



Search Joshua Tree

April 24, 2018

Johnny Lang Canyon, Joshua Tree National Park

2018-007

Written by Shani Pynn

I woke up this morning well before dawn. It feels like I haven't been on a search in so long. I packed all my gear the night before, so all I had to do was head out the door. 6 AM I was meeting up with Alex and Glenn. I made it to J-Tree early and got to watch the sun rise. The Sheriffs, Desert Search and Rescue (DSAR), and RMRU had come to help the Joshua Tree Search and Rescue (JOSAR) crews.

The subject of our searching expedition was an older blind hiker with a past heart condition. This perplexingly adventurous elderly man had the foresight to have a plan. He had left a note on his car days before, advising at what time he should be searched for. That time was late Sunday, it was now Tuesday, and JOSAR had searched the day before. Since he hadn't been found we would search some more. Monday's search had turned up some clues, which to our ears was happy news. JOSAR had found tracks and arrows pointing his way, it seemed like today might be a good day.

Our subject started off from Quail Springs Picnic Area parking lot, headed to Johnny Lang Canyon in search of things that were buried. It seems he had an interest in the mines, so we would be watching for those too this time. After a safety check my team headed out on assignment. We had a waypoint and set out to find it. I checked our communications when we were out of sight. Basecamp could hear me clearly, so we were alright. We reached our point by about 9am and found a spot with some shade to spend the time.



**JOSAR member in Yellow under Joshua Tree Center
Photo by Shani Pynn.**

Once teams 1 through 3 tracked our subject to a drainage we would head up there. Until then, we were staged nearby and enjoyed the fresh air. To check in by radio I had to find some higher ground, so I began searching around. Halfway up a hill was reception rock where I was able to sit and talk.



**Shani at Radio Rock
Photo by Shani Pynn.**

I checked in with Basecamp watching quail fly by and was advised to keep standing by. Team 2 radioed in they had a hiker following them. Without other direction they did their best to work around him. A little bit later he headed off ahead, much to team 2's trackers' dread. The search continued with more arrows and sign. My team listened to the reports, passing the time. Just after our latest check in around 10:30 it seemed we had a reporting party (RP) hiker. Our elderly blind prospector was alive and awake, although he wasn't feeling that great. The RP said he had dehydration and abdominal pain and gave a waypoint to help our teams' aim. With a live subject and a point to guide the way, I thought it would turn out to be a good day.

Teams 2 and 3 headed towards our guy. The rest of the teams waited, standing by. Hearing on the radio that our subject was found, a Sheriff's' helicopter let base know they were around. While team 2 headed toward the waypoint with speed, team 3 picked a

different path. Team 3 got there first and we all waited, breath caught in our throats. The radio crackles and we were all listening. We heard “I have reached the subject. He has a pulse and he is breathing.” A collective “Yes!” echoed across the desert floor as our spirits were lifted once more. The Helicopter came in and pick up the subject to be flown back to Basecamp where an ambulance was waiting.



**Alex hiking out with Teams 4 and 5
Photo by Shani Pynn.**

Hiking back to Basecamp with the helicopter up ahead, I had upbeat 90s music stuck in my head. An ambulance ferried our subject away and our benevolent helicopter few off for another day. Back at Basecamp they gave us some food and water. We turned in our shared gear and cooled off with ice cubes. We were lucky so far, this could have gone a different way. I have to say, today was a good day.

RMRU Members Involved: Glenn Henderson, Shani Pynn, and Alex Rilloraza.

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.