



Desert Search San Diego County

April 11, 2012
Anza Borrego Desert
2012-012

Written by Glenn Henderson

On April 10, 2012 RMRU was notified that help was needed for a search in San Diego. The search was for a missing 24-year-old man, Guillermo Pino, who had not been seen since Easter Sunday, April 8. San Diego Mountain Rescue was running the search and wanted us there by 7 a.m. the next morning. After putting the call out to the team we ended up with Patrick McCurdy, Fernando Moreira, and me. Fernando is a professional tracker from Reno, Nevada. He was in town to teach a series of tracking classes to RMRU on the following Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Since Fernando was in town a little early, we took him with us.

We met at the Rescue Garage (Hemet) at 6 a.m. and started driving, and driving, and driving. We were headed for Anza Borrego State Park, in the Western Carrizo Badlands (Mud Caves). We didn't arrive until 9 a.m. This area is very remote with mud hills 200 to 300 feet high. It is a type of terrain I had never seen before. These hills have long tubes created by rain and wind that go through some of the hills and some drop down vertically and then exit out the side of the hills. They are all big enough to crawl or walk through.



Searchers in mud hills
Photo by Glenn Henderson

Our assignment was to cut for sign (look for tracks) to the north and east of the PLS (place last seen). Our subject was barefoot so it should have been easy to spot his tracks but it had rained with a lot of wind the previous two days and there were dozens of tracks from searchers over the past three days. We did not find any sign.

The search was continued the following day so this time we met at the Rescue Garage at 4 a.m. and arrived on scene at 7 a.m. Our assignment was to cut for sign to the south and west of the PLS. Again we did not find any sign except for many more tracks of searchers. We finished our assignment and were then sent out to go through one of the mud caves. The one we searched went completely through one of the hills and came out the other side. It was over 1000 feet long and took quite a while to work our way through.

After finishing our second assignment we were released and returned home at 7:30 p.m. The search continued throughout the weekend but our tracking classes started at 8 a.m. Friday morning and lasted through Sunday so we did not send any other personnel.

Editor's Note: In late April 2012 the body of Guillermo Pino was found in a hole of loose dirt about 60 feet deep. Pino's body was eventually extricated from the difficult Anza-Borrego mud cave by mine rescuers on May 8, 2012.

RMRU team members present: Glenn Henderson and Patrick McCurdy.

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.