

Depot Creek, 26-27 March 2011

Report and Photos by Russell Willis

Grid references are AGD 66 as is the 1:50 000 Burrundie map which shows the area where the trip took place.

This was the first trip I'd led for the DBC in many years – the last one also to Depot Creek, though I can't remember exactly when. Enquiries from nine people produced six starters (Andy, Betty, Chris, Elena, Yasmin & Bill) plus myself heading off on what has to be one of the easiest overnight walks possible.

As I'd had a big day the day before, we didn't leave until 9 am. Stopped at Adelaide River where someone was offering Devonshire teas in the shade of the trees in the park. How could we resist?

The massive rains in February had made a bit of a mess of the Depot track. Along the power lines, it was so bad that someone had, thankfully, created a new track on the side. At the 1.2 km mark, an erosion gully looked impassable but some fairly major road works dropping large stones into the hole (Bill managed to manhandle rocks far larger than any of the rest of us were game to try.) All that effort proved not to be worth a lot as another 400 m got us to another erosion gully that was too deep to try. The sides were very boggy, so we pulled over and donned out packs. We left the car at 7480/9078.

It took less than half an hour to reach Depot, less than another half hour to reach a sandy beach next to a large pool. This was home. Less than an hour's walk had given us a lovely spot we had all to ourselves. We set up a fly for shade and spent the next few hours eating, swimming, reading and relaxing. It's a hard life. We were so energetic, that when Andy finally decided to explore downstream at 4 pm, he went on his own. Camp was at 7495/8916. A larger group would have had to spread out a bit more, but I estimate there was room for 7 to 9 tents. (We had four.)

One advantage of walking with a tour guide who needs practice is that you can have a three course meal prepared for you. A different advantage of walking with Andy is that he produced a few ice cold beers as we were settling in. He'd frozen them and put them into a flexible cooler. For those who don't want to carry a cooler, freeze the cans then wrap them in a thermarest or similar. Works a treat.

After such a lazy day, we chatted on for a while and didn't get to bed until after 9:30. We had a short shower during the night, but not enough to get things very wet. We were close enough for the distant sound of passing road trains to be just audible over the sound of the creek flowing past.

We had a leisurely start the next morning. Tents dried out during breakfast so we packed up, then set off following a route similar to the one Andy had taken the day before. There was a fair amount of rock hopping, a few small climbs and lots of spear grass which, fortunately, wasn't quite ready to drop all its seed. We did cop a moderate amount of seed, but it could have been much worse. There was a small cascade above a large pool at 7458/8932. Slightly further downstream on the left hand side of the pool was a sandy spot that looked like a good campsite. There was a larger set of cascades above another big pool at 7406/8895. About 200 m downstream was a series of rock ledges which would make a good campsite. Toileting would, however, be a bit of a hassle after dark as climbing out of the gorge would be a bit dangerous and digging is impossible. You could, however, shift a few rocks which would take care of the problem.

The gorge continues for about another 1½ km to where it finishes with a final drop over a small waterfall. We were being lazy, so we stopped where we were. We had a swim near the rock ledges then returned to camp for a quick lunch, then headed back to the cars, arriving about 1 pm. A stop at Hayes Creek for a cold drink, then on back to Darwin. The relaxing weekend was over.

