COLO RIVER

Passes and Routes

A Bushwalkers Guide

BRIAN CORLIS

Copyright © 2005 by Brian Corlis

Published by

Brian Corlis
35 Camellia Ave.,Glenmore Park 2745
Email: briajen2@bigpond.com

Disclaimer

The descriptions given for the passes and routes are from the authors direct experience at the time. Landscapes can change dramatically due to natural events such as rock falls, land slips, erosion and bush fire. Interpretation of the described routes is also subject to the experience of the reader.

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry.

Corlis,Brian

Colo River Passes and Routes

ISBN 0 646 44721 1.Colo River (N.S.W.)-Guidebooks.I.Title

919.44504

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements....1

Introduction....3

Suggested Walks....6

Bucks Pass....8

Crawfords Pass....8

Wollemi Range Pass....8

Saddle Pass....8

Pass 4....8

Wounded Knee Pass....9

Slot Pass....9

Boorai Ridge Pass....9

Dooli Creek South....10

The Pulpit....10

Dooli Creek East....10

Barakee Pass....10

Flat Rock Pass....10

Death Adder Pass....11

Waterfall Pass....11

Creek Pass....12

Angophora Pass....12

Snake Bite Pass....12

Dry Gulch....12

Traverse Pass....12

Canoe Creek Pass....13

Deception Pass....13

Belly Rub Pass....13

Meander Pass....14

Dry Creek Pass....14

Savage Pass....14

North Gully Pass....15

South Gully Pass....15

Little Pass....15

Big Pass, Tambo Crown *15*
Shelves Pass *16*
Tambo West Pass *16*
Crossover Pass *16*
Mt Parr West *16*
Hall's Pass *17*
Heart Stopper Pass *17*
Clews Shortcut *17*
Clews Original Mt Maiden Pass *18*
Maiden Ridge Pass *18*
Pass 26, Pass 27 ..... *18*
Brumby Pass *18*
Straw Gully Pass *18*
Cascade Pass *18*
Dry Ridge Pass *19*
Mt Parr South. West *19*
Back Track Pass *19*
Rock Cap Pass *19*
Rapids Pass *19*
Mt Parr South, East *19*
Bob Turner Track *19*
Split Pass *19*
Tootie Creek Pass *19*
Razor Back Pass *19*
Spider Orchid Pass *19*
Ivy League Shortcut *20*
Townsend Spur *20*
Bucks Pass 36 ..... *20*
Wollangambe Pass *20*
Bucks Pass 38 20
Maps 21
Map 1 22
Map 2 23
Map 3 24

Map 4 25
Map 5 26
Map 6 27
Map 7 28
Map 8 29
About The Author 31
Index 32
PHOTOGRAPHS 32
Bibliography 33

Acknowledgements

Solo walking in the rough and rugged terrain along the Colo River is a risky exercise and although the author has ventured into the area alone on many occasions it is always preferable and more enjoyable in the company of one's fellow man.

Thanks go the following who have accompanied me, not without injury on some occasions, and have given me the encouragement to continue the task over many years.

A special thanks to George Daniel who around the campfire on the beach on the Colo River near the junction of Pinchgut Creek suggested that I should take on the task of revisiting the passes described by Bob Buck on his sketch map and provide a more detailed description of these and add a number of additional passes now known.

Of those who have accompanied me, of which there are many, special thanks go to Raz Chatta, John Daruz, Max Reindl, Dennis Trembath, Richard Lumsden, Henry Roda, Christine Cowan, Peter Love, Kaye Birch and many others who have joined exploratory trips into sometimes unknown territory.

I am sure there are more Passes yet to be discovered as walkers and climbers become more adventurous and push the limits of accessibility.

The last word is always from "Nature" who having sculptured the landscape leaves us no alternative but to meet it and try to conquer it on its own terms.

Brian Corlis

Introduction

The Colo River and Wollemi National Park include some of the best, relatively untouched wilderness areas. The river has its source from two main systems.

System1

The Capertee, which commences from the Great Dividing Range near the small town of Capertee through a wide valley with the Gardens of Stone National Park and the spectacular Pantoneys Crown to the south, the Genowlan Mesa and Mt Airly to the west and Umbiella Creek with the towering Tayan Peak to the north.

Although containing a large catchment area the relatively low rainfall does not provide a large volume of water flow.

System2

The Wolgan River which flows from the south in the Wollemi National Park through an almost isolated valley, dominated by Woolpack Rock, Cape Horn and Donkey Mountain, before turning east at the ruins of the old shale mining township of Newnes.

The Capertee and Wolgan Rivers meet to form the Colo River. This is further fed by Wollemi Creek which itself has a very large catchment from the north. It meanders almost 100km through pristine wilderness before entering the more settled farming region of Upper Colo and finally entering the Hawkesbury River.

Photo 1 Looking towards Tambo Crown with Big Pass, the cliff line, on the left

Exploration of the Colo River probably commenced with the settlement in the early 1800's of the lower Colo River from the Hawkesbury River junction. The early settlers were probably the first to venture up the gorge looking for good farming land but none was to be found. Thomas William Parr made the first official exploration north in 1817. His party included Ben Singleton who may already have explored the area some months earlier. The party did not explore upstream but left it at Upper Colo and proceeded on to the plateau country to the east of the main Colo Gorge. They entered the upper reaches again in the headwaters of Wollemi Creek.

The first parish map was prepared in the 1830's but later expeditions found this to be very inaccurate. A major exploration was conducted in 1885 with a view to constructing a railway line across the dividing range to Dubbo but the project proved to be too costly.

The army surveyor Lt Colonel H.G. Clews was responsible for the first complete map of the area in the 1930's and I have attempted to retrace his expeditions as detailed in his memoirs "The bad bit across the River". The sketch map prepared by Bob Buck in the 1970's is the most widely known in bush-walking circles and provides the basis for the following series of descriptions and maps. The spectacular gorge plunging down to 300m presents many difficulties for access. The most accessible points are:

1 Hollow Rock and Crawfords Pass at the end of Culoul Range.

2 The Canoe Creek track from the Grassy Hill fire trail, and

3 The popular Bob Turner track from Colo Heights.

However those who are a little more adventurous can find many more access points of varying difficulty leading to some of the most spectacular areas of the Colo River.

The maps and descriptions are presented as a guide to genuine bush walkers with some experience of rough and rugged terrain. It is recommended that people with little experience of rough and rugged terrain should not enter this country.

Photo 2 View south from lookout on Pass 33 track

Photo 3 Below the ramparts Colo River Gorge

I have tried, where possible to describe the passes so as to provide a clear indication of the degree of difficulty, however, what is relatively easy for experienced climbers may be extremely difficult for some with less experience.

It is sincerely hoped that the many years of exploring in this great wilderness area can be of some benefit to those who may follow.

To all who may venture in, treat it with respect and leave it as you found it.

Brian Corlis 2005

Suggested Walks

WALK 1 Hollow Rock to Crawfords Lookout and Crawfords Pass. Then down to Wollemi Creek and the Colo River junction continuing down river to Boorai Creek junction. Exit via Pass 7. There are good campsites below Pass 6 and a little further down river. This is a demanding two day walk best done in autumn or spring.

WALK 5 Grassy Hill fire trail to Canoe Creek junction. A good short day walk although a steep walk out. All on tracks.

WALK 6 Grassy Hill car park to Alidade Hill and return. A short off track day walk best done by proceeding up the ridge from the car park. Good views.

Photo 4 Hollow Rock on Culoul Range

WALK 2 Hollow Rock to Colo River via Pass 5, returning via Crawfords Pass. A spectacular but very demanding day walk for experienced walkers only.

WALK 3 Hollow Rock to Colo River via pass 6. Return via Crawfords Pass. A very good leisurely two day walk with good camp sites either below pass 6 or at Wollemi Creek junction.

WALK 4 Hollow Rock to Boorai Creek Junction via Pass 7 and return. Excellent camp site. A relatively easy two day walk.

WALK 7 Canoe Creek/Colo River and proceed downstream to camp below Little Pass. Return via Little Pass 17 and ridge to south following old fire trail to main Grassy Hill road. Good campsites below Little Pass.

WALK 8 Canoe Creek returning either via Pass 15 or Pass 16 and old fire trail to Grassy Hill Fire Trail. Two very good day walks for experienced scramblers (rope useful). Pass 16 offers excellent views.

Photo 5 One of the many ancient aboriginal galleries within the Colo River Catchment

WALK 9 Grassy Hill Fire Trail car park to Pinchgut Creek junction via Pass 12. Returning via Pass 11(a). A much more demanding two day walk for experienced walkers only. For the really adventurous, try the entry via pass 11 (rope essential).

WALK 10 Bob Turner track to Colo River and return. Easy day walk.

WALK 11 Bob Turner track to Mt Parr South and return. A much more demanding day walk.

WALK 12 Bob Turner track to Colo River and return via Hungryway Creek and Parr Spur. A more demanding day walk but leave a car at the start of Drip Rock Track. Map C.M.A Colo Heights

WALK 13 Mountain Lagoon to Tootie Creek/Colo River junction via Pass 33 and return. A good day walk with a long climb out.

WALK 14 Mountain Lagoon to Colo River via Pass 34 and return via Pass 33. A good day walk for the more adventurous. Pass 34 is very steep. Leave cars at the end of the fire trail and walk back to enter Pass 34.

The Drip Rock Track (Map.C.M.A Colo Heights) provides access to many excellent walks around Island Mountain and Angorawa Creek but the 11.5km fire trail is a drag. Minimum of two days required for this area. A spectacular walk for the adventurous is:-

WALK 15 Proceed from the end of the Drip Rock Fire Trail to Clews Cave and then to the Colo River via Clews shortcut Pass 24. Proceed upstream (west bank) to camp opposite Mt Parr West. Exit via the very steep Mt Parr West (Pass 22) or proceed up Angorawa Creek to Pass 22(a). Definitely for experienced walkers only. Rope essential.

WALK 16 Bob Turner car park to Colo River via Mt Townsend and Townsend Spur. Return by walking up river and exit via Bob Turner track. A very good two day walk. The reverse is also recommended. Map C.M.A. Mountain Lagoon

WALK 17 Mountain Lagoon to Colo Meroo camping area via Gospers and Mailes Ridge and return. A two day walk to good camp site. but steep climb out. Map C.M.A Mountain Lagoon.

These are but a few of the many possibilities for day walks, and extended walks for 2 days. There are many other possibilities and the author will probably not live long enough to explore every ridge and gully, but he will keep trying.

Good walking

Photo 6 Spikey Acacia

Bucks Pass

Bucks Pass 1 *Crawfords Pass*

Map 1 - From about 100m north of Crawfords Lookout, the track drops steeply off the cliff-line. It then proceeds around the base of the cliffs to a rocky outcrop above the top of the peninsular where it then drops steeply to the right into Wollemi Creek. This track may be difficult to find from the bottom but a rock cairn marking the beginning of the track can be seen from the creek bed.

Another route can be taken (best from the bottom) commencing at the point of the peninsular in Wollemi Creek. On the end of the peninsular just below the cliff- line there is a large camping cave. Just to the right of this cave a route can be found requiring some climbing, with a little exposure, to the top of the point. Follow up the point to the next line of cliffs where a route, also involving some climbing, can be found leading to the rock outcrop and then joins the main track from Crawfords Lookout. Inexperienced climbers may need rope assistance for this route.

Bucks Pass 2 *Wollemi Range Pass*

Map 1 - A very steep rocky ridge providing access to Wollemi Range (well cairned). Requires much scrambling particularly for the first 150m ascent after which it gets easier. Excellent views. Rope not needed. For experienced scramblers.

Bucks Pass 3 *Saddle Pass*

Map 1 - Shortcut across saddle. Easy when approached from the east, but get above the first rock ledge before ascending the saddle. When approaching from the west, climb up below a large overhang and ochre cave to a small ledge to the right, (some exposure). A short climb of about 2m leads to a chute which brings you above the first cliff- line. Once here proceed diagonally to the left meandering around the cliff- lines up towards the saddle. A short rope is handy for pack hauling and safety. Experienced scramblers only.

Bucks Pass 4

Map 1 - Possibly the original Culoul Pass. Not used now as requires considerable amount of climbing for first 150m.

Photo 7 Wading along the Colo River below Wollemi Creek Junction

Bucks Pass 5 *Wounded Knee Pass*

Map 1 - Leave the Crawfords Lookout track at the end of the remains of the old fire trail. Head due south to meet the junction of two creeks at GR 707 233. The first section of the creek contains two canyon like sections.

Photo 8 One of the abseils on the canyon route, Pass 5

The first is a chute sloping about 20m into a hole (rope necessary), but it can be negotiated around the top on the right. The next section is a short but deep narrow canyon of about 30m which can also be negotiated above it on the right but the drop back to the creek may need a rope. The next major obstacle is a large waterfall of about 35m. This can be negotiated around the ridge on the north side returning to the creek further down at the top of another waterfall. Traverse to the south side of this waterfall over a rock ledge of about 10m (rope handy for non climbers) then continue further south returning to the creek as soon as possible. The last drop is just above the river but is not negotiable. Move northward above the cliff-line for about 200m. The final drop requires an abseil of about 20m which can be done in two short 10m pitches. (rope essential).

For experienced walkers only. Reverse route difficult due to rock climbs near base. The pass can also be done as a canyon with 8 abseils ranging from 12m to 60m. Two 60m ropes needed. Possibly first done in 2003 by private party led by the author. Nicknamed “wounded knee canyon” as one of the party hurt his knee on the descent.

Bucks Pass 6 *Slot Pass*

Map 1 & 2 - From a lookout overlooking the Colo River, reached by continuing down the ridge from the Heli Pad at the end of the road from Hollow Rock, walk back up the ridge for a couple of hundred metr’s. Traverse to the right at this level until the top of the creek is reached. Entering the creek lower down is difficult due to the cliff-lines. The creek is quite rough in places and needs to be negotiated along the sides from either the left or right bank. After the creek coming in from the left is passed, which is itself negotiable from the Boorai Ridge Track, it then begins to drop very steeply until a line of cliffs directly above the river is reached. Scramble around a ledge on the left where you can drop down two levels and then move back to the centre of the creek bed.

The final drop is reached across a large rock slab and down a fissure to the river. Less experienced rock scramblers may need rope assistance. Below this pass is an excellent camp site.

Bucks Pass 7 *Boorai Ridge Pass*

Map 2 - This is an easy but steep route from the end of an old fire trail along Boorai Ridge which commences about 100m east of the Hollow Rock car park Continue past the end of the fire trail to a rocky ledge with excellent views. Then down to the saddle and along the ridge to where a well cairned track leads to the river. Excellent camp site on riverbank.

Pass 7(a) *Dooli Creek South*

Map 2 - Proceed up Boorai Creek to junction of Dooli Creek. The magnificent rock basin at the junction is well worth the visit. Continue up Dooli Creek and commence the ascent at the headland about 300m from the junction. A very steep pass requiring much meandering around the cliff-lines. Provides access to a long ridge leading to Culoul Range. Experienced walkers only.

Pass 7(b) *The Pulpit*

Map 2 - This is an interesting alternative exit to pass 7. Proceed up Boorai Creek to the first creek junction on the left. The creek bed is at first very steep but eases. Keep to the left to reach the saddle and take the short climb to the top of the "Pulpit" .Good view. From here proceed diagonally up to the left to join the main track on Pass 7.

Pass 7(c) *Dooli Creek East*

Map 2 - An easy entry and exit point from the ridge leading to the Canoe Creek fire trail.

Bucks Pass 8 *Barakee Pass*

Map 2 - Climb to the shelf above the river from a point about 200m east of the creek junction at GR 696 192. From the gully proceed SW up the very steep ridge and up a short and a little exposed rock climb to a large yellow overhanging cave.

From here move to the left from the cave around the point to just above the first line of cliffs. An alternative route exists by continuing around the rock shelf above the river towards Barakee Creek and then very steeply up a point overlooking Barakee Creek. There is a short but difficult rock climb with some exposure of about 3-4m at the base of the cliff line. (Rope essential)

Bucks Pass 9 *Flat Rock Pass*

Map 2 - When approaching from Boorai Creek junction, climb up to the first line of cliffs to a 20m very steep rock climb to the ridge. (rope essential) Once on the ridge it is an easy walk up to where the major cliff-lines begin. First meander up to a large yellow ochre overhanging cave and from here climb steeply to the left and then to the right to a shelf leading left along the base of some large cliffs.

Photo 9 On the beach near the junction of Boorai Creek towards Barakee Pass

This shelf leads to the top at a large rock slab and an excellent lookout. An excellent pass with some exposure. For experienced walkers only.

When approaching from above, locate the large rock slab where the pass is cairned to the descent on the right of the first shelf. Then meander down very steeply to the top of the nose of the ridge. At the bottom of the ridge there may be an easier descent to the right of the ridge into Boorai Creek. Rope handy for less experienced walkers.

This pass offers an alternative route to Boorai Creek/Colo River Junction via a ridge from the Grassy Hill Trail.

Photo 10 Rock lily Wollemi

Bucks Pass 10 *Death Adder Pass*

Map 3 - When approaching from the bottom, enter the more southerly creek and climb diagonally up to the bottom of the major cliff-line, (steep but negotiable). Follow the base of the cliff line around and enter the next creek to the north, keep to the base of the cliffs and look for a climbable break in the cliffs. The route up is very steep and tricky with many rock pitches requiring ropes. The breaks to the next level are sometimes difficult to find. An erosion gully provides some relief to the steep cliff-lines but ends at a large cave and overhang. Traverse to the left to find a route to the next level. Continue meandering around the ledges and up short climbs to the next level. It gets easier towards the top. A difficult route with some exposure. For experienced walkers only. Would be very difficult from the top down as the entry point would be hard to locate and the overhangs and ledges to the next level down would also be very difficult to find.

A somewhat easier route down can be found by leaving the main ridge at around GR 737 167 and proceeding due west until the top of the cliff lines are encountered. There are many drops requiring ropes and the ledges are generally followed to the right. This route leads to the creek at around GR 734 1680 where the final drop to the creek is via a small canyon of about 10m. (rope essential). Once in the creek follow it down, and then follow the bottom of the major cliff-line to the next southerly creek. A very steep route for experienced walkers only.

Bucks Pass 11 *Waterfall Pass*

Map 3 - A small cairn on the ridge marks the entry point north, to a very steep gully past a minor waterfall and then to a large usually dry waterfall. The route down is via a series of ledges which lead to the right (east) of the fall. Look for drops usually 5-10m down to the next level and continue east to find the next drop finally reaching the bottom at the next minor creek entering from the right. Once in the creek bed a steep but relatively easy rock hop leads to the Colo River .Experienced walkers only. 20m of rope essential. Difficult from the bottom due to the rock pitches. A spectacular pass.

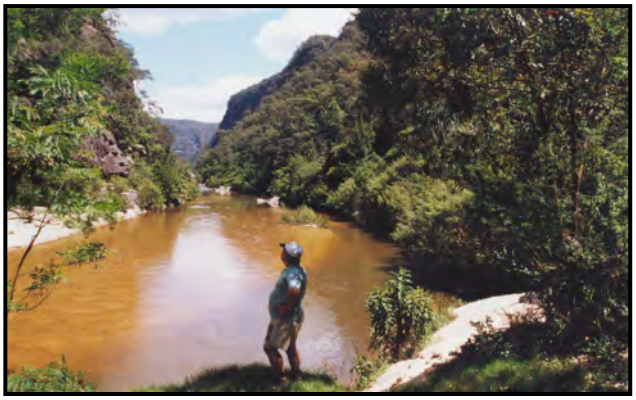


Photo 11 Colo River with a high water flow at the Junction of Canoe Creek

Pass 11(a) *Creek Pass*

Map 3 - From the canoe creek parking area proceed north west finally descending near the junction of a creek coming in from the east. The creek is somewhat rocky requiring much boulder hoping but is quite negotiable. When approached from the bottom the first half kilometer of the creek presents a number of waterfalls and rock falls which require some climbing and meandering to right or left. The ridge east of the junction at GR.741 164 also provides good access from the top but the exit from the creek is steep.

Pass 11(b) *Angophora Pass*

Map 3 - From the Canoe Creek parking area, proceed N.W as for pass 11(a) traversing just below the ridge to the point of the spur, then walk around the spur to the west. Once around the spur negotiate down the first gully, which is very steep, until it is no longer negotiable. Traverse west to the next gully which leads to the creek. A very steep route but a little easier than pass 11 or 12. Rope useful for less experienced walkers.

Photo 12 Rock bluff at Canoe Creek/Colo River junction

Bucks Pass 12 *Snake Bite Pass*

Map 3 - A short route to Pinchgut Creek There are two routes down this spur.

The first (original pass 12) is entered via a steep gully near the top of the spur. Continue down this very steep creek bed until an impassable waterfall is reached. Traverse around to the west and enter the next gully which is then negotiated down to the river.

The second pass is accessed by proceeding down the spur until it is no longer negotiable and entering a smaller gully. At one point a non-negotiable waterfall is reached which is bypassed by climbing around the point to the right and down a small cliff face and returning as soon as possible to the gully. Good camp site at Pinchgut Creek junction. Both passes for experienced walkers only.

Pinchgut Creek *Dry Gulch*

Map 3 - The first half kilometre of Pinchgut Creek leads through a large rock fall and boulders to an impassable 25m waterfall. To negotiate up Pinchgut Creek, climb up the ridge to the right at the creek entrance and proceed along the top of the cliff lines to the top of the waterfall.

Pass 12(a) *Traverse Pass*

Map 3 - From Alidade Hill descend north- westerly into the creek and continue down until reaching the cliff line and a 50m waterfall overlooking the river. The route down is to the right, first down a short but fairly exposed drop of about 3m to the next ledge under a small overhang. At the end of this ledge on the right is the next drop of about 10m from a convenient tree. From here descend via another short ledge back to the creek and down to the next waterfall. Traverse around the right over the top of a small gully and then down to another small cliff- line. Keep to the right of the creek where the best route to the river is down the spur.

An excellent very steep pass requiring 20m of rope. For experienced walkers only. The reverse would be very difficult due to the overhanging ledges.

Bucks Pass 13 *Canoe Creek Pass*

Map 4 - An easy well marked track with large cairn at the top near the end of fire trail. The track from the bottom commences at the creek but leads upwards through a rock crack to the south to avoid a waterfall.

Excellent view at a rock shelf where the track turns sharply upstream and follows some way from the creek bed before it leads very steeply up the ridge to the fire trail.

Pass 14 *Deception Pass*

Map 4 - A tricky route requiring much meandering. Proceed up Canoe Creek from the Colo River past a small waterfall to the first major creek junction from the right. There is a significant line of cliffs immediately above the junction. Move into the right creek and proceed up under the cliff line until some breaks occur. Keep meandering upwards to where there is a very narrow slot leading up to the next level. From here there are two options, the left leads to a very steep route on the nose of the ridge. To the right leads under the cliffs above the right creek branch to where some steep breaks allow access above the first major cliff-line. Once back to the main ridge the minor cliffs at the top are no problem. For experienced walkers only.

Photo 13 The Colo Gorge with Savage Pass and Mt Savage on horizon from unnamed lookout

Bucks Pass 15 *Belly Rub Pass*

Map 4 - Look for the usually dry creek bed entering from the south almost at the Canoe Creek junction. The first 100m or so up are very steep requiring some meandering but don't progress too far to the right up the ridge. There is a short section of climbing up the edge of a large rock slab (on your belly) where a rope would be handy for less experienced scramblers. Once past this the going gets easier. Continue up the creek to the first fork left and continue up this fork until a small cave and waterfall is reached. (dingo cave - there were many footprints there).

Leave the creek and proceed up the western side towards the ridge. Follow the ridge to a cliff line near the top where a little meandering will find a negotiable route. Excellent views from the top. This point is probably the one reached by Lt Colonel Clews from Grassy Hill and a cave immediately behind the lookout may have been the "flour cave" he used, although it is now filled with leaf litter and does not have the fine white powder he described.

Bucks Pass 16 *Meander Pass*

Map 4 - From the bottom enter the dry gully (Pass 15) and proceed up until the ridge on the right becomes negotiable. Continue up to the base of the major cliff-line and traverse around to the next dry creek gully at the base of a waterfall. The gully is best crossed on the western side but then return to the eastern side and commence climbing up the ridge towards a large ochre cave and overhang. A little meandering from right to left eventually leads to the top. A steep but relatively easy climb. Rope not necessary.

Pass 16(a) *Dry Creek Pass*

Map 4 - The gully to the west of Pass 16 is easily negotiable from above the lookout and once reaching the bottom of the cliff-line traverse to the east and exit via Pass 15. From below proceed as per Pass 16 and continue up the gully above the waterfall. This is probably the original route taken by Clews on his way to Mt Savage.

Photo 14 At the top of the exhilarating climb up Pass 22(a). Pass 22(b) directly opposite

Photo 15 Christmas Bush

Bucks Pass 17 *Savage Pass*

Map 4 - There are three routes to the Savage Ridge above Canoe Creek. The first is immediately to the left of the cliff-face on the bend of the river. A very steep route, which is cairned, commences from a small tree next to the first shelf. Generally take the shelves leading to the right until the small very steep gully is reached. From the top of the gully, move up and around on the north side of the next major cliff-line to a small erosion gully.

Photo 16 Island Mountain from Mt Parr West

This leads to a chimney and a very steep climb to the top of the ridge. Further up the ridge negotiate mostly on the north side. When approaching from the top, the last drop to the river from the gully presents some difficulty in locating the passes to the next level down. Some exposed sections may need rope assistance. For experienced walkers only.

Pass 17(a) *North Gully Pass*

Map 4 - Enter the gully about 800m upstream from the Canoe Creek junction at GR 734 142 just past a small bluff. Very steep and loose at the top of the first line of cliffs after which it gets easier. Near the top of the ridge it again gets very steep and loose and is best negotiated to the left along a shelf below the cliff-line. Rope handy for the descent. Experienced walkers only.

Pass 17(b) *South Gully Pass*

Map 4 - About 1.2km downstream from the Canoe Creek junction almost at the base of Little Pass. is a very good campsite on a sandy bank. Enter the gully opposite and take the right branch and proceed up a very steep and loose gully, with lots of dangerous scree, to the top of the ridge.

This is probably Clews' route to Mt Savage which was only found after a day of futile efforts to find a way through the cliff-line. He was probably first baulked by the cliff- lines to the west and retreated back to the river and attempted to find away through the cliffs. There is a suggestion in his memoirs that he may have progressed around the point opposite Canoe Creek and up the river to as far as Pinchgut Creek before returning defeated. After a hard day with no result he returned to the campsite and the gully he first tried and found the way via the scree slope. This experience led him to describe the area west of the Colo River as "The bad bit across the river".

Bucks Pass 18 *Little Pass*

Map 4 - A very steep but relatively easy route. From just east of the river bend proceed up diagonally to the east keeping just below the cliff-lines and negotiate around the cliffs. At the top continue up the ridge and then traverse around to the creek on the left which is usually dry. At the top of the ridge are excellent views overlooking the Canoe Creek Junction. When approaching from the top, get to the base of the cliff- line on the right and continue around the point to the west and traverse diagonally down to the river.

Photo 17 Early morning on the beach below Mt Townsend Spur

Bucks Pass 19 *Big Pass, Tambo Crown*

Map 5 - When approaching from the top, commence just to the right of the point of the ridge at the beginning of the cliff-line. Meander down to the left until it is possible to drop to a shelf leading sharply right and to a point just above the narrow saddle between Tambo Crown and the cliff. A 12m somewhat exposed cliff-face needs to be negotiated to the saddle (rope necessary). A steep scramble then leads around some large rocks and then up to the top of Tambo Crown. From here it is an easy walk down the ridge to the river.

When approached from the bottom, a lead climber will need to climb the cliff face and attach a rope to a good tree at the top of the pitch and the scramble up from here is very steep. Experienced walkers only.

Pass 19(a) *Shelves Pass*

Map 5 - A very steep gully with many shelves which can be negotiated around the right or left. Experienced walkers only.

Photo 18 Red Tailed Black Cockatoos

Bucks Pass 20 *Tambo West Pass*

Map 5 - From a sandy camp site on the south-west of the Colo River/Tambo Creek junction, proceed up to the base of the first major cliff line. Follow this west until a steep shelf/ramp is reached. At the top of the shelf continue up through a loose rock slide to the base of the next cliff and traverse to the west and up to a chimney leading to the next level. From here continue upwards and to the right until to a point just above a creek is reached. The route up is difficult and requires much meandering and climbing. An easier alternative is to enter the creek above the waterfall and proceed upwards until the cliff- lines on the left break and the slope becomes walkable. This is the preferred route for the descent. An excellent pass for experienced climbers and scramblers only. Rope essential. Good views of both the Colo River and Tambo Creek from the top.

Photo 19 Native Iris

Bucks Pass 21 *Crossover Pass*

Map 5 - A straightforward steep ridge. From the bottom a small erosion gully just on the north side of the base provides a reasonable route. At the first major cliff-line traverse to the right around the point of the ridge and proceed up a gully leading back to the ridge-line. Excellent views towards the top. A very good scenic pass.

Bucks Pass 22 M*t Parr West*

Map 5 - From the junction of Angorawa Creek, proceed south straight up the ridge. Above the first line of cliffs is a difficult narrow chimney and a chock stone requiring some tricky climbing for the lead climber and a pack haul for the followers. The more difficult cliff- lines are negotiated to the

right (west) but return to the spur as soon as possible. It looks impassable from the bottom but meandering around the cliff lines will find the best route. Much climbing necessary and a 20m rope is essential. Not for inexperienced walkers. The views are superb but a long walk in and out. Don't miss the view from the top of Mt Parr West.

Pass 22(a) *Hall's Pass*

Map 5 - A very steep rocky ridge from Angorawa Creek. Numerous cliff- lines requiring a meander either to the right or left to find a route which usually involves some climbing with some exposure. A 20m rope essential for pack hauling and safety. Spectacular views along the sharp ridgeline. An excellent pass for experienced walkers only.

tricky climbing. Once above these, the very steep ridge- line becomes easier but the rocky outcrops are best negotiated on the western side. Rope essential for the descent. Experienced walkers only.

Bucks Pass 24 *Clews Shortcut*

Map 6 - A dry creek bed, very steep at the top, but easily negotiated to the river. This pass was first discovered by Clews. On his second survey trip he started from Mt Tootie and reached the junction of the Wollangambe and Colo Rivers and proceeded upstream looking for a pass to the east. This pass offered the best route. On a later trip, entering from the east along what is now the Drip Rock Track, he was camped in the saddle just above the pass when it began to rain.

Photo 20 This monster resides in the Valley of the swamps. A remote area of the Wollemi National Park

Pass 22(b) *Heart Stopper Pass*

Map 5 - A very steep rocky ridge on the north-west side of Colo River opposite Mt Parr West providing access to Mt Maiden. Commence ascent from the sandy beach. The first line of cliffs presents the greatest challenge requiring some

The party sought shelter in the cave now known as "Clews Cave".

Photo 21 Colo River towards Island

Pass 24(a) *Clews Original Mt Maiden Pass*

Map 6 - From the sandy beach directly opposite Pass 24, proceed up the ridge to the west. The only difficulty is a cliff-line approx 50m from the river but a very steep and loose break allows access and once above this it is an easy, but steep climb to the top of the ridge. (20m of rope handy for the descent.)

Pass 25 *Maiden Ridge Pass*

Map 6 - Very steep ridge with some climbing. Excellent views up and down the river. For experienced walkers only.

Bucks Pass 26, Bucks Pass 27

Map C.M.A Wollangambe - These two passes are more appropriately considered as access to the lower Wollangambe River and as such are not included in this review.

Bucks Pass 28 *Brumby Pass*

Map 6 - Island Mountain South Ridge. An easy ridge leading to Island Mountain. When approaching from the bottom. Enter from about 100m upstream from the side creek.

Pass 28(a) *Straw Gully Pass*

Map 6 - A very steep pass leading directly from the Colo River to Island Mountain. From the campsite opposite the Wollangambe River junction, proceed diagonally up to the right towards the cliff-line and traverse around the base of the cliffs to a significant gully. The climb up the gully encounters a number of very steep dry waterfalls requiring some climbing with some exposure and pack hauling. If the dry water falls present difficulties they can be negotiated on the north side but this also requires much difficult climbing and pack hauling. Once above the first 200 m of ascent the going gets easier and leads to the spur from the north east of Island Mountain. From here, the short easy climb up to the summit has some excellent views. A 20m rope recommended and the pass should be attempted by experienced climbers and walkers only.

Bucks Pass 29 *Cascade Pass*

Map 6 - From the creek entering to the south of Island Mountain continue upstream. A waterfall, usually dry, is encountered requiring some meandering and scrambling but rope not necessary. Continue upstream and take the first major creek from the east then to the junction of

two creeks and proceed up the spur between the two. There are a number of cliff-lines requiring some meandering and scrambling.

Pass 29(a) *Dry Ridge Pass*

Map 6 - This is an easier route up the ridge to the south. Follow the first right branch of the creek for about 200m and as the cliff line breaks on the right negotiate up the ridge. Continue up the ridge to where a couple of lines of cliffs will require some meandering to find the easiest route. Rope not generally required

Bucks Pass 30 *Mt Parr South. West*

Map 7 - At first from the bottom it is an easy climb up an open ridge but a series of cliff-lines towards the top of the ridge present some difficulties. Some meandering around the eastern side and climbing necessary. Rope useful. Excellent views. For experienced walkers only.

Pass 30 (a): ***Back Track Pass***

(Map 6 & 7). This pass is reached from the top by following the ridge south west from the Drip Rock Track .Leave the fire trail at GR 785 069. At GR 780 052 there is a rock shelf (good views) overlooking a cliff-line which at this point is not negotiable. The pass is reached by proceeding north west along the top of the cliff line for about 200m where a minor spur west provides a reasonable but very steep access. Some meandering right and left required. Once down the cliff-line, traverse around to the gentler ridge south to the King Rapids. Although it is cairned near the top, the pass through the cliff-line from the bottom is difficult to find.

Pass 30(b)**: Rock Cap Pass**

Map 7 - A somewhat easier route to Mt Parr South. From King Rapids, proceed north between the two small creeks entering at this point. A straightforward steep climb but the cliff-lines on the top of the spur need traversing below the cliff-lines on the northern side. A climb to the top of the rock cap ridge gives excellent views. A very scenic route.

Pass 30 (c) *Rapids Pass*

Map 7 - A very steep route requiring some climbing. Cross the river at the top of King Rapids (which may be difficult if water levels are high) or swim just above the rapids. Commence the ascent at around GR 787 045 look for a small erosion gully which gives some relief from the cliff lines. Some meandering required to locate breaks. Rope essential. For experienced scrambers only. Provides access to Mount D'Arcy.

Bucks Pass 31 *Mt Parr South, East*

Map 7 - Steep but easy ridge, nice views along the ridge but view from the top a little disappointing.

Bucks Pass 32 *Bob Turner Track*

Map 8 - Well maintained easy graded track from car park to Colo River.

Pass 32(a) *Split Pass*

Map 7 & 8 - A steep but straightforward route either to the right or left side of the cliff line on the point of the spur. Provides good access to Mount D'Arcy.

Bucks Pass 33: ***Tootie Creek Pass***

Map 8 - A well marked track leading from the junction of Tootie Creek to the Mountain Lagoon Fire Trail.

Pass 33(a): ***Razor Back Pass***

Map 7 & 8 - An easy ridge north from the Tootie Creek/Colo River Junction. Giving assess to Mount D'Arcy.

Bucks Pass 34: ***Spider Orchid Pass***

Photo 22 View North from Tootie lookout on Pass 33

Map 8 - If entering from the river follow up the very nice creek until it forks and then proceed straight up the spur. The ridge is at first very steep and scrubby and the cliff-line near the top is negotiated to the right. A little easier to negotiate down the steep spur from the Tootie creek firetrail.

Pass 34 (a) *Ivy League Shortcut*

Map 8 - An easier route down to the end of Townsend Spur from Gosper's Ridge. Leave the Gosper's Ridge Fire Trail at GR 982 835 and proceed north along the ridge. Continue down the spur to where it branches into two. The east branch, which is easier, is difficult to locate on the way down but the exit point is cairned. Both are steep but quite negotiable.

Bucks Pass 35 *Townsend Spur*

Map 8 - An easy ridge but steep and scrubby near the river. Best accessed on the western side of the point. Excellent views both east and west from below Mt Townsend.

Bucks Pass 36

Map CMA 1:25000 Mountain Lagoon - A steep rocky ridge opposite Meroo camping area but the top leads through private property.

Bucks Pass 37 *Wollangambe Pass*

Map 6 - A spectacular route leading straight up from the Wollangambe/Colo River Junction. Although very steep no rope needed. The ridge-line back to the end of the road from Mt Tootie offers many spectacular views across both the Colo and Wollangambe Rivers. For experienced walkers.

Bucks Pass 38

Map CMA 1:25000 Mountain Lagoon - Although not a direct access route to the Colo River I have included it as it provides the easiest access to the Wollangambe/ Colo River junction. From the end of the fire-trail from Mt Tootie, (CMA Mountain Lagoon) GR 731 038, continue down the ridge to a narrow saddle and enter the gully to the north. A little steep at first but the creek soon becomes very pleasant and easily negotiable to the Wollangambe River. If proceeding downstream, cross the river as soon as possible and allow plenty of time as the route is slow going due to large boulders and thick scrub.

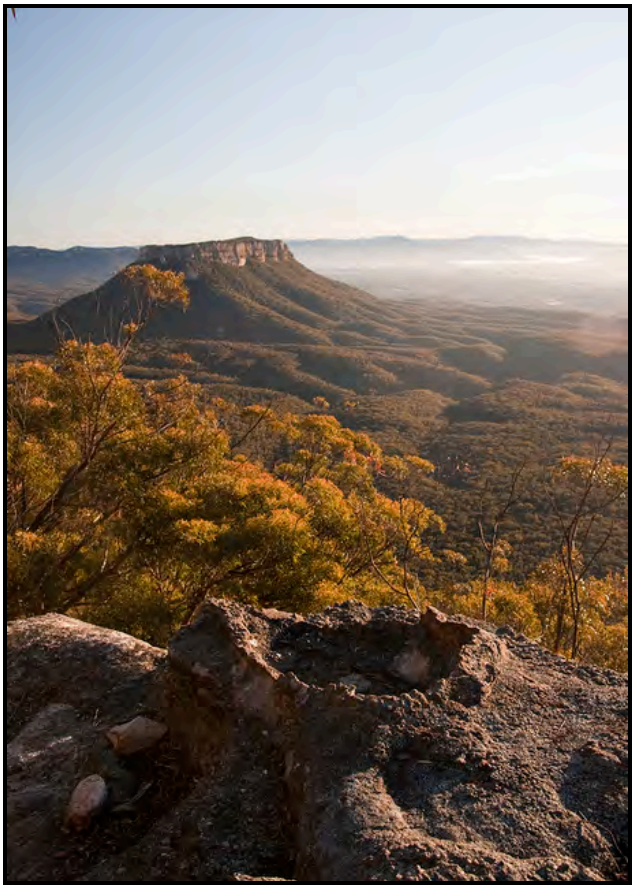


Photo 23 Ancient landscape and Pantoneys Crown

Maps

The maps are reproduced by permission of the Land Information Centre, (formerly Central Mapping Authority), Bathurst. They should be used in conjunction with the CMA maps of which they from a part as follows;

Map 1 and Map 2.

CMA 1:25000 Six Brothers

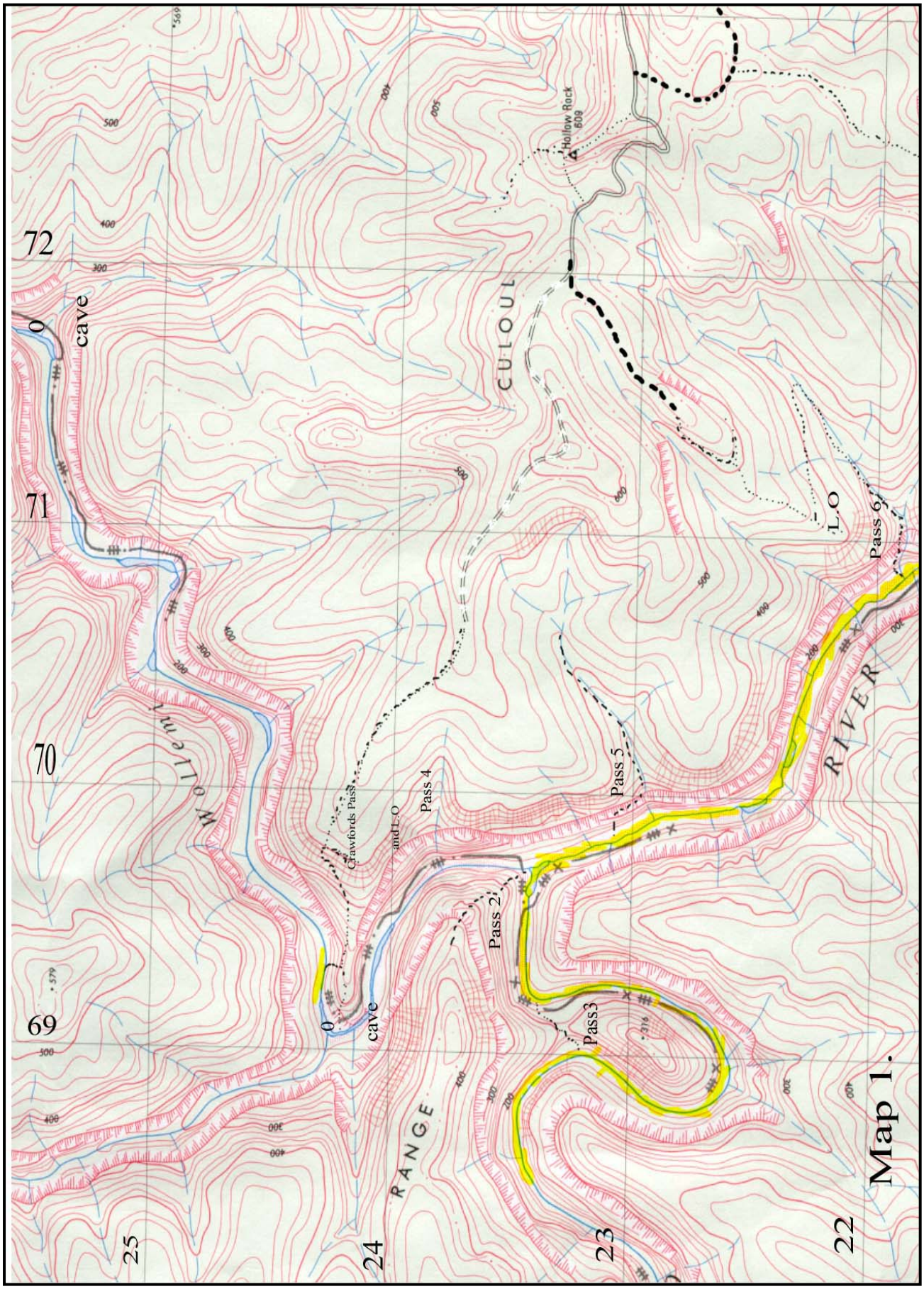
Map 3, Map 4, Map 5, Part Map 6.

CMA 1:25000 Colo Heights.

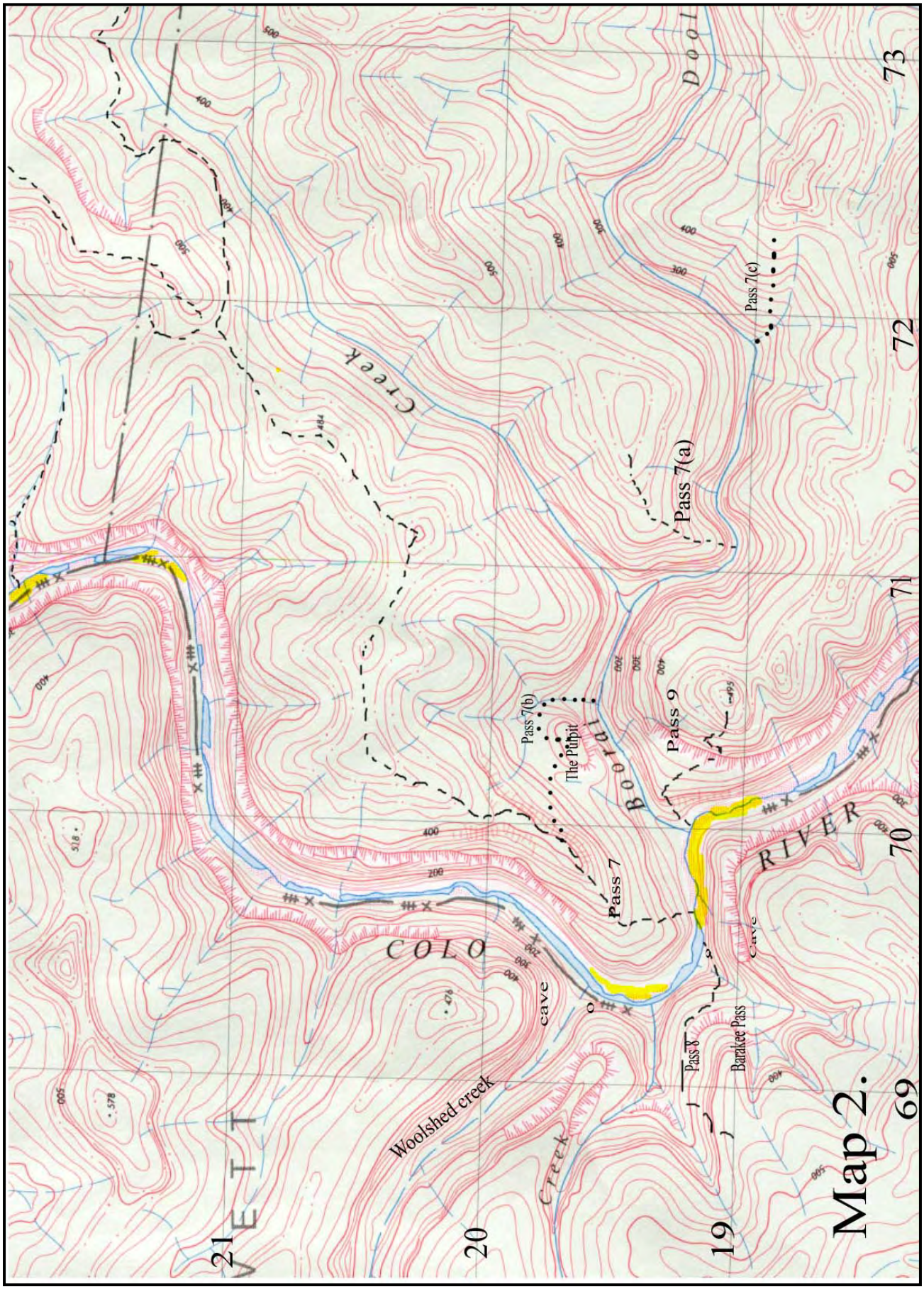
Part Map 6, Map 7, Map 8.

CMA 1:25000 Mountain Lagoon

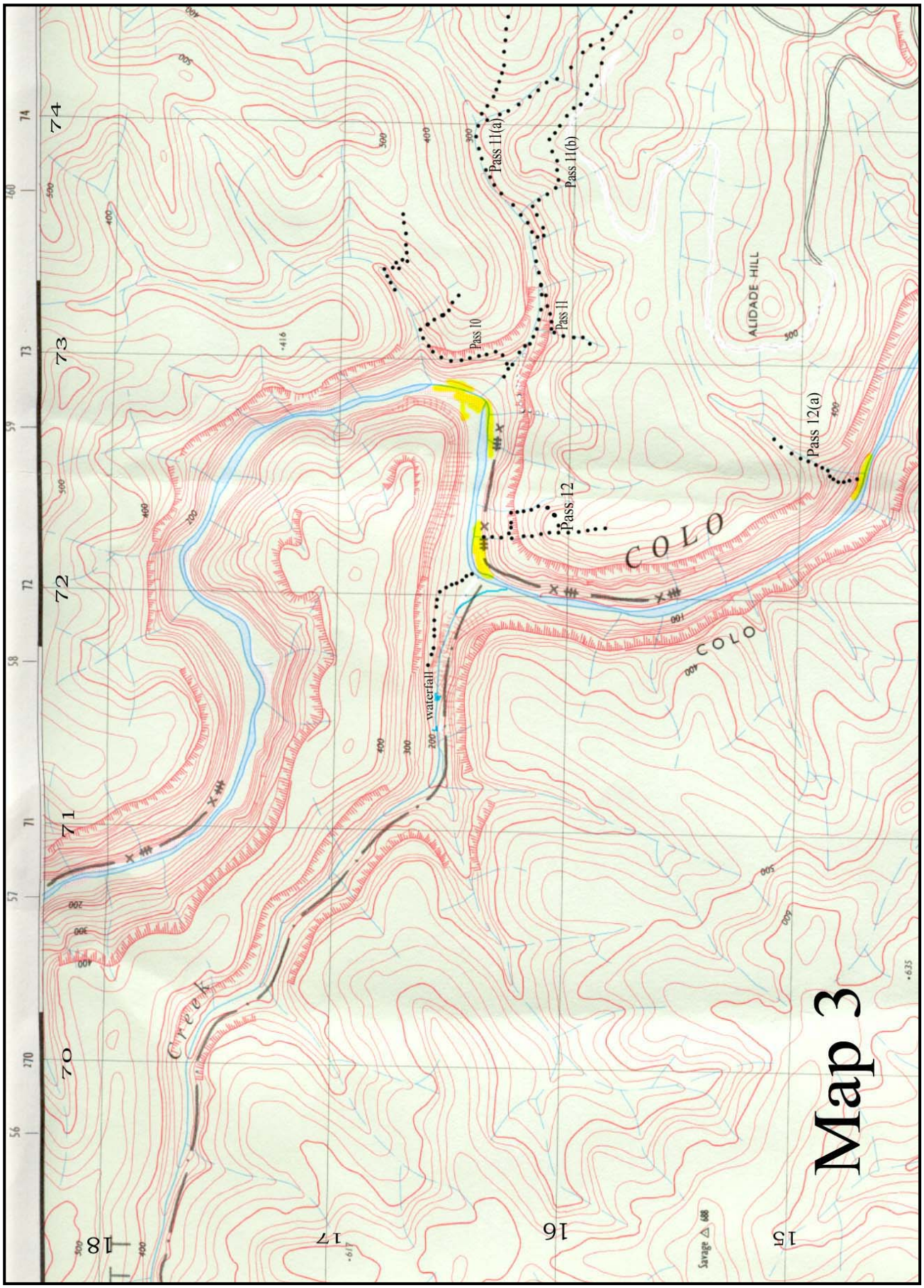
Map 1


72
71
70
69
25
24
23
22
cave
cave
Hollow Rock
609
CULOUL
L.O
Pass 6
Pass 5
Pass 4
Pass 2
Pass3
Crawfords Pass
and L.O
RIVER
RANGE
Map 1.

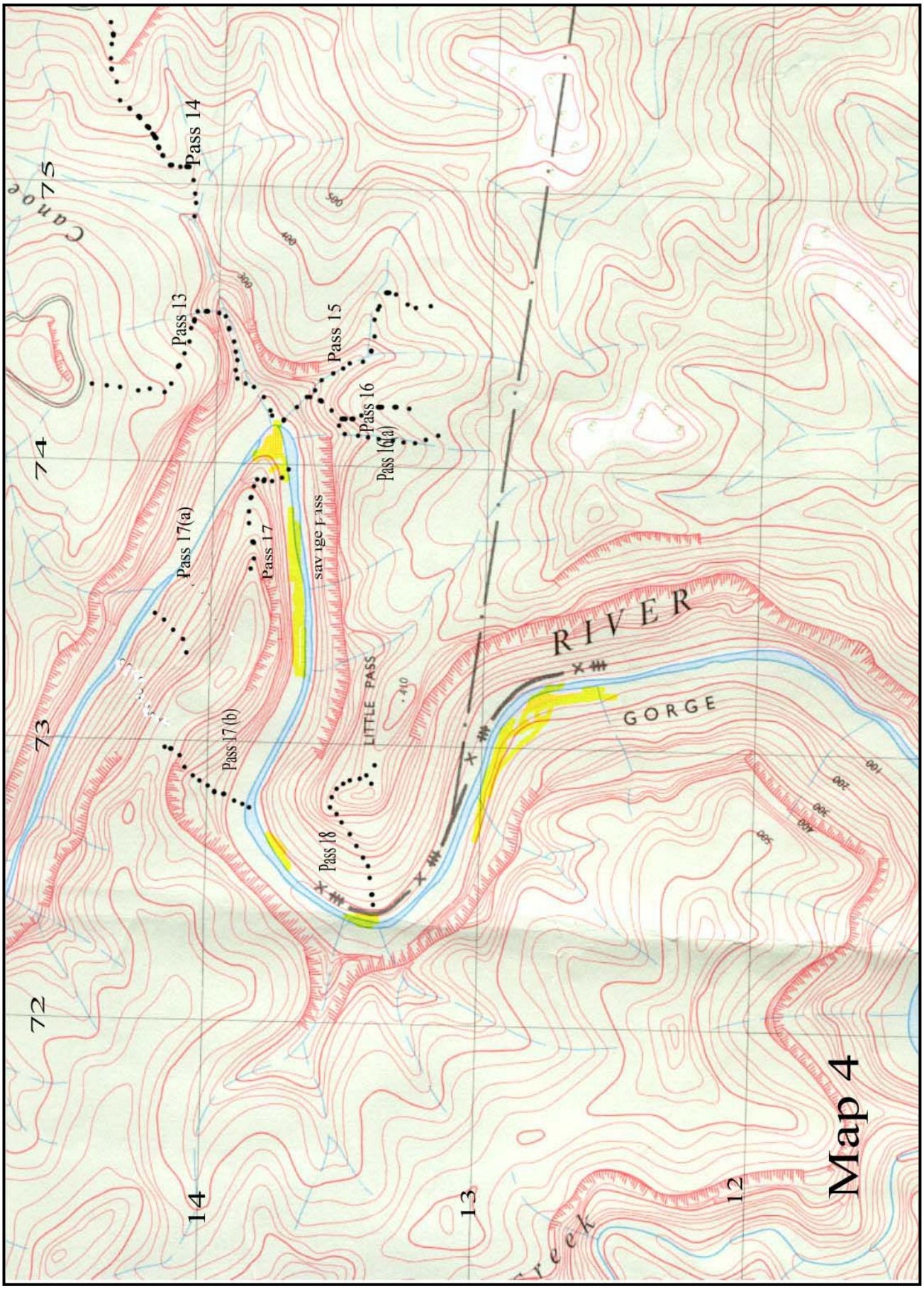
Map 2


Pass 7(c)
Pass 7(a)
Pass 7(b)
The Pulpit
Pass 9
Pass 7
Pass 8
Barakee Pass
cave
cave
Woolshed creek
Creek
RIVER
COLO
21
20
19
73
72
71
70
69
Map 2.

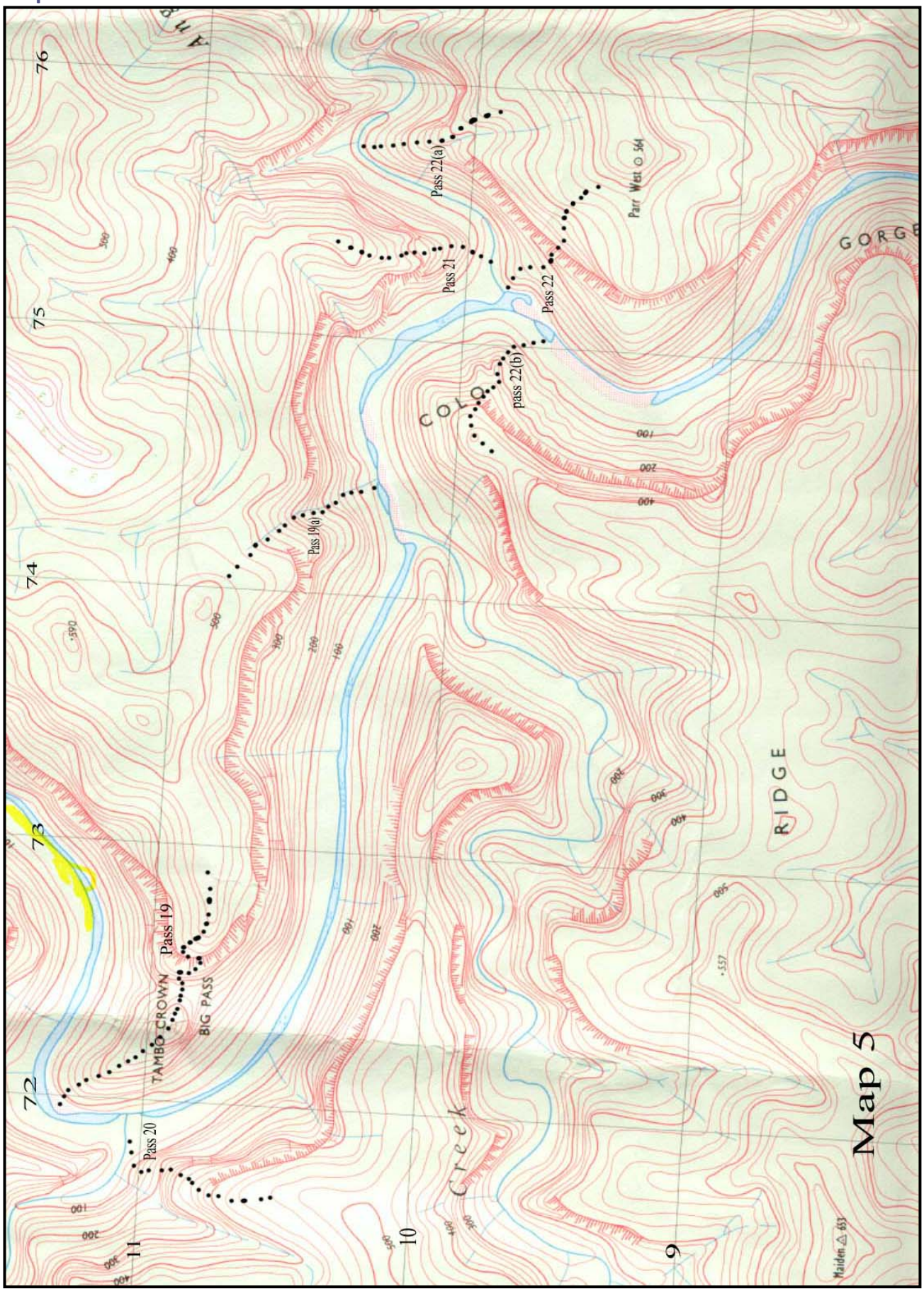
Map 3


Pass 11(a)
Pass 11(b)
Pass 10
Pass 11
Pass 12(a)
Pass 12
ALIDADE HILL
COLO
COLO
waterfall
Creek
Map 3

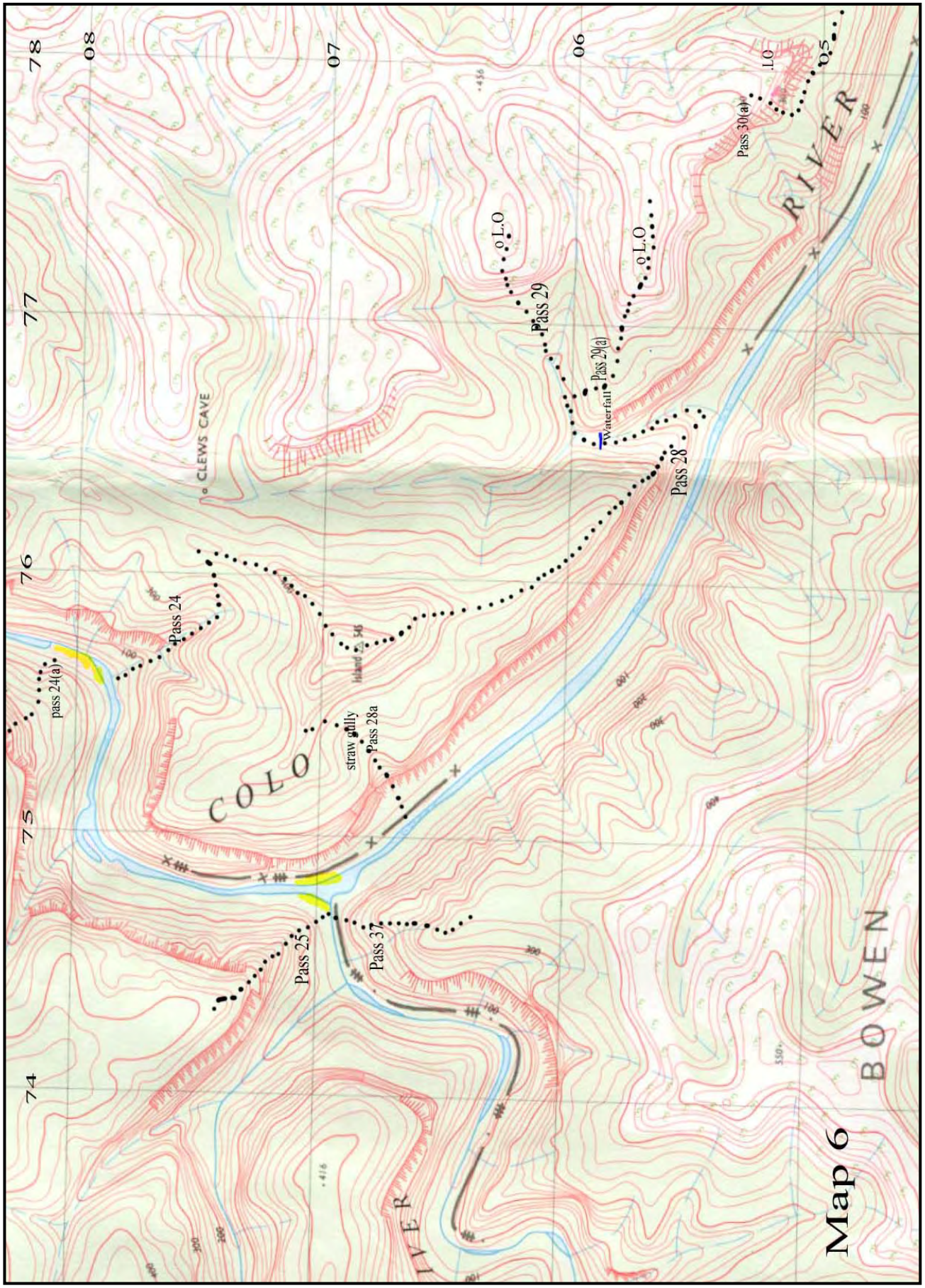
Map 4


Pass 14
Pass 13
Pass 15
Pass 16
Pass 16(a)
Pass 17(a)
Pass 17
Pass 17(b)
Pass 18
LITTLE PASS
RIVER
GORGE
Map 4

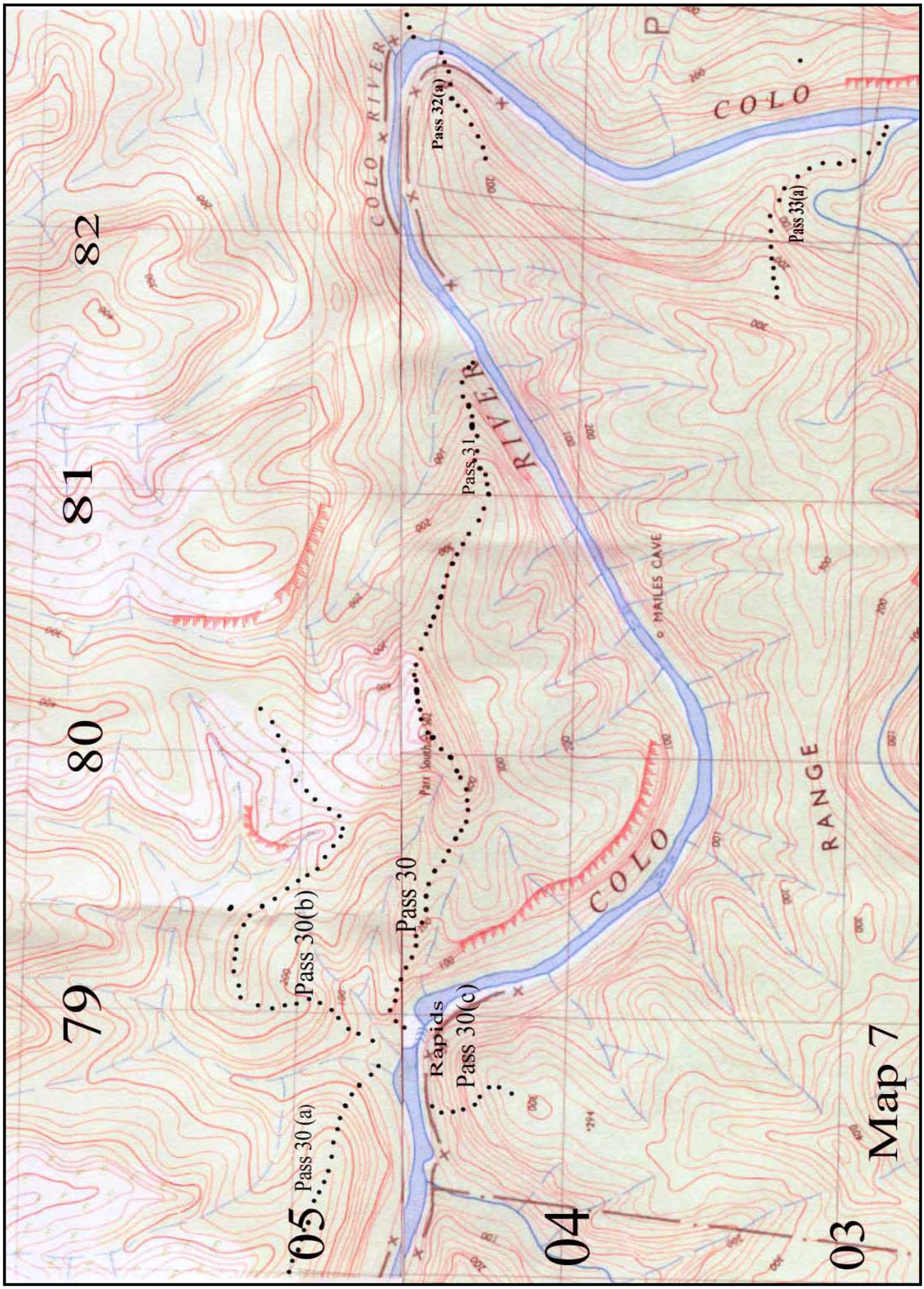
Map 5


Pass 20
TAMBO CROWN
Pass 19
BIG PASS
Pass 19(a)
Pass 21
Pass 22(a)
Pass 22
pass 22(b)
Parr West ⊙ 564
COLO
GORGE
RIDGE
Creek
Map 5

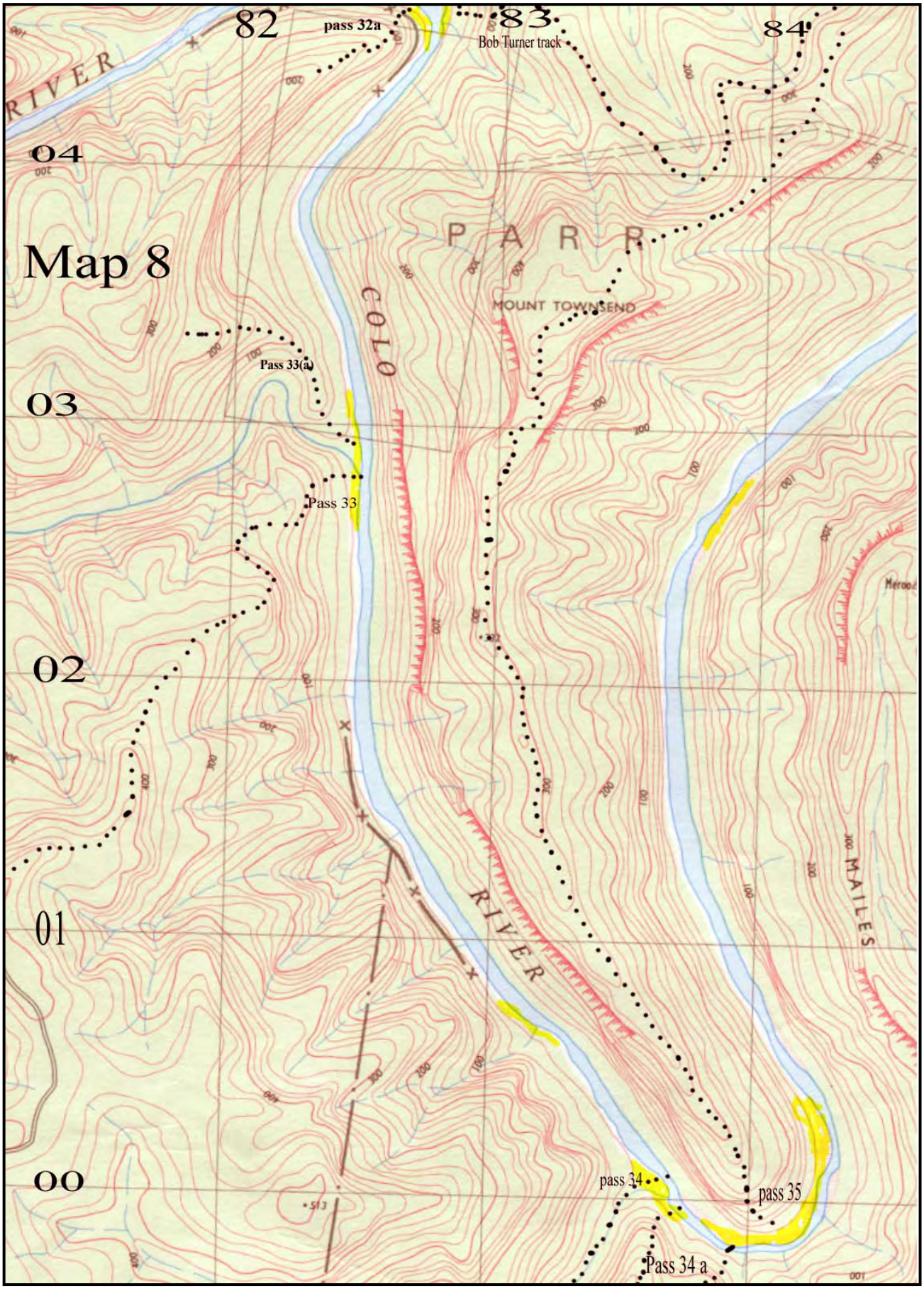
Map 6


Map 6
BOWEN
RIVER
COLO
RIVER
CLEWS CAVE
Pass 24
pass 24(a)
Pass 25
Pass 37
straw gully
Pass 28a
Pass 28
Waterfall
Pass 29(a)
Pass 29
Pass 30(a)
L.O
L.O
L.O
74
75
76
77
78
08
07
06
05

Map 7


79
80
81
82
05
04
03
Pass 30 (a)
Pass 30(b)
Pass 30
Rapids
Pass 30(c)
Pass 31
Pass 32(a)
Pass 33(a)
COLO x RIVER
RIVER
COLO
COLO
RANGE
MAILES CAVE
Map 7

Map 8


Map 8
82
83
84
pass 32a
Bob Turner track
RIVER
04
03
02
01
00
P A R R
MOUNT TOWNSEND
COLO
Pass 33(a)
Pass 33
RIVER
MAILES
pass 34
pass 35
Pass 34 a

About The Author

Brian Corlis has been an active bushwalker, rockclimber, caver and adventurer for most of his life. Firstly as a Boy Scout at Adamstown on the outskirts of Newcastle (where he grew up), and then with the Newcastle Bushwalking Club during which time he developed a taste for exploration.

Brian was a founding member of the Newcastle Speleological Society (now non existent). His early interest in rock climbing included some climbs in the Hunter Valley but was consummated with his “discovery” of the Warrumbungles and the Maclay River gorges which on moving to Armidale, and joining the University of New England Mountaineering Club, became a passion.

A move later in life to Sydney soon led to his association with The National Parks Association of N S W Inc for which he is an active leader. His additional membership of the Coast and Mountain Walkers Inc has provided further opportunities for exploration.

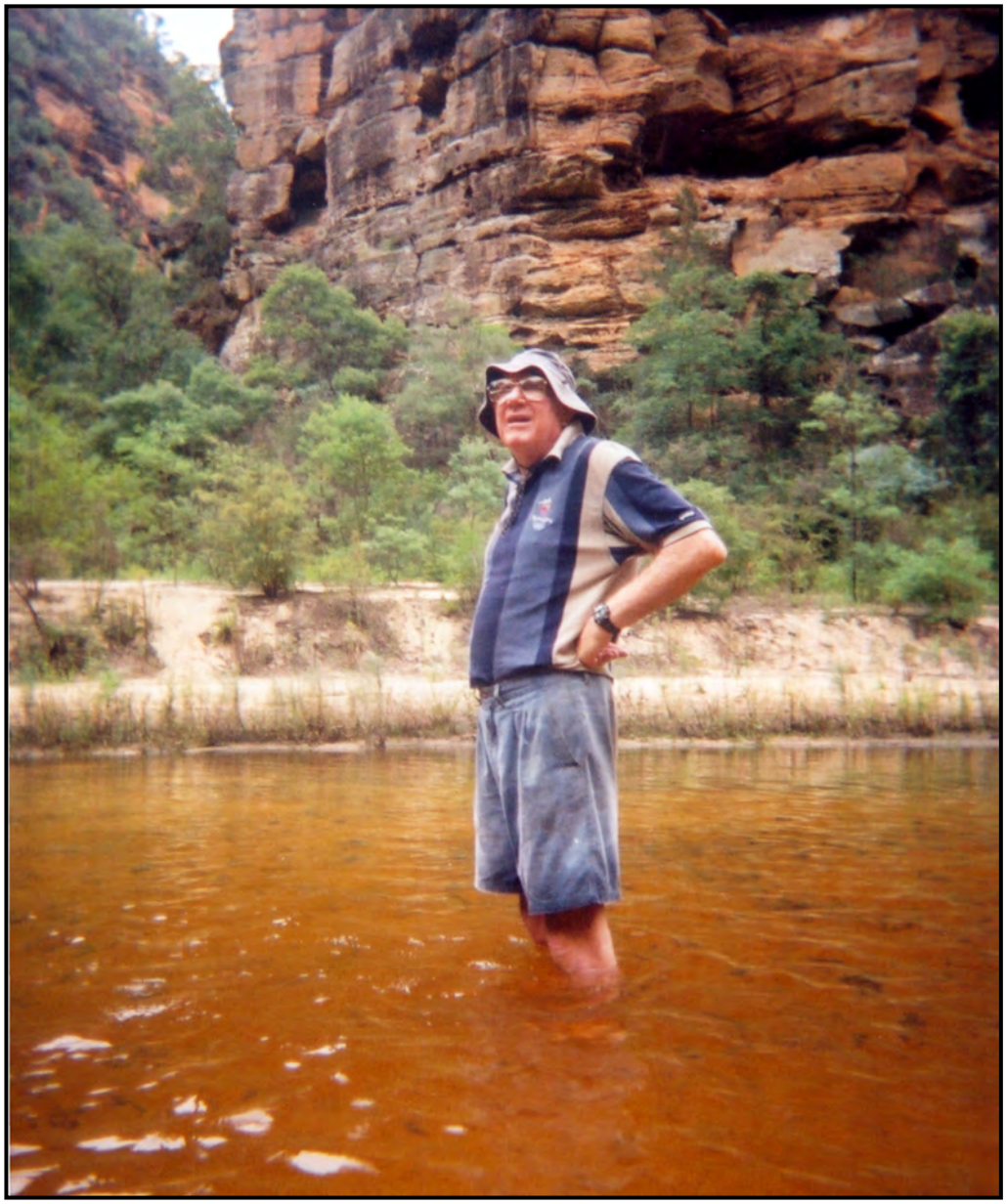


Photo 24 The author cooling off in the Colo River at the Canoe Creek junction

Index

PHOTOGRAPHS

FRONT COVER. Pantoneys Crown is an isolated mesa at the headwaters of the Capertee River. View from Gardens of Stone National Park.

Page 3 Tambo Crown and Big Pass. (Photo 1)

Page 4 **View** south from lookout on Pass 33. (Photo 2)

Page 5 Resting below the ramparts of the Colo Gorge. (Photo 3)

Page 6 Hollow Rock on Culoul Range. (Photo 4)

Page 7 One of many ancient aboriginal galleries in the Colo River catchment. (Photo 5)

Page 7 Spikey Acacia. (Photo 6)

Page 8 Wading the sandy stretches of the Colo River below the Wollemi Creek junction. (Photo 7)

Page 9 Pass 5. Abseiling down one of the sections of the canyon route. (Photo 8)

Page 10 Crossing the Colo River at the Boorai Creek junction. Barakee Pass in the background. (Photo 9)

Page 11 Rock Lilly. (Photo 10)

Page 11 Colo River with a better than average flow at the Canoe Creek junction. (Photo 11)

Page 12 Rock bluff at the Canoe Creek junction**.** (Photo 12)

Page 13 View from unnamed lookout above Canoe Creek junction and Savage Pass. This is probably the point reached by Lt Colonel H.G. Clews on his first survey trip to Mt. Savage. (Photo 13)

Page 14 At the top of an exhilarating climb up Pass 22(a) from Angorawa Creek. Pass 22(b) directly opposite. (Photo 14)

Page 14 Christmas Bush. (Photo 15)

Page 14 Island Mountain from Mt Parr West. (Photo 16)

Page 15 Early morning at Mt Townsend bend. (Photo 17)

Page 16 Red Tailed Cockatoo. (Photo 18)

Page 16 Native Iris. (Photo 19)

Page 17 This rock monster resides in the Valley of the Swamps which is a very remote area of Wollemi N.P. (Photo 20)

Page 18 Colo River towards Island Mountain. (Photo 21)

Page 19 View North from lookout on Pass 33. (Photo 22)

Page 20 Ancient landscape and Pantoneys Crown. (Photo 23)

Page 31 The author, Brian Corlis, in the Colo River at the Canoe Creek junction. (Photo 24)

Bibliography

1 Clews, H.G.H. *"The bad bit across the river"*
Undated. Self published.

Reproduced in "The Waysider" Journal of the Catholic Bushwalking Club 1970.

2 Buck, Bob. *"Colo River Sketch Map"*
1974 Self published.