

Two Lost Hikers Found Save

May 29th, 2007
Cactus Springs Trail
2007-011

by Patrick McCurdy

On the long Memorial Day weekend, four backpackers decided to hike the Cactus Springs Trail near Pinyon Pines. On Sunday, two decided to head home to Orange County while two others, Jonathan and Jeni, decided to stay out through the following day. That afternoon Jonathan and Jeni got separated from their camp and were reported missing when they didn't show up at home Monday night.

RMRU was called out that night and had several search teams in the field, searching all night long in the dry, rugged terrain for the two missing backpackers. Additional, Riverside County Sheriff's helicopters repeatedly flew the area in search of the two. By morning, RMRU put out the call for more people and Desert Sheriff's Search and Rescue (DSSAR) joined RMRU in the search. Sheriff's helicopters were flying search teams into their assigned area as well as making water and food drops to the teams who had spent the night in the field.



Photo: Grace Manues

I arrived about noon to find Gwenda Yates and Lew Kingman running base. With the weather promising to be quite hot, the decision had already been made to go through state Office of Emergency Services to request 30-50 additional searchers from SAR teams in other counties.

By the time John Dempsey arrived to join me in a field search team, I already had secured our assignment: We were to be flown to the subjects' camp, scout the area, then head down Deep Canyon as far as we could make it and be flown back out from there. While the helicopter circled the area of the camp looking for a place to set down, Jonathan and Jeni were spotted in a deep dry wash that ran into Deep Canyon. While their clothes blended in with the terrain, Jonathan was waving a red bandana over his head and that stood out like a signal flare.

The helicopter set John and I down a little up-canyon from the two backpackers and we

were to them in a matter of minutes. They had found some silty water in Deep Canyon and except for being tired, hungry, and a little scraped up, they were fine and eager to get back to civilization. John and I hiked them back up to the waiting helicopter and we were all four flown back to the incident command post where they were checked out by DSSAR's paramedic Sharon Ollenberger.

Many thanks to all the members of DSSAR who helped in this search, along with myself, John Dempsey, Lew Kingman, Gwenda Yates, Grace and Jim Manues, Liz Sands, Jeff Toscas, and Marty Syrette of RMRU.

See the CBS news story [here](#).



Photo: Grace Manues

John Dempsey, Jonathan, Jeni, and Patrick McCurdy, at the ICP.

RMRU is a volunteer search and rescue team that covers Riverside County and assists other teams with search and rescue efforts in other counties. Each member purchases their own equipment and takes time off work, without compensation, to participate in search and rescue missions. Team equipment is purchased from contributions from the community. We are a non-profit organization and are funded by [donations](#) from people like you.