



Two Missing Marines Marion Mountain Trail

June 10, 2012

San Jacinto Mountains

2012-018

Written by Chad Marler

R.M.R.U. is most likely to be called out on a Sunday night after loved ones fail to return home after a weekend of hiking or climbing. Sunday, June 10, 2012 was no exception to the rule and at 9:21pm R.M.R.U. members received a text message to respond to two missing Marines near the Marion Mountain Trail.

Idyllwild team members Chad Marler, Les Walker, and Lee Arnson arrive to the Marion Mountain trail head at approximately 9:45pm. Deputy Horkel and hiking friends of the two lost Marines inform us that their group hiked to the San Jacinto Peak via the Marion Mountain Trail earlier that day. As the group made its way back from the peak, our lost subjects Jason and Brian, decided to leave the group and discover their own way down. Jason's cell phone is able to send text messages to say Brian has injured his ankle and they are in a drainage canyon but can't navigate their way out. They have also managed to make a fire to signal their location.

Lee and I head out on the Marion Mountain Trail while Les takes his vehicle over to the Black Canyon Road to look back to our location to try to spot the signal fire. After Lee and I hike approximately one mile at a brisk pace we hear a man's voice calling from below our location. We soon realize this is the call of our subjects and decide to leave the trail and hike down the fall line of the mountain to the sounds of the call.

Meanwhile, Les spots a signal fire from Black Canyon Road which proves to be in the direction we are heading. Les and arriving member Alan Lovegreen plan to drive up Dark Canyon Road to a spot below our location. Member Pete Carlson is now at base with the Sheriff running operations.

Within 20 minutes after establishing voice contact, Lee and I navigate down the steep and loose terrain with our headlamps in the dark still night to find our subject Jason. Jason has a 36" diameter fire that the three of us take great care in putting out. We then head 400 yards downhill to Brian who has stayed below Jason's location with his own fire. It turns out that their decision to split up, although not usually advised, is beneficial because Jason's location was away from the creek and allowed him to hear our shouts

from above. FYI, if you are ever lost, do not hang out near streams where running water sounds dominate any chance of hearing rescue members voices.



Rescuers (Lee and Chad) with Subjects
Photo by Alan Lovegreen

Les and Alan hike up to our location from Dark Canyon Road as the rest of us put out Brian's signal fire. I offer to tape Brian's ankle but he refuses treatment and is able to hike without assistance. Les and Alan lead our group the way out to Dark Canyon Road and the Marines are reunited with their chastising friends at approximately 12:45am. The subject's and their friends are very appreciative of our efforts and offer a sincere handshake of gratitude to each of the R.M.R.U. members on scene.



Subject crossing stream with rescuer Les helping
Photo by Alan Lovegreen

Mission Notes: The subjects thought they would find their own way down the mountain from San Jacinto Peak, thus leaving the trail. We found the subjects location fairly quickly because of little to no wind noise (If the wind been blowing we would not have established voice contact and hiked past their canyon location). This was a well balanced team effort by R.M.R.U. members on scene. GPS coordinates of the two fire locations were given to the Forrest Service as a precaution so they could check them in the morning.

RMRU team members present: Lee Arnson, Pete Carlson, Alan Lovegreen, Chad Marler, and Les Walker.

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.