

Two Lost Hikers Black Mt. Trail

May 8-9, 2011

Black Mt. Trail Head, San Jacinto Mountains
2011-009

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Sunday Night, May 8 - written by Patrick McCurdy:

RMRU members are always trying to figure out some way to predict when missions will happen. Bad weather and inconvenience are strong predictors. Mother's Day at dinnertime with a wet storm headed in makes a mission a near certainty. The call came at 6 p.m., two hikers lost off of Black Mountain Trail.

I got there first just after dark in a light rain, followed quickly by Frank, Gwenda, Glenn, Mike, and Nick showing up shortly thereafter. The last cell phone contact with the subjects was about 7 p.m. They said they had a fire going but their phone battery was low and must have died after that call as we never heard from them again. Since we had gotten GPS coordinates from their cell phone before the battery died, Nick, Mike, and I headed out as Team 1 about 8 p.m.

We hiked about two miles up the trail, than started bushwhacking through incredibly dense manzanita and chinquapin bushes trying to get the last half mile to the subjects' GPS coordinates. The growth was so dense that moving through it was nearly impossible. We kept calling out for the subjects, but the wind and fog made any voice contact over 1/10 of a mile impossible.

We got to the GPS coordinates, but there was no sign anyone had been there. We made our way to an area of trail that looked like someone had been earlier, but we still unable to locate our subjects. Finally around midnight, soaking wet, and with the knowledge that our subjects had a fire, the search was suspended until 6 a.m. the following morning.

Monday Morning, May 9 - written by Dana Potts:

On Monday morning I responded to the Black Mountain trail head at 6 a.m. and met up with team members Lee Arnsen and Gwenda Yates. After a brief discussion about what had been done the night before, Lee and I headed to the last known GPS coordinates from our subject's cellular phone. Upon reaching the area, Lee and I found no sign of the two and headed back to the trail to look for any sign of tracks leaving the main trail.

As we approached the trail, Lee gave out a shout for the two missing hikers and we listened. Just then the wind stopped and I heard a faint voice. Lee yelled out again and the second time we could clearly hear, "we're over here."

Within 5 minutes we were with the two missing hikers. They were in good spirits for having spent a damp and cold night out. We fed them and gave them extra warm jackets to put on before walking them down the trail to the road head. The two later told us that they were able to start a survival fire for warmth but had run out of water.



Lee, Dana, and subjects arrive at base
Photo by Patrick McCurdy

Note: Always pack a couple extra snacks, just in case. Trail mix is an easy one, plus it has protein and carbohydrates. Put it in a plastic bag, it will pack away easy. A light weight survival blanket, bivy sack, or plastic trash bag will help keep you warm and dry all night.

RMRU Team members present Sunday night: Glenn Henderson, Mike Herman, Patrick McCurdy, Nick Nixon, Frank Snider, and Gwenda Yates.

RMRU Team members present Monday morning: Lee Arson, Dana Potts, and Gwenda Yates.

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.