



Missing 78 Year Old Woman

November 29, 2013
Thousand Palms Preserve
2013-039

Written by Matt Jordon

At about 2:30 pm on Friday, November 29 members of RMRU received a call out for a search in Thousand Palm Oasis for lady in her late 70's. The female subject had gone hiking and was two hours overdue when the report was made to form a search. Additionally, a CHP spotter plane was implemented and a local member of DSAR arrived shortly thereafter to assist.

Not long after I got to the Coachella Preserve, the subject's car was cordoned off with a police line and I began to note tracks leading from the vehicle. Members of the family also arrived and I interviewed them to gain more information on the possible whereabouts of our missing person. We were getting ready to go out in the field for the Search when at 3:40 the subject was spotted walking back on the same trail she had hiked out. The family standing next to me were extremely happy, calling out her name.

When I spoke to the little old lady, she was extremely aggravated that the spotter plane had not seen her. She told me that she wound up climbing a nearby hillside and removed her top -- then waved her blouse around on multiple occasions in hopes of gaining attention of the pilot. I mentioned that skin tones blend in well with the desert terrain, but she would have none of it. My overall assessment of what happened was that she was an inexperienced hiker who became separated and disoriented from her group. Instead of sticking together and returning as one, she decided to continue on solo and lost her way somewhere. Eventually she regained her bearings and (luckily) made her way back before dark. When I showed her a map and asked her to point out where she thought she had been, she couldn't orient herself and had a hard time trying to visualize where she may have come from or gone to.

The moral of the story is: Don't get separated, know your surroundings, and have a backup plan before setting out on any outdoor adventure. It would have been smart of her to have brought water and a map also.

RMRU team members present: Pete Carlson, Glenn Henderson, Matt Jorden, Lew

Kingman, Helene Lohr, Les Walker, 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.