



Three Missing Hikers Tenaja Trailhead

June 18, 2012
Ortega Mountains
2012-022

Written by Paul Caraher

The call came out at 2:39 in the morning for three overdue male hikers in the Cleveland National Forest. The mother of one of the subjects reported he was due for father's day and never showed up. Upon arrival at the Tenaja trailhead, I joined veteran member Glenn Henderson and was told that he and I were it. More members would be arriving later in the day to assist.

Glenn was able to get a description of the trio's shoes, which included Converse hi tops, DVS skate shoes and a lug-hiking boot. Having attended an in depth tracking course months prior, I was confident we could find their tracks and stay on course. We did see these prints at the Tenaja trailhead going into the canyon but not coming out. Since the subject's itinerary included Fisherman's Camp and Tenaja Falls, Glenn and I started clearing the trail up and beyond Tenaja Falls. After numerous call outs and no sign of the subject's prints, we decided to head back to the trailhead and make our way to the starting point for fisherman's camp.

Arriving at Fisherman's Camp, we were able to get on track. The prints were leading away from camp and heading out the San Mateo Creek trail in the complete opposite direction. Around this time we heard Star 9 arriving on scene and directed them to the general area where we thought they might be. Not long afterward the subjects were located camping on a streambed about a mile and a half from fisherman's camp. There was so much dense vegetation on the trail; we decided to get back to the CP in case we were needed to assist with aviation.

Star 9 landed at the Command Post and picked me up to fly in for a welfare check with a Deputy. As we circled overhead, Star 9 once again instructed for the hikers to stay put. The pilot landed about a quarter of a mile away. The Deputy and I hiked into the hiker's camp only to find them gone. Back in the helicopter we spotted them on the trail heading back to the Command Post.

At base, I was greeted by fellow teammates Jeri, Lew, Dana, and Roger May. Glenn was now running base with Lew Kingman. Jeri, Dana, Roger and I descended into

the canyon to meet up with the hikers. Jeri led the way and made contact with them about an hour and a half later. Other than being a little dehydrated and embarrassed, the three hikers were healthy and able to hike out to the trailhead.

RMRU team members present: Paul Caraher, Glenn Henderson, Lew Kingman, Roger May, Dana Potts, and Jeri Sanchez.

RMRU is a volunteer search and rescue team that covers Riverside County and assists other teams with search and rescue efforts in other counties. Each member purchases their own equipment and takes time off work, without compensation, to participate in search and rescue missions. Team equipment is purchased from contributions from the community. We are a non-profit organization and are funded by [donations](#) from people like you.