



SPLASH

Magazine of the River Canoe Club of N.S.W. Incorporated

www.rivercanoeclub.com

Safari 2010



Introduction from the Whitewater Convenor



In a country where flowing white water is at best a little hard find – The Snowy Mountains and Victorian Safari is the perfect solution. The water may be a little cold, but having the opportunity to paddle for 9 straight days in a row in the scenic Australian high country is not to be missed. This year was no different, the usual classics were paddled at mainly good levels. The highlight for me was the three new sections of river paddled including the Ski-tube section of the Thredbo, the upper West Keiwa, and the Snowy River from Charlottes pass.

Whitewater Convenor, “Doinky” Sindle, doing his thing with style.

We had 33 paddlers who paddled at least one day, 25 paddlers on the Mitta Gorge, and 18 safely negotiating the Murray Gates. Thanks to Basil and Annette for their selfless shuttles, and to all the others who helped out (especially Emma, Glen and Heidi who made the Gates possible). It’s also great to see new people stepping up into the role of trip leaders.

My only complaint was about the campfire discussion, they didn’t seem to be up to the usual highly intellectual level that RCC are known for – we will have to work on this...

Till next time, keep those Vuvuzela’s blowing.

Tim

Front Page Pictures (clockwise from top left):

President Barlow in the most hideous outfit ever seen; Italians on the Mitta Mitta; Yoda with lightsaber, Glen being washed down the Eucumbene gutter rapid, SJ conquering the Mitta Mitta; Craig on the Bundara.

In this edition:

- **River reports**
- **Overall report**
- **Member comments**
- **Return to The Snowy River – by Tim Sindle**



River Reports



River: West Kiewa
Section: Dungey Track to Diversion dam
Level: 0.81 dropping to 0.76 (gauge 300m up from Diversion Dam)
River Length: 6km
Team: Markus, Gary, Oli, Tim, Jiri
Adventrepro: [Adventurepro:Westkiewa](#)

The West Kiewa is a river that keeps you honest. Starting off with 7km of hiking with your boat – you’re hoping the return on investment is worth it. The river starts off with about 500m of calm water, and once this is over it gets to almost one continuous rapid until you reach the take out - out of breath and with a smile

(or terrified grin) from ear to ear.

We started off with a chat to the local hydro technician who was out clearing roads and diverting water. He strongly suggested we avoid any trees in the river - he was one of team who helped rescue a kayaker 2 years ago who had had to break his legs to exit his kayak. With this in mind we set off on our walk. The road gate is only opened the week of Melbourne cup. Some carried using fancy harness (the soft ones), others used the trusted shoulder (the tough ones), while Yoda simply levitated his kayak and willed it to the put in (the one with Force).



The river was excellent - continuously steep, and a great water level. There’s a fair bit of wood around, although we only had to get out once for a log and once for a sievey drop. Many steep bouldery rapids, and about halfway along the section, Gary announced. “We’ve paid off our walk – now it’s all fun!” Just when you think its easing off there’s a brilliant slide and some more excellent clean drops. The last rapid of the day was so easy Gary decided to throw go up side down over some rocks, throw his paddle away, hand roll up and then call the wayward paddle back to its master – all very impressive.

Yoda doesn’t boof, he levitates.

After 2hrs and 30 minutes we reached the diversion dam, content that the 2hrs walking and 5hrs of driving that day was well worth it! It’s also a river where a honest appraisal of your own ability is a good thing, there are many sieves that you find yourself ferry just meters above. At the level we did it –it was a hard grade 4 river, a little more water and things would get serious...





Gary and Oli running and inspecting some of the quality drops.



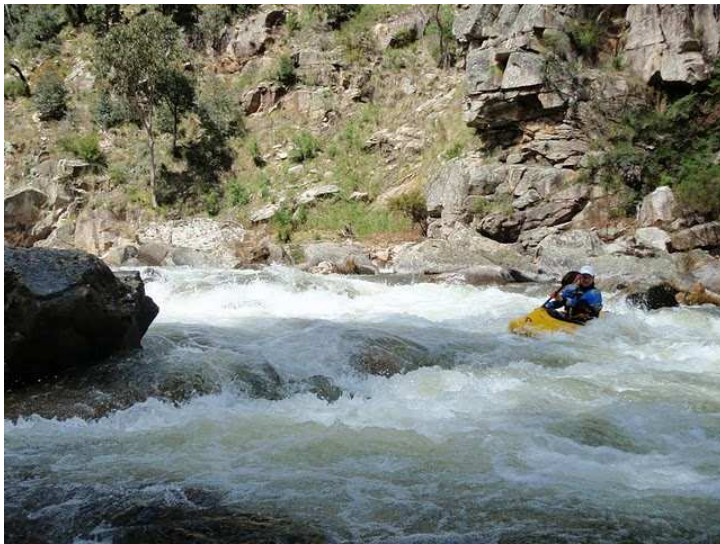
River: Thredbo River
Section: Skitube section
Level: Low

River Length: 16km

Team: Markus, Kevin, Oli, Tim, Jiri, Andrew, Tassie Tim, Adam, Donald from Scotland

Adventurepro: [Adventurepro:Thredboskitube](#)

This section has been on our 'to do' list for a couple of years now but we have not had the time, water or courage to attempt it. This year we had the time and courage - whether we had the water is debateable. Oli had done it before, even doing a section of it solo after breaking his paddle and having to walk out and back in again to retrieve his boat the following week. This previous trip by Oli was 83 years or so ago, and those of us who paddled the Shoalhaven with Oli earlier this year have come to distrust his long-term memory of rivers.



Once on the river we had several kms on grade 1-2 stuff to warm up on before the steeper stuff started. When the river did steepen and narrow it formed some very nice rapids and drops that were probably in the easy grade 4 category. The water level was low, and with more water it would be cleaner but pushier, and those easy grade 4s I imagine would become far more challenging.

The Ockerlander in action

There were a couple of compulsory portages, one around a savage sieve. As I sat in the last eddie above this sieve Yoda, who was out of his boat scouting it, pointed to the rapid and yelled very clearly, "You go in there, you die". Emma's experience on a previous (non-RCC) trip proves him wrong, but looking at it, I don't know how she got through – you do not want to miss that last eddie.

The river eased off for the last few kms, the whole trip taking us a bit under 4 hours. It was a good experience to do this section, but I wouldn't do it again at this level. With more water it would be a fantastic, very challenging section of river.



River: Snowy River

Section: Charlottes Pass to Guthega Pondage

Level:

River Length: 16km

Team: Tim, Markus, Michael, Ollie, Gary and Yoda

Special thanks to Annette for shuttling drivers.

Although perpetually placed on the Safari calendar, this section of the Snowy has rarely been paddled. Lack of people willing to brave the cold, locked gates, unknown water levels combined with alternative paddling options have always relegated this trip to my wishlist. However, sipping coffee in Corryong in the comfort of a sunny 20 degree day I became increasingly confident that this year would be the one. Although a Ranger confirmed an earlier report from the NPWS website advising of delayed opening of the access road the only thing that stood between us and the upper Snowy was Ollie and his urge to paddle Leather Barrel Creek. Luckily that creek had no water. Arriving at the Spencer's Creek picnic area, where the reported snow depth was still more than a metre, it became obvious that the Ranger was right. I let the Force be my guide, but unfortunately weak it was, gate open it did not. Some more progressive members proclaiming a skill of opening gates "the environmentally friendly way" were given the opportunity to show off their talent, which they declined following a cost benefit analysis. We had a glimmer of hope when Park Rangers turned up shortly after but our frustration soon gave way to amusement. Although they came prepared with a key, their lock was not part of the chain that locked the



gate. Our progress now lay solely in the hands of the gate keeper that opens the gate at 10am to let cars in and out of the lodges at Charlottes Pass. Looking at the number people seeking access and taking into consideration the number of cars we wished to drive up - enough to fill the car park at Charlottes - I revised my probability of success and proceeded to get ready to drag the boat up from Spencers. What I failed to anticipate was that the guy coming to open the gate was actually Gary's old kayaking buddy named Richard. He recognised Gary instantly, and after some initial blank stares the feeling became mutual. Needless to say, our entry into the gated community of Charlotte's Pass was guaranteed and we wasted no time driving up.

At the turnoff to the village, it became apparent why the road was closed, completely covered by deep snow all the way up to the pass. We quickly got changed and started the march up the hill to the summit. Although I have done this walk many times, it has never been with a boat in tow. On top of the hill we were greeted by an awesome vista of the Main Range, with views towards Mt. Kosciuszko and the Blue Lake. There aren't many things that can beat the sight of white capped mountains on a warm sunny day and the accompanying silence broken only by the distant rumble of the Snowy River. The feeling was shared by others, and we all agreed the trip was already a success and the paddling was just a bonus.



A few of the Snowy crew.



We briefly admired the scenery before Ollie, in true probe spirit, jumped on his boat to try the new sport of snowboating. A rather entertaining mode of transport, yet convincing enough to make us follow. The snow cover was patchy, the trees uncooperative and the scrub downright unfriendly. Nevertheless, we had some fun sliding down 200m vertical metres towards the Snowy River until the snow gave way to thicker Alpine scrub. Luckily I found a nice snow covered creek bed which made for a hair-raising toboggan run all the way down to the riverbank. Some acrobatics from Tim made for a good laugh. If only I had the camera! As we were getting changed we watched skiers hesitantly wade across the river

upstream and I made a mental note to refrain from rolling. As booties are not designed to walk on snow we quickly hopped in the boats, launched from the snowbank, and paddled into the unknown. Within 100m we reached the first gorge, described in the book as grade 3. The description was quite accurate, though based on the tightness and the consistency of the rapids I would grade it 3+. A couple of unplanned rolls later, the gorge finished with a short portage around a rocky rapid. As always, Ollie had a line but we all decided it was not worth the potential spanking. Once the gorge finished, the river widened into full-on gravel races and we turned our attention to the beautiful scenery and the deep snowbanks lining the banks. Unlike the Thredbo, where Tim's altimeter indicated we paddled uphill towards the end, the Snowy continued to drop steadily. Though easier, the second gorge just above Spencer's Creek was just as enjoyable as the first, and finished with a nice waterfall. We passed a group of skiers at the Illawong hut bridge before descending down numerous bouldery rapids of grade 3 standard which continued until the backwaters of the Guthega Dam.

This is definitely a section that should be paddled more regularly. The rapids are very enjoyable and the scenery is just stunning.

Overall Safari Report

Looking back through the Splash archives I see I joined this club in June 2003, my first trip report was December 2003, that aside there have always been in my time as a member two major trips each year, Easter at the Nymboida and October in the Vic High Country; I have been on both a couple of times. Month's ago I'd promised myself I'd go on the Vic Safari this year, we'd moved up to the Central Coast two and a half years ago and being a basically slack person I'd let my white water paddling slip in favour of other more mechanical past times; I bored enough of you on Safari so I won't prattle on any more about that.

I arrived at Ngarigo campsite Saturday afternoon to find no one; a quick text message told me members were on route from paddling the Eucumbene the previous day and to collect fire wood, this I did.

Sunday set the tone for the rest of the Safari, there were trips for all skill levels, I chose to paddle the lower half of the run from Thredbo to the camp site, I'd paddled this section before and was asked to lead six paddlers we took our time and eddy hopped our way down to the camp, the run reawaken old muscle memories, easing me back in to white water paddling without the full on experience of the upper section from the village, that afternoon a small team paddled from the Ski Tube to the Trout hatchery, a first for them and by all reports an excellent grade four run.

Monday we left Ngarigo and headed for the Murray River at Tom Groggin, again there was a trip for all skill levels, the main party of eighteen paddled the Murray gates section, the rest of us paddled from Tom



Groggin to Grassy Flat led by Deb Cunneen, I was tail end and on the first rapid had my first swim in three years; complacency on my behalf, still we're all only between swims as the saying goes. A small shuttle to retrieve our cars and we set off on the eighty kilometre shuttle to meet the larger team at Damms Bridge, a team photo and then some had the long drive home, others had the eighty kilometre drive back to pick up cars, the rest of us headed for Corryong and a well deserved meal in the pub. Tuesday brought everyone together at Anglers Rest on the banks of the Cobungra Creek, over the next four days various sections of the Mitta Mitta were paddled, the gorge section three times at three different levels thanks to a good down pour of rain Wednesday evening, the more experienced paddlers led trips on the Cobungra and Bundara Creeks, I had my second swim on the Mitta Mitta, again let down by my rusty skills and complacency, for my troubles I pulled a muscle and didn't paddle for the rest of the week, I was quite happy to shuttle and did so for the remainder of the Safari .

Undoubtedly the highlight of the trip had to be a first descent of the West Kiewa River for Rivers Canoe Club paddlers, a strong team with all the necessary gear and preparation drove 150kms to Mt Beauty via Omeo and Mt Hotham, the shorter road being closed, they hiked seven kilometres carrying kayaks and gear to the river and then paddled a grade 4 section of the West Kiewa River, there were no incidents and they arrived back in camp late the same evening. The whole run was filmed by Gary Nelson using a head cam and the footage had everyone enthralled when viewed on Gary's laptop back at camp, the marvels of technology today eh!

Friday afternoon saw the Kiewa Crew heading for the Snowy River at Charlotte Pass, they paddled this Saturday; Saturday also saw most of us pack up and head home, the exception being Glenn Robinson who had the good fortune to meet up with his son Casey who was in the area, so stayed to catch up for a few days.

So from reading the report from 2003 when there were 5 paddlers on Safari, this year saw a total of 33 members turn up and paddle at least once over the course of the Safari, Tim Sindle the white water convener did a thoroughly professional job, he catered for all skill levels and I heard nothing but praise; shuttles again were hectic at times, but organising 20 plus people and gear is always going to be chaotic. There was one dislocated shoulder, the brave soldier popping it back in himself by using a rolling technique, then paddling the rest of the Cobungra Creek (a hero), the other injury was a thumb nail torn off and deep gouges to two fingers following a swim on the Bundara, no hero status here as the soldier got a lift back to camp from a local, both were tended to by members with the relevant first aid skills. What really impressed me this year was how much safety has come to the fore, I'm not saying we were unsafe in previous years; it's just that I can see very obviously that members have taken very positive steps to make paddling as safe as it can possibly be, from the choice of boats, the safety gear carried, training done both on and off water, i.e. first aid; but most of all the attitude they have, it can only be good for the club that we have members like this and that they instil these attitudes in others, a demo was even given on the set up and use of a Z drag to free a pinned boat whilst waiting for a shuttle, good to see. I met some great new people, caught up with some old friends; if you attended you probably had as good a time as I did if you didn't you missed one hell of a Safari, your loss.

Bob Montgomery.

RCC Member Comments

Bob "In a Bottle" Montgomery:

1. Favourite river: Thredbo (Didn't swim)
2. Most irritating car-shuttle discussion you took part in or witnessed: *Censored!*
3. Time when Tim Sindle annoyed you most: He annoys me because he's to fit by half. (Bastard :-))
4. Most inappropriate thing you witnessed: *Censored!*
5. Best campsite: Anglers Rest, no rangers harassing us for fees.
6. Stupidest action you witnessed: *Censored!*



Oliver Ockerlander

1. Favourite river/s: West Keiwa and upper Snowy, mainly because both were new, had fantastic weather, perfect water level and a good group of paddlers (except that Andrew was missing).
2. Most irritating car-shuttle discussion you took part in or witnessed: None to speak of as I chose my transport carefully!
3. Time when Tim Sindle annoyed you most: Never – he is a legend, and apparently even more legendary in one particular department!
4. Most inappropriate thing you witnessed: *Censored.*
5. Best campsite: Geehi. Beautiful, and exemplary behaviour from all who camped there.
6. Stupidest action you witnessed: Michael changing his mind leading into a rapid and Garry getting slammed into rocks because of his procrastination.

Simon McDonell

I can't really contribute to the "best" discussion, given I wasn't there. But I reckon sitting in the office knowing everyone else was out paddling while I was doing work was pretty much the most irritating part of the trip for me...boohoo



David "Eddie/The Beautiful Man/ I have a doll with Doinky's face attached" Barlow

1. Eddie graduated from being called Eddie the Hammer to Eddie the Hatchet
2. Eddie's Bling Mobile AKA the Hilux – can withstand a Kangaroo strike at 90km and not sustain a dent.
3. Yoda can't withstand a kangaroo strike (AKA the viewing of a kangaroo dispatch) and should stay in the Dagobar system where kangaroos are reported to be rare
4. The Eucumbene is still a great river even at low levels
5. Eddie learnt Bear Grylls techniques on the Eucumbene – AKA eating raw rotten trout
6. Emma LN led the upper Thredbo – way to go!
7. The Murray Gates were great – mind you pulling teeth from a wild boar would be great compared to my first trip down the Gates.
8. I still love Andrew Extreme – even though he was painful prior to the Gates.

Gary Nelson

What a great few days I had on the Victorian Paddle Safari. If you find some spare time here is my website photos and some maps of the rivers we did:



http://www.gasek.com.au/Kayaking/My_Albums_2010/My_Albums_2010.html

I took some video and will hopefully get it on this site and You Tube when I have time. Hopefully see you paddling real soon



Michael "Micta" Taylor

1. Favourite river - Snowy River - a classic. Cobungra also a classic, as were Mitta and Murray.
2. Most irritating car-shuttle discussion you took part in or witnessed. - Murray Gates at Tom Groggin.
3. Time when Tim Sindle annoyed you most - Tim did a great job. I can't recall being annoyed by him.
4. Most inappropriate thing you witnessed - Geehi group photo, but I'm still laughing.
5. Best campsite - Geehi - view of the mountains, clean river water, great fire, heaps of space.

I had a great trip, and my paddling improved heaps.

David "Dunnydoo Brownie" Brown

Don't asked the Italian's if they got their paddles?? Taking Tom & Fred for a paddle from Big River to Jokers & after the car-shuttle & arriving at drop off point to find 4 boats but only two paddles - shithappen - race back to Tom's car then try to find them!

James Whitelaw

The stupidest thing that I heard said on the trip was myself saying - "Sure, Tim, I would love to paddle the Cobungra".....this was soon followed by, "What the hell am I doing?"

After much pant-filling action, I would have to say that I would happily say that stupid thing again!

"Shakey" John Maddox

Favourite River: Mitta Gorge Section at 1.54m, fast and bouncy

Summing up:

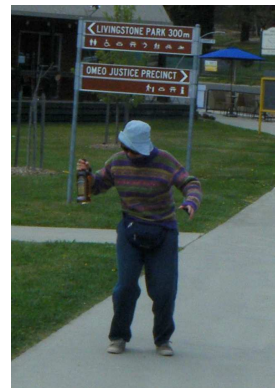
Rocks? - "What rocks! - Keep going, doesn't matter"

Holes ? - "What holes ! - Keep going, doesn't matter"

Eddys ? - "What eddys! - Keep going, doesn't matter"

Favourite Campsite: Anglers Rest "Had a pub"

We also met a local from Omeo, she was very friendly and as it turned out, knew how to handle a white-water kayak (see right).



Dave Lucas

The best Campsite is Geehi Rest Area on The Swampy Plain River.

Colin "Cannon" Kinnison

1. Favourite river: The Murray Gates, the white water section.
Least Favourite river: the Murray Gates, the flatwater section.



2. Most irritating car-shuttle discussion you took part in or witnessed: I don't participate in these "discussions". Every time I make a comment I get funny looks and told that won't work.
3. Time when Tim Sindle annoyed you most: So hard to choose just one.....
4. Most inappropriate thing you witnessed: Though I didn't see it myself, I heard there was some wardrobe malfunctions in some of the group photos.



5. Best campsite: The perfect timing at anglers rest with regards to rain and the blue duck dinner was well planned.
6. Stupidest action you witnessed: Emma leading a lovely line down the Mitta Gorge.....and no one (including me) following.
7. Most fashionable paddler: Mr August with mystery man top, speedos and plastic bags on the feet.
8. Most disturbing camp fire incident: Grown men and women sitting on each other knees and saying that they love them and asking for a smile
9. Most pride of a injury: David Brown's thumb I believe may have made the front cover of the Nairobi Times the amount I saw it getting flashed around.
10. Most unlucky paddler: Brendan. The rain brings plenty of water for a great run on the Bundarra, but it also takes your esky and chicken.
11. Scariest moment: Eddie armed with an axe chasing kangaroos features in my nightmares now.
12. Something that should not have been brought on Safari: Hard to choose between Tim Sindle or his !@#\$ing vuvuzela
13. Most gutsy paddling: The unshakeable John doing a double roll through the Gobbler never giving up.



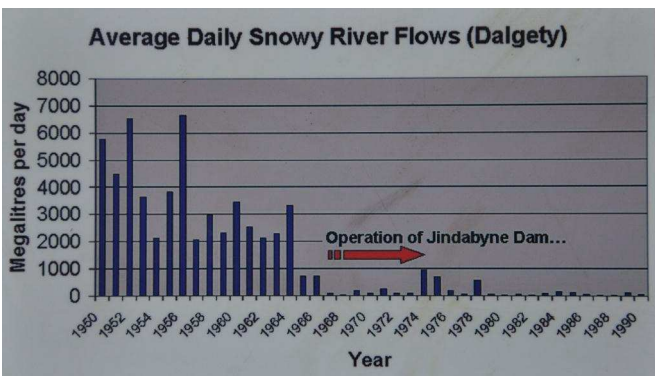
Return to the Snowy River:

By Tim Sindle



Jindabyne dam releasing water – and making friends with the Snowy River Alliance (photo: Kevin Songberg)

It started initially through some whispers on email, then a public government press announcement. The news? The Snowy River would flow again. I spoke to many rivers people and the answer was the same - no matter what's down there - when they release the water we have to be on it. Rivers Canoe club has a long history with this river and the original footage of a 1949 decent can be seen on the 75th DVD. After a week of studying maps, calculating gradients, watching old archive RCC 1949 footage, and phoning local contact - it was on.



The rarity, and historic significance of this event cannot be downplayed as seen on the graph to the left – this was the first time this section would be paddleable since 1967! Years of lobbying by various groups including the Snowy River Alliance, finally convinced the governments to force a release. We settled on a plan of action where we would paddle the most accessible section from Jindabyne Dam to Dalgety on Saturday, then take it from there. A small group assembled on Saturday morning - not knowing what to expect. One thing was for sure -

there was water and lots of it. Would there be trees, sieves, or even rapids?

The river report follows but suffice to say it's a brilliant section of whitewater with great rapids and stunning scenery. For those dedicated enough to take the gamble - it was well worth it, as 13 paddlers went down on Sunday while others scouted sections downstream for Monday.



After the paddle Lynn was heard to say “*you don't need to take me down rapids that big again*”, while reports from Penrith are that that Glenn had a distant stare for the next week muttering to himself, “*it was big...it was really big...*” Three paddlers managed to delay work for a day to paddle a further downstream section on Monday. Reports are that this was brilliant too but a lot harder, and more remote.

Thanks to Ali, Rob, Gary, Scott, Matt, Kevin, for helping the group get down the river safely and scouting new possibilities downstream. One thing is for sure when they release again - we will be on it again!



River: Snowy River

Section: Jindabyne Dam to Dalgety Campsite

Other pull out points are at the end of Werralong road and at the Snowy Wine and Micro-brewery

Level: 1.37 BOM gauge at Dalgety Weir (3080 MLD released from dam)

Grade: Big volume 3+ /4 with a couple of grade 4 level rapids.

Distance: 25kms to Dalgety

Time: 6 hrs to Dalgety. (1hr to the gorge, 2-3 hours in the gorge and 2-3 hours to Dalgety)

Gradient: 10-15m/km in the gorge (see map).

Report: Tim Sindle

Video:



This section has 3 distinct parts to it, 7km of grade 1-2 flowing water. A 4-5 km steep gorge, and then another 13km of flowing water. Although there is one significant rapid (3+ rapid)in the first hundred meters that is hard to scout and a poor line can result in a close encounter with a bank of dead black berries.

After about 7kms of flowing water with small rapids, a steeper gorge is reached. When you see the horizon drop off and series of rapids in front of you – the fun is about to start.

Gary on the 2nd rapid of the gorge (photo – Kevin Songberg)

There are numerous big multi-stage rapids, the first of which is probably the most significant. Scouting/portaging on the left is recommended. Many good rapids follow, there are often many options to choose from and the risks of each have to be weighed up. One rapid seems unlikely at first as the water sieves through many dead willows and rocks. (Hopefully after a few 'floods' - these will be removed. The best line we found was left side of the right channel. More big, bouncy, fun rapids follow, inspection is definitely recommended although all the rapids were runnable.



Kevin finding his way through (Photo: Tim Sindle)

Matt lining up a drop (photo :Gary Nelson)



Once out of the gorge the river flattens and winds its way through farmland and scenic boulder strewn countryside to Dalgety. There is a exit about 1-2km after the gorge at the low-water Werralong road Ford. The next exit is at the Snowy Vineyard and Microbrewery a further 5km down river.

This is a “almost-never” run section since the building of the Jindabyne dam in the 60’s – but with the now promised water releases there is good chance of it running again. The gorge could handle more than 3000MLD – less



rocks to hit, but the holes would be something to watch out for and it would be a wild ride. It could likely be runnable at lower levels of 1000MLD but it would be a rocky creeking trip and there is a possibility of sieves at lower levels.

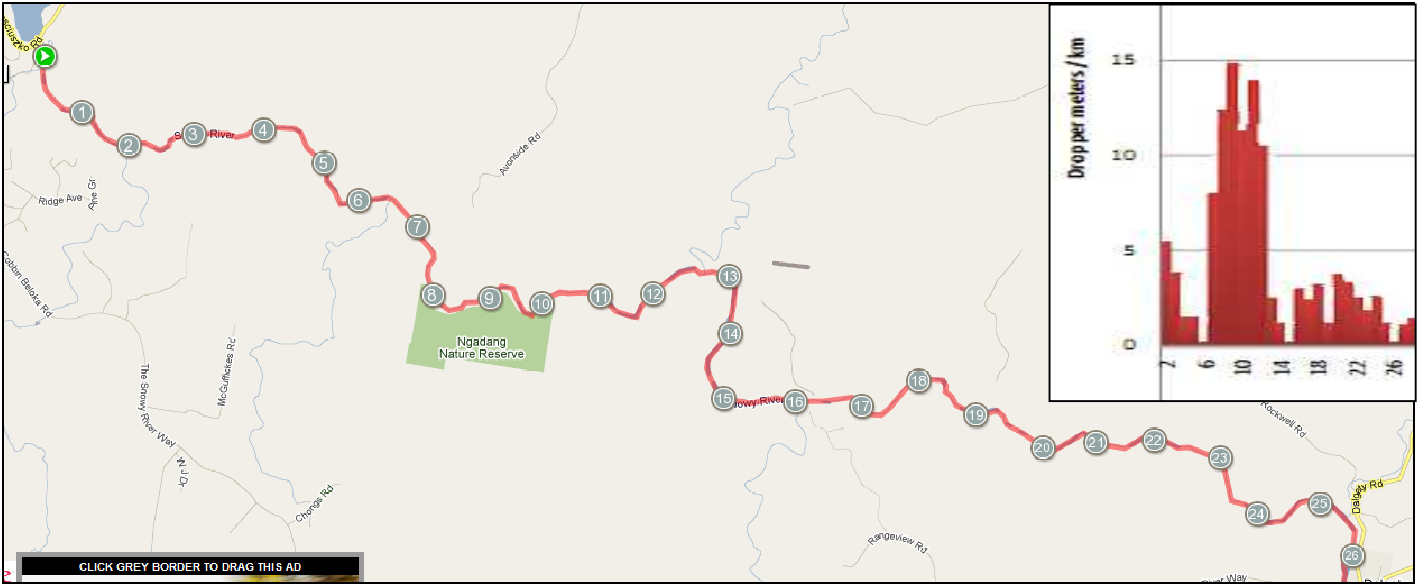


Tim in amongst it on one of the last rapids of the gorge (Photo: Matt White)

Exceptional willow and blackberry eradication work has been done in the river bed, and there is evidence of the many dead bushes and trees along the way, only a few remain – and these are mainly large trees below the gorge on farmers properties. In future releases beware that this debris may cause straining hazards.

The Jindy dam was kind to us and released water that wasn't too cold (12C), we saw some platypus, and a blue tongue lizard along the way too. At this level perhaps the best big volume grade 3+/4 river in the state!





Gradient and kilometres map

