



Missions
January-March 2021

Thank You!

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

Countless people owe their lives



OUR SUSTAINING MEMBERS



January 1 - March 31, 2021

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RESCUE TEAM MEMBERS



Thomas Blanke - Oceanside | **Coby Brown** - Hemet | **Steve Bryant** - Alta Loma

Pete Carlson - Blue Jay | **Kase Chong** - Hemet | **Shawn Dennstedt** - San Diego

Cameron Dickinson - Temecula | **Kirk Cloyd** - Hemet | **Derek Donovan** - Temecula

Blake Douglas - Riverside | **James Eckhardt** - Riverside | **Corey Ellison** - Laguna Niguel

Kaitlyn Ellison - Laguna Niguel | **Gary Farris** - Palm Desert | **Matt Frenken** - Hemet

Michael George - Riverside | **Donny Goetz** - Los Angeles | **Josh Gould** - Murrieta

Beth Jeffery - Murrieta | **Glenn Henderson** - Hemet | **Eric Holden** - Temecula

Tony Hughes - Yorba Linda | **Kevin Kearn** - Huntington Beach | **Rob May** - Riverside

Robert Newton - Hemet | **Dana Potts** - Corona | **Shani Pynn** - Riverside

Vinay Rao - San Jacinto | **Tyler Shumway** - Hemet | **Becky Templeton** - Murrieta

Ray Weden - Murrieta | **Gwenda Yates** - Hemet

Support Members

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

MISSION REVIEWS

January-March 2021

Page 4



On the Cover -

RMRU Climbing Tower

Riverside County Sheriff Dept. -

Hemet Station

Photo -

Beth Jeffrey - RMRU

President's Message

Greetings!

Well, here we are looking at the end of April. The year is 25% over and we have already logged 14 missions in.

The major change in our lives is the addition of the H145 Airbus helicopter to the Riverside Sheriff's aviation squadron.

This is a twin-engine helo that can carry 3 times the number of rescuers at a time and can fly in most inclement weather.

We have been training with it for the last month with many more trainings scheduled in the next few months to include night time hoists.

Just after the first training it was used on a rescue inserting RMRU members in the hills above Corona with great success. The Airbus has

been extremely busy with rescues from the day it was put into service.

We have three new members that have joined RMRU and more are waiting for approvals. We welcome all the help and new ideas that they may bring.

We are constantly looking for more members to join our team in helping lost or injured in the wilderness.

Plan to hike safe!
Yours in Rescue,
Glenn Henderson



Double Fisherman's Knot
(Grapevine)

Newsletter Editor -
Gary Farris

Mountain Rescue Association



*Consists of 100 teams
with over 2,500 search and
rescue volunteers
located in the United States
and Canada.*

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

*RMRU hosted the MRA
California Region's
Tracking Recertification in
March 2020*

Mission Reviews

January - March 2021

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



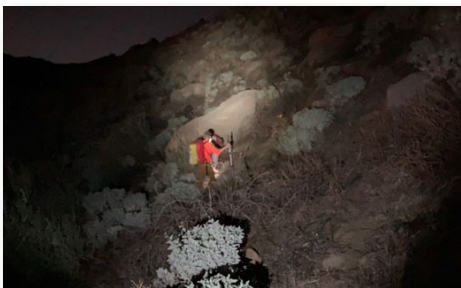
Box Springs Lost Hiker

January 11, 2021

Box Springs Mountains,
Riverside

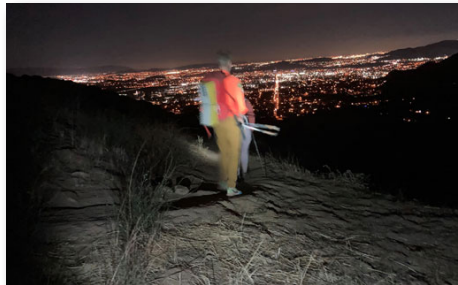
Written by Blake Douglas

RMRU was activated at 6:59pm on a Monday January 11th, for a hiker lost on the Two Trees Trail in the Box Springs Mountains of Riverside. Since I live directly below the "C" landmark on these hills, and James Eckhardt lives two blocks from me, we were anticipating a record response time.



James helps Subject back to Trail.

The Two Trees Trail is rated as a moderate route by trail websites, gaining 1000 feet in 1.5 miles, roughly following a shallow, shade less ridge through scrub brush to a parking area and overlook on a plateau; the overlook and trail are popular among locals. Our subject's coordinates placed her half



James hikes Subject back down on Trail.

way up the trail, but a quarter mile off, in one of the numerous drainages that break up the hillsides.

James and I reported to the lower trailhead, only to find that the RSO deputies had responded to the upper trailhead. Team president Glenn Henderson made contact between the RSO deputies and us. It was reported that the deputies had attempted to hike down to the subject, but the terrain became too steep, so we were advised to prepare for a technical rescue.

We located the subject at 7:48, with less than 30 minutes of hiking, fortunately in non-technical terrain with only minor navigational considerations. Our subject had set out to hike a loop route, completing the Two Trees Trail and then taking an alternate route down.

This alternate route did not work out, and lacking a light source, she was unable to proceed once night fell. With no medical or technical considerations, we completed the mission as a simple hike out back to the trailhead for a happy reunion with her family.

Lessons from this rescue are oft-repeated ones. Always bring a dedicated light source (not your phone). If you doubt your navigation or ability to complete an unfamiliar route, consider turning back to a familiar one. Do not rely on only one source of information when planning a hike; online guides are, in our experience, frequently inaccurate, sometimes showing trails where none exist.

RMRU Members Involved:

Coby Brown, Cameron Dickinson, Blake Douglas, James Eckhardt, and Vinay Rao.



Prussik Hitch

MISSION REVIEWS JANUARY - MARCH 2021

Hoist Mt. Biker

January 18, 2021

Santa Rosa Mountains

Written by Glenn Henderson

I received a call at 9:45 Monday morning with a request for a hoist rescue of a 51-year-old female mountain biker in the Santa Rosa mountains.

I rolled out to Hemet Ryan air base. As we were flying to the biker location we were called off and told that Cal Fire had it under control.

RMRU Members Involved:

Glenn Henderson.

**Recover Remains**

February 05, 2021

Pinyon Pines Area

Written by Glenn Henderson

We searched for Rosario Garcia on July 9 and July 10. Also, on August 8 and again in September without finding any other clues as to her whereabouts. A drone searcher found possible evidence of her and we responded on Friday, February 5 and did find her remains. They were recovered with the Riverside County Coroner's office and RMRU. Our sincere condolences to the Garcia family.

RMRU Members Involved:

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

**Missing Skyline Hiker**

February 07, 2021

Long Valley, Upper Tramway

Written by Pete Carlson

At 5am the call comes that a female hiker has been reported overdue on a hike up the Skyline Trail from Palm Springs and then heading over to Idyllwild. We are to meet at Keenwild Forest Service Helipad and will be flown into different points on the mountain to search. As everyone arrives at base assignments are made and the order of flying in is set up.



Rescuers at base, Subject front row second from right.

First in will be Tyler and James, they will search from the air first flying the whole Skyline Trail and then be put into Long Valley at the Upper Tramway. NOTE: The Tramway is closed due to COVID-19. Once in they will check Long Valley area quickly and then begin descending the Skyline Trail looking for tracks and yelling trying to make contact.

Next in are Cameron and Rob who will be put in on the Skyline Trail around snow line and begin by going up to the snow line and looking for tracks. If they find none they will start down the Skyline.

Then Beth and I go into Long Valley and will start hiking up to

Round Valley and Wellman's Divide. As we land and get out of the helicopter, we see James waving at us and then see Tyler with someone else. We quickly realize it is the subject. We turn around and signal the helicopter to stay put. James goes up and tells the pilot that we have the subject. Tyler and the overdue hike get into the helicopter to be taken back to base.

It turns out that Tyler had checked the Ranger Station and bathrooms in case the subject was over there. As he was coming back to meet James and start down the Skyline Trail, he saw someone walking towards him, it was the missing female hiker. She had a hard time getting up the last icy section of the Skyline to Long Valley. Then as she tried to hike to Idyllwild via the Willow Creek Trail, she found she was post holing up to her knees in soft snow. She was wearing tennis shoes.

She found some plastic bags and put them over her socks and up her legs to try and keep dry. After getting part way down to Willow Creek she realized she could not make it and headed back to Long Valley. She spent the night around Hidden Lake, and in the morning heard the Helicopter and headed back to Long Valley.

We had two more teams ready to go, one to come into Long Valley and hike the Willow Creek Trail to Idyllwild and another to go into Skunk Cabbage Meadow and head down towards Caramba. After Tyler and the Subject were in base, next pick up was Cameron and Rob. Then I was flown out as a sin-

gle load and last James and Beth got flown out. Again, this mission was caused by someone not understanding the winter condition when doing the Skyline Trail. You must have at least Micro-Spikes and know how to use them. And for the top soft snow, tennis shoes will not really work. With the Tramway closed there were no tracks in Long Valley or going out any of the trails, so anyone going up there must know how to navigate and find the trails buried in snow. You must be in top condition hike up the Skyline and then to post hole through deep snow.

RMRU Members Involved:

Tom Blanke, Coby Brown, Pete Carlson, Cameron Dickinson, Kaitlyn Ellison, James Eckhardt, Glenn Henderson, Eric Holden, Beth Jeffery, Rob Newton, Tyler Shumway, and Becky Templeton.

Missing Woman Hwy 74

February 15, 2021

Highway 74 Area below Mt. Center

Written by Glenn Henderson

At 8:50 pm the team is called out by call captain Gwenda Yates. It seems that a Danielle was hiking down the drainage next to highway 74 towards Hemet. She had dialed 911 and reported that it had gotten dark and was lost.

Seven of us rolled out and went to a phone ping location about 400' from 74 and Strawberry creek drainage. A team of 3 went to the ping location while another team

went to where the drainage crosses 74. After much calling out and not finding any sign (footprints) in the bottom, the teams then went up to where the trail starts. Again, nothing was found. Since it was a burner phone, we did not have a number to call and could not ping it again. So, everyone was released and returned home at 12:30 am.

RMRU Members Involved:

Coby Brown, Cameron Dickinson, Glenn Henderson, Beth Jeffery, Rob Newton, Vinay Rao, and Becky Templeton.

Injury Simpson Park

February 19, 2021

Simpson Park, Hemet

Written by Vinay Rao

Most of RMRU's missions are in the San Jacinto Mountains. This mission happened to be in a semi-urban park – Simpson Park – in Hemet.

At approximately 4:15pm RMRU was activated to assist a hiker who had fallen while hiking a trail and had possibly hurt her leg. Some of the responding team members live close by the response time was very quick.



Subject being wheeled into base by RMRU members.

Glenn was the first to arrive at the Park and met CSO Jeff Funkhouser. The subject's cell phone ping indicated she was only a few hundred yards below the upper parking lot. RSO Aviation's Star 9 flew over the location and was able to, via radio, talk Glenn to her location. Glenn confirmed that she was injured and stayed with her until Vinay, the second team member to arrive at the upper parking lot, was able to walk down to her location along with three CalFire personnel. A quick assessment by RMRU and CalFire made it clear that she had injured her right knee and was able not to walk out of the area.

Meanwhile, James, Coby and Thomas had arrived at the lower parking area with the team van and were asked to prepare the litter to carry the subject out. Vinay left the area where the subject was, went to the lower parking lot and guided the litter team to the subject's location which was only about 3/4 mile from the road.

While this group was getting the subject in to the litter, Blake and Robert also arrived at the lower parking lot. Vinay re-traced his steps to bring them to the location. We all met up on the trail and with a smooth team effort were able to get the subject quickly and safely to a waiting AMR ambulance for transport to the hospital.

RMRU Members Involved:

Tom Blanke, Coby Brown, Blake Douglas, James Eckhardt, Glenn Henderson, Rob Newton, and Vinay Rao.

Lights in the Hills

February 21, 2021

Anza Area

Written by Blake Douglas

RMRU was activated at 3am on February 21st to investigate a report of lights sighted near an abandoned mine near Cahuilla Mountain in Anza.

Vinay and I reported to the Hemet-Ryan airport to fly in with RSO Aviation. After a short recon we spotted dim blue lights directly at the mine's coordinates, but on closer inspection the pilot and TFO determined these to be Christmas lights, possibly set up by locals or a transient. With no sign of motion, heat, or habitation on Star 9's instruments, we agreed that there was no emergency and returned to base.

RMRU Members Involved:
Blake Douglas and Vinay Rao



Lights in the Hills - 2

February 23, 2021

Anza Area

Written by Blake Douglas

Call Captain Gwenda Yates put out a request for team members on the evening of February 23rd. Apparently, RSO was continuing to receive reports from concerned citizens regarding the lights at the abandoned mining site on Cahuilla Mountain that we had investigated a few days earlier. Our objective was to locate and remove whatever the light source was, while planning for the possibility of a rescue.



Blue Lights Cameron.

We met up with Deputy Funkhauser at an unnamed trailhead inside a gated community bordering on National Forest land. Based on satellite imagery it appeared that the road or trail that led to the mine was still in use, but this route did not appear on any maps of established routes. We departed with a deputy accompanying us as a precaution due to previous security concerns in the area.

The trail was well-maintained and showed abundant signs of recent use. About halfway to the mine we spotted the blue lights that were visible from Star 9, but also a brighter, white light that repeatedly turned on and off, but did not move. This turned out to be a solar-powered LED with a motion sensor, which was probably being set off by wildlife, or vegetation moving in the wind. Likewise, the Christmas lights were attached to a small solar panel.

The remains of the mine consisted of a large tailing pile with various archaeological leftovers, but nothing resembling a hole in the earth where someone might have fallen. The lights appeared to have been installed on a cliffside intentionally, but perhaps without the forethought as to how they could be interpreted. After removing them, and taking a photo, we hiked out without incident.

RMRU Members Involved:
Cameron Dickinson and
Blake Douglas.



Rescue Two Stranded Hikers

March 2, 2021

Massacre Canyon

Written by Rob Newton

A call went out to Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit around 7:30pm for two hikers stranded in San Jacinto's Massacre Canyon. Cameron, Coby, Kase, Mike, and Rob rolled out to the scene and began planning for a potentially technical rescue.

Massacre Canyon is a short but treacherous hike made popular by three waterfalls which can be utilized for short repels or fourth class (possibly up to fifth class) climbing. There are two options to reach the upper falls – hike through the riverbed and climb up the first waterfall or take the trail near the top of the canyon, then repel down to the falls.

Knowing the subjects were stuck between the second and third

waterfalls, which creates a walled-in room with vertical rock walls on three sides and the drop over the second waterfall on the fourth side, the team decided to take the upper trail on their initial approach to reduce the amount of necessary climbing in the dark. Once they arrived at a washed-out area of the trail, the subject's shoes were found on a rock where the trail drastically narrows. It was decided the best approach would be to descend the rockslide to see if it was possible to hike out on that route to avoid the washed-out sections of the upper trail. At this point verbal contact was made with the subjects and the team told them to stay put, assuring them help was on the way.

Kase made the initial descent on the rockslide and successfully navigated his way about 100 feet down the slope to the riverbed below. Kase continued up the trail to the subjects, who at this point were roughly one quarter mile from the washout, while the rest of the team made their way down the slope one at a time due to the amount of falling debris the descent was causing. Mike went next, followed by Rob and Cam. Once all three reached the riverbed, Kase confirmed via radio he was with the subjects and they were ok.

When the rest of the team reached the base of the second waterfall, Kase gave instructions on the route he took to climb up and around the third waterfall to then repel in on an existing fixed rope. After some initial confusion on his first attempt, Rob was able to navigate the wall west of the waterfall

on his second try, followed by Cam, and they descended to the top of the third waterfall together. This left Mike at the base of the second waterfall to assist from below with the lowering of the subjects. Rob and Cam handlined down to Kase and the subjects and began planning to lower them down the second waterfall.

"Our subjects had gone on their hike late in the day with no food, no water, and no light source."

RMRU RESCUER -
BLAKE DOUGLAS

While waiting for the rest of the team, Kase created an anchor with a length of webbing and an existing piton in the rock wall. We decided our best course of action was to belay our subjects down to Mike via a top rope set up and a few minutes later, we were in position to lower our subjects. Rob belayed on the ATC directly below the anchor and Cam acted as edge attendant. Kase split the distance between Rob and Cam to backup belay and relay communications over the noise of the waterfall. Our first subject was lowered without incident and after pulling the helmet and harness back up, the second subject was lowered safely as well. Rob, Cam and Kase then repelled themselves down using the ATC.

After an easy hike back to the washout, Rob and Kase climbed back to the trail traversing the top of the canyon with a call out rope.

The plan was to find a suitable anchor and belay position to assist our subjects on their final ascent. After finding a horn to wrap webbing around, we used an overhand on a bight to build a Munter hitch to pull up our first subject. Rob then lowered Kase to put him in a better position to accurately throw the rope to our second subject. Once he was up and safely positioned on the trail, Kase lowered Rob for one final rope toss to Mike and Cam below. They handlined their way up and the team and subjects had an uneventful hike back to base, completing the mission successfully.

Our subjects had gone on their hike late in the day with no food, no water, and no light source. This is an important reminder to always carry appropriate gear and supplies, no matter how short of a hike you anticipate.

RMRU Members Involved:

Coby Brown, Kase Chong, Cameron Dickinson, Michael George, and Rob Newton.



Rescue Two Stranded Hikers

March 13, 2021

Skyline Trail, Palm Springs

Written by Rob Newton

RMRU was activated at 530pm on Saturday March 13, for two hikers stuck on the Skyline trail. With few team members available, call captain Gwenda Yates directed Rob Newton and me to respond to the Hemet Ryan hangar, with the intention of extracting the

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR RMRU TEAM MEMBERS !

hikers using a helicopter hoist. Dark clouds building over the San Jacinto peak made this option look increasingly unlikely.

The hikers were reported to be near the 7200' elevation area of the trail, in a region known at the Traverse. Despite being close to the Mountain Station of the Palm Springs Tram, this area sees the highest proportion of our rescues. The navigation and terrain are considerably more difficult in winter than any other part of the trail, compounded by the fact that hikers are usually traveling lightly (i.e., unequipped for snow or an overnight emergency) and they typically reach this area late in the day, already tired after hours of hiking.

My immediate concern was hypothermia, as the remote location usually means that it can be anywhere from one to three hours before we reach a subject. Fortunately, we spotted their light much lower than their reported coordinates, at the 6200' level approaching the snowline. However, the 30mph winds made a hoist impossible, and the winds were worse at every lower point on the trail, meaning we could not even be dropped off by hover step. As we flew back to Hemet Ryan, we evaluated our options, and determined the only viable one was to hike up the trail. Our subjects were in phone contact with Gwenda and were retracing their steps by using their cellphone light, but the battery was almost dead, and they had no overnight equipment.

We arrived at the trailhead in Palm

May 2021 RMRU Helitac Training



New "Rescue 9" Helicopter (left)
& "Star 9"



View from on the Hoist
to "Rescue 9"



Inside "Rescue 9"
as a team member is hoisted

Springs around 830pm, and departed at 9, feeling fresh and warm in 65-degree temperatures and packs as light as we could justify, considering we had something like a mile of vertical gain ahead of us. We reached the first rescue box around an hour later, and the halfway cairn by 1130.

At that point we began to slow down and perform callouts, as the trail becomes less distinct, and it can be easy for someone to wander down into one of the adjacent canyons. While we had no response to our callouts, we were able to begin tracking, finding two pairs of prints that only went uphill.

We finally found our subjects hunkered among some brush just off trail on Mars Ridge at the 5000' area. They were uninjured, but tired and cold, and we set about warming and evaluating them, and making hot drinks for everyone (Rob and I were not feeling so cozy now that the temperatures had dropped into the 40s and our shirts were soaked in sweat). Our subjects had begun hiking at 7am the previous morning and had not reached the snowline until late in the day.

They had one pair of micro spikes which broke almost immediately, and the snow eventually went up to their knees. After seeing other hikers turn around, they realized they would be unable to reach the Palm Springs Tram before it closed and called for help. Other than being tired, one of their shoes had practically disintegrated and was being held together with tape. Af-

ter repairing this as best we could, we began hiking down at 1am. We were looking at 5 miles of distance and 4000 feet of descent.

Skyline is not formally considered a trail by the Forest Service, so it receives no true maintenance or ergonomic overhaul. This lack of user-friendliness leads to a large portion of the trail consisting of "stair-step" rocky terrain, somewhat unique among the steeper trails in Socal, which is alright for ascending, but terrible for descending.

One of our subjects had an existing knee injury, which seemed like it might be a minor inconvenience at first, but it quickly became apparent that the trail and the knee were not getting along very well. The subject was barely able to put weight on the leg on a descending step, and despite using a brace and compression wraps, their speed quickly dropped to around half a mile per hour, and they frequently had to sit down in order to descend steps of more than a few inches.

With the limited resources available, we had no real option other than to monitor the subject's condition and hope for the best as we descended. Thankfully, there were no complications and we simply continued descending at the best pace the subject was able to maintain. Ultimately the descent took around 9 hours, arriving at the trailhead at 1030am, where the subjects were checked out by the Palm Springs Fire Department. I had been active on the mission for around 16 hours at that point,

and I took a nap in my car before driving home.

Lessons:

At one point during the descent, we encountered some hikers beginning their own bid for the tram, and one mentioned that I should "show them the sign". This is a bit of a dry joke because there are numerous signs along the first mile or two of the Skyline trail which explicitly state that deaths and rescues are common on this trail, and that all persons should carry the appropriate equipment.

Nevertheless, our subjects had not only failed to notice this sign, but realized they were carrying none of the equipment listed on it.

As is often the case with Skyline rescues, research would have gone a long way to preventing this situation.

Some key points include;

- never rely on a cellphone as your only source of communication, navigation, and light
- be aware that remote trails are likely to be unbroken after recent snowfall
- introduce yourself to snow travel and equipment in a low risk setting such as a fire road

RMRU Members Involved:

Blake Douglas and Rob Newton.

THE 10 ESSENTIAL SYSTEMS

1. Navigation

Waterproof topographic map or in a waterproof container plus a magnetic compass. Optional altimeter or GPS receiver.

2. Sun protection

Sunglasses, sunscreen for lips and skin, hat, clothing for sun protection.

3. Insulation

Hat, gloves, jacket, extra clothing for coldest possible weather during current season.

4. Illumination

Headlamp, flashlight, batteries. LED bulb is preferred.

5. First-aid supplies

plus insect repellent.

6. Fire

Butane lighter, windproof matches in waterproof container.

7. Repair kit and tools

Knives, multi-tool, scissors, pliers, screwdriver, trowel/shovel, duct tape, cable ties.

8. Nutrition

One day of extra food.

9. Hydration

Extra 2 liters of water for one additional day.

10. Emergency shelter

Waterproofed bivouac sack, tarp or space blanket plus insulated sleeping pad

ABOUT RIVERSIDE MOUNTAIN RESCUE UNIT

FOUNDED 1961

MEMBER MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION 1963

GOVERNING BODY: RIVERSIDE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

MEMBERS: ORIGINAL: 6 | CURRENT MEMBERS: 38

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

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

RMRU BOARD MEMBERS 2021 - 2022

Glenn Henderson- President

Eric Holden - 1st Vice-President | Cameron Dickinson - 2nd Vice-President

Shani Pynn - Secretary | Blake Douglas - Member at Large



BECOME A SUSTAINING MEMBER



SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Your donation is deductible from both your state and federal taxes

RMRU tax ID number for Not-for-Profit status 95-2497048

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Membership Types:

- ☐ Benefactor Club \$1,000 +
- ☐ Summit Club \$500
- ☐ Patron Club \$200
- ☐ Century Club \$100
- ☐ Supporting Club < \$100

Please send your donation to:

**Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit
43950 Acacia Street
Hemet, California 92544**

Help save a life.

Join RMRU

rmru.org



**Courage
Commitment
Compassion**

