



HUMBOLDT

Creek v5a5IV ★★

Location

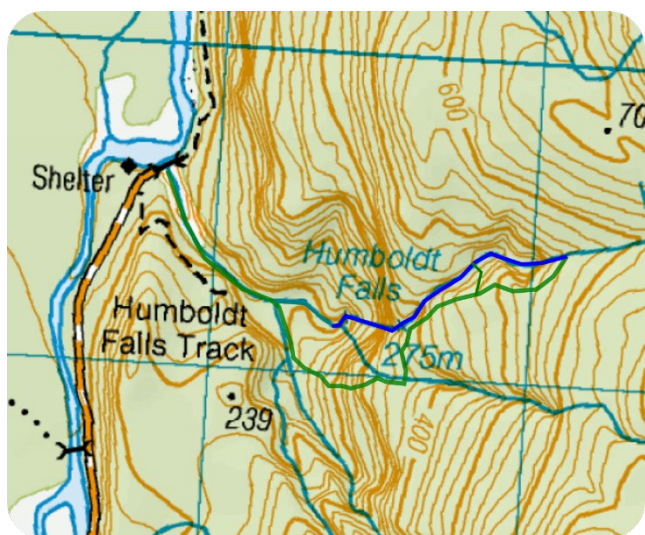
Hollyford Valley, Fiordland National Park

Character

High flow pool-drop canyon, with multipitch descent of the four leaps of the 275m high Humboldt Falls

Map

CB09 Hollyford



Approach by Car

Head towards Milford Sound on SH94. Turn right down the Hollyford valley Road (gravel) to a parking area by the road end shelter.

Approach on Foot

From the swingbridge, boulder hop and wade upstream to the first major tributary on the true right. Head up the tributary, for a hundred meters or so, looking for a likely place to begin bush bashing toward the canyon.

Climb steeply towards the falls until you arrive on a very sharp and narrow spur in the forest. Climb the spur, sidling to avoid any obstacles until the spur runs out.

Avoiding the super steep terrain on your left, continue up through very steep forest until it flattens out. From here, sidle north and cross Little Humboldt canyon.

The best crossing point is at 355m: look around for a hole between boulders on the true left, which allows you to slither your way into the stream without needing a rope. On the other side, there is a steep scramble to get out. Send your best climber first and rig a rope for others to

ascend. Continue sidling to the head of Humboldt Falls. It is easy enough to scramble in here and check out the anchors at the top of the main falls, (or begin the trip here if you prefer.)

Follow the canyon rim up to about 450m, where there is a relatively easy gully that can be followed into the stream. Alternatively, continue up the rim: the canyon has been explored from the 540m contour.

Rock

Serpentine and Diorite

Water

Considerable current and strong vertical flow. March is the usual season, after a dry period of several days.

Catchment

8.1 km²

Anchors

Double bolted 10mm stainless below the 450m contour from 2024. First descent (sparse) bolting above, from 2008: likely in need of replacement.

Gear

2x 60m minimum. 3x60m recommended for efficiency on the multipitch sequences.

Route Description

The description that follows is from the 480m contour. (Possibly up to 6 pitches between 480m and 540m)

Time

Vehicle park to start of canyon	1-2hr
Canyon descent	6-9hrs
Return to vehicle	30min

Flash Flood Danger

High. Big rain events, very steep terrain and limited soil means Hollyford valley canyons will rise extremely quickly.

Escapes

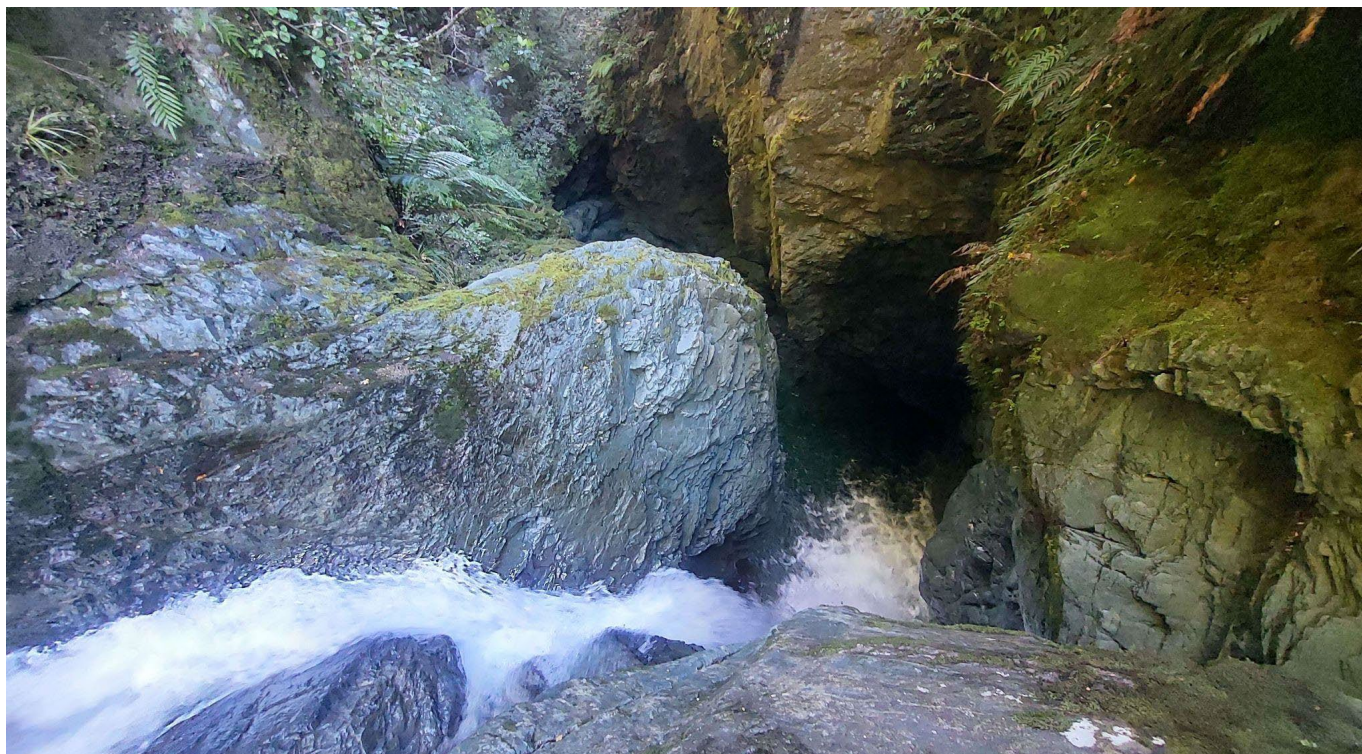
It is possible to enter/exit the canyon on the TL at the top of Humboldt Falls, and around the 480m contour

Notes

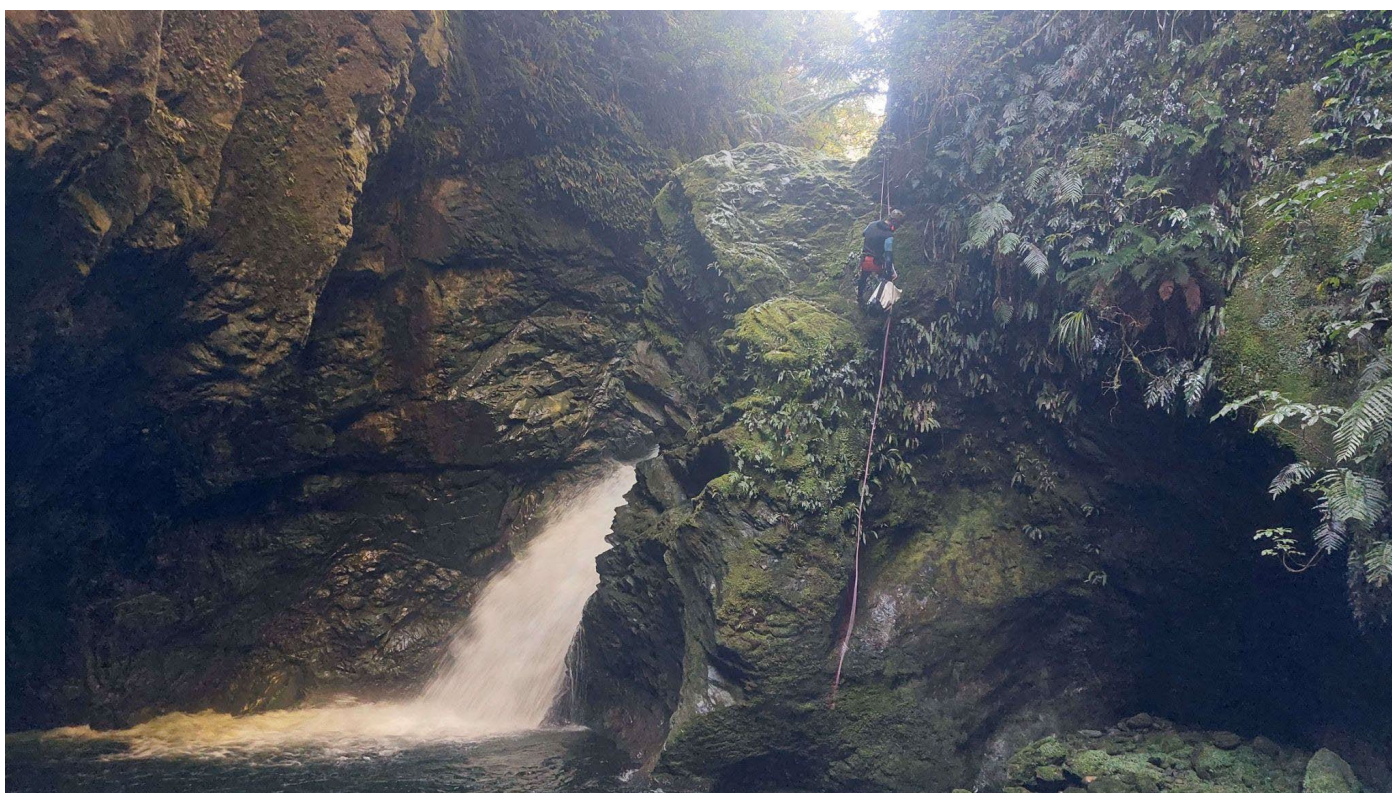
First descent: First Descent Annette Phillips, Bronwen Waters, Dave Vass and Alain Rohr, 3 April 2008

Description from 480m

Patrick Timm, Madie Shears, Elias Love did the second descent in March 2024. Images and notes courtesy of Patrick and Maddie.



After entering the stream around 480m, there is a few hundred meters of creek walking before it drops into this pitch.



Looking back at the first abseil (15m).

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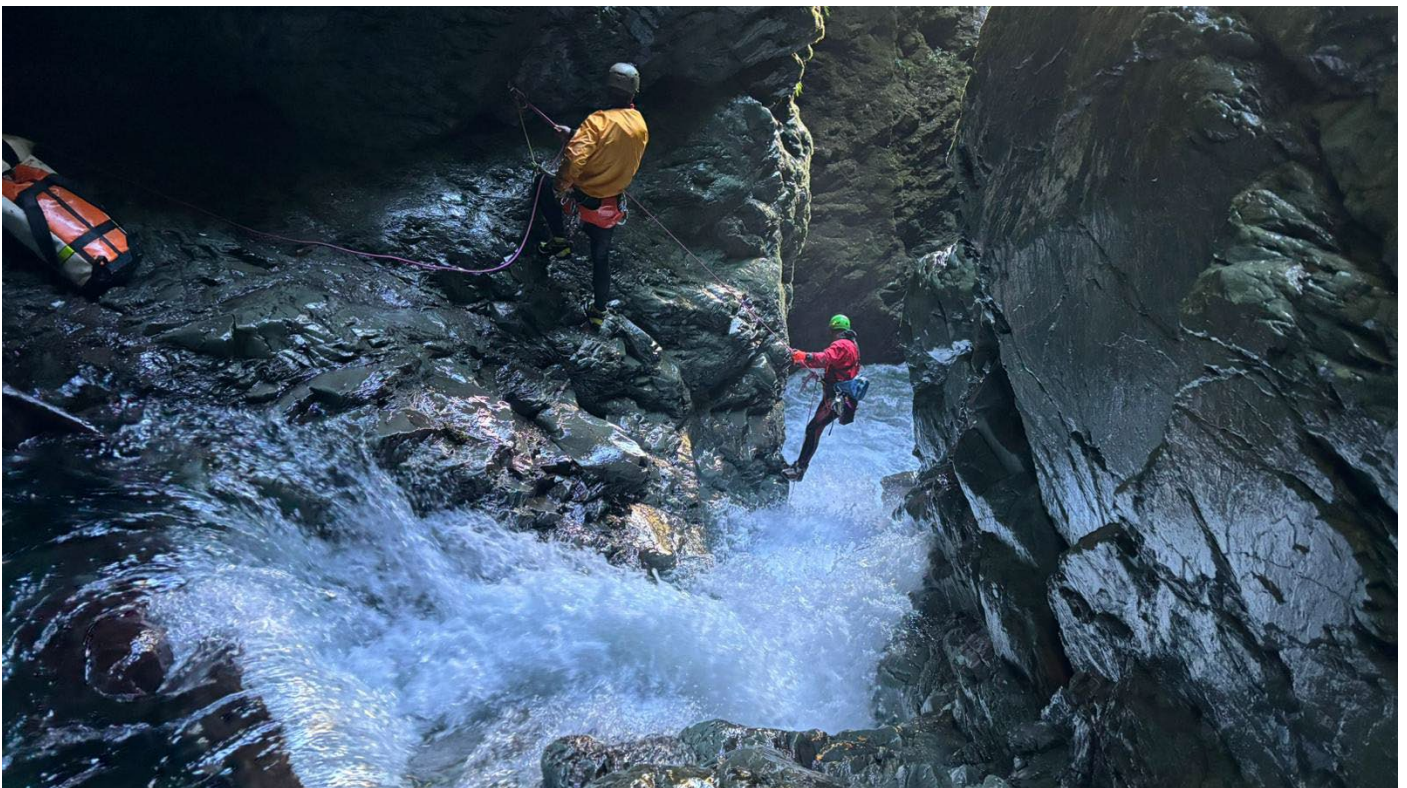
Topo by Patrick Timm and Dan Clearwater 25 Aug 2024

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2nd abseil (around 10m), follow ledge on canyon TL. This abseil is immediately above the narrows that follow in the next photo.



The narrows abseil (15m). Stay on TL and hug the wall. Good ledge to stand and jump from at the bottom to swim over the flow (we didn't look but didn't think the wall was undercut on the other side).

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Looking back up the narrows abseil.
In this flow (which we thought was 'normal' flow after a dry period of several days) it looks worse than it is.



Abseil after the narrows abseil (15m). This is the last abseil before the big Humboldt Falls!



Humboldt Falls sequence

This is a sequence down the four main leaps of Humboldt Falls (275m)

Main Leap 1: 1x pitch 55m

Main Leap 2: 2x pitches 55m and 50m

Main Leap 3: 3x pitches, 50m, 40m, 40m

Main Leap 4: 1x pitch, 45m high.

The 2nd descent team had '60m' ropes, but take those pitch lengths with a grain of salt. You don't want to find out the hard way that your '60m' has shrunk to 55m and the actual length of a pitch is 58m.. That's one way of saying rig releaseable for the first person so you can lower them if needed to reach the anchor...

All anchors for the main Humboldt falls are on the TL side. The anchors at the top of each section are generally in places protected from heavy floods so might need some searching to find, and the same might go for the rebelay too.

Everything on the main falls we double bolted and connected with webbing. We never found any traces of the original bolts from its FD. We used 60m ropes. Most abseils land on very slippery rock!

Re-belay anchors were placed to avoid ending up in the flow, so if it looks like you're about to go into the main flow, you've probably missed an anchor!

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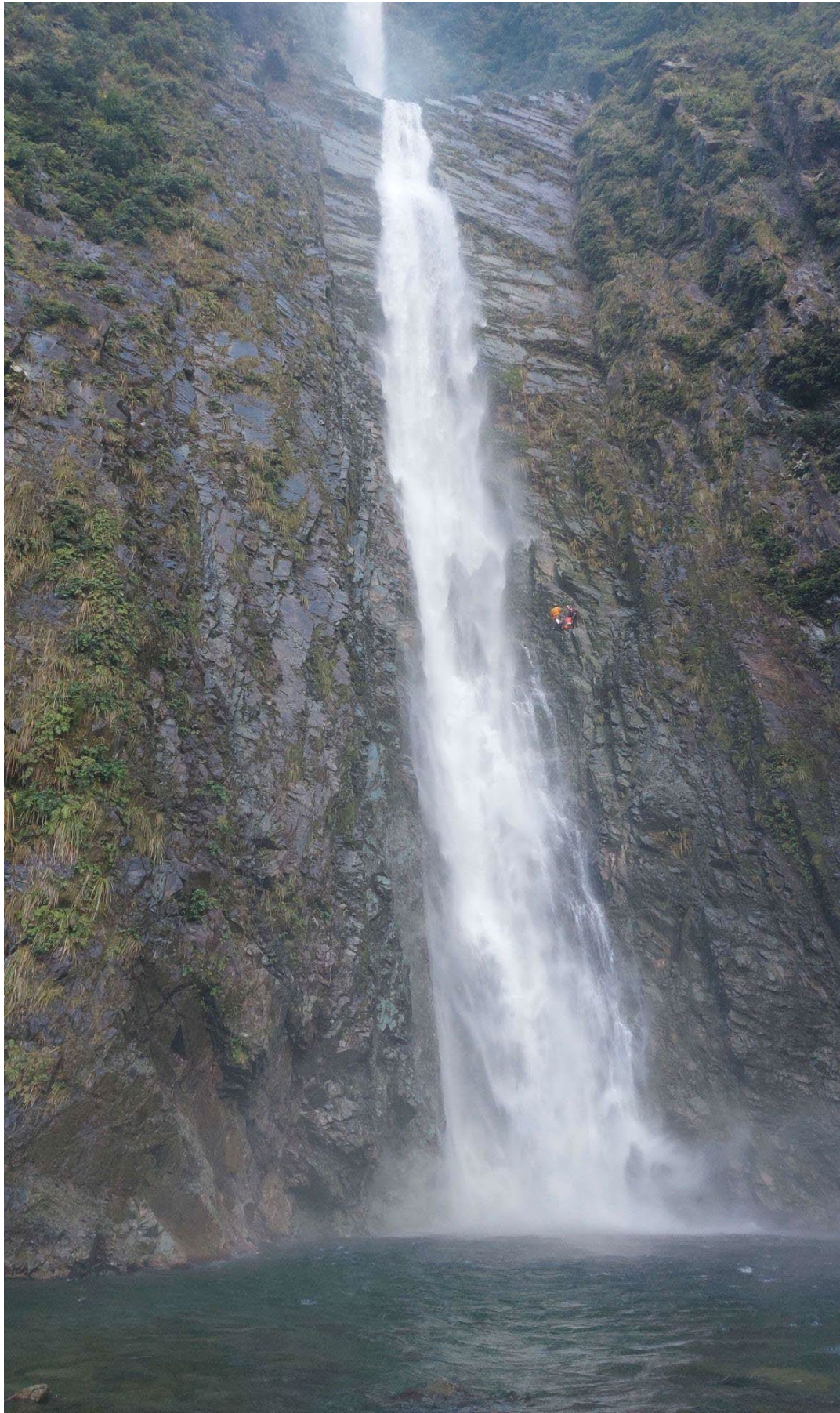
**Main Leap 1 of
Humboldt falls.**

55m pitch.

Lots of vegetation, the
next ones get better!



Main Leap 2
2x pitches 55m and 50m



Main Leap 3
3x pitches, 50m, 40m, 40m

The canyoneers in the photo are on the 2nd re-belay on this Leap. .

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Main Leap 4.

45m

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