

Missions

May - November 2019

Thank You!

To all that volunteer their time and financial assistance....

Countless people owe their lives



OUR SUSTAINING MEMBERS



May 1, 2019 - December 31, 2019

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RESCUE TEAM MEMBERS



Steve Bryant - Alta Loma | **Pete Carlson** - Blue Jay
Kase Chong - Hemet | **Cameron Dickinson** - Temecula | **Kirk Cloyd** - Hemet
Derek Donovan - Temecula | **Blake Douglas** - Riverside
James Eckhardt - Riverside | **Corey Ellison** - Laguna Niguel | **Gary Farris** - Palm Desert
Michael George - Riverside | **Donny Goetz** - Los Angeles
Josh Gould - Murrieta | **Glenn Henderson** - Hemet | **Eric Holden** - Temecula
Tony Hughes - Yorba Linda | **Kevin Kearn** - Huntington Beach
Rob May - Riverside | **Dana Potts** - Corona | **Kaitlyn Purington** - Laguna Niguel
Shani Pynn - Riverside | **Vinay Rao** - San Jacinto
Tyler Shumway - Hemet | **Daniel Tran** - Garden Grove
Ray Weden - Murrieta | **Gwenda Yates** - Hemet

Support Members

Joe Erickson | Kaylean May | Roger May | Brad Scott | Ty Wittersheim

About Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit

The Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit is a group of volunteers trained and ready to respond to wilderness emergencies.

At any hour of the day, law enforcement agencies, national park and military officials may call upon the Unit to aid an unfortunate victim.

The unit is on constant alert, via text messages, to search for and effect the rescue of hikers, skiers, rock climbers and outdoorsmen whenever and wherever tragedy strikes.

The unit performs about 95% of its missions in Riverside County. However, it has traveled south into Mexico, north into the High Sierras and into Nevada to accomplish its lifesaving missions.

The unit is currently comprised of 23 volunteers, who literally come from all walks of life. They regularly leave their jobs (or in the middle of the night, their warm beds) to respond to a call for help.

They do not receive remuneration for time given to search and rescue.

The members make up a small, but spirited, group of mountaineers who spend one weekend each month training to sharpen their rescue skills.

Each member must provide all of their own equipment at a cost of more than \$2,500.

Beside acting as highly competent rescue workers, members also work closely with schools, clubs, church groups, and Scout troops throughout the area to teach mountain safety. The ounce of prevention may well prevent the untimely pound of cure.

In this newsletter issue are summaries of all our missions from May 2019 - November 2019.

Summaries of all our missions dating back to 1969 can be found on our Website at RMRU.org.

RMRU is always looking for new members!

We are an all-volunteer, non-profit team of rescue volunteers who are always looking for qualified people to join our team of dedicated rescue members.

As a member of the Mountain Rescue Association, we are not your average search and rescue team. In addition to what is expected of most SAR teams, we specialize in high-angle rope rescue and extended back country and mountain rescue missions. If you think you have what it takes to be part of an elite mountain rescue team, please join us at one of our monthly meetings normally held the Wednesday of every month.

While the regular meeting begins at 7 pm, a training season begins at 6 pm and is a great opportunity to meet one on one with team members. We meet at Sheriff's Office Valley Vista substation at 43950 Acacia Street in Hemet.

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Mt. Baldy, California

December 9, 2019

Photo: James Eckhardt - RMRU

Newsletter Editor -

Gary Farris



Email info@rmru.org ahead of time to make sure there will be someone out front to meet you.

We look forward to meeting you!

Even if you can't join us in the field, your contribution can help make a vital difference in our mission to save lives.

While each member purchases their own equipment team equipment is purchased from contributions from the community. We are a non-profit organization and are funded by donations from people like you.

Your donations allow us to keep our training and team gear updated and help us to save lives. This includes our rescue trucks and recent acquisition of a new communications van.

Donations of any size are appreciated, however if you would like be a sustaining member, please fill out the form below. **We also take PAYPAL donations at info@rmru.**

Mission Reviews

May 2019 - November 2019

The following pages contain a selection of first hand accounts of RMRU missions written by the team members involved.



Missing Couple

May 1, 2019

Humber Park

Written by: Cameron Dickinson

As I was on standby to go out into the field as part of a secondary team for another search, another 911 call went out from dispatch that two hikers didn't return to a planned birthday party, as originally reported by a concerned friend. Since our initial search had adequate rescuer coverage, me, and fellow team members Daniel and Blake headed over to Humber Park to meet with the responding Deputy's to obtain any information about our hikers.

Once we arrived at the Park, and a friend of the missing couple arrived to provide us information about their whereabouts. The friend had indicated that he wasn't exactly sure which trail or what destination his friends were hiking to, but said he thought they were planning a hike to Suicide Rock. The missing couple's car was located, but in front Ernie Maxwell trail. Instead of heading to the trail that leads you to Suicide Rock, we decided

to first do a quick hike on the Ernie Maxwell trail towards the Climbers Trail to Lily Rock to see if there was any possibility that hikers were in that area.



Cameron, Danial, Subjects, Blake, and Sheriff

Right after we started our hike, we noticed lights in the distance from two headlamps. I shouted out the missing persons name and did receive a confirming response that these were the hikers we were looking for. It turned out that these hikers were not lost or missing at all, just running a little behind from their hike up to Lily Rock (and not Suicide Rock as originally thought). The couple was a little embarrassed about the emergency response that they had received but appeared to be in good spirits.

We hiked with them back to base

and they went to the birthday party.

RMRU Members Involved:

Cameron Dickinson,
Blake Douglas, and Daniel Tran.



Overdue Hiker

May 1, 2019

Cactus Springs Trailhead

Written by: Tony Hughes

May 1st was the First Wednesday of the month, which is the night we have our monthly team meeting. I was just getting ready to leave when I received a text around 1:45 PM that there was a lost hiker at Cactus Springs trail head near Pinyon Pines. I changed into my search clothes, grabbed my gear, and started driving.

When I arrived at the parking area there were already several team members on scene. Kaitlyn and Blake had just left about 20 to 30 minutes earlier with the dog team. I quickly scanned the area around the subject's car for prints but was not able to find anything on the asphalt, his car, or in the sand nearby. We all started packing up and

getting ready to head up to Sheep Mountain and Martinez Peak to look for the lost 71-year-old male who had not returned. His planned hike should have only taken about 8 hours. He had left the day before and his family called the sheriff when he didn't return that night.

Before I could even finish prepping my pack, we saw a gentleman heading into the parking lot from the trail. I yelled at Glenn "What is our subject's name?". He yelled back "George". I turned around and asked the gentleman if he was George, and sure enough he was. He had spent a cold night in the middle of the forest. He had plenty of food, water, and was in good spirits when he returned to the trail head.



Subject, Michael C., Tony, and Jordan

We got Blake and Kaitlyn on the radio and told them to come back in. This was a quick mission with a great outcome. It was still early so we all headed to Hemet for our monthly meeting. Little did we know at the time this was going to be the first of 3 missions to happen within an 8-hour window.

Some lessons to take away from this mission: 1) Don't hike alone. 2) Let others know your route and estimated return times. 3) Bring enough gear to survive the night. 4) Optionally, invest in a SPOT,

InReach or other device to signal for help when out of cell range.

RMRU Members Involved:

Jordan Antol, Michael Cara, Blake Douglas, Joe Erickson, Glenn Henderson, Eric Holden, Tony Hughes, Kaitlyn Purington, Tyler Shumway, and Daniel Tran.



Missing Woman

May 1, 2019

Ansel Rock

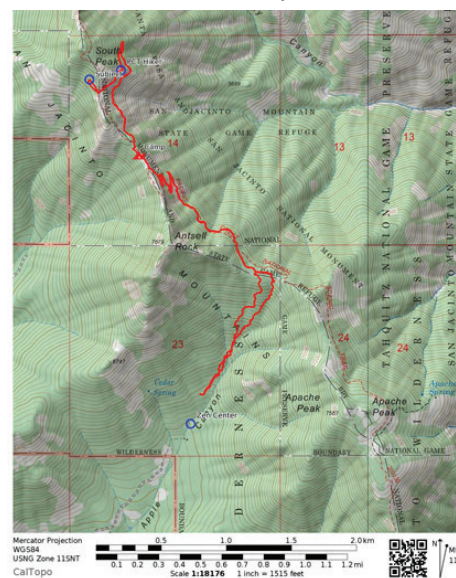
Written by: Tyler Shumway

We Every first Wednesday of the Month we have our team meeting at 7pm. We had all just gotten back from a prior mission that day that was quickly concluded due to a self-rescue. Just as we were wrapping up the meeting, we got word from Deputy Waters that another mission was about to go down. This time it was on the Desert Divide near South Peak with reports of a missing female hiker. More information was provided by the subject's Husband who made the 911 call and stated that he had become separated from his wife and could not locate her.

Another PCT hiker (trail name Oatmeal) was on scene and was trying to help locate the missing hiker. Oatmeal was able to make brief voice contact with the hiker but could not discern that exact location due to the nature of the terrain. The subject's husband stated that she likes to go off trail and scramble nearby peaks.

Our team quickly responded to Lake Hemet Station to establish base. It was decided James and I

would be a hasty team and deploy from the Zen Center in Apple Canyon. Our coordinates put the Husband's location at PCT mile 172 which is where he last saw his wife and had established camp. Oatmeal had hiked further up to PCT mile 173 which is where he had his camp site. James and I crested the ridge at PCT mile 171 which was full of PCT hiker camps.



Map of South Ridge Trail

We asked around if anyone knew of the situation. With no such luck we continued north. We contacted the husband and he was very worried since his wife did not have a headlamp, food or water with her. She did have a few layers of warm clothing. He was able to get voice contact with her shortly after sunset but again due to the steep mountainous terrain it was difficult to tell exactly where it was coming from. We told him to sit tight while we continued along the trail to contact Oatmeal and see if we can get a better idea of where she might be.

James and I quickly made our way to Oatmeal's location doing shout

outs along the way. We met up with Oatmeal who was bedding down for the night and his experience was similar in that he could not tell where her voice was coming from and quickly faded with no further contact. With South Peak being less than a mile away we thought for sure we could find her nearby given the fact that she likes peak bagging.



Shani, Subject, Tony, Subject, Blake and Glenn

As soon as the trail crosses the ridgeline to the west, James and I did a shout out. We immediately heard a response. We continued a few hundred yards up the trail just before PCT mile 173.5 and amazingly found our subject right in the middle of the trail. She was cold and extremely tired as she had been out by herself for over 6 hours with no food, water or light. Other than fatigue she was okay and very happy to see us. We gave her warm clothing, water and food to lift her spirits. She stated that she left camp to scramble the nearby area and quickly got disorientated. She was able to find the trail but could not figure which way to go back to camp.

Luckily, she had only gotten about 1.5 miles away from camp and not in treacherous terrain. After refueling we brought our subject

back to camp to be reunited with her husband. They were both very thankful for our help and given that no one was injured it was decided they would bed down for the night.

James and I retraced our route back down to the Zen Center while team 2 would head up early in the morning to hike them out. Team 2: Shani, Tony and Blake were to hike up pre-dawn to help safely get the hikers off the mountain.

Written by Shani Pynn

At roughly 5:30 AM I hear Glenn's boots across the floor of the Lake Hemet Mountain Sheriff's station. I look up from my napping spot on the floor and see his head poking through the door of the bunk room. He says he has a job for me. I sit up, put my boots on, and walk out to where him, Tony, Blake and the Deputies were gathered.

Glenn tells us our subject was located and is reunited with her husband, but they were too tired to hike out last night. Our first team had left them safe at their campsite so Tyler could get to work on time, and we were going to go in this morning and hike them out. After a quick repacking for the morning hike (instead of a planned overnight) Glenn drove Tony, Blake, and I to our starting point behind the Zen Center.

We started hiking just before 6 AM and met up with the couple at about 7:30 AM. They were doing well, considering their circumstances, and were packed up and ready to hike. We hiked back the

way we came and met up with Glenn and Deputy Parsons back at the Zen Center who drove us back to the mountain station by about 9 AM

RMRU Members Involved:

Cameron Dickinson, Blake Douglas, James Eckhardt, Glenn Henderson, Tony Hughes, Shani Pynn, Tyler Shumway, and Daniel Tran



Injured PCT Hiker

May 7, 2019

Fuller Ridge Trail

Written by: James Eckhardt

We got a callout for a PCT hiker that injured his ankle on Fuller Ridge. I punched the coordinates into my GPS and noted the location was about 100 yards from my last rescue on Fuller Ridge (see mission 2019-013). That was my first rescue with the team, and I was excited to go back to the area with less snow cover. Blake, Deputy Dunlap and I were first to respond and expected to hike from Black Mountain to the hiker. We had more team members on the way (Ray, Eric, Cameron and Michael Cara) who would follow behind with more gear.

As we were preparing at the trailhead, Star-9 communicated that they had been able to make it above the clouds and had found the hiker. Star-9 went to reconfigure for a hoist, and we drove to the Black Mountain Lookout Tower for a hoist pickup. We decided that I would perform the hoist, as I was recently trained (the previous

MISSION REVIEWS MAY 2019 - NOVEMBER 2019

Saturday) and knew the area. This would be my first solo hoist, another first for me on Fuller Ridge.



Deputy Dunlap, Blake, and James at Hoist Location

After hoisting into Star-9, we circled what we thought to be the subject's camp, and I hoisted down. I contacted the camp we had thought the subject was in, but they knew nothing about an injured hiker. I began to make my way to the GPS point and met our subject hiking up the trail towards me. After briefly checking on his ankle, he could walk and it appeared to only be a very minor sprain, I packaged him in the screamer suit, and Star-9 hoisted him up. I sent up his backpack, and then I was hoisted.



James waiting for Star-9 to be Hoisted Up

The subject was hiking the PCT, had fallen on some of the remaining snow, rolled his ankle and dropped his gear into a stream. He had recovered all his wet gear and made his way to a camping spot on the trail. He spent the night and

upon testing his ankle in the morning, decided he couldn't hike out.

When hiking in remote areas, it is important to be prepared for the unexpected. Snow is still present at high elevation, so hikers should carry micro-spikes and know how to use them.

RMRU Members Involved:

Michael Cara, Cameron Dickinson, Blake Douglas, James Eckhardt, Eric Holden, and Raymond Weden.



Lost-Injured PCT Hiker

May 9, 2019

Fuller Ridge Trail

Written by: Vinay Rao

At approximately 11:00am on Thursday morning the RMRU Team received call about a lost and potentially hurt PCT hiker on Fuller Ridge. Given the location of the subject and the 911 caller this mission was coordinated by the Cabazon based Sheriff. Responding team members were Vinay, James, Blake, Kaitlyn, and Michael Cara. Vinay, James and Blake met at the Hemet sub-station and drove the RMRU diesel van to Black Mountain Campground where we were met by two Sheriff deputies.

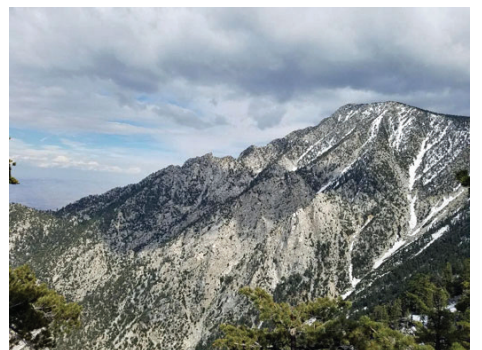
The deputies indicated that their initial report was that the subject may not actually be hurt or lost but a separate PCT hiker (the 911 caller) had met him and was concerned about his welfare. The deputies gave the team the subject's GPS coordinates and it was determined that he was only 2.5 miles east of the campground on

the PCT. Given that Kaitlyn and Michael were going to be driving quite a distance (from Orange County) to respond, a decision was made to inform the RMRU call captain of the situation and have Kaitlyn and Michael hold at their current location near Anza.



Vinay and Blake Hiking Fuller Ridge Trail

Vinay, James and Blake began the hike to the subject and quite quickly encountered patchy and slushy snow; no crampons or micro-spikes were needed, but our ice axes were useful in providing balance. While heading to the location the team encountered about a dozen PCT hikers who had passed and spoken to the subject and indicated he was sitting on the trail and appeared to be in good health!



San Jacinto Peak from Fuller Ridge Trail

Approximately a 1/2 mile from the location of the subject, given that James and Blake were faster hikers, Vinay decided to let James and Blake proceed on the trail. The

two quickly reached the subject and he indicated that he was perfectly fine and was puzzled as to why a 911 call was even made. He showed no indication of injury or distress and had plenty of clothing, equipment and food; he was anxious to continue his hike.

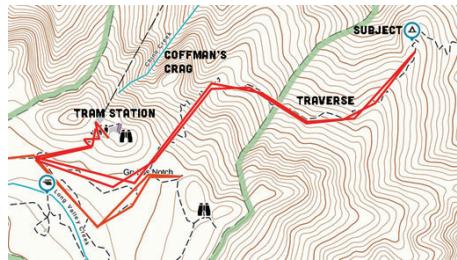
James and Blake bid him well and returned down to the trail to Vinay and all three met back up with the deputies to provide a final report.

An interesting mission!

RMRU Members Involved:

Michael Cara, Blake Douglas, James Eckhardt, Kaitlyn Purington, and Vinay Rao.

mess that can only be recognized if you're looking for it, and hiking it is a question of whether you enjoy doing one-legged squats for eight miles. Much of the lower portion of the trail falls under the jurisdiction of other SAR teams, while RMRU covers the upper regions, particularly the switchbacks leading up to Grubb's Notch from Coffman's Crag, and the Traverse. Our subject was unaware of snow in the forecast, and Skyline had been snow-free for weeks up to this day.



Map and Tracks of Search/Rescue

Stranded Skyline Hiker

May 22, 2019

Below Grubs Notch, Tramway

Written by: Blake Douglas

I was completely unsurprised when my RMRU ringtone went off in the middle of a heavy rainstorm on a Wednesday afternoon. The storm had already activated a weather warning at my job site, and I knew that rain in San Jacinto probably meant snow in the mountains. Our subject was a hiker on the Skyline trail, unprepared for snow conditions and unable to proceed up the final part of the trail.

Skyline is a popular and (in)famous trail running from Palm Springs to the upper tram station, known for being one of the most difficult hikes in our county. Skyline doesn't really resemble what most people visualize when they think of a trail; in many places it's more of a rocky

This led him to arrive at the Traverse wearing jeans and a t-shirt, with the trail before him invisible beneath the fresh snow. He wisely stayed put and called for help. Glenn and I were the first on scene, and ready to set out from the upper tram station immediately, but on further consideration the decision was to hold for additional RMRU team members to arrive. We knew our subject was uninjured, a State Parks ranger was with him, and a supply bag had been dropped from a CHP helicopter, so we could afford to wait. It's not often that you get to spend part of a mission eating nachos and pizza in a warm building, but we were still anxious to get moving.

The tram is usually willing to hold a car for an extra hour or two past their normal closing time, but if a

mission runs past 2300 it's basically guaranteed that you'll be spending the night in the mountain station and riding down on the first car at 0630. All the tram-related missions this year have been overnights. Team members Cameron and Mike George arrived, and we immediately prepared to depart; Mike would stay in reserve with Glenn running base, and Cameron and I would hike to the subject. The fresh snow made the trail more annoying than difficult, particularly on the rocky switchbacks, and at times it felt like each step was a 50/50 chance of either landing securely or deflecting my crampons off some oddly shaped, barely hidden rock. Despite the aggravations we were warm, enjoying the ephemeral features of the forest immediately after a snowstorm, and comparing the merits of various equipment brands, only occasionally stopping to check our coordinates to ensure we were on the trail.

We made it to our subject in about an hour. Despite the wind and cold it was a cheerful spot, nestled among rocks with a small campfire overlooking the lights of Palm Springs. Cozy or not, we wanted to get everyone moving; more wet weather was in the forecast for the morning, and our subject looked to be in good shape other than fatigue from hours of hiking. We were now past the time cutoff for catching a tram car off the mountain, but the station was only 1.5 miles up the hill; a better option than sleeping in the wilderness and then hoping to get out before the next storm hit. Once we got moving, our subject warmed up

nicely, and we all enjoyed steady conversation as we slogged our way up to the notch, the hike at times feeling more like climbing a snowy, rocky stairwell. Once over the top of the notch, the hike was almost complete except for the steep concrete path to the tram station. Despite the offer of an ATV ride from State Parks, our subject wanted to hike this last bit, and we arrived tired but glad for a happy outcome and the prospect of a few hours of sleep.



Subject, Blake, Glenn, Cameron, and State Park Ranger

What went wrong: Our subject was from Seattle; although he was in good shape, and had scouted portions of the trail days in advance, he had neither monitored the forecast for snow nor anticipated the need to do so, being unfamiliar with the mercurial nature of weather in the San Jacintos and how this adds to the unique challenges of the Skyline trail. Had he done this hike a day earlier, he would have completed it.

Thanks to the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway staff, California State Parks, CHP, and RSO for their teamwork and professionalism.

RMRU Members Involved:

Cameron Dickinson, Blake Douglas, Michael George, and Glenn Henderson.

Stone Creek Lost Hiker

June 8, 2019

San Jacinto Mountains

Written by: Editor

We got the call for a lost day hiker in the San Jacinto Mountains and as members were packing up and starting to drive to the point last seen, the hiker walked out to the Sheriff's Car on location.

RMRU Members Involved:

Jordan Antol, Blake Douglas, Tony Hughes, Kailyn Purington, Vinay Rao.

Tramway Lost Male

June 9, 2019

Tramway - San Jacinto Mountains

Written by: Editor

We got the call for a lost Male hiker out of the Tramway. As members were packing up and starting to drive to the point last seen, the State Park Personal found the person and said they could get him out without our help.

RMRU Members Involved:

Blake Douglas, James Eckhardt, Corey Ellison, Tony Hughes, Kevin Kearns, Kailyn Purington, Daniel Tran, and Vinay Rao.

OES Mt. Waterman

June 22 - 29, 2019

Angeles National Forest

Written by: Blake Douglas

This mission, an OES for a missing 70-year-old in the mountains of Los Angeles County, posed an unusual problem that I haven't encountered in Riverside County; specifically, cultural barriers. Typically, when we observe any

nervousness or hesitation among subjects, or their relatives, it's because people are uncertain of our authority and relationship with the Riverside Sheriff's Office.

Basically, people assume that they're going to get into trouble for having to ask for help. We always dispel these worries to the best of our ability, and we usually get reliable information and cooperation that helps us to complete our mission.

In this case, the combination of cultural barriers, as well as what seemed to be insurmountable anxiety from the subject's friends and family, led to sparse, conflicting, or missing information about our subject. We were uncertain of almost everything about this person except his name and age, but we were assured that all attempts were being made to change this.

"...people assume that they're going to get into trouble for having to ask for help"

RMRU RESCUER -
BLAKE DOUGLAS

This uncertainty caused the search area to cover almost the entire northern and southern drainages of Mt. Waterman, as well as some regions to the southeast; an area of over six square miles with only a single major trail. None of these regions had very high visibility or easy access, but with calm weather and relatively little off-trail use, we were confident that we would be able to see signs of someone

having gone off-trail within the last few days, and callouts would be highly effective.

Kevin Kearn and I were the only RMRU members able to respond at 7am on a Monday June 24th. We were assigned a steep, lightly forested hillside just south of a fire road that ran along one of the ridges; unfortunately, after extensively searching our area for several hours, we found no signs of any significance. We returned to the command post at the Newcomb's Ranch restaurant, where Kevin had to depart, but was replaced by Cameron Dickenson.

Cameron and I put in for another assignment, and were given a larger, much denser region on the north face of Waterman, near one of the abandoned ski routes. This was even more removed from our previous search area, but it needed to be checked off because it provided easy access to a main road. Once again, no sign of our subject.

Written by Cameron Dickinson

On the following day, June 25th, I returned to the area to search for our missing male hiker. This day I would be joined by fellow team member Glenn Henderson. Glenn and I would be teamed up and would be given a search area by the command's search coordinator that would place us just south of the hiking trail where our missing hiker and his family members were known to have hiked several days before.

The terrain we would search was moderately steep, with sections

that were dense with vegetation, large bolder outcroppings; however, some areas where more open with light vegetation. After thoroughly searching this area, we found no sign of our subject. Several other mutual aid search teams were out that day as well searching in their designated areas. The search would continue...

"He was able to communicate and walk, but very weak as a result from not eating any substantial food for 5 days"

RMRU RESCUER -
CAMERON DICKINSON

On Saturday, June 29th, one week after he went missing, was found alive. He was located several miles south from his last known location, in a steep ravine in the Devils Canyon area. He was spotted by Altadena Search & Rescue team, as they located him down next to a creek. He was able to communicate and walk, but very weak as a result from not eating any substantial food for 5 days, other than some surrounding mountain berries and frogs. Weather was in his favor, with moderate temperatures during that period, and having a jacket in his possession. Drinking water from the flowing creek was critical in his survival, thanks to a winter with a higher precipitation and snowpack.

RMRU Members Involved:

Cameron Dickinson,
Blake Douglas, Glenn Henderson,
and Kevin Kearn.

Lost Female Hiker

June 26, 2019

South Ridge Trail

Written by: Vinay Rao

At approximately 4:00pm on Wednesday afternoon the RMRU Team received call about a lost hiker near the South Ridge Trail-head. Responding team members were Vinay Rao and Blake Douglas. Vinay and Blake ("the RMRU team") met at the Hemet Sheriff sub-station and drove the RMRU diesel van to the Trailhead area where we were met by two Sheriff deputies. The deputies indicated that their initial report was that the subject – a female Nepalese national - was part of a retreat group and, along with a friend, was scouting out a location for a hike for the entire group.

They two found a suitable location and the male left the subject to go and get the rest of the group. When he returned to the site an hour later the subject was not there. The group decided to look for their friend but could not locate her and decided to call for help. Three members of the group remained with the deputies and informed the RMRU team that the subject was not carrying any food and water. She also had "taken off" on her own in the past to find a place to meditate and could reach a meditative state where she may not be able to hear anyone calling out to her.

Given that the last know location of the subject was hours old, the deputies asked that a K-9 team be brought out. Once the K-9 arrived the RMRU and K-9 teams proceed-

ed with the search moving generally southwest from the Command Post (CP). A deputy in an ATV also proceeded to a dirt road approximately 2 miles west of the CP to widen the search area. The K-9 appeared to have a good track on the subject. The RMRU team performed multiple callouts as loudly as possible given what we knew about the subject.

The teams searched for about two hours before the K-9 needed a rest.

Given that we were only about a mile from the CP the best approach was to return to the CP and possibly bring in another K-9 unit. While re-grouping at the CP the deputies received a call that the subject had found her way to a road where she was ultimately picked up by the deputy in the ATV and returned to the CP. She was unharmed and was in good health.

RMRU Members Involved:

Blake Douglas and Vinay Rao.



Black Mt. Research

June 29, 2019

Black Mt. Road near old YMCA camp

Written by: Eric Holden

On Saturday a large-scale search was made to find any evidence of John Sturkie who had gone missing back in January. See mission on 3-20-19 for more background information. With well over 30 searchers from at least 8 different RSO teams we were hoping to bring a conclusion for the Sturkie family.



**James Repealing
Waterfall in Canyon**

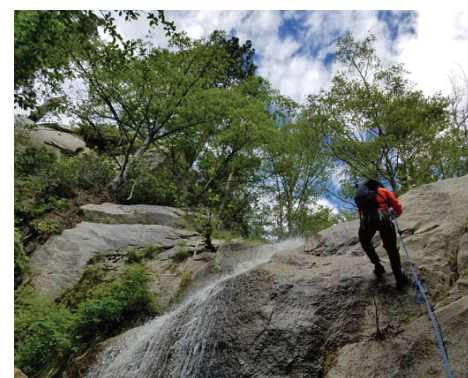
(DSSAR, SWAT, ROVE, SERT, RSO Drone Team, Star-9, RMRU, River-side Search Dogs). We sent searchers into many difficult to reach places, some involving rappelling down waterfalls. After about 4 hours of searching the DSSAR team located John's body down a steep ravine. Star-9 assisted with lowering the coroner to John's location and retrieving him via stokes litter. Our thoughts go out to all of John's family and friends.

Written by DSSAR Member

DSSAR received a call for mutual aid from RMRU requesting assistance in the search for missing hiker John Sturkie after numerous attempts to find him over the past 5 months. DSSAR members met at the Black Mountain Command Post at 8:00 am and received our assignments from RMRU OPS Leader Eric Holden.

Jason, Joe, Mark and Allen were assigned to Search Area 13 and assigned a remote canyon just north

of the area where John's truck was found. Jason, Joe, Mark, and Allen proceeded down the search area. Mark Bachli found a black and grey pullover jacket at 1:11 pm believed to be worn by John on the day he disappeared. The team photographed the jacket, marked the GPS coordinates, and called it in to the Command Post. The team then continued down the search area looking for other signs of John before noticing a smell coming up the canyon. The team spread out as far as possible in the narrow canyon filled with boulders and overgrown brush to locate the source of the smell. Mark Bachli reached John at 1:49 pm, followed by the other team members, and called the Command Post with the GPS coordinates for John Sturkie's remains.



**Tyler Ascending
Waterfall in Canyon**

The Command Post relayed back and asked us to stay with the remains until the Sheriff's Deputies were able to hike down to our position and call in STAR 9 helicopter for extraction. We stayed with the remains to assist with extraction until 3 members of RMRU team (Blake, James, and Tyler) reached our location and advised us to start hiking out, as we did not need 7 SAR members and 2 Deputies to assist.

On our way back up the canyon to await the extraction via helicopter, Mark Bachli found a cell phone. He immediately marked the GPS location and called it in to the Command Post. We then bagged the cell phone and continued our climb out of the canyon to wait for further instructions and possibly assist with the extraction. Once the helicopter arrived with the coroner and both the remains and the coroner had safely been extracted, we proceeded down the Black Mountain truck trail to the Command Post for debriefing and sign out.

RMRU Members Involved:

Pete Carlson, Cameron Dickinson, Blake Douglas, James Eckhardt, Michael George, Glenn Henderson, Eric Holden, Shani Pynn, Tony Hughes, Tyler Shumway, and Gwenda Yates.

DSSAR Members Involved:

Sharon Ollenburger, Mike Smith, Michael Fogarty, Jason Roberson, Joe McEuen, Mark Bachli and Allen Langenbahn



Mountain Rescue Association
consists of 100 teams with over
2,500 search and rescue volunteers
located in the
United States and Canada.

*RMRU joined MRA in 1961 is a
regular member.*

*RMRU will be hosting the MRA Cali-
fornia Regions Tracking
recertification in March 2020.*

Broken Wrist Devils Slide

July 1, 2019

Humber Park, Idyllwild

Written by: Blake Douglas

The message on the rescue line was "two lost and injured hikers, possible broken leg or arm, report to Humber Park". I kissed my wife and daughter goodnight, knowing I'd probably be out until dawn; broken limbs, combined with three or more hours just to reach the subjects, were likely to make this one difficult. Fortunately, when we (Glenn, James, Cameron, and myself) arrived at Humber Park, we were told that the injury was actually a hand or wrist problem... much less life-threatening, and it was nice to head up Devil's Slide knowing the subject's life wasn't immediately in peril.

"On arriving at the coordinates, our callouts were met once again with silence."

**RMRU RESCUER -
BLAKE DOUGLAS**

A few minutes up the trail we encountered a team of firefighters in full BDUs headed down; they had hiked all the way to Saddle Junction and performed extensive callouts, but because they weren't authorized to travel beyond the junction, they had to turn around. It was a clear, still night, ideal conditions for callouts, and it was disappointing that they had no luck. Callouts often feel like an exercise in frustration because there are so many ways for them to go wrong. Was your call loud

enough to overcome the terrain? Were you even facing toward the subject? Are they conscious, and if so, are they capable of a response? Did that rustle of your pack, or the sound of your own breath, drown out their reply?

Usually it feels like callouts never work until they do, and that was the case again here.

As we neared Saddle Junction, Glenn advised that Kaitlyn Purington had joined us and would be heading up the trail soon, and that we should leave one person at the junction to form Team Two with her. Cameron needed to be on Team One, as he was the only one with MRA certification, whereas James and I are still trainees. One round of rock-paper-scissors later, Cameron and I continued as Team One, doing frequent, but unsuccessful, callouts. James waited for Kaitlyn and became Team Two.

On arriving at the coordinates, our callouts were met once again with silence. We kept hiking, deliberating on whether to continue all the way to the peak and the rescue hut there, but our calls were finally answered only a few moments later, 200 feet in elevation above the coordinates provided by the deputy. Our subjects hadn't heard a single callout except the final one, presumably because the ledge they were on deflected or blocked them. Both subjects looked to be in good shape and more than ready to get out of the forest. As reported, the female had a wrist injury that, while painful, wasn't debilitating, although she had snapped one of her hiking poles

in half from the force of the fall that caused the injury. Cameron dressed her arm with a sling while we discussed their predicaments.

As best we could put together from their recollections, our subject's struggles began when, following the injury, they missed the sign at the Wellman Divide junction. There just seems to be something about this junction, missing it is one of the most common wayfinding errors in the San Jacinto high country.

Our subjects, thinking they were headed east toward the tram, were heading south toward the state park border and a junction locally referred to as Annie's Junction. At Annie's they headed west, and made it all the way to the Strawberry Junction with the Deer Springs Trail, before second-guessing their route and heading back the way they came, returning to Annie's and heading south again, on Angel's Glide (the local name for the PCT connector between Annie's and Saddle Junction). They eventually ran out of daylight, found a relatively flat outcropping, and called for help.

Once we had reached them, it was a simple matter of hiking them back out the way we came. We met up with Team Two (James and Kailyn) at the Saddle. They were in good spirits and it was a pleasure to enjoy their conversation among the six of us as we headed down Devil's Slide with an abundance of artificial light.

What went wrong: Our subjects had extensive hiking experience,

a map, and equipment for a day hike, but did not have a GPS, light sources, or overnight gear. It's essential to plan around the possibility of injury, losing your way, or being out after dark, and packing the appropriate equipment. Fortunately, the weather cooperated on this mission, but if this had happened in winter, or a storm had come up, things would have been much less pleasant.

RMRU Members Involved:

Cameron Dickinson,
Blake Douglas, James Eckhardt,
Glenn Henderson, and
Kaitlyn Purington

Bee Canyon Missing Person

July 2, 2019

Hemet to Idyllwild Highway

Written by: Vinay Rao

At approximately 10:00 am on Tuesday morning the RMRU Team received call about a lost person possibly several miles from the entrance to Bee Canyon (near the Cranston Fire Station on Highway 74 east of Hemet). Responding team members were James, Blake and myself. James, Vinay and Blake ("the RMRU team") met at the Hemet Sheriff sub-station and drove to the command post ("CP") where we were met by two Sheriff's deputies. The deputies indicated that their initial report was that the subject – a male – had called 911 the night before – Monday – indicating he was lost but did not give any additional information. The Sheriff's Office ("SO") was able to ping his location to

within approximately 400 meters. Deputies had been conducting a search through the night on ATVs and were not able to contact the subject.

"... a female has stumbled into a citrus grove near the CP somewhat disoriented."

**RMRU RESCUER -
VINAY RAO**

While the Team was staging at the CP, deputies gathered information that a male has stopped at a nearby residence - Victory Ranch – at approximately 7:30am and had asked to stay there. Victory Ranch was not able to grant his request but did agree to drop him off at a business establishment in Hemet. The Team waited while deputies drove to the establishment to try and locate this individual. This was to determine whether the subject and the male that stopped at Victory Ranch were the same. The deputies returned to the CP after a long search unable to locate the male. The Team then loaded up with two deputies in an ATV and proceeded through Bee Canyon to the approximate location of the call.

As the Team neared the location, the deputies received a call from the CP that a female has stumbled into a citrus grove near the CP somewhat disoriented. Workers at the grove called down to the CP and the female was brought to the CP by deputies. Based on the initial information that the female provided, the Team and deputies

decided to return to the CP.

Given the female's condition and ambulance was called to evaluate/assist her. After a lengthy wait and a detailed interview of the female by the deputies it was determined that the 911 caller was most likely no longer in the area and the Team was released from the search. The deputies did agree to do a final search with officers only.

RMRU Members Involved:

Blake Douglas, James Eckhardt, and Vinay Rao



Dripping Springs Hoist

July 2, 2019

Cleveland National Forest

Written by: Editor

We got the call for a lost hiker out of the Dripping Springs area. Aviation had found the missing person and needed RMRU to do a hoist. While team members were responding to the Hemet Airport, the Helicopter found a place they could land and pick up the lost hiker.

Team members never got the airport before they were called off.

RMRU Members Involved:

Cameron Dickinson and Vinay Rao



RMRU Mission Lingo

"STAR - 9"

Riverside County Sheriff's Helicopter radio call sign

Lost Woman Inyo County Dripping Springs - Lost Hiker

July 13, 2019

White Mountains -

(East of Bishop, California)

Written by: James Eckhardt

After a great day of technical rock training on Longview Dome on July 13, we were activated to search for a missing camper and her dog in the White Mountains. The camper had been reported missing on July 12 near Grandview Campground. Cameron Dickinson and I were able to respond, and we drove to Bishop, CA directly after the training.

After a few hours of sleep, I was paired with two members of the Inyo SAR and later joined by a member of China Lake Mountain Rescue. Cameron was ill, so was unable to join the search. Our assignment was to thoroughly search an area of rolling hills one mile south of the point last seen. The terrain was fairly open and very easy to navigate, a change from our often-scrubby brushy terrain. We completed our search area having found no clues.

We drove back to Riverside, and on July 14, heard the great news that both the subject and her dog were found alive about 2.5 miles south of their last known location.

RMRU Members Involved:
Cameron Dickinson and James Eckhardt.



July 21, 2019

Cleveland National Forest

Written by: Vinay Rao

After an initial briefing with the on-site SO deputy the team surveyed the subject's campsite where several footprints were visible. Based on a brief description of the area from the campground host, the team determined the best option was to begin the search by hiking on Wild Horse Peak Trail, not the Dripping Springs Trail.

Also, given that there were only two team members and one deputy running base, a consensus was reached that the team would return to the CP at approximately 4:00 am.

"As we stopped to talk with him it turns out he was the subject's friend who had initially dialed 911."

**RMRU RESCUER -
ERIC HOLDEN**

The team walked the trail for just over 3 miles, tracking footprints similar the ones at the campsite as well as seeing towels on the trail which could have been the subjects. At 2:20 am the team reached a turnaround point. The team conducted multiple shout-outs with the subject's name and identifying ourselves as search and rescue; no response was received. After returning to the CP, and having a discussion with the RMRU call captain, the search was temporarily suspended till morning.

Written by Eric Holden

The call went out for more searchers needed in the morning as the 1st operation didn't yield any clues to the subject's whereabouts. I met with James and Glenn, and Sharon with DSSAR at the dripping springs trailhead. We were able to find a good solid boot print in the subject's camp site. With this information Glenn and Sharon would hike up the Dripping Trail and James and I would be inserted via a Forest Service's vehicle about 8 miles up the Wild Horse trail and look for any sign. The temps were in the mid-90s with a very high humidity making the hiking conditions not good. On our way down the Wild Horse trail James and I found nothing other than a lot of poison oak. About halfway down we found out Cameron had started back up the wild horse trail and had found the same boot print in the camp site and was following it up towards us.

Cameron eventually lost the print and met up with us about 2 miles from the trailhead. While we were talking about the next course of action another hiker passed us. As we stopped to talk with him it turns out he was the subject's friend who had initially dialed 911. We got more information about the subject and listened to his call for help. We thanked him for the information and the subject's friend started hiking up the trail more. Keen-Eye-Cameron quickly called for him to stop and let us see his boot. Turns out, the prints we were looking for, the prints Cameron was following were the

subject's friend's boot and not his. He had gone out the night before we got called out and search all over the campsite and then up the trails.

We hiked back down to base to cool off and figure out the next plan of action. As it was late in the day it was decided to call off the search for the night and get this mission rolling OES as additional searchers would be needed. We left for the day with a deputy waiting at the campsite in case he returned. About 30 minutes after we all left, the subject walked back to camp, uninjured.

RMRU Members Involved:

Cameron Dickinson,
Derek Donovan, James Eckhardt,
Glenn Henderson, Eric Holden,
and Vinay Rao

San Juan Loop-F Lost Female Hiker

July 27, 2019

Cleveland National Forest

Written by: Corey Ellison

RMRU received a call out at approximately 11pm for a lost female hiker off the San Juan Loop trail in the Santiago Mountains. Michael, Josh, and I arrived on scene around midnight and met up with the deputy in charge. The lost subject had gone hiking with her friend and become separated around six in the evening. Her friend walked the trail twice trying to find her but was unsuccessful.

It was around 10 PM and he notified 911 that his hiking partner

was missing. After obtaining information from the deputy and the reporting party, our team headed out. Michael had hiked this trail multiple times and thought he knew a couple places where a person could easily get off trail. At one of the switchbacks, we found evidence that the subject proceeded to go off trail and down towards the river.

On this designated path we found a water cup that was stated to be the subjects along with too many liquor bottles that the subject was also stated to have. Further down we found tracks that matched the size and build of our subject. After combing the riverbed for about two hours we reported back to the deputies that we have been unable to locate the missing subject. The area our team searched was close to both the trail and Ortega Highway (cars both visible and audible).

Due to her history as a transient, the deputies felt she may have Hitchhiked back down Ortega highway to where she was staying in orange county. Our team also believed this to be plausible due to the small size of the area the subject was expected to be in. The sheriff's deputies decided to call the search to a halt and reevaluate the situation. RMRU was pulled out and returned home around 6 AM.

RMRU Members Involved:

Michael Cara, Cory Ellison, and
Josh Gould

Three Lost Hikers

August 10, 2019

Marion Mountain Trail

Written by: Daniel Tran

At approximately 4:00 PM, after spending 8 hours in the field doing GPS, map, and compass training, the team received an emergency call, stating that 3 subjects had become lost while hiking the Marion Mountain Trail. RSO Aviation came flying over the Devils Slide Trail as we were hiking down from the Saddle Junction after our day of Training. They called us on our radios and asked if we could come over to the Marion Mountain Trailhead and hike in to get some lost hikers. We said yes, they then gave us the coordinates, approximately 0.7 miles away from Marion Mountain Campground and 0.4 miles away from the trail where they had spotted the subjects.



Rescuers and 3 Subjects at Base

Blake, Vinay, Rob, and I were sent into the field and Kase, Eric, and Pete ran base. Glenn and Ray arrived shortly after with the team vehicle. We used our freshly learned knowledge about navigation to devise a plan of trekking on an old logging route along contour lines. We approached the end of the logging trail and were able to reach the subjects after cutting across some vegetation. Though they sustained a few scrapes while moving through thick brush, the

subjects were thankfully in good condition and spirits.

They encountered difficulties with their phone connection and became lost while trying to find their way back down the trail. There were slippery boulders along the few streams on the way back, but we were all able to make it back to base safely.

RMRU Members Involved:

Pete Carlson, Kase Chong, Blake Douglas, Glenn Henderson, Eric Holden, Rob May, Daniel Tran, Vinay Rao, and Raymond Weden.

Two Lost Female Hikers

August 10, 2019

Palm Springs Tramway

Written by: Blake Douglas

I was having coffee at Higher Grounds in Idyllwild with Vinay, Daniel, and new team member Kase Chong, following 8 hours of training at Saddle Junction followed immediately by a mission. We were all tired and ready to head home, when, of course, our phones pinged with another mission, this time at Wellman Divide. Kase and I were available and ready to head back up Devil's Slide, but after confirming the coordinates we found that our subjects were near Miller Peak, making this a tramway mission. Since most tram missions end with us being stuck at the upper station until dawn, Kase was unable to join us, so Glenn and I took the team truck down from Idyllwild and drove to Palm Springs with Michael George coming from Riverside and Cameron from Temecula. On our way, we heard from

call captain Gwenda Yates that a second mission was possibly going to be called out at Deer Springs trail, but fortunately this one never manifested.

Cameron arrived at the tram in record time and, considering that the rest of us were still about an hour away, he was given clearance to proceed on his own. Normally RMRU requires a minimum of two members for field teams, but since our subjects were reported to be on the trail and without injuries, the mandate was waived on the assumption that Cameron just needed to escort them back to the tram station.

Once we arrived at the upper tram station, Glenn intended to keep Mike and myself in reserve, but we had only just started to unpack our overnight gear when we were asked to head out on another mission; this one being a welfare check on a camper in Round Valley. Knowing Cam's mission could easily turn into a medical call or a search, Mike and I brought all our gear and began heading up the Willow Creek trail, then across Round Valley.

As we headed west, we observed a pair of lights working south, down the main trail that runs east of Jean Peak, heading for Wellman Divide. Considering it was nearly midnight, it didn't seem likely that these were regular hikers, as we almost never encounter anyone on the San Jacinto trails after dark. I wondered if, somehow or other, our subjects had gotten ahold of lights, and were now deviating from their original location. Moments later, Cameron radioed that he had arrived at the coordinates

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near Miller Peak, saw no subjects, and heard no response to his call-outs. I then reported our observation of the moving lights. You can only hear one person at a time on the radio, but I'm pretty sure there was a simultaneous "aaaaugh" from Cam and Glenn.

Glenn put our Round Valley mission on standby and redirected Mike and myself to Wellman Divide, hopefully to cut off our subjects before they got there, since Wellman is a great place for people to miss the sign and get lost (or, if you're already lost, even more lost). Cam approached from the north while Mike and I continued the Round Valley trail up to Wellman's. Fortunately, Glenn was able to call the subjects on their cell-phone and instruct them to remain at Wellman's when they got there. We reached Wellman's within half an hour, to find our subjects and a pair of better-equipped hikers; the lights we had seen belonged to them.

According to our subjects, they were so cold at their original position that the passing hikers had offered to relocate them. One of our subjects was suffering from altitude sickness as well as signs of early hypothermia, but otherwise they were ok. After briefly warming our ill subject, we began hiking them back down toward the tram, with Mike breaking off at Round Valley to continue our welfare check mission. Travel was slow and we stopped periodically for warmth, snacks and to keep up a positive attitude, since our ill subject was trudging along almost silently at this point, just trying

to focus on getting to the tram. We made it with enough time for a short nap before the dawn crew arrived to take us down the mountain; fortunately, our subjects were feeling better at this point and everything worked out ok from a medical perspective.

What went wrong: while our subjects had some hiking experience, they didn't expect to get tired, sick or to be out after dark. A lack of anticipation and planning around worst-case scenarios is a common theme among subjects who are lost but not injured; they simply didn't pack enough of, or the right kind, of equipment for the situation they ended up in.

RMRU Members Involved:

Cameron Dickinson,
Blake Douglas, Michael George,
and Glenn Henderson.

Safety Check

August 10, 2019

Round Valley - Mt. San Jacinto

Written by: Michael George

Well, my exciting night started out as a search for two women lost on the way back from the peak. Blake, Glenn, Cameron and I responded to the tram that evening. Cameron, having gotten there 20 minutes earlier, had decided to catch the tram that was departing within minutes of his arrival.

He made it to the top just as Blake and Glenn and I arrived at the bottom. With Glenn's ok he headed out on his way to the peak. By the time the three of us got to the top Cameron was well on his way. It was

decided that Blake and I stay back until Cameron contacted the girls. In the meantime, knowing it would be a long night, Glenn has us bed down for a couple hours. He had no idea how right he was. Just as soon as Blake and I got our bags down, Glenn came over and told us to pack up. Apparently, a woman called the Sheriff Dept staying she was concerned about her husband and their 5-year-old son spending the night in Round Valley campground. She felt he might be suffering from altitude sickness for reasons unestablished. So, we were being asked to perform a welfare check close to the area that the two women were reported to be in. Blake and I immediately packed up and headed out.

After about 25 minutes of hiking we saw the lost women's headlamps up on the southern hill of Miller's Peak. Not where they said they were and not close to Cameron. We directed him to their lights. As we continued hiking in for the welfare check, Cameron established contact with the women. They were cold, dehydrated and suffering slightly from the altitude themselves.

I believe it ended up due to not really eating properly during the hike. Glenn decided that the women took precedent at moment and Blake and I headed over to Cameron to assist. When we got there one of them was shivering and immobile. It took a while to get her to eat, warm her up and get her moving.

At this point we were about 25 min past where the turnoff for

the father and son were. So, we hiked back to that junction where we decided that I would go look for the father and son, in nearby camp sites in Round Valley. By this time, it was 1 am. Long night, right Glenn.

I headed over to the campsites surrounding Round Valley Meadows. While I did this Blake and Cameron escorted our two women back to the tram, apparently stopping quite a few times for the women to recharge. I searched high and low around the meadow in and among 20 campsites looking for a red and white tent, with a father and son for 2 1/2 hours. Never found a clue to where they were.

By this time, it was close to 4 in the morning. I decided to investigate a couple more campsites before heading back. Still no sign of them, so I headed back to the tram. By the time I arrived back at the tram it was 5:20. Glenn, said welcome back, you're just in time for the first tram car down. Well so much for laying down for a bit.

As we were all getting ready to head down, I found out Blake, Cameron and the 2 women had only gotten in an hour before hand. So, we all had a long night. As we were preparing to get on the tram the sun crested the horizon, creating a beautiful sunrise. Welcoming us to a brand-new day.

RMRU Members Involved:

Cameron Dickinson, Blake Douglas, Michael George, and Glenn Henderson.

Newton Drury Lost Hikers

August 25, 2019

San Jacinto High Country

Written by: Vinay Rao

At approximately 7:00pm on Sunday night the RMRU Team received call about three lost hikers near Newton Drury Peak which is approximately a 1/2 mile southeast of Mt. San Jacinto Peak. Responding team members were James Eckhardt, Cameron Dickinson, Kase Chong, Kaitlyn Purington, Blake Douglas and Vinay Rao (the "team").



Two Subjects, Vinay, Cameron, Kase in back, Kaitlyn by her pack, and last subject at Base

The three hikers had hiked to Mt. San Jacinto on Sunday morning (via the tram) and on the way back down in the afternoon ended up on the wrong trail which led them down towards Newton Drury. They notified 911 at approximately 6:15 pm of their situation and stated that they had minimal water/food and their cell phone batteries were draining down. A later, second call to 911 indicated that they had moved and at that point the hikers were advised to stay put as a rescue was being organized. Fortunately, they were not injured, and the weather was warm and presented no danger.

The command post was set up at the Marion Mountain Campground (the "CP"). After an initial briefing with the on-site SO deputy and a State Parks representative the team split into two groups; Team 1 – James and Blake & Team 2 – Cameron, Kaitlyn, Kase and Vinay. Both teams went up the Marion Mountain Trail and then to Deer Springs Trail. Based on the location (pinged from cell towers) Team 1, which was the faster team, continued further up Deer Springs Trail and as they got closer to the hikers moved off trail southeast. Team 2 was targeted to start off trail from Deer Springs Trail at Bed Springs creek and move northwest towards the hikers. Team 1 located the hikers and after assessing them and providing food/water began hiking them down towards Team 2.

After reaching Team 2, the hikers were then handed off to Team 2. Team 1 (James and Blake) had to get back to go to work in the morning, so they hiked out fast and drove home. Team 2 stayed with the hikers who by this time were exhausted and eventually walked them down to the CP at a slow but steady pace returning to the Marion Mtn. Campground at approximately 8:30am on Monday morning. The hikers were assessed by Cal Fire & EMTs and were extremely grateful to have been rescued!

RMRU Members Involved:

Kase Chong, Cameron Dickinson, Blake Douglas, James Eckhardt, Kaitlyn, and Vinay Rao

Three Lost Hikers

September 4, 2019

Palm Springs Tramway

Written by: Kase Chong

The Tenaja fire start in La Cresta at the Tenaja Rd and Clinton Keith Rd at 16:43. The fire and smoke put debris in the air resulting in a thunderstorm over the San Jacinto mountains. The three subjects, nurses from San Diego County, headed down from San Jacinto peak were forced to find shelter from the sudden subsequent storm. There was a real and dangerous threat of a lightning strike and in the subject's haste to retreat off the peak, they headed west along Deer Springs instead of east back to the tram where they quickly lost the trail.



Derek, James, Kase, Corey, Glenn in back, and Three Subjects and Cameron front on Tramway

The team was activated during their monthly meeting at 19:00. The team quickly made their way to the Palm Springs Tramway and got onto the trail at 21:00. The subjects were located cold and wet but in good spirits around 22:46 south of the Deer Spring switchbacks huddled under a large rock used for shelter. The three had gathered nearby pine needles to use as insulation from the ground and one had wrapped their feet in

pine needles and a plastic bag. The three were hydrated and ready to just hike out. The team hiked the subjects out south to Wellman Divide and back to the tram by 1:40. The team and subjects spent the night at the upper tram station where they awaited the first morning tram to take them home.

A deputy was waiting at the lower station where the team handed them over at around 6:30.

RMRU Members Involved:

Kase Chong, Cameron Dickinson, Derek Donovan, James Eckhardt, Corey Ellison, and Glenn Henderson.



Lost Hiker Foley Peak

September 6, 2019

San Jacinto High Country

Written by: Pete Carlson

I was hiking in late Friday afternoon for the Friday night to Saturday evening training. I started at 4pm on the Marion Mt. Trail and reached the junction with the Deer Springs Trail just before 6pm. I was then going to continue to the junction with the Bed Springs creek and going to camp at Bed Springs. Other members were hiking in later after 5pm. As I was hiking up the towards the Bed Springs junction when I heard Star-9 Sheriff's Aviation flying around. They soon left the area. I turned on my radio and called for any RMRU unit. I heard (Tyler, Blake, Kaitlyn) responded that they were coming up the trail and that we had a mission for a lost hiker near Foley Peak. I told them I would head up and

meet them at Little Round Valley. Once I got to Little Round Valley, I eat some food and got a good drink and filled extra water bottles. I got on the radio again and found out they were still 45 minutes away.

I started going cross country towards Foley Peak in the now dark of night using my headlamp. After about 45 minutes I recognized exactly where I was on the ridge going up to Foley from the saddle between San Jacinto and Foley. I have been on this route half a dozen times in the last ten years and could tell from the rocks where I was. I had only gone another 100 feet on the ridge when I saw a light and heard a voice below me about 200 feet away. It was our subject who was lost.

I told her to stay put and that I was with Search and Rescue and would come to her. When I got to her, she was in good shape and had food and water, just not exactly sure where she was. She had called 911 on her cell phone and Star-9 had found here but could not do a hoist in the wind. About 20 minutes later the other 3 rescuers arrived at our location. She had climbed San Jacinto Peak from the Tramway and gone down the wrong side of the peak away from the Tramway. Once it got dark, she did not have a headlamp, only her cell phone as a flashlight.

We then decided the shortest and fastest way out was down the Marion Mt. Trail. Tyler had a good track on his GPS back to Little Round Valley with not much brush or not many big boulders. Once

in Little Round Valley it was easy going back down the trail. When we reached the Fuller Ridge Junction just after midnight Blake and I decided to get some sleep. Kaitlyn and Tyler said they were fine to hike out with the subject. Blake and I did a quick set up of ground tarps, sleeping pads, and sleeping bags and were falling asleep in 15 minutes.

Tyler and Kaitlyn got the subject out around 3am to the trailhead. Kaitlyn then went to sleep in her car and Tyler drove the subject to Hemet where he lives and dropped her off at her friend's home. Her friend was going to take her to Palm Springs Tramway in the morning to get her car. In the morning Blake and I were up by 6:15am and hiked back to the trailhead where Kaitlyn was just waking up at 8:15am when we got there.

So again, it seems that when ever RMRU has a training we get a mission, but at least this time we were already hiking it the correct direction.

RMRU Members Involved:

Michael Cara, Pete Carlson, Cameron Dickinson, Blake Douglas, Kaitlyn Purington, and Tyler Shumway.



Alpine Butterfly Knot

Tramway Lost Hiker

September 7, 2019

San Jacinto Peak

Written by: Josh Gould

On Saturday around 7pm we got a call out for a missing hiker near the area of Miller Peak. Michael, Cameron, Blake and I responded to the Palm Springs tram. After talking with the deputy on duty, the four of us headed up the tram. Michael stay at the tram station and ran base, while Cameron, Blake and I headed out to Miller Peak. We followed Long Valley Creek to the Tamarack Valley Campgrounds. From there we head up the trail to Miller Peak. Based off the serval coordinates we received, we placed him on the north face of the peak at around 9700 feet. Following the path, we found that the switchbacks were heavily overgrown and decided to take the direct path to the subject, branching off the path at what should have been at the first switch back. We headed up the hill and did a few shout outs. He responded below us.

We fanned out and headed down the side of the cliff. Blake spotted his head lamp and we all converged on the location. He was well prepared for his day hike and had the food and water needed for the trip and believed he even had some extra, so he gave away some food and water to some other hikers. After evaluating him to make sure everything was okay, we gave him some water and headed out. We found out that he got off trail because of believing the trail should have been on the other side of overgrown vegetation. He continued with this mindset and once

he realized where he had ended up, he hunkered down and called for help.

This mission went smoothly, and the GPS coordinates we received from STAR-9 were spot on.

RMRU Members Involved:

Cameron Dickinson, Blake Douglas, Michael George, and Josh Gould.

Evidence Search

September 10, 2019

Hemet

Written by: Glenn Henderson

The team was asked to help with an evidence search in some orchard groves in Hemet. We met at the Hemet Sheriff's station at 6 AM and deployed out after a briefing at 6:30. We cordoned off the grove into grids and searched each one. Nothing was found.

RMRU Members Involved:

Cameron Dickinson, Glenn Henderson, Eric Holden, and Vinay Rao

Palisades Search

September 11 - 13, 2019

Saddle Junction to Tahquitz Peak Area

Written by: Glenn Henderson

The team was activated at 5:30, Wednesday September 11 for a female that had fallen about 40 feet near the Palisades between Saddle Junction and Tahquitz Peak. A group of hikers saw her fall and heard her call for help. They climbed to the fire lookout tower on top of Tahquitz Peak and called 911. They gave an approximate Lat/long for her location. RMRU members responded to the South Ridge Trail. Cameron and

Blake hiked up the South Ridge Trail to the Lat/Long given. They searched the area, calling out for anyone to answer. They did not find anyone. They then climbed back to the trail and hiked out to Humber park searching for anyone along the trail. Nothing.



Looking at Palisades Search Area from Tahquitz Peak

Thursday morning, I met up with Sharon Ollenburger from Desert Sheriff's Search and Rescue (DSSAR) at Keenwild Heli base. We were flown into the northern edge of the Palisades and we spent the day looking down the sheer rock trying to see to the bottom combined with lots of calling out. Again, nothing.

The Sheriff's department wanted to make sure that if anyone was there and injured that they had every chance of being found. Since we had 7 RMRU members gone to Zion Canyoneering, we called for an OES (Office of Emergency Services) callout. The callout was for type 1 rescuers that must be able to rappel long distances and then be able to climb back up the rope, move the anchors to another location and do it again. This is a high angle rock rescuer's dream callout.

They would all be flown into the site and flown back out by the

Sheriff's helicopters. We asked for 20 rescuers and 36 showed up. We flew most of the rescuers in but were not able to get everyone in as we had too many for the limited area. We also had 4 volunteers hike up the drainage from Humber Park to Tahquitz Peak.

No sign was found by the rescuers or from the team that hiked up. We posted on social media that if you were this person and hiked out before we got there to call the Sheriff's office to let us know what happened. They were not in any kind of trouble, but we wanted to know they were ok. We still believe the first hikers that were eyewitnesses did see what they said, and they were totally credible, but the person must have hiked herself out.



Searchers at Heli-spot Tahquitz Peak

RMRU and the Riverside Sheriff would like to thank the other teams that came out to help on this technical mission. ((Orange County SAR, San Bernardino Cave Team, San Diego Mountain Rescue, and Sierra Madre Mountain Rescue Team)

RMRU Members Involved:

Kase Chong, Cameron Dickinson, Blake Douglas, Michael George, Glenn Henderson, Vinay Rao, and Raymond Weden

Missing Marine

October 01, 2019

Skyline Trail

Written by: Eric Holden

On my way into work we got a callout for a missing marine on the Skyline trail. The subject was attempting to hike Cactus to Clouds to Cactus in one day. This is one of the most difficult trails in the country with over 10,000ft of elevation gain and loss over 30 miles. As there was over 15 miles of trails to check we activated DSSAR and the Sheriff's Mounted Posse to assist in the search.

I met Glenn, Blake, Cameron, and James at the Keenwild Heliport and it was decided that Blake and James would be airlifted in via Star-9 to Round Valley. From there they would hike up to San Jacinto Peak and see if he was up there or had signed the hut book. Cameron and I were going to be flown into round valley to cut for sign at the top of Sid Davis and the main trail. With our guys flying in, DSSAR was taking the tram up to check Grubb's Notch for any sign that someone had come up recently, and the Palm Springs Mounted Police was checking down near the start of the trail.

After about 4 hours of searching a call from the family came in with startling news. Apparently, the subject had hiked about 1 mile in then turned around, called an Uber, left his car at the trailhead. He went to the Airport in L.A. an attempt to flee all of life's responsibilities. There were approximately 20 ground personnel, STAR-9 air support, and the tram running



special trips for searchers. Note the Tramway was shut down to the public for maintenance. A lot of resources went into a search for someone that wasn't even there. We called all teams off and went for a nice lunch/dinner in Idyllwild.

RMRU Members Involved:

Cameron Dickinson, Douglas Blake, James Eckhardt, Glenn Henderson, and Eric Holden.

Other Groups Involved:

RSO STAR-9, DSSAR, Palm Springs Mounted Police, and Palm Springs Tramway



Tramway Hiker

October 8, 2019

Tramway to San Jacinto Peak

Written by: Blake Douglas

Around 7:30pm we received a callout for a missing hiker from the Palm Springs Tramway. This didn't come as much of a surprise because the tramway had just reopened the previous day, after being closed for a month for annual repairs, so we expected a larger-than-average number of people to be on the trails. Our hiker was just past the Wellman Divide junction; he was lost and lacked over-night gear.

James and I were the first to respond, and we coincidentally met Kase Chong in the parking lot as he was coming down from a day of hiking. Kase joined Glenn and Mike Cara running base while James and I went up and began our hike to the subject's coordinates. We made it in about 90 minutes, finding the subject about

"Normally a night mission out of the tram means that we are spending the night at the Tramway's mountain station"

RMRU RESCUER -

BLAKE DOUGLAS

200 feet south of the trail with some light bushwhacking through whitethorn, pine and manzanita. As near as our subject could tell, he had missed the Wellman Divide junction (as is often the case in this area) and once he reached the water at Wellman Cienega, he realized that he was going the wrong way, then lost the trail, and was unable to find it again before nightfall. He was in great shape other than being lost, and we immediately headed out.

Normally a night mission out of the tram means that we are spending the night at the Tramway's mountain station and take the first car down in the morning. Fortunately, Star 9 was available for this mission, and was able to land in the Round Valley meadow almost as soon as we arrived there at midnight. It was a strange and almost unnerving experience to go from a casual conversation between the three of us, to the noise and tension of a helicopter landing, and then suddenly being alone in the forest at night.

The silence and cold tend to creep in quickly when you aren't moving, and despite having been in these mountains alone, at night, many times before, it still makes me a little anxious. The minutes started to stretch on, and when I heard the

buzz of Star 9 coming back over the ridge and I was ready to go in record time. We landed at one of the tram's parking lots, then went to Denny's before heading back to Riverside. The pumpkin pancakes were pretty good.

RMRU Members Involved:

Michael Cara, Kase Chong, Douglas Blake, James Eckhardt, and Glenn Henderson



Deer Springs Mix Up

October 14, 2019

Humber Park to Deer Springs

Written by: Glenn Henderson

The team was called out for a missing hiker somewhere off the Angels Glide trail at 4:15 PM. She had started at Humber Park and was to return out the Deer Springs trail just north of Idyllwild. We decided to meet at the Deer Springs trailhead.



Glenn, Sheriff, Subjects, Vinay, and Blake at Base

When we got there, we met Sheriff's officer Funkhouser. He reported that she had been found by other hikers on Suicide Rock and were hiking her out. I sent Vinay to hike in, meet them and hike out with our subject.

Meanwhile the husband was worried about his Wife, so he started

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hiking in from Humber park to find her. His last text was that he had gone one and half miles too far and was going back. No more signal from him so was he going back to Humber or out to Deer Springs Trailhead?

Vinay was back at base with the wife and I then sent he and Blake Douglas in Deer Springs to find the husband. An hour later they radioed that they had met up with the husband and were continuing back out with him.

Everyone was back at base by 8:30 PM.

RMRU Members Involved:

Cameron Dickinson,
Douglas Blake, James Eckhardt,
Glenn Henderson and Vinay Rao

Missing Man Fresno OES

October 18, 2019

Outside of Fresno in Sierra

Written by: Glenn Henderson

The team was activated for a search northeast of Fresno along the Kings River in the Sequoia National forest. We were searching for a 65-year-old man that had been missing for six weeks. Fresno activated the OES (Office of Emergency System) to get statewide help. Shani, Cameron, and Blake responded at 7 PM on Saturday, October 19 arriving at basecamp at 2 AM. I left at 4 AM on Sunday, October 20 arriving at 11:30. When I got to basecamp, they told me that our team was on an assignment following up stream along Kings River. I was to catch up and do another assignment downstream

from their starting point. We all completed our assignments and met up at 6PM. Fresno had a kitchen set up and fed us all well.

Cameron and Blake had to get back to work on Monday, so they left, and Shani and I pitched our tents alongside the river ready for another assignment on Monday. We were assigned to a Fresno county search dog team and to two members of BAMRU (Bay Area Mountain Rescue Unit). Our assignment was to drive further downstream and search between the river and the road for 2 miles. Lots of steep terrain and POISON OAK!!! I managed to bring some home with me that appeared a week later. No clues of any kind were found.

Fresno had been on the search for two weeks and with the statewide call out the search was scaled back and will be continued by Fresno SAR. Shani and I packed up our gear and were on the road by 2:30 in the afternoon and got home at 8 PM.

It's always disappointing to leave a search without finding anything. It's especially hard to leave and know that the family does not have closure. I hope that something will be found soon by Fresno SAR.

Note: Unfortunately this man's body was found outside the search area a few weeks later.

RMRU Members Involved:

Cameron Dickinson,
Douglas Blake, Glenn Henderson
and Shani Pynn

Skyline Hiker

October 27, 2019

Skyline Trail to San Jacinto

Written by: James Eckhardt

We were called out to search for a skyline hiker reported missing by his hiking party. The subject had become separated from his group at Wellman Divide when his hiking companions had started to run back to the tram. The intention had been to meet at the Tramway; however, the subject did not make it.

With that information, Cameron, Blake, Tony and I met at Humber Park with the intention of hiking to Wellman Divide. As we were gearing up for the hike, we noticed a light coming down the Devil's Slide trail, and sure enough, it was the subject. After giving the subject food and water (he had run out of both), we handed him over to the Sheriff's officer Funkhouser to get a ride back to his friends.

As is often the moral from our rescues, it is essential to never leave a hiking companion. This mistake could have led to a long search, but thankfully in this case, the conclusion was rapid and simple.

RMRU Members Involved:

Cameron Dickinson, Douglas
Blake, James Eckhart and
Tony Hughes



*Figure 8 Follow Through
with Tie off*

Body Recovery

October 30, 2019

Reche Canyon

Written by: Daniel Tran

Our team was contacted by the Sheriff at approximately 7:30 PM to assist them with the recovery of a deceased individual from Reche Canyon. Eric, Shani, Blake, James, Cameron and I arrived on the scene and Vinay brought the truck from Hemet station.

Since we were told it was very steep, we took pickets and ropes in case we needed to lower the litter. We hiked along a trail and up a steep hill where we then quickly located the subject and put them into the litter.

Thankfully, while we were up there, we found a less-steep route and did not need to establish an anchor in order to extract the subject. The team returned to base and then we headed home.

A few homeowners were kind enough to allow us to park on their property and the Sheriff helped us out by providing an ATV to carry our heavy gear.

RMRU Members Involved:

Cameron Dickinson, Douglas Blake, James Eckhart, Eric Holden, Shani Pynn, Vinay Rao, and Daniel Tran



Double Fisherman's Knot
AKA Grapevine knot

Dehydrated Hiker

November 16, 2019

Dripping Springs

Written by: Tony Hughes

RMRU along with DSSAR were at Hemet-Ryan airport for our twice per year training with Sheriff's Aviation. We were just getting ready to start a rotation of daytime "hover step" practice when one of the deputies asked who wanted to go on a rescue. Several people volunteered and ultimately it was narrowed down to me. We didn't have much info other than there was a dehydrated female at Dripping Springs.

We got her coordinates and it turned out she was about 10 miles from the trailhead. She was alone and it was getting close to dusk. Pilot Chad Marlatt, TFO Jerry Osterloh, and I flew to her coordinates and started looking for her from the air.

We circled the area for a few minutes and scanned up and down the trail with no luck.

She was wearing all black and blended into the background. She was tossing her backpack in the air to get our attention and Jerry actually spotted her blond hair against the background at a hairpin turn just up trail from the coordinates we received.

Chad was able to land very close to her, Jerry opened the door and pulled her inside. We landed at Vail Lake where Cal Fire was waiting to ensure the subject was OK and help her get where she needed to go.

After dropping off the subject, we flew back to Hemet-Ryan and continued our training.

RMRU Members Involved:

Tony Hughes.

RSO Aviation: Pilot Chad Marlatt and TFO Jerry Osterloh.



Anza Search

November 21 - 23, 2019

Anza California

Written by: James Eckhardt

On the evening of November 21, we were called out to search for a missing elderly male with diabetes in Anza. The subject had come to Anza from Mexico to visit relatives but had left abruptly with the stated intention of returning to Mexico.



Blake and Cameron
making plans at base.

Eric ran base while dog teams, RSO deputies, Star-9, the drone team and Blake, Cameron, Josh, Mike and I cut for sign around the subject's point last scene near his relatives' residence. We concluded our evening with a grid search of an area where the dogs had hit on in an earlier search.

With no further clues found, we prepared to expand our search the next morning with more county resources. DSAR members, Star-9,

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ROVE, dog teams, the drone team, many deputies and RMRU members Blake and Cameron responded.



Tony Searching a Drainage.

We searched all day with no success and were met with some difficulty searching large tracts of land due to residential access issues. Most to all clues found throughout the day could not be attributed to our subject, so we prepared to expand our search areas on the third day of the search.



James at Base Sunset.

On the 23rd, we continued the search with many of the same county resources, again with no sight of the subject. When all but one team had finished the day's assignments, the subject was found alive and well very close to the point last seen.

We are grateful for the help of all involved including DSAR, SERT, ROVE, the drone teams, Mounted Posse, Search Dogs, Star-9 and the many deputies.

RMRU Members Involved:

Cameron Dickinson, Douglas Blake, James Eckhardt, Michael George, Josh Gould, Eric Holden, Tony Hughes, Shani Pynn, Tyler Shumway, and Raymond Weden.



Skyline Rescue

November 30, 2019

Top of Skyline, Grubs Notch

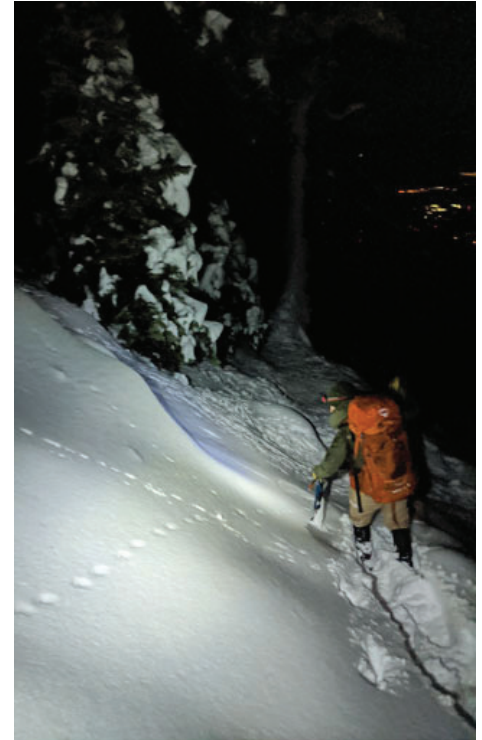
Written by: Blake Douglas

An unusually productive storm system arrived on our mountain on Wednesday, November 27th, and dumped snow for three days, culminating in the largest November snowfall in 50 years. These are the sort of conditions in which we're surprised if we don't receive a callout.

That inevitable callout came at 5pm on Saturday, while I was in Idyllwild with my family. Our subjects were reported to be on the Skyline trail just past Coffman's Crag, tired and possibly lost, but not injured. Skyline is one of the most difficult trails in the country, and the sections just below the tram are probably the worst parts of the trail to travel in winter. Even in clear weather this section of the trail is steep, difficult to find and follow, and adjacent to some dangerous terrain.

Tony, James and I responded. Our plan was to follow our typical tram callout procedure; gather members and equipment at the foot of the tram road, take as many of us up together as possible, retrieve the subjects, and bring them back to the tram overnight to await the first car down in the morning,

since it's rare for a subject to make it back to the tram during its normal operating hours. James, being exhausted from a day of hiking, would run base, and Tony and I would be Team 1.



Blake Breaking Trail to Subjects.

After checking in with the State Parks officers in Long Valley, we followed a set of recent snowshoe tracks over Grubb's Notch and down a few of the switchbacks, where the tracks abruptly ended, and we broke trail from that point forward. Travel was slow and moderately difficult, even with snowshoes we were post holing more than a foot deep in several places. On the bright side the weather was perfect for a rescue, with no wind, and temperatures slightly above freezing, although this did mean that the trees were melting onto us continuously.

When we reached our subjects' elevation, we briefly considered

attempting a traverse, but the depth of snow and the terrain between us made it immediately clear that this path wasn't worth the attempt.

We decided to descend and continue breaking trail until we either found our subject's tracks or had a clear line of sight to them. At this point we had cell phone and occasional voice contact, but they seemed to be on the other side of a ridge.

We found their tracks about 30 minutes later, branching abruptly from the trail and up a drainage, following a set of deer tracks. It was never clear to us why they followed the deer tracks when those tracks clearly broke from the trail well before the ascent to Grubb's Notch, but my assumption is that Gaia failed to acquire their location due to the amount of rock in that area.

Other similar locations in our mountains, such as Caramba, have done the same thing; another reason to carry a map and compass. The ascent to our subjects was probably one of the more difficult hikes I've endured on a mission. I kept thinking "any second now, they'll be right over that next tree...past that next rock...yep, any second now... only to have Tony check Gaia and find that we were still hundreds of feet below them.

If you've never hiked Skyline and you're reading this as a means of learning about the trail, know this; the trail never involves bushwhacking, nor rock climbing. If

you're doing either of these things, you're not on the trail.

We reached our subjects around midnight, on top of a small promontory that required a 10-foot climb to reach them, which was fortunately easy to navigate and had some solid hand and foot-holds.



Blake Leading Subjects Out.

They were cold but in good spirits and ready to hike out immediately; after we all warmed up with some hot drinks and food, we began the long trip back to the tram. This time I didn't wear my snowshoes because our subjects didn't have any either; it would be better if I found postholes and kicked steps rather than letting our subjects potentially injure themselves doing so. All this together meant the 2-mile round trip took 7 hours.

We arrived at the tram around 3am, ready for a few hours of sleep

on the floor and a quiet ride down the mountain at sunrise. What went wrong:

There were several things that went right with this mission, and we were confident that our subjects would have survived the night if we weren't able to reach them. The three main problems that led to this mission were a lack of familiarity with the trail and terrain, a lack of snowshoe traction, and a lack of overnight gear.

First, if you know you're going into snowy terrain, bring snow traction. Snowshoes, crampons, and/or micro-spikes - any of them are better than nothing. If you haven't broken trail in snow before, expect it to be many times harder than hiking in clear conditions and plan accordingly.

Second, if you're hiking a difficult wilderness trail, try to hike or scout it first when it's snow-free, so you aren't doing guesswork trail-breaking if your navigation equipment fails.

Check your navigation frequently to ensure that you're on the trail, especially in sections when going off-trail means wasting valuable time and energy and getting into potentially deadly terrain.

RMRU Members Involved:

Douglas Blake, James Eckhardt, and Tony Hughes.



ABOUT RIVERSIDE MOUNTAIN RESCUE UNIT

FOUNDED 1961

MEMBER MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION 1963

GOVERNING BODY: RIVERSIDE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

MEMBERS: ORIGINAL: 6 | CURRENT MEMBERS: 31

ANNUAL BUDGET: ORIGINAL \$200 | CURRENT \$15,000

MISSIONS: TOTAL OVER 2,000 | AVERAGE PER MONTH: 3.33

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