



Missing Women

January 06, 2015
Big Bear Lake
2015-002

Written by Kevin Kearn

RMRU responded to an Office of Emergency Services (OES) request to assist the San Bernardino County Sheriff on Tuesday January 6. San Bernardino SAR teams were searching for a 35-year old missing female in the vicinity of the Fawnskin Interpretive Trail in the vicinity of the north shore of Big Bear City. The woman, Lisa Ann Cimbaluk, of Irvine, had been reported missing by her family on December 29, prior to the snowstorm of December 30. Almost a week later, on Sunday January 4, her snow covered car was located at the trailhead. San Bernardino Sherriff Deputies and SAR personnel already searched the one-mile trail without any sign of her Sunday and Monday.

RMRU team members, Glenn and Matt drove up with the truck and met myself at the Sherriff's command post established in the North Shore Parking Lot at 0700. The weather was clear and temperatures were initially in the low 20s; Big Bear Lake appeared frozen over but a sign read, "Do Not Walk on the Ice." Deputies briefed us along with approximately 30 other searchers before assigning everyone to search teams. They planned to conduct a grid search of the area and RMRU was assigned to search a sector just west of the trailhead with three members of a San Bernardino Team. There were at least five other teams searching other sectors and several aircraft also supporting the operation.



RMRU Search Areas
Photo by Kevin.

We started searching by 0900 after loading waypoints for our search boundaries into our GPS units. The terrain was mostly wooded but generally open with goods fields of observation below the trees. There was some spotty, shallow snow cover on the ground with a bit more snow in gullies and along the shaded sides of fallen trees. We were careful to probe these snowy areas with poles and our six-man team completed its search by 1300. We had reasonable confidence that we had scoured the terrain thoroughly.



Rescuers Searching Big Bear
Photo by Kevin.

After returning to the command post, Glenn and I both remarked that Ms. Cimbaluk may have ventured onto the ice, given its close proximity just across street from the trailhead parking lot. Our team then linked up with a cadaver search dog and handler, and two more deputies. Our reinforced team moved east by vehicle and then dismounted to search up a gully east of the trail head, over several ridges west, and then down another gully into the trailhead parking lot. Although the dog stopped several times, there were no definitive signs of our subject.



Glenn and Matt Searching
Photo by Kevin.

Deputies ceased search efforts when the sun set at 1700. Although search teams found some clothing and miscellaneous items, nothing belonged to the Ms. Cimbaluk. We initially planned to continue supporting the search Wednesday. Glenn and Matt got a room provided by the San Bernardino County while I went to stay with my brother-in-law, but at 0200 the next morning RMRU was alerted to support a search at the Tram. Glenn and Matt left at 0400 to conduct that mission (See mission 2015-003). I could not go and departed for my work at Ft Irwin ending RMRU's involvement.

Two days later, on Thursday morning January 8, a helicopter discovered a female body in the water by the south shore of the lake where the ice ended and the following day the coroner confirmed the victim was our subject, Ms. Cimbaluk. RMRU offers its deepest condolences to the Cimbaluk family for their tragic loss.

RMRU Members Involved: Glenn Henderson, Matt Jordon, and Kevin Kearn.

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.