



Missing 20 Year Old Hiker

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San Jacinto Mountains
2016-013

Written by Glenn Henderson

I received a call from dispatch at 3:09, Tuesday morning. They had a report of a 20-year-old male that had hiked up the Marion Mountain Trail with the intentions of summiting San Jacinto Peak, 10,835 feet high, and returning to his car in the same day. The family reported that he had little experience, few supplies, and was not prepared to stay overnight. Monday night into Tuesday was when a large storm hit with rain, snow, and high winds in the mountains. This led to a great sense of urgency to the situation. I put the call out to all members, loaded up my gear and headed for the garage and our rescue truck.

When I got to the trailhead I met up with team members Cameron and Lee. We were all pleasantly surprised that there was no wind! Just intermittent snow or light rain. I immediately sent them up the Marion Mountain Trail to the summit. I put the call out for more help and Lew, Kirk, Gary, Tony, and Wayne responded. Star 9 was able to get up through the clouds and began searching the area around the trail and the drainages off of the trail. They spotted what looked like prints in the snow and gave us co-ordinates to that location. I sent Tony and Gary to that location to check it out. It was about 2 miles in a straight line from basecamp but the mountains don't work like that with many ridges and ravines in the way.

I also put out a call from Desert Sheriff's Search and Rescue. Sharon and Jacob responded and hiked up the Deer Springs trail to Strawberry junction, talked to some people camped there and then continued on to the Marion Mountain Trail junction. Nothing. They then returned back the same way. Meanwhile Lee and Cam reported that they had checked for sign at the Little Round Valley campground and had now summited San Jacinto and were taking a break before continuing on down to Wellman's Divide.

On the east side of the mountain State Park Rangers were headed up from the Palm Springs Tram to the summit from their side. Other team members were now leaving to go to the Seven Pines trail head and hike up to the Marion Mountain intersection. Because it was so cold with lots of moisture we opted to send out an OES, (Office of Emergence

Services), call out for mountain teams from other counties.

About 4:30 in the afternoon we got the call that our missing subject had called his father and was in a car trying to get back to his car. It turns out that he had made a wrong turn at the Fuller Ridge trail and followed two sets of prints in the snow. The falling snow covered the tracks he was following and when he turned around he could not find his own tracks in the snow. He then dug under some rocks, covered the opening with bark and bushes and spent the night. He did have more gear than we were told and spent a fairly comfortable night except for his feet which did get pretty cold but no frostbite. He got up then next morning and hiked out the Fuller Ridge trail to Black Mountain road and then down the road to Hwy 243 where he hitched a ride back to basecamp.

I called all teams back in and all returned except for Lee and Cam who decided to go ahead and hike out from Wellman's Divide down the Angel's Glide and Devils Slide trails. I picked them up at Humber Park at 5:30 after they had hiked 17 miles, mostly on hard packed snow and ice. Lee said that they experienced complete whiteout conditions at times with snow and hail falling straight down due to no wind.

Sheriff's SERT (Sheriff's Emergence Response Team) had just arrived with their communications vehicle and personnel but they were happy to pack up again with this great outcome (as we all were). After a quick dinner at La Casita in Idyllwild, we all made it home safely.

RMRU Members Involved: Lee Arnson, Kirk Cloyd, Cameron Dickinson, Gary Farris, Glenn Henderson, Tony Hughes, Lew Kingman, and Wayne Smith.

Desert Search and Rescue Team (DSAR) Members Involved: Jacob Paull and Sharon Ollenburger.

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.