entrance and is developed on three levels. The lowest level consists of tight and muddy stream passages, one of which extends through to the contact between the limestone and adjacent shales. The middle level passage passes through two tight squeezes before termination in a chamber with extensive earth fill. The top level consists of two linked chambers with thick deposits of guano on the floors.

Glenrock Caves

Glenrock Caves are located 120 km north-east of Muswellbrook. The caves are on private property and permission must be gained from the property manager.

The area boasts over 100 caves, although many of these are only small vertical shafts. Glenrock caves provides one of the best locations to practice SRT and ladder work on the New England. One of the larger caves in the area is the aptly named “Hens Teeth” (GR-30) at a depth of around 47 m. Caves this size at Glenrock are “as rare as hens teeth”. A good weekend cave hit list would be: The Sentinels (GR-23), Westgate (GR-18), Curtains and Lace (GR-19), Figtree (GR-1), Good Drop (GR-32), Head First (GR-69), Overseers (GR-11) and GRime of the Century (GR-100).

The Glenrock Caves are notorious for their high concentrations of foul air, so a flame test (see warning section) should be undertaken when descending into vertical chambers. In November 1993 one caver in a group of twelve was diagnosed with histoplasmosis (see warning section). The exact cave source of the

fungus is unknown but “Bats and Bandicoots” (GR-43) was suspected. At the time of this infection GR-43 contained large quantities of dry bat guano with an uncomfortable high cave temperature. Cavers to the area should understand the risks associated with this region.

TIMOR

Maps: Murrurundi 1:100,000
Nundle 1:100,000
Ellerston 1:100,000

The Timor Cave Region lies to the west of the Upper Manning Region, on the other side of the Mount Royal Range. It contains the Isaac’s Creek, Isis River and Crawney Pass Caves. The caves have developed in a middle Devonian limestone.

Crawney Pass

At Crawney Pass, there are three small caves located on a travelling stock reserve beside the Nundle-Timor Road. The caves have vertical entrances with pitches up to 6 m deep. Bone Cave and Suicide Hole each have about 35 m of passages. Suicide Hole did contain a serious concentration of carbon dioxide, but this problem does not appear to have been encountered by speleologists in recent years.

Isaac’s Creek

The caves at Isaac’s Creek are commonly known as Timor Caves and are situated about 25 km northeast of Murrurundi. The area contains five sizeable caves and a number of smaller ones.

Main Cave (TR-1) consists of a large dry cavern with several smaller passages leading out of it. There is a basalt dyke on the western side of the cavern. The cave has been extensively vandalised with parts of the walls being covered with inscriptions. This must be the only cave

area in Australia where the vandals use stencils.

Belfry Cave (TR-2) is the second largest of the caves in the area. It has a fairly large chamber and some smaller passages. It formerly contained pool rims and calcite dog tooth spar but these have been destroyed. There is a basalt dyke in this cave similar to that in Main Cave.

Hill Cave or Far Top Cave (TR-7/8) has two main sections linked by a long steep squeeze. The bottom section has a narrow crawl passing through vertical squeezes to a small chamber at creek level. A rope is handy for this cave as well as for several of the smaller caves in the area.

Helictite Cave (TR-4) has three passages that lead from a spacious entry chamber. But only one passage leads to a parallel rift system, several tight squeezes and an attractive dry crystal pool.

Shaft Cave (TR-3/17) offers a basic vertical caving problem. TR-3 opens immediately to a 6 m shaft with a dirt floor: descent is aided by a short length of ladder. An alternate return from the base of the shaft is to exit via TR-17. Climb the narrow 6 m chimney to a tight keyhole squeeze. It is useful to first fix a hand line to aid ascent.

Isis River

This cave area lies to the northwest of Isaac’s Creek on the Nundle-Timor Road. All of the larger caves along the river have locked gates and access is controlled by the landowner who will only admit Speleology Clubs.

Glen Dhu Cave (TR-15) has a large collapsed entrance chamber that offers two main leads. The first down an obscure and constricted passage to a series of short climbs and squeezes that

finally terminate in a horizontal crawlway some 20 m below the entrance. The second lead gives access to the major part of the cave, a system of connected chambers up to 12 m high with numerous false floors of flow stone.

Moores Lake Cave (TR-27/30) is at river level and thus offers a rare example of an active nothepheatic cave. Calcite rafts can be seen to form as water evaporates from the undisturbed lakes. TR-27 was opened in 1975 followed by a secondary entrance TR-30 the following year. The cave is reputed to have more than 800 m of passages; however, flooding often inhibits access, with foul air encountered when water levels recede.

TAMWORTH

Maps: Tamworth 1:100,000
Manilla :100,000

This region lies further northward along the same belt of Devonian rocks in which the Timor Caves occur. The region contains the Moore Creek, Attunga and Sulcor Caves.

Moore Creek

These caves have formed in a limestone hill beside a westerly flowing tributary of the Peel River, about 10 km north of Tamworth. The caves have locked gates and access is controlled by a cave trust.

Main Cave has about 180 m of passages with two entrances, one of which contains an old ladder. The chamber below contains much rockfall and some prominent coral fossils. In the smaller passages caving is very unpleasant, because of the large amount of fine choking dust. There is also a smaller cave with a short tunnel which terminates in a

squeeze. The formations in both caves have been heavily vandalised.

Sulcor and Attunga

These areas are situated to the north of Moore Creek and contain a number of small caves.

MACLEAY

Maps: Kempsey 1:100,000
Cowarral :100,000
Carrai 1:100,000
Macksville 1:100,000

This region is situated inland from Kempsey in a belt extending from Yessabah to Kunderang. The caves occur in a Permian limestone which consists of large fossil fragments in a lime/mud matrix. The natural vegetation in most of the limestone areas is subtropical rainforest. Where this has been cleared some areas have been overtaken by a scrubby regrowth dominated by lantana. This presents serious problems for surface exploration and for the location of cave entrances.

Besides the caves described below, there are also some at Comboyne, 50 km south of Kunderang, which are thought to be stratigraphically equivalent to those of the Macleay Region.

Yessabah

The caves at Yessabah are situated in a rainforest covered limestone hill about 45 m high.

Bat Cave is a dry cave with about 90 m of passages. There are about 30 smaller caves in the area. Several others, entirely filled with breccia and other sediments, have been exposed by quarrying excavations. Six small caves at Gowing's Mountain, several kilometres to the southeast are also included in the Yessabah Region.

Moparrabah

This area lies about 15 km to the northwest of Yessabah.

Moparrabah Main Cave is a nothephreatic system reputed to contain more than 1600 m of passages. It is situated in a low hill overlooking Tait's Creek. The cave is very easy to explore but it is not difficult to become lost. There are five smaller caves in the same area.

Caves are also present at Temagog, a few kilometres to the southeast. However, the only sizeable one is TNT Cave, which has about 90 m of passages and an unstable man-made entrance.

Willi Willi

The Willi Willi area occurs to the west of Moparrabah in much more rugged terrain than in the Lower Macleay. Limestone summits like Mount Pleasant and Mount Sebastopol rise up to 350 m above the valley floors.

The Willi Willi Bat Cave is an extensive nothephreatic system with three entrances in a saddle to the southwest of Mount Pleasant. About 20 other caves have been found in the Willi Willi area. Many of these are potholes with vertical pitches of up to 20 m. Further down the slope on the northern side of Mount Pleasant, the caves have passage trends controlled by vertical fractures. Although the difference in elevation between the highest and lowest known caves approaches 300 m, no single system of great depth has yet been found.

Stockyard Creek

This cave area is situated about 10 km southwest of Willi Willi. It includes the Stockyard Creek, Carrai and Windy Gap Caves.

Access to Stockyard Creek itself is difficult, requiring a 700 m descent. The

best known of the caves is Wall's Cave which consists of a series of shafts which have been followed down to depth of 80 m. The descent of the cave requires several ladders or ropes, as well as a lot of time to get to the cave.

The caves at Windy Gap are situated in rainforest on the western and eastern slopes of the left-hand branch of Stockyard Creek to the west of the gap itself. River Cave has about 100 m of narrow passage with extensive deposits of tufa around the resurgence. Other caves here include Col's Cave, Crystal Cave and Queensland Cave.

The Carrai Caves occur on the margin of the Carrai Tableland to the southwest of Windy Gap. Carrai Natural Arch has a couple of small dry caves and a few bats. Downstream of the Arch the gradient of Warbro Creek steepens and there are several small vadose passages developed in huge blocks of limestone talus. The best known of the caves in the Carrai area is the Carrai Bat Cave which has a total length of about 100 m with a few large caverns and a notable glow worm population.

Kunderang

To the southwest of Stockyard Creek there are several outcrops of cave bearing limestone in the valley of Kunderang Brook. Cars must be left several kilometres away, 700 m above the creek. The largest of the caves is KB-4 which has about 300 m of known passages.

ASHFORD

Ashford Caves are situated about 60 km north of Inverell along the Severn River and have been formed in a lens of Carboniferous limestone. The main cave in the area has about 550 m of known passages and was formerly mined for

guano. It is a very dusty cave and is devoid of formations. There are several other smaller caves.

BORDER RIVERS

This region lies to the north of Inverell and crosses the border into Queensland including such cave areas as Viator and Glen Lyon, which are now subject to flooding by the Pikes Creek Dam.

CROMBIE'S CAVE

Crombie's cave is a small granite cave near Armidale on the New England. It has formed when Powers Creek found an underground route through weathered joints in granite, and enlarged by stream abrasion. Unlike the limestone caves described previously it is not an extensive system, but rather provides an interesting horizontal caving problem in the heart of the granite country.

Walking

Northeastern New South Wales contains a great variety of walking country from the open woodland of the tablelands to the steep jungle-covered slopes of the escarpment, and the long stretches of sand and dunes of the coast. With all this variety there are walks to suit all; from the Sunday afternoon stroller to those desiring the challenge of long trips in rugged wilderness. Much of the region has been little explored by bushwalkers and the walks described in this section are only a small sample of the possibilities open to the walker. In producing this guide, it is our intention primarily to wet the appetite, rather than provide a comprehensive account of bush walks in northeastern New South Wales. There are usually many variations possible to the routes described here and it is our hope that you will explore them.

WARNING

Walking can be a dangerous recreational activity. Walking involves an inherent risk, particularly for unprepared parties. See the boxed section “the do's and don't of wilderness safety” and follow these guidelines. If you are new to walking or to the region, walk with more experienced parties.

Be aware that the grade or difficulty of walks may differ from that stated, due to changes in track conditions resulting from weather and track use (or lack of). Walk times can also vary from that indicated, depending on party fitness, navigational ability and track condition. In particular gorge walks require a high degree of fitness and, in many cases, rock-hopping

and scrambling skills. Be aware that winter, particularly in the New England and Tableland regions, can result in freezing conditions with unexpected blizzards reported.

Walkers should always check on access permission for the tracks as this may have changed from that stated.

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Walk safely and enjoy the wilderness.

THE AREAS

Within this section the walks have been grouped according to their geographic positions and the similarity of the country involved. The largest of these groups is that covering the New England Gorges; the other major groups are the Eastern Escarpment, the Tablelands, the Border Ranges, the Western Slopes, and the Coast. The country within each of these groups has its own distinctive character.

The New England Gorges

With local relief usually greater than 500 m the gorges provide both magnificent scenery and a wide range of walks from easy to very difficult. The heads of most of the gorges are characterised by precipitous slopes and spectacular scenery. Walking here is both strenuous and exciting, but is generally restricted to walks of only a day's duration because of the difficulty of travel with full packs and

the relatively small distances involved. Care is required because much of the rock is unstable, especially after heavy rain. See the Canyoning section for more adventures.

Easier access to most of the gorges can be had only a short distance downstream from their heads via long, sparsely wooded ridges. Many of these offer continuing views of the gorge and of the stream far below. At first travel along the gorge floor can be quite demanding with swimming and rock-hopping, but further downstream this gives way to much easier walking over gravel banks and alluvial flats. The middle and lower reaches of most gorges offer the possibility of day walks and extended trips.

The Eastern Escarpment

The country along the Eastern Escarpment of the tablelands is generally steep and densely forested. Because of the rugged terrain much of it has been little disturbed by man, although forestry activities have substantially reduced the recreational value of some areas. Those remaining natural areas provide challenging walking with breathtaking views, and the beauty of the different forest types. In places the vegetation itself is the major obstacle faced by walkers, particularly around the margins of rainforest. However, within the rainforest there is often very little undergrowth and walking is relatively straightforward

Most of the creeks and rivers of the escarpment are lined with rainforest and, besides offering a fairly clear route for walking, provide some of the most beautiful campsites you could hope for. Because of the nature of the terrain, normally 2 or 3 days are required to explore any particular area along the escarpment. However, some areas, par-

ticularly those within the National Parks, are also suitable for day walks.

The Tablelands

Although most of the Tablelands have been cleared, there are still some remaining areas of natural bushland. Because of the limited size of these areas, few Tablelands walks extend beyond a day in length. The forest is usually very open, providing for fairly easy walking. Wildlife is abundant in most areas and some of the higher points offer panoramic views.

The Border Ranges

This area has suffered greatly at the hands of man, but some very beautiful stands of forest remain. The Border Ranges are a must for rainforest freaks with the creeks offering some of the best rainforest scenery in New South Wales. The vegetation provides the main obstacle to walkers, there being some particularly nasty vines and an abundance of stinging trees in places. Walks here range from easy strolls along rainforest tracks to difficult explorations involving steep climbs and much scrub bashing. It is difficult to walk for more than 3 days without coming across disturbed country.

The Western Slopes

The remaining natural forests of the Western Slopes are largely restricted to the mountainous areas of the Warrumbungles, the Nandewars and the Namoi Tops. Although much of the forest is open, there are some areas of dense scrub which can make walking difficult. The views from most of the high points are superb. The Namoi Gorge is probably the last wild river area left on the slopes and offers excellent walking. Although the track

THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF WILDERNESS SAFETY

DO'S:

Research the walk before you go. Obtain up to date information from parties who have recently completed the walk.

Give trip details, including names, departure and return times, route and location of cars, to relatives / friends or Police. Notify them of any special medical conditions members of the group may have. Be sure to notify them of your return.

Ensure groups consist of three or more persons for safety reasons.

Take the correct map and a compass, and know how to use these. If you find yourself lost make camp and stay put. Keep an eye and ear out for others who may be searching for you.

Make sure everyone has appropriate clothing, footwear and camping gear, and sufficient food and water. There should be at least one first-aid kit, plus more than one member with a current first-aid certificate. Carry extra food, waterproof matches and cold/wet weather gear for emergencies.

Be aware of conditions in the area you intend to walk in, e.g. weather, terrain and fire-restrictions. Know what to do if you are caught in a bush fire.

DON'TS:

Don't set out unprepared. Follow the "do list" even for day walks.

Don't travel faster than the slowest member of your group - always keep together. Know the limitations of your group and yourself.

Don't underestimate the time a trip will take to complete - always allow a safety margin.

Don't leave injured person alone. Someone should always remain with the injured person while the others go for help.

Don't leave any rubbish behind. Take out what you take in, and leave no sign of being there. Bury all faeces and toilet paper at least 20 cm deep and at least 100 m away from campsites and any water.

Don't light fires unless absolutely needed - carry a stove for cooking. If required, fires should be small, well contained and away from anything combustible. Use only dead wood from the ground. Before you leave make sure the fire is completely out by dousing with water. When cool, scatter all remains so there is no visible sign.

Don't disturb the environment or wildlife.

GRADING SYSTEM FOR WALKS

Walks were graded mainly on the degree of physical fitness and experience required to safely attempt any particular walk. We also considered the amount of danger involved in undertaking the walk and the technical skills required.

Easy

Suitable for anyone with the desire to walk. Only a minimal degree of fitness is required as these walks involve very little climbing or problems with dense vegetation.

Medium

Although these walks may require a significant amount of physical exertion, they should be well within the capabilities of anyone with a reasonable level of fitness. Relatively little experience is required and navigation is usually easy. All walks involving climbs of greater than 300 m have been graded Medium or above. Many of these walks are straightforward but are not suited to the unfit.

Hard

These walks usually involve significant amounts of quite strenuous activity such as swimming and/or scrub bashing. They should only be undertaken by fairly experienced, fit parties.

systems in the National Parks provide some good day walks, most off-track walks require 2 or more days.

The East Coast

The northern coastline of New South Wales is characterised by long sandy beaches separated by small rocky headlands. A barrier system of low sand dunes, oriented parallel to the coast, extends some distance inland. Immediately behind the dunes there are extensive areas of low-lying swamp and heath, while sclerophyll forest usually dominates the higher ground. Much of the natural vegetation has been cleared or altered, but a number of recently established National Parks will ensure that a portion of the coast will remain in its natural state. Walking along the beaches and headlands

is easy, requiring little navigational skill, but walking inland in the heath and swamp can be more difficult. The National Parks are fairly small and at best it is only possible to walk for 1 or 2 days without coming across developed areas.

All walkers are asked to read the section on private property in the Introduction. Please respect the rights of property owners and lease holders so that future walkers can enjoy continued access.

EQUIPMENT

The equipment required for walking in the Northern Tablelands of New South Wales is little different from that used elsewhere in Australia. However, the local climate and vegetation do influence equipment needs to some extent and, for the benefit of those new to walking or new

to walking in this area, the following information is provided .

Clothing

Shorts are often adequate, although wool or fleece trousers should always be carried on winter walks. Where patches of dense scrub are likely to be encountered, such as at rainforest margins, some form of leg covering may be needed. A jumper or fleece jacket should be carried on all walks, even those in the heat of summer, in case the party is benighted. Thermal tops and bottoms are essential for winter walking. A windproof and waterproof jacket and pants should always be carried as heavy rain can occur at any time of the year and winter conditions on the tablelands can rapidly lead to exposure for the unprepared. Hats in summer to protect from the sun and a hat and/or beanie for warmth in winter is advisable.

Footwear

In most areas walking boots, sandshoes or runners are often satisfactory and the choice is a matter of personal preference. However, good walking boots are almost essential for trips in the uppermost reaches of the gorges, particularly where scree slopes will be encountered. As boots are difficult to swim in and dry slowly, sandshoes are recommended for trips requiring swimming or wading.

Packs

For day trips just about any well-made pack that sits comfortably on the back and keeps out of the way is satisfactory. For through-walks a pack with a good waist-belt is recommended, as these reduce the weight on the shoulders and spine, resulting in a more comfortable and better

balanced pack. A liner inside the pack is useful to keep everything dry.

Sleeping Bags

In the summer months night temperatures are very mild throughout the region and only a light sleeping bag is needed. In the winter months temperatures on the tablelands can be extremely cold and a good bag is required. Winter camping off the escarpment can also be very cold with temperatures approaching freezing. With such a range of temperatures it is difficult to find a single bag suitable for all possible occasions. However, a bag that can be used down to -10°C is satisfactory for nearly all occasions, especially when used with a good sleeping mat. Sleeping mats provide insulation and some softening of otherwise rough ground.

Shelter

Some form of shelter should be carried on all overnight walks. Tents are highly recommended, but some walkers prefer flysheets, particularly for walks in rugged country where tents can be difficult to pitch. The advantages of a large nylon flysheet is that it is light weight and can cover a number of sleeping sites, even if they are separated by intervening rocks or roots. For these same reasons small individual ground sheets are a good idea.

Stoves

Stoves should always be carried for cooking. Small fuel stoves are quick and easy, and ensure that wood remains where it belongs. Many popular parks in Australia are stove-only areas for good reasons. If using a campfire ensure it will not spread and don't leave unsightly scars to spoil other parties' enjoyment of the

area. Do not light stoves or campfires during firebans.

Safety Gear

A small first aid kit, including tweezers for ticks and splinters and compression bandages in case of snake-bite, should always be carried. A compass and appropriate maps are essential equipment, particularly in heavily forested areas where navigation by sight can be impossible. A headtorch is extremely useful if you find yourself still walking after sunset.

Food and Water

Always ensure you have an adequate supply of food and water. For longer walks carry either a water filter or water purification tablets. The availability of water will depend on recent weather conditions, and should be checked prior to departure.

The New England Gorges

This section describes walks in the gorges along the eastern margin of the New England Tablelands. The Upper Macleay Gorges are covered first, running from the Apsley region in the south to the Styx in the northeast. Then follows the Guy Fawkes Gorges again in a south to north sequence. The final description is of the Henry River Gorge which lies further to the north.

APSLEY REGION

Maps: Apsley 1:25,000
Armidale 1:100,000
Carrai 1:100,000
Cowarral 1:100,000

Green Gully 1:25,000
Kunderang 1:25,000
Yarrowick 1:100,000
Rowley Creek 1:25,000
Tia 1:25,000

Besides the waterfalls (Apsley and Tia), the major features of this part of the Park are the vast cliff lines and deep canyons of the gorges. Some stands of dry rainforest occur in the gorges. In the late spring many of the cliff faces come alive with large numbers of flowering rock orchids. There are a large number of possible walks in the Park, both along the gorge rims and into the gorges themselves. Travel along the gorge floors is generally slow and swimming is often necessary. The heads of both gorges are extremely steep and quite dangerous especially after rain.

Access. The southern side of the Park can be approached from the Oxley Highway. The Apsley Falls picnic area is just off the highway, 20 km southeast of Walcha (150 km from Wauchope), while the turn-off to Tia Falls is 39 km southeast of Walcha. The northern side of the Park can be reached by way of the Moona Plains Road which leaves the Walcha Uralla Road 1 km north of Walcha.

Day Walks

Rim Walks (Easy)

Maps: Apsley 1:25,000

From either of the picnic areas it is possible to walk for many kilometres along the rims of the gorges. However, the heads of both gorges are surrounded by cleared land which detracts somewhat from the splendour of the views.

A recommended rim walk begins at "East Lynn" (871669A), which can be reached by following the Moona Plains Road. From here, walk due south for

about 3 km until the edge of the gorge is reached. Follow the rim around to the east until the spectacular gorge of Graveyard and Stockyard Creeks is reached. This area is well worth exploring. It is an easy walk back to “East Lynn”.

Brookside-Gorge Floor (Medium)

Maps: Apsley 1:25,000

The turn-off to “Brookside” is at 855581A about 3 km from the turn-off to the farm (879600A). From “Brookside” walk NNE to the top of the ridge at 885607A. It is an easy trip to the gorge floor with a number of good view points on the way down. Travel along the gorge floor in either direction is straightforward and nearly all the ridges on the southern side of the gorge can be climbed. A good trip is to walk upstream and climb any of the ridges leading up to the point at 865620A. From here is it an easy walk along the rim of the gorge back to “Brookside”.

Tia Gorge (Medium or Hard)

Maps: Tia 1:25,000

The Tia drops steeply for the first 2 km below the first fall (907521T) with a succession of waterfalls and canyons. Probably the easiest route into the upper gorge is to follow the gorge rim east from the parking area for a few hundred meters then descend the prominent gully to the river at 908522T. From here it is only possible to walk about 200 m downstream before progress is blocked by a major fall. Travel below this point would require the full range of rock climbing and abseiling gear and would provide a challenging trip for the fit and experienced. A spectacular descent route for those with climbing equipment would be provided by the ridge at 912525T.

Longer Walks

North Rim (Easy, 2 days)

Maps: Apsley 1:25,000

Leaving a car at “East Lynn” (871669A) as described above, walk SSE to the edge of the Graveyard Creek Gorge around 885635A. From here the rim can be followed eastward through forested country with spectacular views down into the gorges. There are good campsites beside a number of the larger streams entering the gorge. Alternative finishing points are at “Karringal” (951619A) or “Brooklyn” (962628A).

Echo Point - Downstream (Medium, 2 days)

Maps: Apsley 1:25,000

This is a long but interesting two day walk. The walk begins at “The Peak” (911639A), which is reached by way of the Moona Plains Road. From “The Peak” follow the rough track south to the edge of the gorge and then walk southeast along the edge to Echo Point (924602A). After everyone has had a good shout, head down the ridge through (926597A). This ridge is very steep at first but soon reaches a reasonable grade.

From the base of the ridge travel downstream is fairly slow, and a number of swims are necessary if some difficult traverses are to be avoided. There is a good campsite on the bend at 944595A.

Slow travel continues until 986576A, after which the gorge opens up considerably, and walking becomes easy. As it is a long walk back to “The Peak” it is best to head up the ridge at 987573A. From the top follow the ridge northwest to “Karingal” (951619A) and thence “The Peak”. If possible it would be best to leave a car at either “Karingal” or “Brooklyn”.

THE LOWER APSLEY

Maps: Apsley 1:25,00
Green Gully 1:25,000
Kundarang 1:25,000
Rowleys Creek 1:25,000

Downstream, the valley of the Apsley widens out, although it continues to deepen with local relief up to 900 m. There are a number of large tributaries each with its own deep gorge, and altogether these gorges cover a large area known as the Macleay Gorges Wilderness Area, located in the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park.

The Wilderness is not suited to day trips because of its relative inaccessibility and the depth of the gorges; however, it offers some superb overnight walking with rugged gorges, broad river flats and an abundance of wildlife. Before setting out for any walk in this area you are strongly advised to contact all relevant land owners and lease holders. They have been significantly inconvenienced in the past through parties of walkers becoming lost.

Access. Take the Moona Plains Road from the Walcha showground for approximately 45 km, following the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park signs to Budds Mare Rest Area.

Longer Walks

Budds Mare - Apsley River - Rowleys Creek (Medium, 2 days)

Maps: Kundarang 1:25,000
Rowleys Creek 1:25,000

Start walking at Budds Mare Rest Area (016716R) and follow the Apsley River track down the ridge. This is a very long, fairly easy ridge which offers many fine views. Walk for approximately 5 km then

you need to go northeast (028708R) and follow the ridge all the way to the river, where you will find the Riverside Rest Area (053730K). Once the river is reached walk downstream towards the junction with Rowley's Creek (046792K). The river is very peaceful and the walking is easy, being over gravel banks and alluvial flats. There are numerous good campsites along this stretch.

The next day continue downstream to Rowley's Creek. There are 2 options at this point. This first option is to walk up Rowley's Creek for about 3.5 km until a major creek enters from the south (013777R). Climb the obvious ridge to the west of this creek and follow it to "Kanagra Vale" (971713R), then back to Budds Mare Rest Area. The second option is to take the 4WD track which starts near the stockyards (044789R) and climbs approximately 800 m up the spur between the Apsley River and Rowley's Creek. Follow this track south through a locked gate at 998733R until you reach the main access road to Budds Mare (998720R). From here it is approximately 2.5 km to the rest area.

Budds Mare - Paradise Rocks - Rusdens Creek (Medium, 2 days)

Maps: Apsley 1:25,00
Green Gully 1:25,000
Kundarang 1:25,000
Rowleys Creek 1:25,000

This is quite a strenuous walk involving two climbs each of 800 m; however, the views are magnificent. From Budds Mare Rest Area descend the same ridge as described in the preceding walk, but once the Apsley is reached follow it upstream for about 7 km to just above its junction with Green Gully. Either camp here or fill all waterbottles and begin the

climb of Paradise Rocks for one of the most scenic campsites you could hope for. To climb the rocks begin on the subsidiary ridge at 097684G which leads onto the major east-west ridge to the trig. The ground on the very top is a bit rough for camping but there are good campsites near the top of the ridge at 074683G and in the saddle at 071683G.

Next morning follow the Paradise Rocks ridge for about 4 km to the southwest and then head northwest around the headwaters of Paradise Creek to the indistinct ridge at 042664A. Follow this ridge north for a few hundred meters then descend any of the ridges down into Rusdens Creek. These ridges are very steep at first but soon reach a more gentle grade.

A good route out of Rusdens Creek is to climb the ridge (026689A) directly to the southwest of Budds Mare Creek. From the top of the ridge it is a straightforward walk across semi-cleared land to Budds Mare Rest Area.

Oaklands - Apsley River - Green Gully (Medium, 3 days)

Maps: Green Gully 1:25,000

From "Oaklands" follow the rough track north to around 063574G, then continue on along the main Apsley-Yarrowitch ridge and descend to the Apsley from any point along this ridge. Once at the river travel downstream is easy. There are a number of good day trips that can be done from the valley floor and it is best to select a good base camp, preferably near the junction of the Apsley and the Yarrowitch.

One possible day trip from the junction is to follow the Apsley downstream to Green Gully then walk up the latter to Brumby Pass (140682G), a small canyon on a tributary creek. From here backtrack

for about 2 km and ascend any of the ridges up to Tooth Rocks. The ridge leading southwest from Tooth Rocks can be followed back to the river junction.

Another good day trip is to explore Paradise Rocks which offers some excellent views of the wilderness. Any of the ridges leading up to the Rocks from the campsite are negotiable but possibly a more interesting route is to follow one of the rainforest gullies up. The best of these is that centred on 076673G. When the gully becomes too steep just traverse onto one of the ridges and continue to the top. Quite a bit of time could be spent exploring the area around the Rocks. There appear to be few easy descent routes on their western margin and probably the best route down is the major easterly ridge through 083684G.

RUSDEN'S CREEK

Maps: Apsley 1:25,000
Yarrowitch 1:100,000

Rusden's Creek is the first major tributary of the Apsley River from the west. The gorge penetrates deep into the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park and provides considerable scope both for day walks and longer walks into the Apsley. In its upper reaches the creek consists of a string of beautiful deep pools connected by waterfalls. This section remains largely unexplored. Further downstream the gorge opens out and provides easy walking (see the description of the Lower Apsley area). Vegetation in the area is typically open eucalypt woodland with some small pockets of dry rainforest in the gullies and a riparian vegetation of rainforest species in the upper reaches of the stream.

Access. Follow the Moona Plains Road from the showground at Walcha. After 7 km take a right turn again towards Moona

Plains. After another 27 km take a right turn towards “Brooklyn” (962628A) About 7 km down this road there is a gate and a run-down hut on the left, where cars may be parked (955652A).

Day Walks

Upper Waterfalls (Medium)

Maps: Armidale 1:25,000

From the hut, follow the fenceline east for 1 km to an old track. Follow the line of the track to the northeast. As the track is heavily overgrown in places it is easiest to walk through the woodland to the east of it. After about 1 km the track tops a rise (975658A). From here, strike off due east for 1 km to the top of the ridge at 984658A. Follow this ridge down to the creek keeping to the right all the way. Return by retracing your steps.

ROWLEY'S CREEK

Maps: Armidale 1:100,000

Rowleys Creek 1:25,000

This is a declared wilderness area within Oxley Wild Rivers National Parks. The area offers interesting walking in a steep sided gorge. The vegetation is a combination of dry sclerophyll forest and large patches of dry rainforest. The stream is unusual in that it often flows underground for long stretches. .

Access.—It is advisable to telephone the relevant landholders before undertaking any trip in this area as all access is through private property.

Day Walks

Steep Drop Falls (Medium/ Hard)

Maps: Armidale 1:100,000

Rowleys Creek 1:25,000

It is an easy 2 km walk from the access point (908792R) to Steep Drop Falls. Although the falls are usually dry there is a spectacular drop into a sheer sided canyon. From the top of the falls there are excellent views into Rowley's Creek Gorge. To descend into the gorge follow the ridge immediately to the east of the falls. Although steep, this ridge (927781R) is not difficult, but there is a small bluff about half way down which can be negotiated by following it to the right. From the base of the ridge you can either walk upstream to the base of Steep Drop Falls which is difficult but well worth the effort. Or take an easy walk downstream. Exit up the ridge (947788R) after Boggy Creek. From the top it is advisable to follow a compass bearing back to the road as the country can be scrubby around the creeks and is traversed by numerous tracks which are confusing and should not be followed.

Longer Walks

Rowley's Creek to Apsley River (Medium, 2 days).

Maps: Armidale 1:100,000

Rowleys Creek 1:25,000

Leaving from “Jiskadale” (951722R) there is an easy descent to Rowley's Creek by way of the ridge which enters the gorge from the southwest (984755R). Rather than follow this ridge to its end it is more interesting to descend the subsidiary ridge which heads northwest from 991775R to the junction of Moona and Rowley's Creeks. The walk downstream to the junction with the Apsley is straightforward. The vegetation is mainly dry sclerophyll and fairly open. From the junction a short walk up the Apsley leads to the start of a long southwesterly ridge at 041771R. The ascent of this ridge offers

spectacular views in all directions. From the top of the ridge it is a 7 km walk back to “Jiskadale”. OR alternatively walk up the 4WD track from the Stockyards (044789R).

BLUE MOUNTAIN CREEK

Maps: Armidale 1:100,000
Enmore 1:25,000
Winterbourne 1:25,000

This is quite a long and relatively open tributary of Salisbury Waters, which has some pockets of dry rainforest. Red Cedar was still being cut here well into this century. For most of the length of the gorge walking is easy and nearly all ridges are negotiable. It is only in the upper reaches that care must be taken.

Access. The northern side of the gorge can be approached by taking the Danger-sleigh Road south from Armidale and continuing south past the Dangars Falls turn-offs to the road that runs to the north of the gorge ending on Enmore Long Ridge. A number of side roads provide closer access to the edge of the gorge.

To approach the gorge from the south, take the road opposite the Kentucky turn-off on the Uralla-Walcha Road and follow it east for 20 to 30 km where a number of side roads lead towards the gorge.

Day Walks

Fredroy Falls (Medium)

Maps: Winterbourne 1:25,000
This trip begins at “Enmore” (810964W) on the northern side of the gorge. “Enmore” is private property so ask permission. From “Enmore” follow the track south for about 1 km, then strike off southeast to the poorly defined ridge at 816941W. Aim for the saddle (822937W), crossing to the left of the dog fence, then

walk down the gully leading south from this saddle. It is an easy walk upstream to the base of Fredroy Falls, which are well worth the trip. There is a large swimming hole there.

The easiest exit route is the reverse of the above. A more difficult exit is to scramble up an exposed route to the west of the falls and continue upstream for about 1 km to a prominent ridge on the north side of the gorge. This might require some swimming. The ridge leads to cleared country due south of “Enmore”.

Winterbourne Falls and Gorge (Medium)

Maps: Winterbourne 1:25,000

Winterbourne Creek is only a short tributary of Blue Mountain Creek, but boasts an impressive waterfall and steep-sided gorge near its head. The gorge is approached from the southern side, but getting there is not easy as there is a maze of roads in the area. The starting point is “Weenganimbee” (830896W).

It is possible to walk down the creek to the falls but this is not recommended because of dense scrub. The recommended route is to walk north from “Weenganimbee” approaching the edge of the gorge at around 843925W. Follow the edge of the gorge around to the northeast to the top of a steep ridge (852926W), which leads to the eastern end of the canyon below the falls. This ridge provides good views of the falls. It is a good walk from the base of the ridge down Winterbourne Creek to Blue Mountain Creek where there is an exit ridge to the northwest, 200 m upstream of the junction. It is a 4.5 km walk from the top of this ridge back to “Weenganimbee”.

Postman's Creek (Medium)

Maps: Enmore 1:25,000
Winterbourne 1:25,000

Postman's Creek is a tributary of Blue Mountain Creek from the north. It is reached by taking the road past "Hazeldean" (886976W) out onto Enmore Long Ridge. The road ends at a locked gate (943972W). From here the ridge can be followed for a further 2.5 km before it begins to drop off on all sides. Follow the northeasterly ridge (969985E) down to the creek. From here it is a fairly straight-forward walk up the creek ascending any of the ridges on the southern side.

A more strenuous and interesting day can be had by climbing up the rainforest gully (972000E) on the northern side of Postman's Creek. When the gully becomes too steep carefully traverse onto the ridge to the left (970997E) and follow it to the top for some excellent views. Follow the main ridge west into Enmore State Forest continuing through some scrub until a convenient place to cross the upper section of Postman's Creek is found. It is a 4 km walk back down the road to the start.

Longer Walks

Blue Mountain Creek (Medium, 2-4 days)

Maps: Enmore 1:25,000
Winterbourne 1:25,000

Using any of the entry ridges to the upper section of Blue Mountain Creek described above, it is easy walking to the junction with the Macleay River. It would take 2-3 days to reach the junction. Probably the most interesting exit is to the north of the junction. Climb the ridge between the Macleay River and Postman's Creek and continue on through Enmore State Forest to "Blue Nobby" (901011E). It is a long walk from there back to "Enmore" and a car shuttle is advised.

DANGARS GORGE

Maps: Armidale 1:100,000
Enmore 1:25,000
Gostwyck 1:25,000
Hillgrove 1:25,000

The Dangars Gorge area features the spectacular Dangars Falls and below them the precipitous valley of Salisbury Waters. This is part of the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park.

Access. From Armidale follow Dangarsleigh Road and the Oxley Wild Rivers National Parks signs for approximately 20 km to the Dangars Falls picnic area. The route is well signposted.

Day Walks

Rim Walks (Easy)

Maps: Gostwyck 1:25,000

The well marked trails along the top of the gorge provide easy walking. The great lookouts are ideal for surveying the gorge before descending (if you are so inclined). All the lookouts offer great views, and Mihi Falls Lookout is certainly worth the walk.

Dangars - Salisbury Waters - McDirty's Creek (Medium, 1 Day)

Maps: Enmore 1:25,000
Gostwyck 1:25,000
National Parks leaflet

The track to Salisbury Waters leads to a great picnic and swimming spot. You can exit via the track you came down on, or alternatively walk up the gorge which involves rock-hopping, scrambling and swimming and come out of the gorge at McDirty's Creek (807053E). The total distance is around 12km.

For a long day with some challenging bouldering and numerous swims, exit the gorge at Dangars Falls – see the Canyoning section for details.

Mihi Gorge - Dangars Falls (Easy)

Maps: Enmore 1:25,000
Gostwyck 1:25,000

From the start of the ridge leading to the Dangars-Mihi junction (808043E), descend into Mihi Gorge below the second falls. The vegetation here is

interesting as species usually associated with western regions occur alongside plants usually associated with the coastal areas. It is relatively easy walking down Mihi Creek to its junction with Salisbury Waters. To return to the car park, find the track and climb the ridge at the junction of the two streams.

Longer Walks

Dangars - Gara or Bakers Creek (Medium/Hard, 2-4 days)

Maps: Armidale 1:100,000
Enmore 1:25,000
Gostwyck 1:25,000
Hillgrove 1:25,000

Another option for longer walks is to go downstream in the gorges. Walks can be of any number of days as Salisbury Waters enters the Macleay River System. A great 2-3 day walk is from Gara Gorge (897062E) to Blue Hole (2-3 days).

GARA GORGE

Maps: Armidale 100,000
Enmore 1:25,000
Hillgrove 1:25,000

Unlike most other gorges in the area, there is no major fall at the head of Gara Gorge, the River descends a series of small steps carved in the granite. Travel through the gorge varies from rock-hopping and scrambling in the upper section to easier walking in the lower section. There are some great swimming pools.

Access. Turn right off the Waterfall Way (Armidale to Dorrigo Road), just east of the Armidale City speed limit signs. The road is followed for 15 km to the Blue Hole Picnic Area.

Day Walks

Blue Hole - Mushroom Rock (Medium)

Maps: Hillgrove 1:25,000

From the car park downstream of Blue Hole, follow the Gara River downstream via small cascades and large pools. Generally, obstacles can be avoided by scrambling up and around the right-hand side. Exit the gorge (862135H) by walking up a spur, past the Mushroom Rock, and return to the Blue Hole along the western edge of the gorge.

Blue Hole - Gara Gorge - Long Swamp Creek (Medium/Hard, long day)

Maps: Enmore 1:25,000
Hillgrove 1:25,000

From the Blue Hole follow the river downstream through the gorge until the valley begins to open out where Long Swamp Creek enters the Gara River on the right (876089E). It is a steep walk up Long Swamp creek until progress is blocked by two falls with a total drop of 45 m. The falls can be negotiated on the left-hand side by scrambling up a loose slope. The gully is quite narrow in places and shaded, with many of the moss-covered rocks being quite slippery. About 2.5 km up the creek from the Gara, the valley begins to flatten out. At this point, climb the ridge to the north of the creek and follow the edge of the Gorge back to the Blue Hole. If it is getting late, it is advisable to set a course for the road leading to “Kenwood Park” (842130H). From here, follow the roads back to the Blue Hole.

Longer Walks

Gara - Salisbury Waters (Medium/Hard, 3-5 days)

Maps: Enmore 1:25,000
Gostwyck 1:25,000
Hillgrove 1:25,000

Several multi-day walks commencing or ending at the Gara Gorge can be done. One possibility is to follow the Gara River to its junction with Salisbury Waters, approximately 15 km, and then walk either upstream to the Dangars-Mihi area, approximately 16 km, or downstream for as far as you wish. The only limitation is your imagination, and the amount of time available.

COONEY CREEK

Maps: Armidale 1:100,000
Enmore 1:25,000
Hillgrove 1:25,000

Cooney Creek is a major tributary of the Gara River. It is a popular day trip because of its proximity to Armidale and the relatively easy walking it provides.

Access. From Armidale follow the Waterfall Way (Armidale to Dorrigo Road) east for about 18 km to the turn-off (883210H) to “Silverton”. It is 8 km down this road to “Silverton” (875143H), where the walk begins. Always ask permission before entering private land.

Day Walks

Cooney Creek (Medium)

Maps: Enmore 1:25,000
Hillgrove 1:25,000

From “Silverton” follow the rough track south for 2 km to “Applegrove”, which is abandoned, and then head east until the edge of Cooney Gorge (895120H) is reached. The sides of the gorge are rather steep and loose, but there are

numerous descent routes. It is also possible to follow the creek itself downstream from the agricultural country at its head, but this would take much more time.

The stream flows through granite and drops steadily with no major falls or obstacles. After 4 km the Gara is reached. Exit from the gorge by heading north up the ridge from the junction of the two streams (889087E).

THE HILLGROVE AREA

Maps: Armidale 1:100,000
Hillgrove 1:25,000

In previous editions, there were a number of popular walks described around the areas in the vicinity of the township of Hillgrove. These include the Bakers Creek Gorge and the subsidiary gorges of Four Mile and Becks Creeks. The area has an allure for visitors because of its rich mining history. Initially mined for gold, antimony later became the principal product. Various relics of early mining such as tramways, cableways and settlement tanks can be found in the gorge. Many of the old shafts are now collapsed or are otherwise unsafe and care should be taken. Unfortunately mining still continues and recently has increased in activity. This has resulted in most of the walks previously described to be no longer safe, passing through leased land that is actively being mined. For these reasons most of the Hillgrove walks have been removed.

Access. Hillgrove can be reached by taking either of two turn-offs from the Armidale-Grafton Road, these being 23 km (921212H) and 27 km (961222H) east of Armidale.

Day Walks

Bakers Creek Falls - Mines (Medium)

Maps: Hillgrove 1:25,000

The gorge floor can be reached from the falls lookout by descending from the lookout (938204H). It is worthwhile scrambling up to the base of the falls before going downstream.

The gorge is littered with boulders and these make progress slow. About 1 km downstream of the lookout the first of a series of waterfalls is encountered. Descend the first fall on the left and then swim the 50 m pool. Shortly after this, a 30 m fall into a narrow canyon prevents following the gorge bottom. While this can be negotiated by traversing to the left, it is recommended that walkers climb out of the gorge along the slight spur starting at the base of the canyon (934194H) and follow the ridge line back to the lookout. Do not continue past the canyon (934194H) further along Bakers Creek Gorge. Active mining is operational approximately 1 km further down from this point.

Long Point Road - Becks Creek - Becks Point (Easy)

Maps: Hillgrove 1:25,000

Becks Creek is a small tributary of Bakers Creek. It is probably the easiest gorge to descend in the immediate vicinity of Armidale. The climb out, is as usual, steep. Seek permission from the landholder.

To reach the starting point, follow the Long Point Road east from Hillgrove for about 7 km and leave the vehicles at the junction at 997154H. Descend the ridge at 987145H and wander down the gorge. The walk is not without its charm, com-

plete with burbling brook, small waterfalls and cascades.

It is possible to climb just about any of the ridges on the north side of the gorge, all of which lead up to Becks Point. The old mine workings marked on the map are disappointing, but there is a good view to compensate. From the old mine follow the track northeast to the Long Point Road.

WOLLOMOMBI AND CHANDLER GORGES

Maps: Carrai 1:100,000
Jeogla 1:25,000

40 km to the east of Armidale, the Wollomombi and Chandler Rivers drop into the deepest and most spectacular of the gorge systems in the New England Region. Wollomombi Falls (220 m) is the highest waterfall in New South Wales. The total drop to the base of the lower falls is 330 m, making it the highest waterfall system in Australia.

Below the junction of the two streams the Chandler flows through a steep-sided canyon known as the “Inaccessible Gulf”. The valley widens about 4 km below the falls.

Access. Follow Waterfall Way (Armidale to Dorrigo Road) for approximately 40 km east of Armidale, till just before Wollomombi Village. Look for the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park sign, and follow it to the Falls.

Day Walks

Gorge Tops (Easy)

Maps: Jeogla 1:25,000

It is possible to walk quite a distance along the gorge rim from any of the lookouts. A recommended walk is to begin at Edgar’s Lookout (066216J) and walk northwest through open forest until

the dingo fence is reached. Following the fence westward leads to some magnificent views down the gorge system. The fence can be followed for many kilometres around the rim of the gorge. It is also possible to begin at the main picnic area and walk around the rim in a easterly direction, following the track to the top of the Falls and beyond.

The Inaccessible Gulf Ridge Track (Easy/Medium)

Maps: Jeogla 1:25,000

From the Falls Lookout follow the gorge rim to the south along the well-marked trail. After 1 km the top of a long ridge is reached (068210J). By descending the ridge about one third of the way to the gorge floor spectacular views up “The Inaccessible Gulf” to Wollomombi Falls can be had. The track proceeds down to good swimming holes on the river, but it requires a good level of fitness, as it can be steep in places.

Falls Lookout-Lower Falls (Medium)

Maps: Jeogla 1:25,000

Follow the Chandler River walking track to the gorge floor, as described above. From here it is an easy walk, with a number of swims up to 20 m long, to reach the base of a 15 m fall (069202J), 2 km upstream from the bottom of the ridge. The views of the cliffs upstream are excellent. There is no easy way out of the gorge from here, and no way around the fall, so it is necessary to retrace the route downstream.

As alternatives to the walking track, either Green Gully Spur (059213J) or St Helena Ridge (055207J) or St Helena Creek (see St Helena Creek walk below) can be used as exit routes. Once on top

follow the dingo fence back to the lookouts.

Falls Lookout - Oaky Dam Road (Medium)

Maps: Jeogla 1:25,000

From Falls Lookout follow the track to the gorge floor as described above. From here it is an easy walk downstream. The exit ridge leads up the eastern side of the gorge floor from the bend at 063178J. The ridge (066175J) is easy until near the top where some exposed climbing over rock is necessary, but the views are magnificent. From the top of the ridge walk due east for about 700 m until a 4WD track is reached which can be followed 2 km to the Oaky Dam Road, a side road off the Armidale-Kempsey Road. This is a long day walk and requires a car shuttle.

St Helena Creek (Medium)

Maps: Jeogla 1:25,000

St Helena is a beautiful cascading creek, with rainforest including red cedars and lovely clear swimming holes - perfect for a hot day. Walk down to the bottom of the Chandler River via the Chandler River walking track. Walk down the river for about 2 km, until St Helena's Creek comes in on the right (055202J) - just opposite the imposing Church Rock. Take time to explore this creek. It can be negotiated easily for approximately 1.2 km from the junction. After this the falls become quite steep and walking becomes more of a climb. You can either retrace your steps from here (easy), or continue up the creek (hard).

To exit via the creek, be prepared to do some climbing and scrambling up loose rock. It also becomes rather steep. Return to the car along the dingo fence. We recommend that this route should only be

attempted by small fit groups, who have experience in climbing techniques.

A visit to St Helena Creek makes for a delightful spot to lunch if you take the time out from the Inaccessible Gulf Ridge walk. The walk can be done comfortably in a day. Allow approximately 3-4 hours to walk out.

THE LONG POINT AREA

Maps: Armidale 1:100,000
Big Hill 1:25,000
Carrai 1:25,000
Enmore 1:25,000;
Winterbourne 1:25,000

Long Point is a very long promontory penetrating deep into the heart of the Macleay gorge system. Perhaps no other area gives such an impression of the sheer size of the system. To the north and east Point Lookout and the gorges of the Styx, Oaky and Chandler Rivers can be seen; to the south, the Carrai Plateau and the gorges of the Apsley River and Kunderang Brook, to the west, Blue Mountain Creek, Salisbury Waters and Bakers Creek.

Access. From Hillgrove turn left onto Long Point Road.

Day Walks

Chandler River Lookout (Easy)

Maps: Enmore 1:25,000

At the grid 17.5 km from Hillgrove, on Long Point Road, there is a small car park opposite a National Park sign. From the car park follow the walking track 250 m to Chandler River Lookout. The views are great.

Other National Parks Tracks (Easy)

These tracks start at the picnic area 18 km from Hillgrove. There are great views of Salisbury Waters, and great rainforest (watch for lyrebirds).

Sawmill Creek (Medium)

Maps: Enmore 1:25,000

Sawmill Creek is a short intermittent stream which flows east off Long Point into the Chandler River. It is a pretty creek with some waterfalls and a large area of dry rainforest. From the Chandler River Lookout (described above), follow the rim of the gorge northwards to the small hill at 996092E. From here descend the prominent ridge (005094E) to Sawmill Creek just upstream of its junction with the Chandler. Provided the creek is low, it is an easy walk upstream to the junction of two major gullies at 005101E. The gully to the northeast soon becomes a small blind canyon but is certainly worth the short detour. The main creek to the west can be followed through rainforest for a greater distance until the going becomes difficult and eventually the base of a series of waterfalls (usually dry) is reached. To leave the gorge backtrack to the junction of the two gullies and climb the steep ridge to the west (007101E). From the top the fence can be followed back to the grid.

Sawmill Creek (Hard)

Maps: Enmore 1:25,000
Hillgrove 1:25,000

For a harder version, you can travel down Sawmill Creek itself from the head of its gorge. Some abseiling is necessary and a 50 m rope and slings must be carried. About 14 km out of Hillgrove a rough track leads a few hundred meters to the east of the road to some sheds

(987124H). From here it is an easy walk to the head of Sawmill Creek Gorge (000121H). Follow the rim of the gorge southwards for about 200 m then begin to descend the steep, narrow ridge leading southeast (001117H). This ridge dog-legs to the left (north), giving excellent views of the gorge and falls, which have a double-drop totalling about 150 m. A 20 m abseil from the end of the ridge is required to reach the floor of the gorge.

Travel down the gorge is fairly easy for about 400 m until another fall of about 50 m is encountered. This can either be negotiated by traversing across steep slopes to the left (east), or else require a couple of abseils. Further travel downstream is straightforward and exit can be made up either of the ridges described in the earlier Sawmill Creek trip.

Macleay River (Medium)

Maps: Enmore 1:25,000

This trip begins at the grid and car park at 989083E as for the medium grade Sawmill Creek trip described above. Follow the fence west until it terminates at the edge of the gorge, where there are good views of the Macleay River and Bakers Creek gorges. From the end of the fence follow the rim of the gorge south for about 50 m and descend the ridge through 975078E into a small tributary of the Macleay River. It is very pleasant walking down this creek under a rainforest canopy to the Macleay. During dry spells this tributary is unlikely to contain more than a few pools of water.

Walking along the Macleay is very easy and there are good views of the dry sclerophyll dominated ridges which descend into the gorge. About 2 km downstream of the junction of the Macleay and the un-named tributary described above there is an excellent route out of

the gorge, climbing the ridge beginning at 949059E and passing through 962058E. This is a long, gently sloping ridge, providing many good views. From the top, walk due east to the Long Point Road, and then 1.5 km north to return to the car-park.

Narrow Neck - Chandler River (Medium)

Maps: Big Hill 1:25,000
Enmore 1:25,000

This is a fairly long but straightforward walk offering excellent views of the Chandler Gorge. The walk begins near some partly cleared land (016054E), about 25 km from Hillgrove, and 1 km north of Narrow Neck. From here walk 1.5 km northeast and descend the long ridge at 035063E. From the base of the ridge travel along the river is easy, unless the water is high. About 2 km downstream the Oaky joins the Chandler at Jeogla Warm Corner, where there is a good swimming hole. Exit from the gorge by way of any of the ridges leading up to the small hill at 058053B. It is an easy 4 km walk along a gentle southwesterly ridge back to the road which can be followed north to the starting point.

Long Point (Medium)

Maps: Big Hill 1:25,000
Enmore 1:25,000
Winterbourne 1:25,000

From the end of the road it is possible to do day walks into either of the Chandler or the Macleay gorges. Nearly all the ridges in this area are negotiable and it is also possible to walk up some of the rainforested gullies.

Long Point (Easy)

Maps: Enmore 1:25,000
Winterbourne 1:25,000

After checking with the property manager, walk from the locked gate at the end of the road (034006E), following an overgrown 4WD track off to the right. After about 1.5 km this leads to a gate in the dog fence. An indistinct track can be followed through the forest from the gate in the fence. Care should be taken as the track is easy to lose and there are a number of subsidiary ridges that can be mistaken for the main ridge in the first 2 km after the fence. Around 4 km from the fence the ridge passes through a patch of dry rainforest with hanging moss and many small orchids. It is possible to follow the ridge for a further 5 km before it begins to descend steeply. An easy day involving little climbing can be had by walking 8 to 10 km out along the ridge and then returning. The views are spectacular, but navigation is difficult, as paths are overgrown.

Longer Walks

Long Point (Medium, 2 days)

Maps: Carrai 1:25,000
Enmore 1:25,000
Winterbourne 1:25,000

Follow the Long Point Ridge southwards until it begins to descend as described in the above day walk. Care must be taken if the true Long Point to the junction of the Chandler and the Macleay is to be descended. After running south for 10 km from the gate, the ridge swings east for about 1 km to 046928C. From here continue east dropping steeply for about 400 m keeping an eye out for the southeasterly ridge running to the junction (055921C). This latter ridge is very steep and is rocky and almost knife-edged for the last 200 m. A fitting, but exposed, end to a classic ridge. From the junction of the Chandler and Macleay

Rivers, it is an easy walk up either stream but the Chandler is probably the more interesting.

For an easier descent which avoids steep ridges, follow the faint track south-west from the knoll at 040928W for 400 m, then take the westerly ridge to the knoll at 028917W. Head south down the ridge to Oven Camp. To exit you can retrace your steps or proceed up or down any of the rivers and choose a suitable exit point.

Long Point to Wollomombi (Medium, 2-3 days)

Maps: Enmore 1:25,000
Hillgrove 1:25,000
Jeogla 1:25,000

This trip involves a car shuttle, start the trip at the Long Point Rest Area approximately 18 km from Hillgrove. Follow the walking track from the Rest Area (978067E) to the top of the ridge running northeast (999070E), and descend. Once the Chandler River is reached follow it upstream. There are numerous campsites along the way. After 059166J the gorge starts to narrow and progress can be slowed, as there are more river crossings. Exit the gorge at the Chandler River Walking track which leaves the river at 064205J.

OAKY GORGE

Maps: Carrai 1:100,000
Jeogla 1:25,000

Oaky River is often visited because of the small hydroelectric scheme at the head of the gorge. The gorge is not quite as spectacular as some of the others but still has much to offer, despite the intrusion of the power scheme with its attendant litter and introduced weeds.

Access. The gorge is reached from Armidale by following the Grafton and

Kempsey Roads to the Oaky Dam turn-off, 48 km from Armidale. It is a further 3 km down the Oaky Dam Road to the dam settlement at the edge of the gorge.

Day Walks

Dam Settlement - Oaky Falls (Easy)

Maps: Jeogla 1:25,000

Just before the gate into the dam settlement there is a 4WD track heading down the gully to the right. This track can be followed to the power station at the base of the gorge. Permission must be obtained to use this track. It is about a 40 minute walk down the road to the bottom. From the power station it is an easy walk upstream to the base of the falls.

Another feature of the gorge is the rainforest gully on the southern side a few hundred meters downstream of the power station. There are some fairly large red cedars in the gully. The walk back up the road to the top takes about 40 to 60 minutes.

Dam Settlement - Fletchers Gap (Medium)

Maps: Jeogla 1:25,000

This walk involves travel down the gorge from the power station to the saddle between the Oaky and Chandler Gorges (074154J). The walk downstream is rather interesting with two waterfalls which can be passed on the right by moderately high traverses and a number of patches of rainforest. Non-poisonous green tree snakes seem to be fairly common.

The walk can be shortened by climbing the ridge at 086156J. Otherwise it is a steep climb up to the saddle (Fletchers Gap) but this is amply rewarded by the view down into the Chandler Gorge from the top. From the saddle an old 4WD track

can be followed back to the power station road.

THE STYX GORGE

Maps: Big Hill 1:25,000
Carrai 1:100,000
Jeogla 1:25,000

Below the Kempsey Road the Styx enters a spectacular canyon with three major waterfalls, of which no one has managed a complete descent. After about 1.5 km the canyon opens out a little to form a steep-sided gorge with towering rock bluffs and dense rainforest. Proceeding downstream the gorge slowly widens and dry sclerophyll forest eventually dominates. This is probably the most beautiful, varied and interesting of all the Macleay gorges. Compared to the canyon, entry into, and progress through, the gorge is relatively easy.

Access. From Armidale, follow the Grafton Road through Wollomombi and turn-off at the Kempsey Road. Entry to the Styx canyon can be made from Falls Road, which leaves the Kempsey Road 2 km past the bridge over the Styx. The upper reaches of the gorge are also accessible from Falls Road or from Williams Road, which leaves the Kempsey Road at Jeogla (151172J), about 2 km past the bridge over Oaky River. The lower section of the gorge can be reached from the east by way of a number of fire roads off Raspberry Road (215124J), which leaves the Kempsey Road 1.5 km past Falls Road. From the west, access to the lower gorge can be made by way of the Spike Island Road, which leaves the Kempsey Road at 137173J, 1 km past the Oaky bridge.

Day Walks

Falls Road - Upper Falls (Medium)

Maps: Jeogla 1:25,000

Leave the car where Falls Road crosses a small gully (192141J) and follow the creek down to the river (190143J). Above the junction there is an old concrete weir used for the hydroelectric scheme. Below the junction is the remains of a trestle which once joined the viaduct located below the rim of the canyon. The viaduct was used to convey water to a point above the generator. Scramble down below the trestle then swim and scramble to the first waterfall. After surveying the scene you will probably decide to return the way you have come.

Falls Road - Middle Falls (Hard)

Maps: Jeogla 1:25,000

The second waterfall can be seen from a spur just off Falls Road (185135J). A large chockstone can be seen suspended above the falls at about half height. For a closer look leave Falls Road where it crosses a creek at 192138J and follow this creek to the river. A rope is needed as a handrail to get down and back up the last section of the creek (187138J). From here it is a short distance upstream to the second falls (188139J) and about 500 m downstream to the third falls (183137J).

Falls Road - Lower Falls (Medium)

Maps: Jeogla 1:25,000

From Kempsey Road, follow Falls Road for about 3 km. About 400 m after Electric Road a rough track heads right, towards the gorge. This track ends at the gorge rim (184133J). From here it is a short walk southwest onto a knife-edged

ridge (182132J) for a spectacular view of the Styx. Do not attempt to follow this ridge down, but backtrack about 50 m from the pinnacle and drop off into the rainforest gully on the south side of the ridge. It is a fairly simple walk down this gully to the river.

If the river is fairly low it is possible to swim and walk about 1 km upstream to the Lower Falls (182137J), which drop about 40 m directly into a large pool surrounded by towering rock walls. Small rock falls are common in this area and caution and helmets are strongly advised. Return via the entry gully or take the ridge immediately to the west of the creek.

Williams Road - Styx Gorge (Medium)

Maps: Jeogla 1:25,000

About 100 m past the fourth gate on Williams Road (146143J) take the side-track to the left over the hill (150130J) and on to the fence, where the walk begins. Cross the fence and walk south down the hill, then through a gate to the east, and follow the track southeast up the hill for about 500 m to where a track leads off to the left near an old log dump. Follow this track down to a wide cleared saddle (159125J) and continue down the well-defined ridge, Barjo Ridge, to the swimming hole at the bottom (171126J).

From the swimming hole it is possible to walk 1.5 km up the gorge before small canyons and falls necessitate a number of swims. A worthwhile side trip about 800 m upstream of the swimming hole is to explore the rainforest in Back Creek (165128J). It is possible to walk about 800 m up this creek before waterfalls block further progress. The return route to the parking place is the same as the route down.

Barjo Ridge - Falls Road (Medium/Hard)

Maps: Jeogla 1:25,000

The previous two walks can be combined to give a long and strenuous day walk through the upper gorge but this requires a car shuttle. As the walk includes a large number of swims it should only be attempted in the warmer months and then only if the river is low. It could be done as a more relaxing two day trip.

Downstream of the Barjo Ridge (Medium)

Maps: Big Hill 1:25,000

Jeogla 1:25,000

There are a number of good day walks to be had in the gorge downstream of the Barjo Ridge. For the first 4 km downstream of the ridge, to around 138101B, the river is characterised by rocky bluffs with small canyons and falls and quite a deal of swimming is necessary. The dominant vegetation type along this section of the river is dry rainforest. Access to the end of this section is possible down Bobs Ridge (140095B), which is reached by way of Bobs Fire Trail off Raspberry Road.

Downstream of Bobs Ridge the gorge opens out and dry sclerophyll forest dominates. Travel along the gorge floor becomes much easier and it is seldom necessary to cross the stream. This section is most easily approached from the west with the Spike Island Road providing close access to the gorge edge. All of the major ridges are negotiable. A good exit route on the western side is to climb Bellbird Gully (114076B). This gully climbs steadily with no significant waterfalls or other obstacles and provides a good change from ridge climbing. The gully contains a large pocket of dry

rainforest with some towering red cedars and figs.

Longer Walks

Styx Gorge (Medium, 2-4 Days)

Maps: Big Hill 1:25,000
Joeгла 1:25,000

The Styx Gorge is an ideal area for overnight walks with its spectacular scenery and abundance of swimming holes. Campsites are relatively rare in the upper parts of the gorge and take a bit of searching out, but there are numerous grassy flats in the lower reaches. A good walk from Williams Road is to descend the Barjo Ridge and follow the Styx down to its junction with the Chandler and then follow the Chandler upstream to its junction with the Oaky. To complete the walk either ascend Warm Corner Spur (062080B) or walk up the Oaky, although this requires swimming in places, and then climb any of the ridges to the east. This trip takes 3 to 4 days.

ABERFOYLE RIVER

Maps: Ebor 1:100,000
Wards Mistake 1:25,000

The Aberfoyle is a major tributary of the Guy Fawkes. The river begins near Guyra and enters a fairly rugged gorge about 13 km northeast of Aberfoyle. The upper part of the gorge provides difficult walking but the going is much easier in the middle and lower sections.

Access. The upper part of the gorge is accessible from either “Wattlegrove” (118653W) or “Riverview” (091636W). “Wattlegrove” is reached from Guyra by taking the Wards Mistake and Paddys Land Roads to “Mornington” (47 km from Guyra). “Wattlegrove” is a further 3 km to the southeast. “Riverview” is

reached by following the Wards Mistake Road until the intersection (041658W) 39 km from Guyra. Turn right at the intersection then left after 100 m. It is a further 6 km to “Riverview”.

The middle reaches of the river are accessible from the end of the Dyamberin Road which heads north from the Guyra-Ebor Road about 50 km east of Guyra. This road is trafficable to around 251623W.

Day Walks

Aberfoyle Falls (Hard)

Maps: Wards Mistake 1:25,000

There are several spectacular waterfalls between 75 m and 150 m on the Aberfoyle and a number of similar ones on Nowlands Backwater which joins the Aberfoyle near the head of the gorge. From either “Wattlegrove” or “Riverview” walk to the head of Nowlands Gorge and follow the rim south to the top of the first ridge into the gorge (128641W). Good views can be had from a little way down this ridge.

To descend into the gorge continue south along the rim to 127634W and drop down the ridge (132634W). This ridge is very steep and exposed in places and should not be attempted by inexperienced parties. There are a couple of falls just downstream of the base of the ridge, but these can be negotiated fairly easily. It is possible to walk only a few hundred meters up the Aberfoyle before progress is blocked by a large waterfall. A possible exit from the gorge is to climb the ridge (137633W) on the north side of the gorge downstream of the junction. It is a short walk from the top of this ridge back to the head of Nowlands Gorge.

Dyamberin Road - Aberfoyle Gorge (Medium)

Maps: Wards Mistake 1:25,000

From the end of the Dyamberin Road (251623W) there are many good open ridges into the Aberfoyle, which provide excellent views. One of the best of these is that through 224650W and 210656W. Travel along the gorge floor is easy. A good exit ridge providing views up the gorge is that at 197629W. On the return walk to the car it is possible to see the Devil's Chimney from near the head of Bough Yard Creek. The Chimney is a rather spectacular rock spire near the base of the creek's gorge.

Longer Walks

Dyamberin Road - Aberfoyle Falls (Medium/Hard, 2-3 days)

Maps: Wards Mistake 1:25,000

From "Lark Hill" (237568W) on the Dyamberin Road follow the ridge system to the northeast to the junction of the Aberfoyle with Kangaroo Creek (190627W). Walking upstream from the junction the going is easy at first but becomes difficult about 3 to 4 km below the falls, with a number of swims and ropes being required in places. A full day is needed to negotiate the gorge between the Kangaroo Creek junction and the falls. There are a number of steep and fairly difficult routes out of the gorge from the base of the falls (one is described in the day walk above). If a car shuttle has been arranged it is only a short walk to either "Riverview" or "Wattlegrove", otherwise the best part of a day is needed to return to "Lark Hill", following the gorge rim east and crossing the gorge of Kangaroo Creek.

Possible through walks beginning at the head of the gorge and following the

river downstream can take up to five days. Possible finishing points are down the Guy Fawkes to the Old Grafton Road or up the Guy Fawkes then Marengo Creek to "Marengo Station" (see Guy Fawkes National Park). Any such walk would require swims and abseils in the upper reaches of the Aberfoyle and a 50 m rope and slings should be carried.

GUY FAWKES RIVER NATIONAL PARK

Maps: Chaelundi 1:25,000

Guy Fawkes River

1:25,000

Hernani 1:25,000

Marengo 1:25,000

Wards Mistake 1:25,000

This Park covers the central and lower sections of the valley of the Guy Fawkes River, as well as a small part of the upper reaches of the gorge around Ebor Falls. It offers delightful walking. The vegetation is open, dry sclerophyll forest and woodland. The area is certainly rugged yet most ridges are negotiable, the views are magnificent and the river is beautiful to walk along or swim in. Generally walking is easy, although descent in and ascent out of the valley is long and steep. The area is best suited for 2 to 4 day trips; day trips are possible, but most of the day is spent getting into or climbing out of the valley. The main feature limiting trips in the area is access, otherwise it is possible to walk almost anywhere. The walks described in this section cover the whole of the Guy Fawkes valley and many are not wholly within the National Park.

Access. There are limited roads within the Park or even to the Park boundary. There are two major starting points for trips in the area. The first of these is at the gate to "Marengo Station" (400632M) which is reached by following the

Marengo Road from Hernani on the Armidale-Grafton Road. From the west the Park is most easily approached from “Lark Hill” (237568W) which is at the end of the Dyamberin Road from the Guyra-Ebor Road. It is possible to drive past “Lark Hill” to the hut at 252630W.

Day Walks

Marengo Falls and Gorge (Medium/Hard)

Maps: Marengo 1:25,000

From the gate at “Marengo Station” (401635M) it is a 2 km walk down the creek to the top of the falls. It is easiest to walk down the western side of the creek keeping about 200 m from the creek itself. The falls are amongst the highest and most spectacular in the region and are best viewed from the southern rim of the gorge about 500 m southwest of the upper fall. From this viewpoint inspect the northern side of the gorge for this is where the easiest route to the gorge floor lies. The best ridge, although steep, is immediately to the east of a creek entering the gorge from the northern side. Some scrub bashing is necessary to get to the top of this ridge.

It is also possible to descend into the gorge from the southern side down the ridge at 378645M. This ridge is steep and scrambly in places. Make sure that the gully to the west is kept in sight as it is easy to miss the ridge in its upper sections. Do not attempt to enter the gorge upstream of these two ridges as there are almost continuous bluffs along the base of the gorge and many loose scree slopes.

From the bottom it is a fairly strenuous clamber to the base of the falls. If the stream is up some swimming is necessary. The best exit is the ridge on the southern side described above.

Lark Hill - Aberfoyle Junction (Medium)

Maps: Chaelundi 1:25,000

Marengo 1:25,000

Wards Mistake 1:25,000

This is a very long day trip requiring an early start. From the hut at the end of the road past “Lark Hill” follow the very long ridge heading northeast to the junction of the Aberfoyle and Guy Fawkes Rivers. This ridge offers good views of most of the Park. From the junction it is easy walking up the gravel beds of the Aberfoyle. Return via one of the easy spurs at 215665W or 214655W.

Guy Fawkes River - Boundary Creek Falls (Medium/Hard)

Maps: Hernani 1:25,000

This is a long and difficult walk and will require an early start. The walk begins at an abandoned sawmill (323417H) about 10 km along a gravel road which leaves the Armidale-Grafton Road 1 km north of Ebor.

From the abandoned sawmill, walk in a northwesterly direction along a broad flat ridge to 305446H. The descent into the Guy Fawkes River from here is steep and difficult. Descend in a northerly direction and choose the easiest route through the numerous bluffs. The gully at 305452H provides an alternative descent route. When the Guy Fawkes is reached (303454H) head directly up the prominent ridge on the other side. This ridge is knife-edged in places. At the top walk south along the gorge rim until the impressive falls on Boundary Creek are reached (289435H). From the falls walk to 291432H, descend east to a saddle, then take the ridge leading north to the Guy Fawkes. Walk down the Guy Fawkes for 300 m and ascend the ridge that leads back toward the starting point.

Longer Walks

Lark Hill - Guy Fawkes River (Medium, 2-3 days)

Maps: Chaelundi 1:25,000
Marengo 1:25,000
Wards Mistake 1:25,000

It is best to begin this trip about half way between “Lark Hill “ and the hut at the end of the road. From here follow the road to the hut and then take the long ridge described above down to the Aberfoyle junction. From here is it possible to walk many kilometres up the Guy Fawkes. For a two day trip ascend any of the ridges in the vicinity of Big Scrub Creek (322647M), otherwise continue upstream. For a three day trip climb any of the ridges in the vicinity of Connaughtmans (320589M) and Bald Hills Creeks (318551M).

If an extra day is available, a side trip up Marengo Gorge (325668M) to the falls is well worthwhile. The trip up and back is a very long day and it would be best to camp a few kilometres up the creek and do the day trip from there. Some wading or swimming will be necessary.

Marengo - Guy Fawkes River (Medium, 2-4 Days)

Maps: Chaelundi 1:25,000
Marengo 1:25,000

From “Marengo Station” (401635M) there are a number of very scenic routes down into the Guy Fawkes. The easiest of these is McDonalds Ridge beginning at 363629M and ending at Marengo Creek only a short walk from its junction with the Guy Fawkes. A slightly more energetic route is to take the ridge between Marengo and Housewater Creeks beginning at 363669M. Another good ridge is that at 350603M which leads to the junction of the Guy Fawkes and Pantons

Creek. For a two day trip combine any two of these ridges. The walking along the river itself is easy.

For a 3 day trip travel down the Guy Fawkes and climb one of the prominent ridges to Lucifer’s Thumb (345745C) or Jordans track (347712C). The walk along the Thumb provides spectacular views of the river valley and surrounding ranges. It is also possible to do a 4 day through walk beginning at “Marengo Station” and following the Guy Fawkes downstream about 55 km to Newton Boyd where the Old Grafton Road meets the river. After heavy rain this is an excellent lilo trip.

Ebor Falls - Marengo (Medium/Hard, 3-4 Days)

Maps: Ebor 1:25,000
Hernani 1:25,000
Marengo 1:25,000

This trip involves travelling down the upper parts of the Guy Fawkes which are much more rugged than the middle and lower sections of the stream. With care it is possible to descend to the river from either of the Lookouts near Ebor (368362E). Travel down the gorge is not too difficult until the junction with Boundary Creek (295444H). From this point to the junction with Bald Hills Creek (318551M) the going is difficult and very tiring with many swims being necessary. There are several small waterfalls in this section which can be passed by going up and around. After Bald Hills Creek the going becomes easier. Exit can be made up any of the ridges leading to “Marengo Station” as described for the preceding trip.

Chaelundi - Guy Fawkes - Chaelundi (Medium, 2-3 days)

Maps: Chaelundi 1:25,000

The walk begins at the Chaelundi Rest area. Take the Lucifers Thumb track out past Chaelundi Falls. The track swings west and follows the rim of the gorge offering some good views of the valley below.

The track then turns north. At this point, head due west until you reach a prominent ridge (341737C). Follow this, it will swing north at 330745C keep on it all the way to the river. Once the river is reached head upstream. The walking is easy with many river crossings and you have a great choice of campsites.

Day 2 continue upstream until you reach some old stockyards just below Housewater Creek (316685C). Fill your water bottles and start the climb up the steep 4WD track, Jordans Track (328691C). Once the top is reached, the track joins with the Escarpment Walking Track, and this is followed a further 8 km north to the Chaelundi Rest area. This section of the river can take at least 4 hours depending on fitness.

SARA RIVER

Maps: Dalmorton 1:25,000
Ebor 1:100,000
Guy Fawkes 1:25,000
Kookabookra 1 :25,000
Newton Boyd 1:100,000
Sara River 1:25,000

The Sara rises to the northeast of Guyra and, once it enters its gorge, flows eastward for about 50 km before it joins the Guy Fawkes to form the Boyd River. The Sara has no major falls at its head and its entire length provides fairly straightforward walking. The vegetation is predominantly open woodland and thus most of the ridges offer good unobstructed views. Nearly the whole of the Sara Gorge lies within the Guy Fawkes Wilderness. Generally two or more days are necessary

to adequately experience what the area has to offer.

Access. The area can be reached from either Glen Innes or Guyra. From Glen Innes take the road heading southeast through Pinkett and Moggs Swamp to “Koobabookra” (049803K), 48 km from Glen. “Kookabookra” can also be reached from Guyra by taking the Ebor Road for 4 km then the Wards Mistake and Backwater Roads, which lead to Paddys Gully Road. It is then a further 18 km to “Kookabookra”. From the farm follow the road east to around 102778K from where it is only a short walk to the head of the gorge.

Another access route to the area is Paddys Land Road, which can be reached from Guyra by following the Wards Mistake Road and then turning onto Paddys Land Road 40 km from Guyra. Paddys Land Road is trafficable to the intersection at 189727K, just past an old cemetery.

Longer Walks

Kookabookra Creek Downstream (Medium, 2-4 Days)

Maps: Dalmorton 1:25,000
Guy Fawkes 1:25,000
Kookabookra 1:25,000
Sara River 1:25,000

From 102778K walk to the head of the gorge, which provides straightforward walking. Although it is possible to reach the junction with Starlight Gulf (202870S) in a day, progress much beyond the junction with Nowlands Creek (167783K), precludes any interesting return route if only a two day walk is envisaged. Nowlands Creek was an old gold mining area and some time could be spent exploring the old workings up the creek (139768K).

There are a number of return routes from here Kookabookra Creek.

Continuing downstream of Nowlands Creek it is a further 2 days to the Boyd River (296873G) and a short day from there to the Old Grafton Road (328990D). The whole trip is reasonably easy except for the four to five kilometres before Starlight Gulf where the going is a bit more difficult.

Paddys Land - Stop a Bit Ridge (Medium, 2 Days)

Maps: Kookabookra 1:25,000
Sara 1:25,000

From a suitable point on Paddys Land Road, around 170720K, follow the ridges north to Bear Hill (158764K), where there are some old mine shafts. Then follow any of the ridges down to the old mine workings in Nowlands Creek. Stop a Bit Ridge leads northwards from the junction of Nowlands Creek and the Sara. This is one of the most spectacular ridges in the Sara and offers excellent views. It is steep and rocky at first but becomes easier from the knob (162803K) on. Continue on up the ridge to the old road at 145829S then follow the prominent northeasterly ridge (155845S) down to the Sara for a well earned night of rest and relaxation.

To return to Paddys Land, climb any of the ridges to the east of the river to the major north-south ridge running through (182813S). This major ridge can be followed all the way back to the starting point.

HENRY RIVER

Maps: Glen Innes 1:100,000
Henry River 1:25,000
Newton Boyd 1:100,000
Red Range 1:25,000

The Henry is the major tributary of the Mann River. It rises in the hills to the

northeast of Guyra and flows in a northeasterly direction to join the Mann below “Newton Boyd” on the Old Grafton Road. For most of its length the river flows through a rather rugged gorge with numerous small waterfalls in the upper section giving way to gravel banks and gentle meanders in the middle and lower sections. The vegetation is dominated by dry sclerophyll and open woodland communities which present no problems for walkers. There are some patches of dry rainforest in the gullies particularly those on the northern side of the river. Due to its isolation the area is not particularly suited for day walks.

Access. The upper reaches of the river can be reached by taking the Red Range Road east from Glen Innes. About 13 km east of Red Range the road crosses the Yarrow River (023027R). The road ends at “Fairfield” (038994H) a further 4 km after the Yarrow.

The Old Grafton Road, which leaves the Gwydir Highway 35 km east of Glen Innes provides access to the lower reaches of the river. A good starting point is at “Abbey Green” (237072H), 27 km from the Gwydir Highway.

Longer Walks

Upper Henry

Maps: Henry River 1:25,000
Red Range 1:25,000

Relatively little is known about this section and hence no particular walk can be described. It is a 2.5 km walk from “Fairfield” to the head of the gorge where there are several possible descent routes. The river drops very steeply at about 052972H and it would be best to enter the gorge downstream of here. The gully at 057973H offers a good route down. The gorge is fairly rugged for the first few

kilometres with numerous small waterfalls and some swims. A short rope might be needed. Below the junction with Rows Mistake Creek (093985H), the going becomes easier.

The Lower Henry (Medium, 2-4 days)

Maps: Henry River 1:25,000

This section of the river is typified by the gentle gradient of the stream and the reasonably steep but fairly open ridges on the valley sides. There are no significant barriers to walkers and it is possible to explore the area at will.

One possible fairly easy two day walk begins by following the Henry upstream from “Abbey Green” (237072H) to its junction with Blacks Creek (218043H) and then climbing the ridge (210035H) leading southeast from the junction. Near the top of the ridge there are some good views to be had. A 4WD track is met at Lands End Lookout (199034H). This can be followed for several kilometres southeast before dropping down into Blacks Creek to camp. Next day climb any of the ridges to the north of the creek and find the fire trail which runs along the main east-west ridge. Follow the road eastwards and climb Hewitts Peak (173049H) which provides good views down into Four Mile Creek. From Hewitts Peak follow the northeasterly ridge through 182060H and 194073H with views most of the way. This ridge leads back to the Old Grafton Road and it is a fairly short walk back along the road to “Abbey Green”.

The Eastern Escarpment

The Eastern Escarpment of the New England Tablelands provides some rugged but very scenic walking. Within this section the areas are described in a south to north sequence from Werrikimbe National Park to the Upper Clarence area.

WERRIKIMBE NATIONAL PARK

Maps: Banda Banda 1:25,000
Cowarral 1:100,000
Kangaroo Flat 1:25,000
Seaview 1:25,000

Werrikimbe National Park occupies an area of 15,848 ha in the headwaters of the Hastings River. The main features of the Park are its extensive stands of warm temperate rainforest and the gorge of the Hastings River with its spectacular waterfalls. The Park affords a wide scope for walkers, from easy travel through the heathland and woodland in the north, to very rugged wilderness walks penetrating into the gorge.

Access. The Park lies to the north of the Oxley Highway between Walcha and Wauchope. It can be approached by either of two gravel roads, the Kangaroo Flat Road, which leaves the highway 56 km east of Walcha or Fenwicks Road, 66 km east of Walcha (100 km west of Wauchope). Both of these roads lead to Cobcrofts Road which follows the western boundary of the Park. Cobcrofts Road only approximately follows the route of Cobcrofts Trail as shown on the Kangaroo Flat map.

There are three commonly used base areas from which most walks begin. The first of these is Cobcrofts Rest Area

(201445KF), 28 km from the highway along Fenwicks and Cobcrofts Roads. A further 6 km along Cobcrofts Road from the rest area a track leads off to the east (196493KF). This track is sign-posted as the Werrikimbe Trail. It follows the ridge top along to (243480KF) and then leaves the ridge to cross Mooraback Creek (the Hastings River) at Lower Mooraback (253488KF). There is a very pleasant campsite near the stream crossing. This track is trafficable for 2WD vehicles in dry weather, but should be avoided after heavy rain. The third base area for walking is the Mooraback camping area (251537KF) which is 10 km further along Cobcrofts and Mooraback Roads from the Werrikimbe Trail turn-off.

Day Walks

Mooraback and Vicinity (Easy)

Maps: Kangaroo Flat 1:25,000

Around the Mooraback Camping Area there is quite a large area of both natural and cleared grassland with pockets of woodland and dry sclerophyll forest. Heathland occurs a few kilometres down the creek. There are many easy day walks that can be done in this area, the major features being the varied vegetation and abundant wildlife.

Lower Mooraback - Falls Lookout (Medium)

Maps: Kangaroo Flat 1:25,000

This is a relatively straight forward and very rewarding day walk encompassing both a walk through the rainforest and an excellent view of the Upper Falls, where the Hastings plunges into its gorge. A compass is essential. From the Lower Mooraback campsite (253488KF) walk back up the track about 1.5 km to where

it begins to climb up the ridge on the border of the rainforest. Then walk in a southwesterly direction down into Gorge Creek. Cross the creek and ascend through the rainforest onto the ridge, which runs in an approximate north-south orientation. Follow this ridge southwards to the peak at 245460KF from which the falls and gorge can be seen. To return either retrace the route or descend the northeasterly ridge from the peak to the lip of the gorge and follow this around back to Gorge Creek and thence up through the forest to Lower Mooraback.

Lower Mooraback - Upper Falls (Medium/Hard)

Maps: Kangaroo Flat 1:25,000

This is a walk of moderate difficulty leading to the base of the Upper Falls. From Lower Mooraback proceed to Gorge Creek as above but then follow the creek downstream through the rainforest. The only major obstacle is a waterfall that can be passed on the southwest side by dropping into a subsidiary gully. The creek joins the Hastings only a few hundred meters below the falls and it is an easy walk up the river to the large pool at their base.

To return climb the ridge (251466 KF) at the junction of the Hastings and Gorge Creek. Although steep this ridge is relatively easy to climb and offers some spectacular views of the falls. The trip can also be done in the reverse direction.

Lower Mooraback - Werrikimbe Trig (Medium/Hard)

Maps: Kangaroo Flat 1:25,000

This is a long day walk and may involve some scrub bashing, but from the

Trig it is possible to see virtually the whole of the Park.

From Lower Mooraback follow the Werrikimbe Trail across the Hastings. About 50 m to the east of the river an overgrown track leaves the Trail and leads in an easterly direction up on to a major north-south ridge. Follow this track for 3-4 km until it meets a well defined track at 267472KF. Follow this track southward for about 2 km, to where an overgrown track forks off to the right. This track leads up to the trig (265459KF). To return retrace the route, making sure not to miss the track junction at 267472 KF.

Longer Walks

Lower Mooraback - Upper Falls - Werrikimbe Trig (Medium, 2-3 days)

Maps: Banda Banda 1:25,000
Kangaroo Flat 1:25,000

The walks described above can be combined to give a longish two day walk or a moderately easy three day walk. The first part of the walk is the same as the Lower Mooraback-Upper Falls day walk. From the base of the Upper Falls follow the river downstream for several kilometres. Providing the river is not high no swimming is necessary although some wading and high traverses may be needed. There is a small campsite on the bend at 260456KF or alternatively there are a few flat rocks which may be camped on about 1 km further downstream.

Travel beyond the bend at 264450KF would require some longish swims and a few abseils. To leave the river from this bend climb the east bank and continue to climb sidling to the right so as to avoid a major cliff line. This route leads onto a ridge (265446KF) which can be followed to the main Werrikimbe Ridge. Once on

the main ridge slow progress can be made northward through some scrubby vegetation. However, the climb is rewarded by the wide views from Werrikimbe Trig (265460KF).

From the Trig the shortest route back to Lower Mooraback is as described in the day trip above. However, if the party has an extra half day available, instead of turning off the 4WD track at 267472 KF, the track can be followed east out of the Park and into the Mt Boss State Forest. The track passes through some magnificent stands of wet sclerophyll forest and warm temperate rainforest before joining the Werrikimbe Trail about 5 km east of Lower Mooraback. It is a pleasant walk through snow gum woodland containing some beautiful grass trees back to Lower Mooraback.

Cobcrofts Rest Area - Cobcrofts Falls (Medium, 2 days)

Maps: Kangaroo Flat 1:25,000

This is a good two day walk for a fit party. From the Rest Area (202444KF) follow the most southerly of the tracks leading to the east. This is the old Cobcrofts Trail and leads down to a rainforest gully about 1 km from the rest area. Cobcrofts Creek is reached by following this gully downstream for about 5 km to 242444KF. There is a good campsite on the left bank of Cobcrofts Creek about 100 m downstream of the junction.

From the campsite follow Cobcrofts Creek downstream to a small waterfall at 251446KF. Here the creek begins to drop steeply and it is best to head up the ridge to the south and then side east to 259437KF. It is possible to descend the ridge (260441KF) between Cobcrofts Creek and the Hastings. There is a small cliff line about halfway down this ridge

and a short (20 m) rope would be needed to make a direct descent. However, there is a way through a cliff line about 150 m back up the ridge on the north side. This allows a passage down to the creek and thence to the top of Cobcrofts Falls (259441KF). It appears possible to climb the ridges on either side of the falls and descend to the Hastings. There is a small campsite at the junction of the creek and the river.

To return to the rest area from this campsite climb the ridge on the north side of the junction up to 255447KF and then head along the ridge to either of the ridge summits; 245453KF, which has no views, or 245460KF, which offers good views. Then descend into Cobcrofts Creek and up the ridge on the far side of the valley. A bulldozer track runs along this ridge and leads back to the rest area. This track is heavily overgrown towards the end.

To return from the campsite near the creek junction (242444KF), head up the ridge at 239444KF to the same bulldozer track.

Cobcrofts Rest Area - Lower Falls (Medium/Hard, 2-3 days)

Maps: Kangaroo Flat 1:25,000
Seaview 1:25,000

The Lower Falls are the most beautiful and spectacular of all the waterfalls in the Park. They are also probably the hardest to get to.

From the rest area follow the old Cobcroft Trail for about 5 km until a distinct 4WD track joins it on the left (205426KF). This is the Mesa Trail, and follows a long ridge system to Mesa Plateau. Water can be obtained by dropping down to the north from the saddle at 238436KF. The track can be difficult to follow across Mesa Plateau as it is heavily overgrown in places and there are a

number of other tracks branching off it. It comes to an end about 8 km from the old Cobcroft Trail at 242423S. From here it is possible to follow either the major ridge through 257417S to the river, or the less distinct ridge at 258420S, down into a small but beautiful creek and thence to the river.

Once the river is reached it is a very easy walk upstream to the falls. There are a few rocky campsites along the river. To reach the base of the Lower Falls from the Rest Area would be a fairly strenuous day's walking for a fit party. The easiest return route is the reverse of that described above.

If the trip is being done over three days then an alternative return route is to climb the east side of the gorge and walk north along the Werrikimbe Ridge. This is difficult walking, suitable only for fit and experienced parties. It is possible to climb the ridge immediately below the falls at 268420S, but this involves some very exposed climbing and is definitely not recommended. A better route is to follow the ridge further downstream up to 271417S and thence onto the main ridge. Proceeding north along the main ridge there are a number of prominent bluffs which have to be bypassed through thick scrub, but there are good views from the tops of those that can be climbed. There are some good campsites on the ridge in an open patch of rainforest at 272446KF. Water is available here from a small creek, which is spring fed and thus quite reliable. To return follow the ridge northwards to 270451KF and then down the ridge to the junction of the Hastings and Cobcrofts Creek. Then follow the directions as given in the Cobcrofts Falls trip.

FORBES RIVER

Maps: Banda Banda 1:25,000

Cowarral 1:100,000

The Forbes flows to the east of the Hastings, joining it at Yarras. The upper reaches of the river are situated in the Mt Boss State Forest and, although much of that forest has been decimated by logging, the river valley is largely intact and provides good walking.

Access. The upper reaches of the river can be approached by way of the Hastings Forest Highway, accessible by taking either the Bellangry Road from Wauchope or the Forbes River and Forbes Forest Roads from the Oxley Highway at Yarras. Turn off the Forest Highway onto the Cockerawambeebea Road (398527BB). Follow till a 4WD track, the North Plateau Trail (370488BB), leaves the Cockerawambeebea Road. Follow this trail to the west until blocked by fallen trees.

Longer Walks

Upper Forbes River (Medium/ Hard, 2 Days)

Maps: Banda Banda 1:25,000

Follow the Plateau Trail west through beech forest to the point where it swings to the south (349502BB). Leave the trail here and descend the ridge to the north (344512BB) through some dry, prickly forest to the Forbes. The river here runs into a small gorge, with many large pools and cascades. It might be interesting to walk upstream of here but that section is unknown to us.

Walking downstream is slow, with many small waterfalls to negotiate and quite a few pools to swim. Several of the small falls require jumps into deep pools, so this is only recommended as a downstream trip. Campsites are very scarce, but there is a small one (for 4 people) at 312510BB, just above a 10 m waterfall.

Below the campsite the valley opens out a little but there are still a few compulsory swims. There are a number of possible exit points on the eastern side of the river a few kilometres downstream of the campsite. Climb any of these ridges onto the main north-south ridge and follow it north to the Plateau Trail, which ends at around 328483BB. Much of the ridge-top before the trail is reached has been logged and is covered with thick scrub making walking a bit difficult.

THE KUNDERANG BROOK-MOUNT BANDA BANDA AREA

Maps: Banda Banda 1:25,000
Cowarral 1:100,000
Kangaroo Flat 1:25,000
Kemps Pinnacle 1:25,000

This area lies to the north of Werrikinbe National Park and the Mount Boss State Forest. It comprises the watersheds of Kunderang Brook and Toorumbec Creek and offers both good scenery and a wide diversity of forest types and geological features. The dominant vegetation types are wet and dry sclerophyll forests but all four of the major rainforest groups found in New South Wales occur in the area. Kunderang Brook is quite well known for its limestone outcrops and their associated caves (see the Caving section).

Access. From the west the area can be approached from the Oxley Highway by way of the Kangaroo Flat Road then Mooraback Road which leads to the Racecourse Trail. In dry weather it is possible to follow this trail east to where it joins the Hastings Forest Highway which provides access to the large area from the southeast (see Forbes River). It should be noted that a large section of the present Racecourse Trail is not shown on

the maps. The trail runs close to the Hastings–Kunderang divide between 265582KF and 312557BB. Another approach route is to follow the Carrai Road from Toorooka, west of Kempsey. Coachwood Road and Kunderang Trail then provide access to the northern part of the area.

Longer Walks

Kunderang Brook (Medium, 2 days)

Maps: Kemp's Pinnacle 1:25,000

The middle and lower reaches of Kunderang Brook have been cleared and provide relatively uninteresting walking; however, in its upper reaches the stream has cut a fairly steep gorge with numerous small canyons and waterfalls. Most of the ridges in the area are open but there are some patches of rainforest and some prickly scrub. A walk into the gorge section can start from either the Kunderang or Racecourse Trails.

Nearly all of the ridges off the Kunderang Trail are negotiable. From the Racecourse Trail it is best to descend the long northerly ridge through 318482KP. Walking upstream the gorge proper begins at 326482KP where there is a 30 m waterfall. This fall can be negotiated on either side. Continue up on the creek and climb any of the ridges leading to Spokes Trail. There is some thick prickly scrub towards the trail. It is a 10 km walk along fire trails back to the starting point.

Mount Banda Banda – Kemp's Pinnacle (Medium/Hard, 2 days)

Maps: Banda Banda 1:25,000
Kemp's Pinnacle 1:25,000

A sign-posted road to Mount Banda Banda leaves the Hastings Forest Highway 2.5 km north of its junction with the Forbes Forest Road. The walk begins at the end of the Banda Road, about 1 km west of the summit. From the end of the road a rough track leads to the top where, unfortunately, there are no views. From the summit descend the prominent ridge to the north (463543BB) to the Left Arm of Toorumbec Creek. This ridge is steep and sharp, but provides unsurpassed views of the valley below and of the spectacular cliff on the north face of the mountain.

From the base of the ridge follow the creek downstream to the edge of cleared country at 443594KP. The ridge to the north of Middle Creek can be followed up to Spokes Trail. This ridge has a few steep bits near the top, with a bit of scrambling in one spot, but there are no major bluffs despite the appearance of the map 381581KP. The ridge is clear of scrub. From the top either follow Spokes Trail back to the starting point or continue north to climb Kemp's Pinnacle (1152 m). This involves a climb of about 100 m up a rather damp gully on the western side of the pinnacle. This is not a place to slip and a rope would be reassuring. From the top there are unobstructed views in every direction. To return to the starting point follow Spokes Trail as before.

GEORGES CREEK

Maps: Big Hill 1:25,000
Carrai 1:100,000
Hyatts Flat 1:25,000
Jeogla 1:25,000

Georges Creek (also called Georges River) is unusual for the rivers of the Macleay system, in that, although it drops 1200 m, it does not have a major waterfall. Consequently, it is an ideal river for

overnight walks, and it is possible to walk its entire length. The upper section, particularly a few kilometres below where it crosses the Cunnawarra Fire Road and also just below its junction with Cunnawarra Creek, offers some of the most splendid rainforest scenery in the Macleay catchment. The walks described below follow the river upstream from Grays Spur, which is the lowermost limit for enjoyable walking in natural surrounds.

Access. The upper sections of the river are best reached by way of a number of fire roads off the Forest Way, which follows the ridges to the west of the river. The lowest reaches of the stream can be approached from the Armidale-Kempsey Road.

Day Walks

Grays Spur - New England Ridge (Medium)

Maps: Big Hill 1:25,000
Jeogla 1:25,000

This circuit involves a 9 km car shuttle. Grays Spur leaves the Armidale-Kempsey Road 2 km south of the Forest Way turn-off (234103B). Walk down this spur, then upstream 2.5 km to the New England Ridge (267110B) then up the track to the Forest Way. The gorge is rather deep in this section, so although the walk along the river itself is only short, the trip could take a long day.

New England Ridge - Boulder Flat Fire Road (Medium/Hard)

Maps: Big Hill 1:25,000
Hyatts Flat 1:25,000
Jeogla 1:25,000

This is quite a long day trip so be prepared for an early start. For a car shuttle, leave a car on the Boulder Flat Fire Road at 307180H. This can be

reached from the Forest Way either from the north or south. Begin the walk at the top of the New England Ridge (276153J), and follow the track to the river (267110B) or take a short-cut east from the rise at 263123J. Walk upstream to 311158H. From here a sometimes steep and scrubby route leads up the northwestern side of the gorge. It is easiest to follow the creek through 310162H to its source, then traverse up and across thick vegetation to the ridge at around 307164H. The ridge meets a timber track at 308168H, which can be followed to the car.

Boulder Flat Fire Road - Cunnawarra Creek (Medium)

Maps: Hyatts Flat 1:25,000

There is no need for a car shuttle for this walk. Leave the car at 307180H and walk down to the river via the route described for the exit in the last walk. This section of the river is particularly beautiful all the way up to the junction and there are a number of good swimming holes. Leave the river via the ridge (320178H) to the west of the junction. An old track follows the upper part of this ridge, but is very overgrown near the top. Head west through some dense scrub to the Boulder Flat Fire Road (308182H), which leads south to the car.

Cunnawarra Creek - Softwood Road (Medium/Hard)

Maps: Hyatts Flat 1:25,000

Leave a car on Softwood Road at 365223H for the end of the walk. This section should not be attempted if the creek is up because most of the walk is along the creek bed. The walk begins from the Boulder Flat Fire Road where the above walk finished. Follow the ridge down to the Cunnawarra Creek junction.

From here it is an 8 km walk upstream to the exit point (365215H). There are three waterfalls in this section but it is not particularly difficult to walk around them, although you may need to backtrack 100 m or so to find a way up. From the exit point (365215H), scramble up north to Softwood Road.

Softwood Road - Cunnawarra Road (Medium)

Maps: Hyatts Flat 1:25,000

For a car shuttle, leave a car near the Georges Creek crossing on the Cunnawarra Fire Road (394238H). Begin the walk at the top of Softwood Road (358226H) and walk to the end of the road. Then descend southeast through logged forest to the river. It is a very pleasant walk, largely along the riverbed to a waterfall at 392235H which marks the top of the gorge. For most of this section the stream flows through cool temperate rainforest with some very tall Antarctic Beech. The fall can be easily bypassed to the west and it is then only a short walk to the car at the finish.

Longer Walks

Georges Creek (Medium/ Hard, 3 days)

Maps: Big Hill 1:25,000
Hyatts Flat 1:25,000
Jeogla 1:25,000

The stream is ideally suited for pleasant and relaxing overnight walks. Simply join up two or more of the day walks described above. To walk the length of the river from Grays or New England Ridge to the Cunnawarra Road could take three days. Rainforest campsites are generally plentiful.

NEW ENGLAND NATIONAL PARK

Maps: Carrai 1:100,000
Dorrigo 1:100,000
Ebor 1:25,000
Ebor 1:100,000
Five Day Creek 1:25,000
Hernani 1:25,000
Hyatts Flat 1:25,000

The New England National Park covers a large and magnificent area from high escarpment to coastal rivers. The altitudinal range is reflected in the huge variety of vegetation; subalpine flora, sclerophyll forests, and temperate and subtropical rainforests, all being represented within the Park.

You can stay overnight in the camping area or book accommodation in one the huts.

For the experienced bushwalker, the Park provides excellent wilderness walks. Most are strenuous; however, the unspoilt beauty is unsurpassed. Walkers descending from the escarpment must be prepared for rough conditions with slow progress and a shortage of level campsites. Navigation requires some skill due to limited vantage points for locational bearings. In general, ridgetops provide quicker progress than waterways, but have the disadvantage of lack of water. The main creeks can always be depended upon for water supply, a refreshing swim and outstanding rainforest scenery. Other rewards of clear waterfalls, narrow gorge watercourses and surrounds of towering mountainous terrain have to be weighed against the slow progress, occasional leeches, wet feet, and extremely slippery rocks in wet weather. Summer months are usually wet, so May through to November is the best walking weather.

Access. From Armidale travel eastwards along the Armidale-Grafton Road for 67 km until the turn-off to the Park is reached. A gravel road leads 11 km to the Park boundary and continues for a further 3 km to Point Lookout, the highest point in the Park (1562 m). Most walks described in this section lead off from near the Ranger's house at the Park boundary.

Day Walks

Walking Tracks (Easy)

Maps: Ebor 1:25,000
Hyatts Flat 1:25,000

The Park has tracks which are suitable to people of average physical ability and enthusiasm. Track maps and information are available from visitor centres within the Park. The walks vary from 2 to 7 km and the longest takes only a few hours.

Park Entrance - Platypus Creek (Medium)

Maps: Hyatts Flat 1:25,000

Follow Robinson's Knob Trail from the Park entrance until it meets Grasstree Trail (467229Hy). Walk 2.5 km along Grasstree Trail to the turn-off to the antimony mine (478243Hy). The trip can be extended to 2 days by camping at the abandoned mine and taking side-trips up Platypus Creek and its tributaries.

Majors Point - Point Lookout (Medium)

Maps: Ebor 1:25,000

This walk provides excellent views over the tablelands and the escarpment, but requires a car shuttle. Turn off the Armidale-Grafton Road onto Majors Point Road, 1 km north of Ebor. Majors Point Road branches at 404366E, but either branch may be taken. Easy walking

through open snowgum forest leads to Majors Point (451344E). Follow the escarpment rim south, alternating through sclerophyll forest and temperate rainforest. Navigation is relatively easy in good weather, but thick fog can make navigation difficult. From the south-east tip of Darkie Point (441321E) some striking volcanic features and breathtaking views of the park are seen. When nearing Point Lookout (432268E), walk close to the escarpment to avoid swampy heaths and thickets of pepperbush.

Longer Walks

Park Entrance - Sunday Creek (Medium, 2 Days)

Maps: Ebor 1:25,000
Hyatts Flat 1:25,000

Start at the Park entrance and follow Robinson's Knob and Grasstree Trails to Sunday Creek (519263E). The area supports magnificent sub-tropical rainforest and provides for swimming and good campsites. Return by the same route or alternatively climb any of the long ridges leading back towards the Park's track system.

Park Entrance - Thora (easy, 2-3 days)

Maps: Darkwood 1:25,000
Ebor 1:25,000
Hyatts Flat 1:25,000

This is a popular walk as it avoids the return climb up the escarpment. However, it requires a long car shuttle or a lot of hitch-hiking. From the Park entrance follow the Robinson's Knob and Grasstree Trails to Sunday Creek where there are some good campsites. There is no trail from here to the Upper Bellinger valley, it is necessary to rock-hop down the creek with occasional excursions into the forest

before the first cleared land in the Bellinger is reached. It is then still quite some distance to the Dardanelles Bridge (624306D) which is the uppermost limit of reliable vehicular access to the upper part of the valley.

Park Entrance - Robinson's Knob (Easy, 2 days)

Maps: Ebor 1:25,000
Hyatts Flat 1:25,000

This is a straight forward walk along fire trails, the major hassle being that water must be carried as the trails follow the ridgetops. From the Park entrance follow the Robinson's Knob Trail for 15 km out to Robinson's Knob (507194 Hy). One feature of the walk is the grove of red cedars that the trail passes through in one of the saddles.

Park Entrance - Robinson's Knob - Five Day Creek (Medium, 4-5 days)

Maps: Ebor 1:25,000
Five Day Creek 1:25,000
Hyatts Flat 1:25,000

This is a very long circuit walk covering the southern area of the Park. The walk follows fire trails for its entire length. Water must be carried for most of the walk.

From the Park entrance follow the Robinson's Knob Trail to Robinson's Knob (507194 Hy). After a further 1 km, turn onto Comara Trail at 511188Hy. This trail is followed southwards along ridgetops for about 18 km until the junction with Postmans Trail (463057F) is reached. Follow this trail down to Five Day Creek and have a good drink. Then follow the trail north up Five Day Creek on to the Diamond Flat Trail. The Cliffs Trail diverges at 363180Hy and leads

back to the Park entrance, completing the circuit.

Redlands - The Crescent - Point Lookout (Medium/Hard, 3-4 days)

Maps: Ebor 1:25,000
Hernani 1:25,000

Travel along the Armidale-Dorrigo Road to 461418He and turn-off onto the track to "Redlands" (475402He). The walk departs from the small waterfall on Allans Water (465377E). At first the vegetation is scrubby and the progress slow (2 hours to 474355E). Great care must be taken to avoid a dangerous route along a narrow unstable dyke. Navigating the ridge is easy for the most part; however, compass bearings should be followed to avoid taking spurs which may terminate short of your destination. Hard slogging through thick vegetation necessitates the first night's camp on the ridge (around 510320E).

On the second day continue along the ridge to the Crescent (518306E), then descend through subtropical rainforest to the Bellinger River. Follow the river upstream to the start of the ridge leading to Point Lookout (495287E). The second camp can be made in the river or around 478284E. On this ridge, progress is good until 439272E. The final ascent to the Eagles Nest Walking Track is steep and scrubby. Cliffs just beneath the walking track do not allow a direct ascent. When the cliffs are met traverse to the left to around 433266E where a break in the cliffs will be found.

Park Entrance - Five Day Creek (Medium/Hard, 2-3 days)

Maps: Hyatts Flat 1:25,000

From the Park entrance follow Cliffs Trail for about 5 km. Leave the trail at 404217Hy and pick up the initially indistinct ridge leading to Pine Knob. The ridge becomes more defined and an old snig track may be found, allowing faster progress. From Pine Knob, careful navigation is required in the descent to Yellow Knob; from there an obvious ridge leads to the junction of Cedar Creek and Five Day Creek. The descent takes about 5 hours. Five Day Creek provides pleasant walking and swimming, as well as ample campsites.

The following day continue upstream until Turners Creek enters from the left at 443194Hy. Climb the ridge running northwest from the junction to Alum Mountain, then descend to a saddle (427222Hy) where there are good views of the upper reaches of Five Day Creek. Continue westwards up the ridge until Cliffs Trail is met. The area between Alum Mountain and Cliffs Trail is scrubby, making travel slow. An alternative return route is to continue upstream from Turners Creek until the river swings west (449218 Hy). From here, any of a number of ridges can be ascended to Robinson's Knob Trail.

THE BLACK SCRUB

Maps: Darkwood 1:25,000
Dorrigo 1:100,000

The Black Scrub is an area of rainforest and sclerophyll forest on the escarpment between New England and Dorrigo National Parks. From the top of the escarpment there are spectacular views down into the Bellinger River and across the mountains to the sea. The creeks of the area are lined with rainforest.

Access. From above there are a number of tracks leading to the escarpment from the Ebor-Dorrigo Road. The best of these

leaves the road at 580386Da just west of the bridge across the Little Murray River and 17.5 km west of Dorrigo. It is only possible to drive down this track for about 1 km before having to walk. The lower part of the Black Scrub can be reached by way of the Upper Thora Road which follows the Bellinger River upstream from Thora on the Dorrigo-Bellingen Road.

Day Walks

Bishops Creek (Medium)

Maps: Darkwood 1:25,000

From the Upper Thora Road take the turn-off on the right about 800 m upstream of the eighth bridge from Thora (327666Da). Follow this track for about 1 km to the farmhouse (653334Da). From the farmhouse walk upstream for 1 km and then climb the ridge through 648346Da. An old track follows this ridge. Continue on up the ridge for at least a few kilometres then descend any of the gullies or ridges on the north leading down to Bishops Creek. The scrub on the descent is very thick in places, but the creek itself is beautiful and fairly easy to walk down, although wet feet are difficult to avoid.

Escarpment - Bishops Creek (Medium/Hard)

Maps: Darkwood 1:25,000

This walk offers some superb views but also involves some very rugged country and thick scrub. An early start is advised. Beginning on the track at the top of the escarpment (576377Da) walk southeast out onto the point of the ridge at 581372Da. Although steep at first, it is possible to follow this ridge all the way down to the Bellinger. However, for a day walk, follow the ridge down for about 2 km then drop off to the north into Bishops

Creek. After exploring the creek for a while climb any of the ridges to the north. This is a difficult climb with some thick scrub, small bluffs and very steep slopes; however, the views from the escarpment provide ample reward. To return follow the escarpment back to the starting point.

Longer Walks

Bishops Creek - Dardanelles Creek (Medium/Hard, 2 days)

Maps: Darkwood 1:25,000

Starting at the farmhouse (653334Da) on Bishops Creek, follow the creek upstream. After a couple of kilometres the stream enters the rainforest and provides very enjoyable walking. Continue on up the creek until it begins to climb very steeply and walking becomes too difficult. Then climb any of the ridges to the north up onto the escarpment as in the previous day trip. Once on top water can be obtained by making a short side trip to the Little Murray. There are a few possible campsites on the escarpment, some with excellent views. To descend from the escarpment follow the prominent ridge down from the point at 581372Da. This ridge can be followed all the way back to the starting point, but a more interesting route is to drop off it to the south into the headwaters of Dardanelles Creek (594362Da), which can be followed downstream to the road.

DORRIGO NATIONAL PARK

Maps: Bellingen 1:25,000
Darkwood 1:25,000
Dorrigo 1:25,000
Dorrigo 1:100,000

Dorrigo National Park is in an area that was once almost completely covered by

rainforest. The Park preserves quite a large stand of this more luxuriant type of rainforest with its associated fauna. Towards the lower reaches of the escarpment the vegetation changes to wet sclerophyll forest with large hardwoods. No camping or fires outside constructed fireplaces are allowed in the Park.

Access. The Park is situated 4 km east of Dorrigo on the Dorrigo-Bellingen Road.

Day Walks

Track Walks (Easy)

Maps: Darkwood 1:25,000
Dorrigo 1:25,000

There are about 20 km of marked trails within the Park. These range from short circuit walks to longer walks up to 13 km in length. These are described in the National Parks and Wildlife Service brochures "Dorrigo National Park" and "Never Never Picnic Area". Most of these trails are through rainforest, with some giving occasional spectacular views, while others lead to beautiful waterfalls.

Rosewood Creek (Medium)

Maps: Bellingen 1:25,000
Darkwood 1:25,000
Dorrigo 1:25,000

Although it is all downhill this is quite a long day walk necessitating an early start. The walk involves a descent of the escarpment and then rock-hopping down creeks to cleared country. Leaving from the Glade (735398Do) follow the Wanga Walk to Crystal Shower Falls (741390Do). Continue on down the track, which descends a ridge to the northeast. Where the track turns westward, leave it and continue the descent of the ridge (746393Do) until a creek is reached. Follow this

creek downstream to Rosewood Creek (761397B). Rosewood Creek is quite a broad open stream, contrasting with the smaller creeks in the forest. Several kilometres down Rosewood Creek an old track crosses the stream. This can be followed along the right (southwest) side of the creek to a gravel road, which leads south to the Dorrigo-Bellingen Road. Hitch-hiking back to The Glade is usually fairly easy if required.

There are many possible variations to this walk as most of the ridges off the escarpment are negotiable.

GIBRALTAR RANGE NATIONAL PARK

Maps: Cangai 1:25,000
Mount Wellington
1:25,000
Newton Boyd 1:100,000

Gibraltar Range National Park covers an area of approximately 17,000 ha on the escarpment east of Glen Innes. The area was previously State Forest with the result that many of the larger trees have been removed. Earlier still, deposits of both gold and tin were mined in the region and many of the old shafts remain - interesting but dangerous to bushwalkers.

Geologically, the Park consists of granite, capped in places with the remnants of Tertiary basalt flows. Along its eastern edge this granite tableland has been deeply dissected to give numerous gorges and waterfalls. Among the more spectacular of these are Dandahra Falls and Gorge, the falls being about 250 m in height. Another characteristic of the eastern scarp is the large outcrops of granite on some of the ridges.

A major feature of the area is its great diversity of vegetation types. Most of the granitic regions of the Park are covered

by wet sclerophyll forest which gives way to dry sclerophyll forest towards the western boundary, where there are also patches of heath on the sandier windswept hills. Swamps and marshes are found in some of the low lying areas on the tableland itself, while rainforest is found on the eastern scarp, in several gorges, and on the basalt flows at the top of the range. There is also a wide variety of bird and animal life, with some 32 species of marsupials and many reptiles.

For the walker there are several good sign-posted trails to a number of the lookouts and waterfalls in the higher sections of the Park. Off these trails the bushwalker is free to explore the extremely beautiful and often rugged terrain of the Park. Good walking; however, is not restricted to the Park and two of the walks described below extend beyond the Park boundary. There is much to be seen and the walks described here are only a small sample of what the area has to offer.

Overnight walkers are required to inform the Ranger of their proposed route. Rock climbing in the Park is discouraged by the Park authorities.

Access. The Park lies astride the Gwydir Highway and can be approached from either Glen Innes or Grafton. Park Headquarters are some 69 km east of Glen Innes. A gravel road leaves the Highway at the Ranger's Office. It is a 10 km drive to the Park camping area near Mulligan's Hut.

Longer Walks

Mulligan's Hut - Dandahra Gorge (Medium, 2 days or one long day)

Maps: Cangai 1:25,000

This is a relatively straight-forward walk into the gorges of Little Dandahra

and Dandahra Creeks. The walk begins by taking the track from Mulligan's Hut (379344C), to Murrumbooe Cascades (378318C) on Dandahra Creek. From here follow the creek downstream. Much of the walk downstream is in the creek itself as the scrub is often very thick. There are a number of small waterfalls that can be easily negotiated. Campsites are fairly sparse but there are a few flat rocks.

Three and a half very long kilometres from the Cascades, the junction with Little Dandahra Creek is reached (407338C). From here walk up Little Dandahra Creek to the base of Dandahra Falls where there is a great swimming hole - a very pleasant lunch stop. The falls can be negotiated on the right. Cross the creek slightly downstream of the falls and head up the right side of the valley taking care not to veer too far right. Once on top of a steep ridge follow it up to the top of the falls. On the left side of the creek there is a walking track which leads back to Mulligan's Hut.

Mulligan's Hut - Mann River (Medium/Hard, 3 days)

Maps: Cangai 1:25,000
Mount Wellington
1:25,000

From Mulligan's Hut (379344C) follow the track south to Murrumbooe Cascades, cross Dandahra Creek and continue heading south up the valley of Piggi-billa Creek (not named on the map). Follow the creek for about 3.5 km until it swings sharply eastward (387293C). Leave the creek at this point and walk in a southeasterly direction until the scarp is reached.

Follow the edge of the scarp to the east. At times some scrub bashing through heavy undergrowth is required. After

about 3 km a major unnamed tributary of Wollomogo Creek is reached (413273C). Follow this creek for about 1 km, dropping steeply all the way. Then leave the creek and head in a southerly direction skirting around a hill until the major ridge at 411259C is reached. This ridge passes through some bluffs and dense forest near the top but it soon becomes clear and open sloping fairly gently down to the Mann. The ridge terminates at a major bend in the river at 414216M. There are many good campsites along the river.

From the end of the ridge it is a 2 km walk upstream to the mouth of Wollomogo Creek. A further kilometre upstream the base of another major ridge is reached (404220M). This ridge offers a long and fairly easy route to the top of the scarp. Towards the top some dense forest is encountered, but this rapidly gives way to open granite country.

After climbing the ridge follow a bearing of 330° along a rocky ridge until a distinct rock outcrop, known as the Old Man's Hat is reached (341291C). Along the same bearing another outcrop, Anvil Rock (335305C) can be seen. Head for this, skirting around a few minor shallow swamps. A track can be followed from the Anvil to the Mulligan's Hut Road.

Raspberry Lookout - Jackadgery (Medium, 4 days)

Maps: Cangai 1:25,000
Mount Wellington
1:25,000

This is a long through-walk traversing the Mann River Wilderness Area and finishing far beyond the boundary of the Park. The walk begins at Raspberry Lookout (276301C), which is just off the Gwydir Highway, 60 km east of Glen Innes. The finish is at Jackadgery, where

the Gwydir Highway crosses the Mann River, 116 km east of Glen Innes.

From the Lookout follow an old bridle track down Raspberry Ridge to Cooraldooral Creek. This is a long, easy ridge giving good views of the surrounding ranges. Cooraldooral Creek has alternating undercut banks and alluvial flats, many of which have been cleared for grazing. It is necessary to cross the creek many times on the walk down to the Mann. At the junction (356207M) there is an unoccupied property. A 4WD track crosses the river just upstream. On the opposite side of the river a series of grassy terrace provide good campsites.

The Mann is considerably larger than Cooraldooral Creek and has steep undercut cliffs which are difficult to negotiate on some of the bends. These can be avoided by deep wading. Several kilometres upstream of the junction with the Nymboida the river passes from sedimentary to granitic terrain and the valley becomes narrower and more gorge-like. The alluvial flats and terraces disappear and the going becomes more difficult, with much boulder-hopping and some scrub bashing. The rugged terrain continues down to the Nymboida junction.

There is an excellent campsite at the junction. From here it is a fairly easy walk to Jackadgery. An old bridle track sidles along the western bank of the river, about 70 m above river level, and connects with a farm road that leads to the highway.

WASHPOOL CREEK

Maps: Coombadjha 1:25,000
Malara Creek 1:25,000
Tenterfield 1:100,000
Washpool 1:25,000

Washpool Creek flows through the heart of the Washpool National Park to the north of the Gibraltar Range National

Park. The Wilderness contains the largest remaining stand of rainforest left in New South Wales as well as a great diversity of other vegetation types. Washpool Creek itself is really a river in size and the sides of its valley are dominated by towering brush boxes with a dense rainforest understorey. The Creek features many deep clear swimming holes fringed with palms; this area is a definite must for summer trips. Another major attraction is the ruggedness of the topography with the prominent gorges of Washpool Creek and its tributaries, many of which have numerous waterfalls and small canyons.

Walking in the area is generally centred on the creek valleys, although the ridges offer good walking and are usually used for access. Washpool Creek itself provides reasonably easy walking but the extensive canyon/waterfall sections on some of its tributaries are difficult to negotiate. Don't forget to bring a bird book!

Access. From the south the area is approached by way of Washpool Road, which leaves the Gwydir Highway 70 km northeast of Glen Innes (351375C). Washpool Road forks after 3 km. The left fork, Washpool Fire Trail, is trafficable for only a few kilometres before degenerating to a 4WD track, which continues along the top of the Gibraltar Range for many kilometres to the north. The right fork, Coombadjha Road, follows the divide between Washpool and Coombadjha Creeks. It has been "upgraded" by the Forestry Commission and can be followed for quite some distance. Both of these roads are shown on the Coombadjha 1:25,000 map.

The area can be approached from the south by taking the Washpool Road from Baryugil. This can be followed until it crosses Desert Creek, just upstream of its junction with Washpool Creek (444618W).

A 4WD track, the Desert Creek Fire Trail, continues from here up the divide between Desert and Washpool Creeks.

Longer Walks

Washpool Creek from the North (Medium, 2 days)

Maps: Washpool 1:25,000

From the Desert Creek crossing it is a fairly easy day's walk to the junctions of Washpool Creek with either of Willowie (403588W) or Oorooro Creeks (397579W). It is possible to walk directly up Washpool Creek from the crossing but lantana is a bit of a nuisance and it is quickest to follow the Desert Creek Fire Trail up the divide to 428610W where another fire trail leads off to the south crossing Washpool Creek at 432605W. From here the creek can be followed upstream, although there is still some lantana. There are a few campsites near the junction with Willowie Creek but upstream of here there are no reasonable campsites until well past the junction with Oorooro Creek.

The lower reaches of both Oorooro and Willowie Creeks are well worth exploring. Progress up each of these creeks requires some swimming or high traverses and is eventually blocked by a series of waterfalls. The easiest return route to the Desert Creek crossing is the reverse of the above.

Washpool Creek from the South (Medium, 2-3 days)

Maps: Coombadjha 1:25,000
Washpool 1:25,000

Trips in the southern portion of the Washpool Wilderness can be begun at a number of points along Coombadjha Road. A good starting point for trips in the upper part of the valley is the saddle

where the Coombadjha Road crosses the divide between Coombadjha and Washpool Creeks (340413C). This is about 3.5 km north of the Washpool Road. From here it is a long, but fairly straight-forward, rock-hop down Washpool Creek to Pi Pi Flat (348500C) where there are many good campsites.

Downstream of Pi Pi Flat the gorge becomes more pronounced and there are many interesting side creeks offering scope for exploration. It is possible to enter the gorge here by following Coombadjha Road to the point where Ooroowin Road, an old 4WD track, leaves it (approximately 388500C). From here follow Ooroowin Road through the rainforest for about 2 km then strike west and follow any of the ridges down to the Washpool. The scrub is very thick in places. It is also possible to descend some of the creeks although there are numerous waterfalls requiring either difficult traverses or abseils.

There are numerous campsites in the rainforest bordering the stream, although in some sections areas of flat rainforest are fairly spaced out. At around 367530W the stream is blocked by huge boulders after which there are few campsites for about 2 km.

Further downstream the gorge narrows even further and campsites become scarcer. Towards the junction with Oorooro Creek there are some small canyon sections which are easy to negotiate. There is a small campsite near the junction of Willowie Creek.

The easiest return route is to climb one of the ridges to the east of the creek and follow Ooroowin Road south to Coombadjha Road.

Willowie and Oorooro Creeks (Hard, 2-3 days)

Maps: Washpool 1:25,000

In their middle reaches both of these creeks pass through steep-sided gorges with quite spectacular waterfalls and canyons. Travel through these gorges is difficult requiring much abseiling and swimming and is recommended only for small experienced parties.

Willowie Creek is best approached by following the Desert Creek Fire Trail to about 386611W, and then dropping down to the south. The Willowie Gorge begins a little downstream of here.

Oorooro Creek can be approached from the north by following the above route into Willowie Creek and then climbing the ridges to the southwest and dropping down into the upper reaches of Oorooro Creek. Alternately, a long but easy approach from the south is to walk along the Washpool Fire Trail to around 351550W and descend the upper reaches of the creek.

ROCKY (TIMBARRA) RIVER

Maps: Glen Elgin 1:25,000
Newton Boyd 1:100,000
Rockadoodie 1:25,000
Spirabo 1:25,000
Tenterfield 1:100,000

The Rocky drains the area to the west of the Gibraltar Range and flows in a northeasterly direction before joining the Clarence near Tabulum. The river flows through wild country in its upper reaches and provides fairly exciting walking. Due to its isolation, the area is better suited to longer walks rather than day walks.

Access. The upper reaches of the river can be reached by way of a number of logging and fire roads north of the Gwydir Highway between 50 and 60 km east of

Glen Innes. The most commonly used access points in this area are the picnic area on Boundary Creek (272324G), and “Willow Lea” (172284G).

Access to the middle reaches of the river is by way of the Billarimba Road from Tenterfield. This leads to the Upper Rocky River Road which can be followed 13 km upstream to 263612S.

Longer Walks

Rocky River Gorge (Medium/ Hard, 2-3 days)

Maps: Glen Elgin 1:25,000
Rockadoodie 1:25,000

Starting from either the picnic area or “Willow Lea” the upper part of the river can be quite easily reached but travel down the river here is difficult as it falls rapidly, often through narrow, twisting gorges. The river bed is littered with large boulders which make the going very tiring. In this upper section campsites are rare. After about 18 km the first of the river flats is reached (257466R) and walking becomes much easier. If a car shuttle has been arranged continue downstream to the Upper Rocky River Road, otherwise there are several possible return routes to either starting point.

One possibility is to climb the ridge between the Rocky and Morven Creek along which an old fire trail runs south for many kilometres. However, it is a fairly long walk from the point where the fire trail swings west (200372R) to either starting point. A good return route to the picnic area is to climb the long ridge from the beginning of the cleared country through 252450R and 257382R to an old logging road at 264382R, which leads back to the picnic area.

THE UPPER CLARENCE

Maps: Drake 1:100,000
Paddys Flat 1:25,000

This is a large, relatively undisturbed area of mixed forest types in the upper part of the Clarence valley above Paddys Flat. The area is noted for its very abundant wildlife, with possibly the greatest number of macropod species of any similar area in Australia. The river itself has one of the highest observed densities of platypuses. The variety of forest types has also led to a great diversity in bird life with at least 130 species being recorded in the area.

The dominant vegetation type is open eucalypt forest with river oaks and callistemons lining the stream and significant patches of Hoop-Pine dominated dry rainforest in some of the more sheltered gullies.

Access. The area is reached via the Pretty Gully Road which leaves the Bruxner Highway about 3 km west of Tabulum. This road crosses the Clarence at Paddys Flat (432229PF). There is ample space for camping upstream of the crossing.

Day Walks

Paddys Flat - Tooloom Range (Easy)

Maps: Paddys Flat 1:25,000

From Paddys Flat follow the Clarence upstream to its junction with Frazers Gully (411242PF). About 2 km up the gully there is quite a large area of dry rainforest. From this rainforest pocket it is a relatively short walk up onto the Tooloom Range, although the scrub is a bit thick in places. Once on the range there are some good views up the river. Follow

the range southwards to Darkes Point (398255PF) then descend the long south-easterly ridge (403247PF) to the junction with Frazers Gully and follow the river back to Paddys Flat.

Longer Walks

Paddys Flat - Tooloom Creek (Medium, 2 days)

Maps: Paddys Flat 1:25,000

From Paddys Flat follow the Pretty Gully Trail west to 384234PF then head out along the ridge to the north to 380247PF where there are good views north to Mt Lindesay and other peaks of the Border Ranges. An easy ridge leads northeast to the junction of the Clarence with Dinner Camp Creek. Follow Dinner Camp Creek upstream to about 358260PF and climb the ridge heading west then north to 350265PF for some good views. Walk in a northerly direction dropping down to the Clarence at 363286PF. There are some good campsites on the other side of the river.

Next morning follow the river downstream to Tooloom Creek and after walking up the creek for about 2 km climb any of the ridges onto the Tooloom Range. To return to Paddys Flat either follow the range south then descend the southeasterly ridge to Frazers Gully or drop directly into the pocket of dry rainforest at the head of the gully and follow it down to the Clarence. It is an easy walk down the Clarence to the starting point.

The Tablelands

Because of extensive clearing the scope for walking on the New England Tablelands is rather limited and there are

few walks of more than a day's duration. The following areas are described, the most westerly first then in a south to north sequence.

Ebor 1:100,000
Hyatts Flat 1:25,000
Jeogla 1:25,000

MOUNT DUVAL

Maps: Dumaresq 1:25,000
Guyra 1:100,000

Mount Duval is one of the higher points near Armidale and is a popular walking area, largely due to its proximity to Armidale. The fairly large summit area is wooded and there are few unobstructed views.

Access. Leave the Booralong Road 6 km northwest of Armidale and follow the Waterworks Road to Dumaresq Dam.

Day Walks

Dam Circuit (Very Easy)

Maps: Dumaresq 1:25,000
Not extreme, but pleasant and relaxing, with lots of waterbirds. Follow the walking track (about 3 km) around the dam.

Dumaresq Dam - Mount Duval (Easy)

Maps: Dumaresq 1:25,000
From the Dumaresq Dam picnic area cross the creek below the dam then follow the dam's eastern shore to the creek at 656329D. Follow this creek upstream for 2 km, then climb east to the saddle at 676340D. From here it is easy to follow the mountain's southwest ridge to the summit area. The return trip to Dumaresq Dam may be made via the same route or by descending the ridge, which terminates at 668345D.

THE UPPER STYX

Maps: Carrai 1:100,000
Ebor 1:25,000

The Styx is one of the major streams of the New England Tablelands. It begins in the vicinity of Point Lookout in New England National Park and flows south-east until it joins the Chandler in the heart of the Macleay gorge country. In this section walks in the upper part of the Styx valley are described. The Styx Gorge is included in the earlier section on the New England Gorges. In its upper reaches the Styx flows through heavily forested country with local relief up to 250 m. The forest varies from dry to wet sclerophyll and is generally fairly easy to walk through.

Access. The Styx Forest Way follows the ridges to the east of the river all the way from the Point Lookout Road to the Kempsey Road. A number of fire roads approach the river from the Forest Way.

Day Walks

Trout Hatchery - Dinner Flat (Medium)

Maps: Ebor 1:25,000
Hyatts Flat 1:25,000

This is a fairly short but very interesting day trip featuring two large waterfalls. The trip begins at the Trout Hatchery where the Point Lookout Road crosses the Serpentine River (347280E). It is best to begin on the east bank of the river although it may be necessary to cross the stream a number of times. About 1 km below the Trout Hatchery there is a 30 m waterfall, somewhat similar to Ebor Falls. After a further 3 km walk, Back Creek enters from the left (339250H). Just upstream of the junction the river cascades 60 m over a triple drop into a steep-sided canyon. This canyon can be

easily passed on the northeastern side. From here it is a further 2.5 km to the junction with the Little Styx (334238H). In this section there are a number of small waterfalls and canyons. To follow the river itself requires a number of swims, but as the water is very cold, it is best to avoid these by way of high traverses. About 1 km downstream of the Little Styx junction, a 4WD track crosses the river at Dinner Flat (329234H). It is a 1.5 km walk east along this track to the Forest Way (335221H).

Dinner Flat - Nelsons Fire Road (Medium)

Maps: Hyatts Flat 1:25,000

Below Dinner Flat (329234H) the river passes through a series of small canyons. There are also a number of waterfalls up to 20 m in height. All obstacles can be bypassed fairly easily but it may be necessary to cross the river several times. This walk takes about 4 hours, ending at Nelsons Fire Road (301213H), which can be difficult to find from the stream as it does not go all the way to the river. It is possible to drive to the end of the road in a 4WD.

Nelsons Fire Road - Kempsey Road (Easy)

Maps: Hyatts Flat 1:25,000
Jeogla 1:25,000

Follow the 4WD track (301213H) to the river. Although this section of river is easy walking it is quite a long day and can be broken at Wattle Flat (243163J), where there is reliable vehicular access. The major features are a small canyon with two waterfalls 8 km below Nelsons Fire Road, and the cascades, a 10 m drop a few hundred meters upstream of the Kempsey Road.

Longer Walks

Trout Hatchery - Kempsey Road (Medium, 2-3 days)

Maps: Ebor 1:25,000
Hyatts Flat 1:25,000
Jeogla 1:25,000

This walk traverses a variety of country with a number of interesting waterfalls and canyons. It is a good longer walk for those who do not like walking up and down gorges. More details are given in the day walks section above.

CATHEDRAL ROCK NATIONAL PARK

Maps: Ebor 1:25,000
Ebor 1:100,000
Maiden Creek 1:25,000

This Park, southwest of Ebor has many outcrops of massive granite boulders which often present themselves to the walker as complex mazes. The vegetation in the area is a mosaic of wet and dry sclerophyll forest on the hills, with some quite large swamps on the flatter areas. Although most of the Park is above 1300 m, with Round Mountain at 1584 m, no alpine communities are present.

The Park generally offers easy walking through open woodland, although progress can be slow amongst the granite boulders where there are many small steep-sided gullies. The higher rocks offer

outstanding views with the rugged escarpment of the New England National Park to the east, the deep valleys of the Guy Fawkes to the north and the undulating tablelands to the west.

Access. Two roads provide access to the Park. There is a rest area just off the Ebor-Guyra Road, 8 km from its junction with the Armidale-Grafton Road. The south of the Park can be reached from the Armidale-Grafton Road about 6 km southwest of Ebor, just follow the signs to the campground.

Day Walks

Native Dog Creek - Woolpack Rocks (Easy)

Maps: Ebor 1:25,000

This walk follows a walking track. From the rest area at Native Dog Creek head southwest across a swampy gully and climb the main southwesterly ridge through 288362E to Woolpack Rocks at 284385E. The actual ascent of the rocks should be made from the southwestern side; approaches from other directions are often terminated by deep crevasses between the boulders.

Cathedral Rocks (Easy-Medium)

Maps: Ebor 1:25,000

It is only a short walk, approximately 45 minutes, to Cathedral Rocks, one of the main vantage points of the Park. From the campground follow the signed track either way to the rocks, and scramble up to the top. On a clear day the views are spectacular, and the bouldering and scrambling is great.

Longer Walks

Round Mountain Road - Native Dog Creek (Easy, 2 days)

Maps: Ebor 1:25,000

Although it is possible to cross the Park in a day it is worth spending a bit of time over the journey exploring some of the variety the area has to offer. Possibly the most interesting route is to climb Cathedral Rocks, then follow the ridges to the northeast where there are many interesting granite outcrops. Finish up by heading west to Woolpack Rocks and thence to Native Dog Creek.

THE SILENT POOL OF THE NYMBOIDA RIVER

Maps: Dorrigo 1:25,000
Dorrigo 1:100,000

Silent Pool is a large deep pool on the upper reaches of the Nymboida River which has no visible inlet. The river goes underground about 100 m upstream of the pool and during wet periods a waterspout erupts in the pool at regular intervals of about twelve minutes. Even when the waterspout is not active there is still a rise and fall in the level of the pool which can be easily perceived. Despite the route descriptions that follow, intending walkers are warned that parties other than those led by the original author of this article have had some difficulty in locating the pool.

Access. From downstream the closest approach to the pool is to take the Harness Cask Road which leaves the Tyringham-Dorrigo Road 7 km east of Tyringham, or just on the Dorrigo side of the bridge across the Nymboida (600542D). It is possible to drive about 6 km up the road to the edge of the "Harness Cask" property (573514D).

The approach to the pool from the upstream side is somewhat more difficult to find. Turn off the Ebor-Dorrigo Road onto the Ebor end of the Deervale Loop Road, about 23 km east of Ebor (552402D). Follow the Deervale Road for about 6 km and then turn left onto McIndoes Road. Once on this road take the third turn to the left (about 2.5 km from the Deervale Road) and follow this to the farm at 567458D.

Day Walks

Harness Cask - Silent Pool (Easy)

Maps: Dorrigo 1:25,000

From "Harness Cask" follow the river upstream for about 7 km until a large pool is reached with no visible inlet (467545D). At times it is necessary to walk in the river itself but the route is very straightforward and it should be possible to reach the pool in 4 hours.

The Upstream Approach (Medium)

Maps: Dorrigo 1:25,000

From the farm at 567458D there is a bulldozer track which can be followed nearly all the way down to the river. Follow the river downstream until the surface flow disappears. Continue downstream on the left-hand side until you can look over the pool. Walk around to the left and scramble down to the river.

THE UPPER MACINTYRE RIVER

Maps: Elsmore 1:25,000

Indiana 1:25,000

Inverell 1:100,000

The Upper Macintyre runs in part through a quite deep and picturesque gorge which offers scope both for fairly

easy summer trips with many swimming holes or for more serious walking in winter.

Access. From Inverell take the Old Glen Innes Road to Elsmore village and continue east for about 18 km to where the road crosses Paradise Creek (462939I). Cars should be left here.

Day Walks

Paradise Creek - O'Connors Farm (Medium)

Maps: Elsmore 1:25,000

Indiana 1:25,000

This is a through trip requiring a car shuttle but it is possible to do round trips from either end. The route to the starting point is described above. O'Connors farm (381954E) is also approached via Elsmore. From the Paradise Creek crossing it is a 1.5 km walk downstream to the junction with the Macintyre and a further 2.5 km down the Macintyre to the beginning of the gorge. A number of creeks enter the river in the gorge section and are worth exploring, particularly Kangaroo Creek. With side trips this could be made into a two day trip.

WHITE ROCK MOUNTAIN

Maps: Glen Innes 1:100,000

Stonehenge 1:25,000

White Rock Mountain lies to the south of the Gwydir Highway almost mid-way between Inverell and Glen Innes. At 1328 m this is one of the highest peaks in this part of the New England Tablelands and offers extensive views of Mt Kaputar in the west and Mt Spirabo in the east. The top of the mountain is heavily timbered with some magnificent specimens of Snow Gum and Ribbon Gum. The summit is almost level and was intended for use

as an observation post in the First World War

Access. The mountain can be approached by turning south off the Gwydir Highway 31 km west of Glen Innes (38 km east of Inverell). After about 5 km turn east and drive another 4 km to “Numeralla” (570993S) where the walk begins. The mountain itself lies on another property and enquiries should be made as to the current owner before setting out.

Day Walks

Spring Mountain - White Rock Mountain (Easy)

Maps: Stonehenge 1:25,000

From “Numeralla”, Spring Mountain is the very obvious peak to the north. It can be climbed by sidling around the massive scree slope on the southern face and ascending the peak from the west. From the top there are excellent views to the west of Inverell and the Macintyre Valley. White Rock Mountain lies across the saddle to the east, and is climbed by way of the long ridge leading up from the saddle.

To return to “Numeralla” walk south along the main ridge to 600990S then follow the ridge to the west which eventually drops down to the farm.

BALD ROCK NATIONAL PARK

Maps: Bookookoorara 1:25,000
Drake 1:100,000

Bald Rock is a large granitic outcrop contained within a small Park just to the east of Girraween National Park, which is across the border in Queensland.

Access. The entrance to Bald Rock National Park is 29 km northeast of Tenterfield on the Mount Lindesay Highway. From there, it is 6 km to the picnic and camping area at the foot of the rock.

Day Walks

Bald Rock Summit (Easy)

Maps: Bookookoorara 1:25,000

From the picnic area the marked track leads 2 km to the summit of the rock. Although the area within the park was once grazed and selectively logged, quite a diversity of vegetation still exists

including wet sclerophyll forest at the foot of the rock, and cypress pine communities on top. Dry sclerophyll forest, heath and swampland can also be seen. There is also a good chance of seeing some of the Park's wildlife as the marsupial population is large, with numerous kangaroos, wallabies and possums. Unfortunately, wild pigs are also present in significant numbers.

The Border Ranges

THE BORDER RANGES

Maps: Brays Creek 1:25,000
Cougal 1:25,000
Grevillia 1:25,000
Lamington 1:25,000
Mount Lindesay 1:25,000
Mt Lindesay 1:100,000
Murwillumbah 1:100,000
Palen Creek 1:25,000
Sunmap Queensland:
Tyalgum 1:25,000
Woodenbong 1:25,000

The Border Ranges follow the New South Wales-Queensland border from the coast westwards for about 100 km before leaving the border and continuing on into Queensland. They provide a wide scope for walking, with spectacular views and quite large areas of rainforest. The area contains the largest remaining stands of sub-tropical rainforest and Hoop Pine dominated dry rainforest in New South Wales. Australia's northernmost specimens of Antarctic Beech are found on the tops of some of the Ranges.

Walks originating on the Queensland side of the ranges are well covered in "*The Bushwalker's Guide to South East*

Queensland", published by the Brisbane Bushwalkers Club. In this guide some walks beginning on the New South Wales side of the border are described.

The major portion of the Border Ranges in New South Wales has been logged. This has resulted in many areas being criss-crossed by old tracks which can be very confusing for the walker. In addition these areas are often covered with dense lantana and forest regrowth sometimes making progress difficult. The walks described here generally avoid such areas; however, logging continues and may come to affect some of the walks described here. A long but very narrow National Park follows the New South Wales side of the border. The two major features of this Park are Mt Glennie and Levers Plateau, both of which are relatively undisturbed and offer good walking.

Access. The major access points to the Ranges from the New South Wales side are, from west to east, the Border Gate on the Lindesay Highway (705652ML); "Lindsay View" (882599G), at the end of the Findon Creek Road off the Kyogle-Woodenbong Road; Grady's Gap (963658C), off the Lion's Road off the Kyogle-Woodenbong Road; and at a number of points along the Forest Way and Brindle Creek Road in Wiangerie State Forest.

Day Walks

Grady's Creek (Easy)

Maps: Tyalgum 1:25,000

The roads in this area are shown on the Tyalgum map. The walk follows a sign-posted track off the Brindle Creek Road. The track leaves the road at about 093612T and it is an easy 2 km walk to the creek. The track then follows the creek

downstream for about 2 km before climbing back to the road at about 082613T.

Lindsay View - Levers Plateau (Medium)

Maps: Grevillia 1:25,000
Palen Creek 1:25,000

An old 4WD track leaves the Findon Creek Road about 9 km from the Woodenbong-Kyogle Road (882597G). This track leads up on to a prominent ridge to the east of Findon Creek and then follows the edge of the Findon Creek catchment all the way to the Queensland border (about 11 km). The edge of Levers Plateau is reached about 5.5 km up the track and thereafter the track passes through lush sub-tropical rainforest.

The Levers Plateau rainforest is considered to be one of the best remaining stands of subtropical rainforest in New South Wales. Although it is only a small area, there is much to be seen and, if time is available, it is well worth spending a night on the Plateau.

About 8 km from "Lindsay View" the track forks (873663PC). The right fork can be followed for 2 km along a spur to the north of Surveyors Creek. This track leads into forest dominated by the very large Hoop Pines for which the Plateau is famous. The left fork continues through rainforest to the border fence. The Queensland side of the border has been cleared and there are excellent views across to Mt Barney. The walk to the border and return requires a very long day.

Brindle Creek (Medium)

Maps: Brays Creek 1:25,000
Cougal 1:25,000
Grevillia 1:25,000
Tyalgum 1:25,000

This is an excellent day trip but is rather long and requires a car shuttle. The walk begins just upstream of the junction of Brindle and Grady's Creeks (978590G). The start is reached by following the Lions Road north from the Kyogle-Woodenbong Road for about 13 km to an intersection (977588G). From here a track can be followed 1.5 km up Brindle Creek to an old sawmill. The walk ends at a picnic area where the Brindle Creek Road crosses Brindle Creek (067608BC).

For the first few kilometres the walk follows an old logging road after which the creek itself is followed. The creek flows through some very beautiful rainforest and cascades over smooth rock slabs as it descends from the Wiangerie Plateau. These slabs make for easy walking.

This walk could be done as an easy two day walk. There are numerous possible campsites along the stream.

Longer Walks

Mt Lindsay - Border Gate - Mt Barney (Medium/Hard, 3 days)

Maps: Mt Lindsay 1:25,000

This walk follows the border to the west of the Lindsay Highway and then strikes north into Queensland to climb Mt Barney, the most spectacular peak in the Border Ranges. Water is difficult to obtain until Barney Saddle is reached (2 days) so it is essential that sufficient water be carried.

From the Border Gate (705653ML), walk 1 km back up the road to where the border fence leaves the highway. After selecting the most solid looking of the fences, follow it up the ridge to the northwest for about 2 km until the fence leaves the ridge. Leave the fence here and

continue on up the ridge. There are occasional pockets of dense scrub but the walking is generally fairly easy, usually being through open rainforest.

About 4 km from the highway, a major north-south ridge joins the border ridge (673680ML). Care should be taken in locating this ridge as clear views of it are generally obscured by the forest canopy. Follow this ridge northwards towards Gwyal Peak (669709ML). At first, walking along the ridge is through open rainforest and there are a few fair campsites about 1 km north of the border. It is suggested that the first night be spent here as there are few campsites for some time afterwards. The ridge steepens as it approaches the Gwyal Peak-Mt Barney ridge (676696ML), with some thick scrub and sword grass being encountered towards the top. The scrub persists in patches once the main ridge is reached but there is some fairly open sclerophyll forest which allows some views to Mt Lindesay in the east.

Following the Gwyal Peak-Mt Barney ridge to the northeast, only occasional views of the West Peak of Barney can be had until the Peak is close at hand. Head for the steep gully leading towards the top. This gully is not too difficult to climb but if wet a short rope would be handy. From the top of the gully it is only a short walk to the summit where there are good views to the north. From the West Peak a track leads down to Barney Saddle where there is a fairly heavily used campsite. Water can be obtained down the gully to the northwest of the saddle, but it may be polluted.

There are numerous routes off Barney which are well documented in "*The Mount Barney Guide*" published by the University of Queensland Bushwalking Club. The easiest of these is Peasants

Ridge which is reached by following the track from the southeast corner of the Barney Saddle campsite. There is a well worn track down the ridge to a 4WD track which can be followed towards the open country at the foot of Barney. Follow this track down Cronan Creek to the Logan River (727695ML). Then walk up the Logan valley to the Lindesay Highway. It is a 4 km walk up the highway to the border gate.

Lindsay View - Mt Glennie - Levers Plateau (Medium, 3 days)

Maps: Grevillia 1:25,000
Palen Creek 1:25,000

This walk begins at any convenient point along the Sawpit Creek Road, upstream from "Lindsay View" (881599G). An old logging road follows Sawpit Creek to its headwaters. Follow this road to 797622PC where an open ridge leads up onto Mt Glennie (769607G). This ridge should be followed to the base of the cliffs (795605G). From here traverse left onto the prominent ridge (798605G) which can be followed to the top. Once on top of the mountain follow the summit ridge northwards to Glennie's Chair (767619PC), a rocky pinnacle which offers some good views. The descent from Glennie's Chair is a bit steep and a short length of rope would be handy for lowering packs and as a hand line.

From the base of Glennie's Chair follow the border eastwards as described in the walk above. It is a long day's walk from "Lindsay View" to the hut and clearing at 803639PC but there is little water elsewhere so this is a good spot for the first night's camp.

Next day, continue following the fence eastwards until the Levers Plateau track is reached (849667PC). From here the

track can be followed directly back to “Lindsay View” or some time could be spent exploring the Plateau, rejoining the track towards the southern edge of the Plateau.

Mt Glennie - Wiangerie State Forest (Medium, 4 days)

Maps: Brays Creek 1:25,000
Cougal 1:25,000
Mt Lindesay 1:25,000
Palen Creek 1:25,000
Tyalgum 1:25,000
Woodenbong 1:25,000

This walk follows the fence along the New South Wales-Queensland border for about 50 km and traverses a variety of country. The major features of the walk are the views, while its major drawbacks are the scarcity of water and the continuing presence of the fence. The best starting point is at the saddle between Mt Lindesay and Mt Glennie. The saddle can be reached by car by taking the road that leaves the Kyogle-Woodenbong Road 7 km east of the Lindesay Highway (711605W). Only the first 1.5 km of this road is shown on the map but it does continue to the saddle (743630ML).

From the saddle follow the fence east towards Mt Glennie. After a steep climb the fence divides (762623PC). The left branch follows the border while the right leads towards Glennie’s Chair which can be climbed by following the cliff line to the right. Following the left branch for about 6 km, a rough track leaves the fence and leads to a clearing and hut (804639PC). Water can usually be obtained from the tank at the hut. The track can be followed out of the clearing and back to the fence at 812642PC. It is then an easy walk along the fence to Levers Plateau. Water can be obtained from Long Creek as it comes quite close to the fence at a number of

points around 890675C. From here it is a short but relatively uninteresting walk to Grady’s Gap.

From the Gap it is a steep climb up onto Mt Gipps (999647C), compensated for by the good views. After a few kilometres the fence enters dense rainforest, and finally ends after a further 2 km. From the end of the fence a rather indistinct blazed track continues east. The track climbs slowly until Nungulba (070637T) is reached, and then drops toward a saddle. In places the track is hard to follow here, but eventually a tree with a large “W” marked on it should be found. From this tree water can be obtained by following a small gully to the south. Continuing along the blazed track for another 3 km the junction of the Tweed and McPherson Ranges is reached. The track swings to the northeast and after a short distance a sign-posted track to Wiangeree State Forest joins from the right. It is a 3 km walk along this track to the Brindle Creek Road (104608BC).

Lindsay View - Levers Plateau - Long Creek (Medium, 3 days)

Maps: Grevillia 1:25,000
Palen Creek 1:25,000

From the end of the road near “Lindsay View” (885609G), it is straightforward walking up Findon Creek to the base of Queensland Spur (868643PC), although in places the lantana is very thick and it is necessary to walk in the creek itself. A rough bridle track can be followed up the spur. The track enters rainforest about half way up. Once the top of the spur is reached it is only a short walk north to the border fence (848675PC), where there are some good views. Follow the border eastwards for about 1 km then head south for a few hundred meters into the head-

waters of Long Creek (853677PC). Navigation is then easy, simply follow the creek all the way back to the Findon Creek Road.

The first 5 km of the creek traverses through virgin sub-tropical rainforest in the northernmost portion of Levers Plateau. There are numerous campsites along the creek here and this is a good spot to finish the first day's walk. There are a few small waterfalls where the creek leaves the Plateau but these are not difficult to negotiate. It is then very pleasant walking down the creek with towering rainforest lining both banks and very large Hoop Pines emerging above the forest canopy on the eastern slopes of the Plateau. Progress down the creek is made easiest by walking in the creek itself. Good campsites are scarce but there are some sandbanks.

Further down the creek the surrounding forest was logged many years ago and the remains of a wooden tramway can occasionally be seen. Eventually a rough track is reached which leads back to the Findon Creek Road and thence to "Lindsay View".

Mt Gipps - Nungulba - Gradys Creek (Medium/Hard, 3 days)

Maps: Cougal 1:25,000
Lamington 1:25,000
Tyalgum 1:25,000

From Gradys Gap (963658C) follow the border fence eastwards onto Mt Gipps. Continue to follow the border eastwards as described above until Nungulba 072636L (or T) is reached. Nungulba is a rather indistinct summit and is best recognised as marking the end of a long uphill walk of several kilometres. From Nungulba follow the indistinct track down into the saddle (074635L or T) to the east where there is a tree with a large

"W" carved on it as described above. From this tree follow the gully to the south through 074630L (or T) down to Gradys Creek. From Gradys Gap to the creek requires a long day but there are several good campsites along the creek and an abundance of water.

After only a short walk downstream the first of a long series of waterfalls is met. These are generally not difficult to negotiate but a 20 m rope would be useful as a hand line and for lowering packs. The largest of the falls is at 038628L (or T), but this is easily bypassed. As it descends the stream enters a very beautiful gorge. Some of the side creeks have quite large waterfalls and are worth exploring. In particular, the creek joining Gradys at 033635L (or T) has a spectacular waterfall where it drops over a basalt flow (037637L or T).

Eventually, cleared land on the south side of the creek is reached. An old track can then be followed back to the Lions Road. It is a 4.5 km walk back up the road to Grady's Gap.

The Western Slopes

The more mountainous areas of the Western Slopes are still relatively undisturbed and offer good walking. The following areas are arranged from east to west.

BASIN NATURE RESERVE

Maps: Bundarra 1:25,000
Bundarra 1:100,000
Tenterden 1:25,000

The Basin Nature Reserve covers a range of hills on the western slopes, 50

km northwest of Armidale and 18 km east of Bundarra. Local relief is up to 250 m. The main feature of the Reserve is its vegetation. The hills are well forested with native Cypress Pine and Eucalypts, including the quite striking Orange Barked Gums. There are many tall grass trees which haven't been burned for many years and have skirts up to 2 m long.

Access. The Reserve is surrounded by private land. From the west the closest approach is "Pineview" (308590B), about 18 km east of Bundarra on the Georges Creek Road. Access from the south is by way of "The Basin" ("Laura") (348545T), which is off the Guyra-Bundarra Road about 45 km west of Guyra. The northern part of the Reserve can be approached from "The Falls" (384640T), about 55 km west of Guyra on the Guyra-Tenterden-Tingha Road.

Day Walks

Georges Mountain - Rumbling Mountain (Easy)

Maps: Tenterden 1:25,000

The area is a good one for day walks and it is possible to walk just about anywhere as there are no significant obstacles. The major peaks of the area, Georges (323557T) and Rumbling Mountains (335576T), offer excellent views over the Gwydir Valley to the Nandewar Ranges. The trig on the top of Georges Mountain is overgrown and the best views are from the western side of the mountain. "The Basin" and "Pine View" are the closest access points to the higher peaks.

WARRABAH NATIONAL PARK - THE NAMOI TOPS

Maps: Bendemeer 1:100,000
Kingstown 1:25,000

Manilla 1:100,000

Welsh 1:25,000

The Namoi Tops area lies on the western fall of the tablelands where the MacDonald (or Namoi) River turns west to cut through the Moonbi Ranges to form a spectacular gorge from which a fairly placid river, now called the Namoi, emerges. Local relief is up to 500 m and the granite forms many cliff lines as well as providing striking vantage points high above the river. In places the river is almost choked with huge granite blocks which have fallen from the surrounding cliffs. The vegetation is generally fairly open ranging from dry sclerophyll forest to eucalypt woodland and presents no problems for walkers.

Access. From the east the area can be reached by way of the Kingstown-Woodsreef Road. About 15 km west of Kingstown a rough track (093227K) can be followed south past Bald Rock Mountain to around 090200K. This is a private road so permission must be sort.

From the west the area can be reached from Manilla by following roads along the northwestern side of the Namoi for 37 km.

Day Walks

Bald Rock Mountain - Gorge Overview (Easy)

Maps: Kingstown 1:25,000
Welsh 1:25,000

From the end of the track near Bald Rock Mountain, a good introduction to the area is to climb onto the ridge at 083196K and follow it westwards for about 3 km to around 054196W. Towards the end of the ridge there are some good views of the gorge.

Namoi River (Medium)

Maps: Welsh 1:25,000

Assuming it is not flooding, then it is a very pleasant walk/swim upstream from the camping area at the National Park.

Longer Walks

Bald Rock Mountain - Namoi Gorge (Medium, 2-4 days)

Maps: Kingstown 1:25,000
Welsh 1:25,000

From Bald Rock Mountain, walk south to the river. If the river is not too high it is fairly straightforward to follow it downstream into the gorge although a number of river crossings will be necessary and swimming would, in places, considerably speed progress. If the river is up a little liloing is an excellent way to travel, although many of the rapids are quite large and might need to be portaged. There are many good sandbanks to camp on in the gorge. After dropping steeply for about 5 km the river begins to flatten out a bit near Bald Rock Creek. For a two day trip an exit should be made here by following the creek back towards the starting point or by climbing and following one of the nearby ridges.

Some distance below Bald Rock Creek the river again begins to drop steeply, with towering granite cliffs above many rapids. It finally flattens out at around 010178W. To return to the starting point from here climb the northern side of the valley onto the main ridge-top (004194W). The climb is steep and quite difficult in places but is amply rewarded by the views. From here the ridge-tops can be followed northeast towards the Namoi Tops (042218W), which are cleared and provide good views. The walk back to Bald Rock Mountain from here is relatively straight-

forward. The whole walk takes about 4 days.

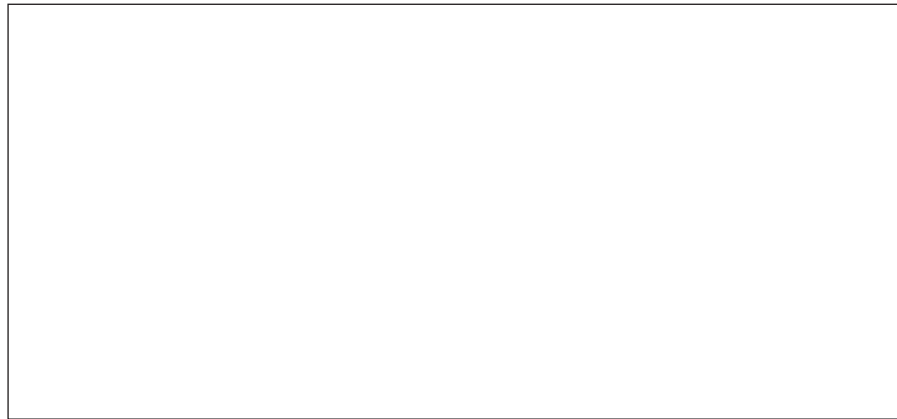
MOUNT KAPUTAR NATIONAL PARK

Maps: Billyena 1:25,000
Coryah 1:25,000
Edgeroi 1:25,000
Grattai 1:25,000
Horton 1:100,000
Kaputar 1:25,000
Narrabri 1:100,000

This Park occupies a large section of the Nandewar Range to the east of Narrabri. The major features of the Park are its spectacular outcrops of rock, with eleven peaks exceeding 1200 m in elevation, Mt Kaputar being the highest at 1508 m. Local relief is up to 1000 m. The dramatic topography of the Park has resulted from the erosion of a thick pile of volcanic rocks. These were extruded from a centre near Mount Lindesay 17 to 20 million years ago to form an extensive lava shield, about 2000 m high and with a base exceeding 40 km in diameter.

The degree of dissection of the landscape varies considerably. In some areas broad valleys with alluvial floors extend well back into the range whereas elsewhere streams flow down narrow V-shaped valleys or canyons with occasional waterfalls. Gently sloping upland areas like the summit of Grattai are only slightly eroded remnants of the original volcanic shield. Towards the tops of many of the peaks, resistant lavas form extensive cliff lines which often display columnar jointing. Backwearing of these cliffs over time has left isolated buttes such as Ningadhun and the Governor.

Most of the streams in the Park rise as springs which vary in reliability. Mean annual rainfall ranges from about 1100 mm on the tops to 700 mm in the foothills,



with a pronounced summer maximum. During droughts many streams cease to flow and Dawson's Spring declines to a trickle. Within the Range Horsearm Creek, Black Mountain Creek and the Horton River usually have surface flow. Around the margins of the range most streams flow onto permeable alluvium. In these areas surface flow only occurs after heavy rain.

The climate on the tops is cool with frequent frosts and occasional snowfalls above 1100 m during winter. Because of the climatic gradients there are a number of vegetation types in the area. Most of the range is covered with dry sclerophyll forest. There are some areas of wet sclerophyll forest and rainforest patches in sheltered gullies of southerly aspect that occur at higher elevations. The trachytic rocks weather to form thin patches of stony soil which is deficient in phosphate. These support only scrubby heathlands even in the higher rainfall areas. The open forests vary considerably in character. In sandstone areas at lower elevations the forest is dominated by ironbarks and cypress pines. Between 900 and 1100 m White Box becomes prominent; this type of forest often has a dense understorey of hop bush and other abra-

sive shrubs which are difficult to penetrate. At elevations of more than 1300 m there are forests of Snow Gum and Candlebark Gum, with herbfields and bogs in poorly drained areas.

Access. The Park is usually approached from Narrabri, the most commonly used route being that to the Park Headquarters at Dawson's Spring, 50 km from Narrabri. The other common route from Narrabri is the Narrabri-Bingara Road which crosses the Range at Killarney Gap, 40 km from Narrabri. The Park can be approached from Barraba in the east by following the Tareela Road. It is a 2 hour walk up the Barraba Track to Dawson's Spring from the end of the road. There are a few minor roads providing access to the northern and southern extremes of the Park.

Day Walks

Glencairn - Castle Top - Greenvale (Medium)

Maps: Coryah 1:25,000
Edgeroi 1:25,000
Grattai 1:25,000

Beginning at the bore on "Glencairn"(877641E) climb Billy Goat Hill and follow the spur east to the summit

of Castle Top (129646G). This gives good views in all directions. Head back about 400 m to the northwest and then follow the prominent spur to the northeast. Just before reaching the major saddle on the ridge, drop down steeply into the gully to the north and follow it down to Curramanga Creek, which can be followed downstream to “Greenvale” (116701G). While descending the ridge it is possible to continue across the saddle and climb the dyke on the other side. This offers good views, but the trachyte forms eroded columns up to 2 m in diameter which are difficult to negotiate. One disadvantage of this walk is that it requires a long car shuttle.

Killarney Gap - Main Range - Evansdale (Medium)

Maps: Coryah 1:25,000

This walk again involves a long car shuttle but it does offer some good views along the Main Range. From Killarney Gap walk south along the range to a point just before Doyles Peak where a descent can be made to the headwaters of Spring Creek to the west. Follow Spring Creek down to “Evansdale” (122542C).

Mt Kaputar - Boomi Gap - Upper Bullawa Creek (Medium)

Maps: Coryah 1:25,000
Kaputar 1:25,000

From Mt Kaputar (271474K), follow the prominent ridge to the northeast and climb Mt Capel (285483K). Descend the ridge to the north and follow the Main Range down into Boomi Gap (278503K). From here drop down to the west into the headwaters of Bullawa Creek and follow the creek down to the scout hall at Upper Bullawa Creek (218516C).

Green Camp - Yulludunida - Ningadhun (Medium)

Maps: Kaputar 1:25,000

This is only a short day trip but several hours can be spent admiring the spectacular views and taking photographs. From the creek just south of Green Camp (194464K) a blazed track leads to the summit of Yulludunida. The rim of this arcuate dyke is narrow and gives good views in all directions. Turn west from the saddle just north of the trig station and head out onto the mesa between Yulludunida and Ningadhun. Drop down into the gully at 183454K and walk around the base of the cliff line, then cross the saddle to the base of Ningadhun. From here descend to the Kaputar Road.

Coryah Gap - Ningadoo (Medium)

Maps: Kaputar 1:25,000

A track can be followed west from Coryah Gap (243464K) to the cliff lines on Mt Coryah. A marked route follows gullies on the eastern side of the mountain to the summit. From here proceed south to Mt Mitchell then turn west and side along the western side of the gully onto the ridge at 216444K. Follow this ridge southwest to “Ningadoo” (182408K). A side trip can be made to Camels Hump (229434K) 1 km south of Mt Mitchell.

Coryah Gap - Pine View (Medium)

Maps: Billyena 1:25,000
Kaputar 1:25,000

This is a long day trip and also requires a long car shuttle. From Coryah Gap follow the fire trail to an old gravel pit (243456K), then head west to the upper reaches of Black Mountain Creek. Initially travel down the creek is difficult with much clambering and scrambling but

it soon becomes easier. Continue on down the creek to “Pine View” (241337B).

Mt Kaputar – Horton River - Brushy Mountain (Medium)

Maps: Kaputar 1:25,000

This is quite a long day trip but does not require a car shuttle. From Kaputar cross the saddle to Mt Capel and then follow the prominent ridge, leading southeast, for about 6 km until the Park’s boundary fence is reached. Then turn south across the Horton River and climb Brushy Mountain (318434K). Return to Mt Kaputar via the Barraba Track.

Longer Walks

Main Range Traverse, Killarney Gap, Mt Kaputar (Medium, 2 days)

Maps: Coryah 1:25,000
Kaputar 1:25,000

This trip affords spectacular views as it includes many of the major peaks of the Park. The walking is generally easy being through open forest, but there is some boulder hopping between Lowes Mountain and Mt Lindesay (not to be confused with Mt Lindsay near Dawson’s Spring). There is also a 480 m climb from Boomi Gap to Mt Capel. Part of the route has been blazed to mark the shire boundary. Near Lowes Mountain the ridge crest has numerous steep trachyte outcrops and it is best to remain below the crest on the western side. Water is usually available from springs on Pound Mountain (256538C).

Note that Lowes Mountain isn’t marked on the Coryah 1:25,000 2nd edition map, but its presumed to be at 228559C.

Killarney Gap - Upper Bullawa Creek (Medium, 1.5 days)

Maps: Coryah 1:25,000

From Killarney Gap follow the main range south to Doyles Peak (203573C). About 1 km south of Doyles Peak the main range swings to the east (208563C). From this point continue south into the headwaters of Oaky Creek. Follow the creek down to the vicinity of the scout hall at Upper Bullawa Creek (218516C). It is possible to add another day to the trip by walking up Bullawa Creek from the scout hall and proceeding through to Mt Kaputar as described in one of the day walks above.

Kurrawonga Gorge (Medium, 2-3 days)

Maps: Billyena 1:25,000
Kaputar 1:25,000

Kurrawonga Gorge is one of the major features of the Park and contains a two stage waterfall with a total drop of 70 m. There are quite a number of possible routes to and from the gorge. From the north it can be approached either from Dawson’s Spring (273465K), or the Barraba Track. There are three routes from Dawson’s Spring. The first of these involves taking the Eckford’s Lookout Track (271475K), which begins just opposite the Dawson’s Spring turn-off. Then follow the Bundabulla Track almost to the Bundabulla Lookout and turn southeast into the gully between this lookout and Bundabulla Cliffs. Go along the spur which runs southward to the junction of Horsearm and Little Horsearm Creeks. The second route is to go down the fire trail which begins just west of the Governor turn-off (255459K). Near Euglah Spring this fire trail joins another which runs south past Jokers Spring and

onto a narrow ridge which lies west of Horsearm Creek. From 275396K turn-off the trail and follow the fence down a spur which leads to the head of Kurrawonga Gorge. The third and most difficult route is to follow Horsearm Creek down from Dawson's Spring. At first the gully sides are steep and awkward with numerous obstacles such as logs and boulders. Further down the going becomes easier, but there is a sizeable waterfall which is not shown on the maps. Eventually some cleared ground is reached in the vicinity of Scutt's Hut. It is very difficult to follow the creek down from here because of dense scrub and a large waterfall. The best way is to head SSE along the clearing to a fence which can be followed down a spur to the head of the gorge.

The gorge can also be approached from Brushy Mountain on the Barraba Track. From Brushy Mountain head west across the valley of Middle Creek and follow the ridge on the other side for about 3 km to the south. Then drop into the valley of Little Horsearm Creek. Most of the spurs and gullies in this area can be negotiated but the cliffs and talus slopes near 291396K should be avoided. Follow the creek down to the head of Kurrawonga Gorge.

There is a good campsite for a small party on Little Horsearm Creek just upstream of Kurrawonga Falls (287392K). The swimming hole here is very pleasant in summer.

Most parties are recommended to use one of the above as a return route, but small, experienced parties can continue on into the gorge and follow the creek to the south. From the campsite on Little Horsearm Creek follow the rim of the gorge westwards and then the fence heading up the ridge to the west for 200 m. Then sidle around to the south and drop

down the steep ridge which leads to the bottom end of the gorge. The last section of this ridge is very steep with numerous portable handholds. Horsearm Creek can be followed downstream to the cleared land at "Mountain View" (273321B).

WARRUMBUNGLE NATIONAL PARK

Maps: Tenandra 1:100,000
Warrumbungle National
Park Tourist Map and
Guide 1:30,000 (C.M.A.)

The Warrumbungle Range rises abruptly from the flat plains country to the west of Coonabarabran. It includes seven peaks of over 1200 m. The range is the eroded remnant of a complex of extinct volcanoes, the last bout of volcanic activity being about 13 million years ago. The National Park occupies much of the central part of the range and includes most of its outstanding features, amongst which are The Breadknife, a vertical wafer of rock 60 m high and only a few meters thick at its summit, and Bluff Mountain, with its sheer western face 350 m in height. During fine weather magnificent views exist in all directions from the major peaks. The sight of a sunset over the Western Plains from any of these vantage points is unforgettable.

Because of the rugged and varied nature of the terrain, many different plant communities are represented in the Park. Mallee, Kurrajongs and Grasstrees grow on the more exposed areas, with White Box on the slopes and a wide variety of plants in the lower regions, including some small relict rainforest areas. In Spring the Park offers a magnificent display of wildflowers. Unfortunately, Prickly Pear also occurs in the Park. Where encountered the Parks Service recommends kicking it out of the ground

and putting it on an exposed rock to die. Do not aid its spread by attempting to eat the fruit. Birds and mammals are prolific, with species such as koalas, kangaroos, wallaroos and rednecked wallabies being easily observed. Feral goats and pigs have been reported.

Access. The Park lies 36 km to the west of Coonabarabran and can be approached directly from there by way of the John Renshaw Parkway.

Day Walks

Track Walks (Easy)

Maps: Warrumbungle National
Park 1:30,000

There is an extensive track system within the Park, providing access to many of the major view points in the area. Literature and maps describing the track system can be obtained from Park Headquarters at Canyon Camp.

Longer Walks

Off-track walking in the Park is not encouraged due to the fragile habitat and the large number of visitors. However, the area does offer considerable scope for extended off-track walks, which need not be confined to the Park. One major consideration in planning any extended walk is the availability of water. Usually reliable water supplies can be found at Burbie Spring (861353W), Hurley's Camp (905322W), Danu Saddle (865336W), Ogma Saddle (878331W), Dows Saddle, Balar Saddle, Gale's Bore (881287W) and Twin Pools (886299W) on Tonderburine Creek. It is advisable to check water conditions with the Ranger before starting on any trip. Do not pollute the water as it is the only supply for fauna and for other walkers.

Other problems with walking in parts of the range are patches of dense scrub. Places where the scrub appears to be particularly difficult include Blackman's Mountain, the Crooked Creek area, south of Bluff Mountain and between Gale's Bore and Tonduron. One possible longer off-track walk is described below.

Burbie Camp - Tonduron - Camp Pincham (Medium/ Hard, 3-4 days)

Maps: Warrumbungle National
Park 1:30,000

From Burbie Camp follow the track to Danu Saddle. This is only a very short walk but if a late start has been made is an excellent place to camp as it provides the opportunity to watch a sunset from Mt Exmouth (854342W). From the saddle continue along the track to Ogma Saddle then leave the track and go southwest. Because of the heavy scrub south of Bluff Creek, it is probably best to follow Bluff Creek down from the saddle to around 866323W where you might be able to pick up an old 4WD track leading south to Iron Knob Gap (871298W). Better views are offered by Toora Gap (877300W) so if you wish, leave the track about 600 m before Iron Knob Gap and follow the creek to the southeast up to the saddle. If the Iron Knob Gap route is used, a gorge will be encountered on the way down to Tonderburine Creek. Walking is much easier on the northern side of this gorge. The gorge begins as a small gully, but deepens quickly, so it is best to get onto the northern side as soon as the gully is encountered. It is fairly easy walking along Tonderburine Creek to Gale's Bore (881287W).

The ascent of Tonduron (1072 m) from Gale's Bore is well worthwhile. The return climb takes the best part of a day.

The climb requires some climbing ability, but is only graded 8 and ropes are usually not used. The scrub around Tonduron is rather dense. The best route is to follow Tonduron Gully, which enters Tonderburine Creek from the east just upstream of Gale's Bore. Follow Tonduron Gully upstream for about 1 km to where the first largish creek comes in from the south (884279W). Follow this creek to the saddle between Tonduron and Wilsons Hill. From here climb the gully on the south side of the spire.

On returning to Gale's Bore the campsite can be moved 2 km upstream to Twin Pools, which are readily identified. This shortens the following day and provides a change of scene. To return to camp Pincham there are a number of possible routes. The easiest of these is to walk up Tonderburine Creek, then follow the gully up to Dagda Saddle (893315W) and then follow any of the tracks back to the camp. Another possibility is to go around to the east of Crater Bluff (897311W), follow the ridge to the northeast and descend the creek to Hurley's Camp.

The East Coast

The coast of northeastern New South Wales provides a number of habitats of interest to walkers from long stretches of sand along isolated beaches to small pockets of littoral rainforest in favourable locations behind the dunes. Some of the coast now lies within a number of national parks. Some of these are described in a south to north sequence.

CROWDY BAY NATIONAL PARK

Maps: Camden Haven 1:100,000
Cooperook 1:25,000
Laurieton 1:25,000

Crowdy Bay National Park is situated on the coast about 25 km northeast of Taree and covers an area of 5520 ha.

Access. The Park can be reached from the north via Laurieton, from the west via Coralville (leave the Pacific Highway at Moorland) and from the south via Crowdy Head.

Day Walk

Diamond Head - Crowdy Head (Easy)

Maps: Cooperook 1:25,000
Laurieton 1:25,000

This walk follows the coastline from one headland to the next, thus cars should be left at both headlands to save returning along the same route.

From Diamond Head camping area (804906L) follow the track to the top of Diamond Head (812899L), where there are good views of the coast to the north and south. Continue south along this track until the long beach stretching off toward Crowdy Head is met (808891L). From here simply follow the beach for 12 km to Crowdy Head (756767C).

HAT HEAD NATIONAL PARK

Maps: Kempsey 1:100,000
Korogoro Point 1:25,000
Macksville 1:100,000
South West Rocks 1:25,000

Hat Head National Park covers an area of about 4000 ha along the coast to the east of Kempsey. Besides the coastline itself, features of the Park include large

areas of heath, which abound with wildflowers in spring, and a number of swamps and lagoons, which provide ideal breeding grounds for waterbirds. Mammals in the Park include possums, red-necked wallabies and grey kangaroos.

Access. There are two routes into the Park. From the north it can be reached by way of the Smoky Cape Lighthouse Road. In the south the Gladstone-Hat Head Road runs through the Park.

Day Walks

Lighthouse - Big Smoky (Easy)

Maps: South West Rocks 1:25.000

This is a straight-forward day walk. From the parking area at Captain Cook Lookout, walk up the track about 500 m to where it begins to climb the ridge (075794S) to Big Smoky Trig. Follow the ridge line up to the top, where there are good views of the Macleay River and the adjacent floodplain, as well as of the coastal strip all the way around to Namucca Heads.

From the trig, walk in a northerly direction for 500 m. From this point, it is possible to descend the ridge (071799S) until a track is met which runs down towards the sea. Follow this along, keeping an eye out for Brahminy Kites and White Breasted Sea Eagles, which can frequently be seen soaring above the ocean in the vicinity of The Ledge.

To return to the parking area follow the coastline around until it is possible to drop down onto North Smoky beach. Walk now to the southern end of the beach where a track is to be found leading back to the lookout.

Little Bay - Gap Beach (Easy)

Maps: South West Rocks 1:25.000

From the Little Bay Wildlife pond (073824S) there is a wide track which can be followed up onto Little Smoky. From this vantage point views of Smoky Cape Lighthouse can be glimpsed through the tree ferns and grass trees. Continue down the track until an old hut (075813S) is reached in a clearing. Continue heading east for a short distance to the sea. The Gap, as it is better known, is a beautiful secluded spot, used only by a handful of surfers in the summer months. To return to Little Bay, follow the track back over Little Smoky.

Smoky Cape - Korogoro Point (Easy)

Maps: Korogoro Point 1:25.000

South West Rocks 1:25.000

This is a 20 km walk around the beach from one headland to the next, and as such, a car should be left at Hat Head Village to save walking back around the same stretch of coastline.

From the Smoky Cape camping area (074782S) walk southwards along the beach towards Korogoro Point. Korogoro Creek, which has its mouth at the base of Hat Head Hill, can be crossed at a bridge (054637K) a little upstream of the camping reserve. From the bridge, head east onto the ridge (055637K) and follow it up to the Hat Head Trig. Extensive views both northwards to Smoky Cape and southwards to Big Nobby make the climb worthwhile. From the Trig, descend the ridge to Korogoro Point and rock-hop back to Hat Head Village. Alternatively, descend the ridge originally taken to the Trig.

YURAYGIR NATIONAL PARK

Maps: Bare Point 1:25,000

Bare Point 1:100,000
North Solitary Island
1:25,000
Red Rock 1:25,000
Sandon 1:25,000

Yuraygir National Park is situated 35 km east of Grafton. The Park includes 40 km of seascape from Angourie to Red Rock.

Access. There are several access points to the Park. Access from the north can be made by way of Angourie or Brooms Head. From the south the Park can be reached via Red Rock, Wooli or Minnie Water.

Day Walks

Red Rock - Pebbly Beach (Easy)

Maps: Red Rock 1:25,000

From Red Rock camping area (221829R) follow the south bank of the Redbank River towards the beach. Cross the river at its junction with the sea and follow the beach north for 5 km to Pebbly Beach. Return to Red Rock via the same route. Note that crossing the Redbank River may require swimming at high tide.

Longer Walks

Through Trips (Easy)

There are numerous through-trips that can be made along the coast from one access point to another. All trips require that cars be left at both the beginning and end of the walk. Such trips include Red Rock to Wooli (the crossing of the Wooli River, requiring either a swim or a boat trip); Wooli to Minnie Water; Minnie Water to Brooms Head; and Brooms Head to Angourie.

Index of Locations

A

Aberfoyle River, Gorge, Falls
129,130,131
Angourie 172
Apsley Region 112
Apsley River 35
Apsley River, Gorge, Falls
91,114,115,116
Armidale 24,27,30
Armidale Cycleway 24
Armidale State Forest 25
Attunga Cave 103

B

Bakers Creek 90
Bakers Creek, Falls 44,91,119,121
Bakers Creek Falls 91
Balar Saddle 169
Bald Blair 30
Bald Rock 157,163,164
Bangalore Creek 84
Barjo Ridge 62,128
Barnard River 58,59
Barraba Fire Trail 36
Barrington Cave 101
Barry Cave 101
Baryugil 77
Basin Nature Reserve 162
Bastille 43,44
Becks Creek 121
Bellingen 32,74
Bellinger River 64,74
Bendemeer 54,55
Bielsdown River 67,72
Big Hill 35
Big Nobby 171
Big Smoky 171
Bishops Creek 145,146
Black Scrub 145
Blaxland Creek 75,76
Blicks River 68

Blue Hole 58,120
Blue Mountain Creek 117,118
Bluff Rock 47
Boomi Gap 166
Booralong Creek 55,56
Border Gate 159
Border Ranges 158
Border Ranges, The 108,158
Border Rivers 104,105
Bostobrick 65
Boulders, The 43,44
Boulder Flat 141
Boundary Creek Falls 34,131
Boyd River 73
Bo Bo River 71,73
Bo Bo River, Gorge 68,71,72
Brindle Creek 159
Brooklana 72
Brookside 113
Brooms Head 172
Brushy Mountain 167
Buccarumbi 75
Budds Mare 35,114
Bullawa Creek 166,167
Bundarra 29
Burbie Spring, Camp 169

C

Camp Pincham 169
Captain Cook Lookout 171
Castle Top 165
Cathedral Rock 46
Cathedral Rock National Park 154
Chaelundi Falls, Rest Area 86,132
Chandler Falls 87
Chandler River 90
Chandler River, Gorge, Falls
46,62,87,89,122,123,125
Clarence River 77
Cliff's Fire Trail 31
Cobcrofts Falls, Rest Area 137,138

Cod Hole 67
Coffs Harbour 36
Commissioners Waters 57
Congi 54
Coonabarabran 169
Cooney Creek 120
Copeton Dam 56
Coramba 36
Corroboree Flat 59
Coryah Gap 166
Coutts Water 65,66
Crawney Pass 102
Crescent, The 144
Crombie's Cave 105
Crowdy Bay National Park 170
Crowdy Head 170
Cundle Flat 59
Cunnawarra 31
Cunnawarra Creek 141

D

Damifino Mine 121
Dandahra Gorge 147
Dangars Falls 68
Dangars Gorge, Falls 42,93,118,119
Danu Saddle 169
Dardanelles Creek, Bridge 74,146
Diamond Flat 31
Diamond Head 170
Dinner Flat 153,154
Dorrigo 36,64,68
Dorrigo National Park 70,146
Dorrigo Plateau 83
Dows Saddle 169
Dumaresq Dam 29
Dumaresq Dam, Creek 28,57,153
Dundurrabin 69

E

Eastern Boundary Fire Trail 35
Eastern Escarpment, The 108,135
Eastwood State Forest 25
Ebor Falls 45,74,86,91,132
Echo Point 113
Elaine's Gorge 89

Ellenborough 60

F

Five Day Creek 144
Fletchers Gap 126
Fortress 43
Four Mile Creek, Falls 44
Fredroy Falls 117

G

Gale's Bore 169
Gap Beach 171
Gara Dam Reserve 27
Gara River, Gorge 57,119,120
Georges Creek, Junction 35,63,140
Georges Mountain 163
Gibraltar Range National Park 147
Gibraltar National Parks 34
Glencairn 165
Glennifer Falls 85
Glenreagh 48
Glenrock Caves 101
Goolang 75
Goolang Creek 76
Gostwyck 31
Grady's Creek 158,162
Grays Spur 141
Greenvale 165
Green Camp 166
Green Gully 89,115
Guy Fawkes River 73,131,132
Guy Fawkes River National Park 32,130
Gwydir River 55,56

H

Harness Creek, Cask 66,156
Hastings River 60
Hat Head National Park 170
Henry River 134,135
Hillgrove 121
Hootens Crossing 77
Horse Stealers Creek 56
Horton River 167
Hurley's Camp 169

I

Imbota Nature Reserve 25
Inaccessible Gulf 87,122
Invergowrie 30
Iron Knob Gap 169
Isaac's Creek 102
Isis River 102

J

Jackadgery 74,75,76,77,148

K

Kaputar National Park 48
Kemps Pinnacle 140
Killarney Gap 166,167
Killekrankie 32
Kirkwoods Creek 90
Kitchen, The 43
Knorrit Flat 59
Kookabookra Creek 133
Kookaburra Crest 24
Korogoro Point 171
Kunderang Brook 94,104,139,140
Kunderang West 63
Kurrawonga Gorge 167

L

Lark Hill 131,132
Levers Plateau 159,160,161
Lindsay View 159,160,161
Little Bay 171
Little Murray River 64
Little Nymboida River 72,75
Long Creek 161
Long Flat 60
Long Point 33,123,125,126
Long Swamp Creek 120
Lower Bo Bo 72
Lower Gara Gorge 43
Lower Mooraback 136
Lucifers Thumb 32

M

MacDonald River 54

Macleay Region 103
Macleay River 31,62,124
Main Range 166,167
Majors Point 143
Manning River 58
Mann River 76,148
Marengo Creek, Falls, Station
74,131,132
McDirty's Creek 119
Megan 70,71
Mihi Falls 94
Mihi Gorge, Falls 43,93,119
Mihi Ridge 93
Minbalup 34
Minnie Water 172
Mirrum Creek 83
Mobong Falls 83
Moonbi 47
Moonbi Ranges 34
Mooraback 136,137
Moore Creek 103
Moparrabah 103
Mount Banda Banda 139,140
Mount Barney 159
Mount Capel 166
Mount Duval 28,153
Mount Gipps 162
Mount Glennie 160,161
Mount Kaputar National Park
36,48,164,166,167
Mount Lindesay 159
Mount Seaview 60
Mount Yarrowyck 46
Mulligan's Hut 147,148
Mushroom Rock 120

N

Nambucca Heads 171
Namoi River, Gorge, Tops
54,55,163,164
Narrow Neck 125
Native Dog Creek 155
Nettle Buttress 43
Never Never River 85
Newholme 29

New England Gorges, The 107,112
New England National Park 142
New England Ridge 141
Ningadhun 166
Ningadoo 166
Nungulba 162
Nymboida River
65,66,68,69,70,73,74,75

O

Oaklands 115
Oakly River, Gorge, Falls 63,126
Ogma Saddle 169
Oneo Canyon 92
Ooperook Creek 71
Oorooro Creek 151
Oxley Wild Rivers National Park 33,35

P

Paddys Flat 77,152
Paradise Creek 156
Pebbly Beach 172
Petroi 31
Pine Creek State Forest 37
Pine Forest 25,27
Pine View 166
Platypus Creek 143
Platypus Flat 66,67
Point Lookout 31,143,144
Postman's Creek 118
Promised Land 39

R

Raspberry Lookout 148
Redlands 144
Red Rock 172
Robinson's Knob 144
Rocky River 55,78,151
Rosewood River, Creek 69,72,146
Rowley's Creek 92,114,116
Rumbling Mountain 163
Rusden's Creek 114,115

S

Saint Helena Creek 89,123

Salisbury Waters 119,120
Sara River 133
Sawmill Creek 124
Scutts Track 36
Sea Cliffs 43
Shepherd Flat Creek 64
Silent Pool 66,155,156
Smoky Cape 171
Spring Gully 32
Spring Mountain 157
Steep Drop Falls 116
Stockyard Creek 104
Stonehenge 47
Stoney Creek Canyon 92
Stop A Bit Ridge 134
Styx River 86
Styx River, Gorge
61,87,127,128,129,153
Styx River State Forest 33
Sulcor 103
Sunday Creek 143

T

Tablelands, The 108,152
Tabulum 77,78
Tamworth 103
Tera Hills 78
Thora 32,74,143
Tia Gorge 113
Tilbuster 27
Timbarra River 78,151
Timor 102
Tonderburine Creek 169
Tonduron 169
Tooloom Creek, Range 152
Toora Gap 169
Trout Hatchery 61,153,154

U

Upper Clarence 152
Upper Gara Gorge 43
Upper Macintyre River 156
Upper Manning 101
Upper Rowley's Creek Gorge 92
Uralla 30,31

Urumbilum Creek 85

W

Wanderriby 63

Warrabah National Park 163

Warrumbungle National Park 48,168

Washpool Creek 149,150

Washpool National Park 34

Wattle Flat 61

Wayper Creek 84

Wedding Bells State Forest 39

Werrikimbe National Park 135

Werrikimbe Trig 136,137

White Rock Mountain 156,157

Wiangerie State Forest 161

Wild Cattle Creek 70

Willi Willi 104

Willowie Creek 151

Winterbourne Falls 117

Wollomombi 126

Wollomombi Gorge, Falls 45,87,88,122

Wooli 172

Woolpack Rocks 155

Wrights Lookout 32

Y

Yarras 60

Yessabah 103

Yulludunida 166

Yuraygir national park 171

