



Lost Hiker Marion Mt Trail

Sept 18, 2012
Marion Mt Campground
2012-035

Written by Pete Carlson

We got the call at 7:30am on Tuesday morning that a hiker was lost on the Marion Mountain Trail. I had just finished at big hike the day before and my gear was all over the place so it took me a while to get going. When I got to the command post at the trail head assignments were already made and some teams had been hiking for over an hour. It turns out a 63 year old woman was hiking with friends up to San Jacinto Peak and she was going slowly and told the rest of her group to go ahead. She was last seen about a half mile from the Deer Springs Trail. Since we did not know if she had continued up and then gotten lost or turned around and started back down we had a large area to search. Gwenda was running base and had made up assignments for different teams to do.

The first team (Les, Chad, and Craig) was going up the Marion Mountain Trail and going to come back down the Seven Pines Trail. Another team (Desert Search and Rescue Members) was going to go up Fuller Ridge Trail. Paul and Roger (RMRU) were going to come up the Deer Springs Trail from Idyllwild. Myself, Matt (RMRU), and Chris (DSAR) were going to go up the Marion Mountain Trail part way and then go down a drainage and see if we could find anything. Also a team of four State Park Rangers were going up Marion Mountain Trail and going down another drainage.

As my team was hiking up the trail around noon and about one half mile from the camp ground, I said we should stop and give a yell, even after lots of teams and people had been up and down the trail you never know. We all three yelled at once and then listened. Nothing, so we yelled again. This time we all heard a faint voice way in the distant. So we gave a third yell and this time we heard a whistle. We had been told that the subject had a whistle, so we were pretty sure this was the subject. We radio base and started going off trail down and to our right for about 10 minutes, then we stopped and yelled again. The whistle was closer, but still seemed to be a long ways off. Star-9 the Sheriff's Helicopter who had been searching for some time came flying into our area and tried to spot the subject, but with no luck. We continued in the direction of the whistle for another 10 minutes and then yelled again. Much closer now and within 2

minutes with could see the subject standing under some trees 100 yards away. We told her to stay there and we would come to her.



**Chris(DSAR), subject, and Matt(RMRU) in field
Photo by Pete Carlson**

She was very tired and had sore legs, but was otherwise in good shape. We gave her water to drink, but she did not want any food. During this time the four State Park Rangers had joined up with us so we had seven rescuers to help get her back. The State Park Rangers found a quick way to get to a logging road that we could then walk back to the Marion Mountain Campground. We put one rescuer person on each side of the subject to help her get up and down some steep hill sides until we got on the logging road. It took us about 30 minutes to walk her back one half mile to camp.



**Brian(State Park), Matt(RMRU), subject, and Chris(DSAR) hiking to logging road
Photo by Pete Carlson**

This could have been a long and hard search, but we got lucky and made contact quickly. We had a good plan in place to cover all the trails with lots of yelling and if that did not work we would start going down likely drainages with more yelling. Again this whole problem came about because inexperienced people split up. Yes, people say they have been hiking for years and are experienced, but that does not mean they really know anything about finding trails once they lose them. There is a big difference between following a well maintained trail and going off trail and knowing where you are. We have had this same situation many, many times over the years. If someone is slow or not feeling well another person should stay with them. When you are tired and not feeling well is when it is easy to miss something and get into trouble.

RMRU team members present: Paul Caraher, Pete Carlson, Matt Jordon, Chad Marler, Roger May, Patrick McCurdy, Les Walker, Craig Wills, and Gwenda Yates.

Assisting agencies: Desert Search and Rescue (DSAR) and San Jacinto State Park Personnel.

Aviation assets: Riverside Sheriff's Star 9.

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

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