



Missing Hiker-Biker

May 13, 2016

Ortega Highway – Cleveland Nation Forest
2016-018

Written by Glenn Henderson

AGGGGGGG!!! 01:30 in the morning again! A report of a missing hiker in the Ortega Mountains near the Orange County line. I rolled out to the station and picked up the rescue truck and met Cameron on the Ortega highway. We had trouble finding where the turn off was as it was a private community. It took two hours to find the right turn and then quite a long drive up to where the deputy was waiting. He showed us on the map where the hiker was last seen and that he supposedly still at that location. Cameron and I left one of our radios with the deputy and we took off looking to go down a trail called Bluewater Trail.

I had never been on this trail before so took off not knowing what we were getting into. If I never do the Bluewater Trail again it will be too soon. Steep, rocky, narrow, steep, short switchbacks, and did I say steep? I found a sign at the bottom that says 1800 feet in 1.3 miles, Hard. They weren't kidding. Cameron had to go back to take care of some work related business so I continued on down the trail. I finally got down to where Dan, our 58-year-old missing person was supposed to be when two mountain bikers came up behind me. They were two friends of Dan and it turns out that it was a mountain biker we were looking for, not a hiker. They went on ahead of me and I made it out to Fisherman's Camp where I met Cameron and Tony who had driven around to meet me. I took one of their cars out and drove up to Tanaja trailhead to wait for them to come to me after clearing the trail to the trailhead.

Meanwhile Star 9 as well as Duke 60, the Orange County Sheriff's helicopter, was in the air searching all the trails. No luck from either one. I was wanted back in base so Star 9 landed and flew me back to base. It was now 1 PM and still no sign of Dan. I started making assignments for teams as they arrived on scene.

Judy and Gary arrived and I sent them out to cover the Bear Ridge trail. Cameron and Tony completed their assignment and I called them back into base. Ray and Eric had just arrived when Dan's wife said that she had just gotten a text that Dan was on a ridge and now had cell service. I put Ray into Star 9 with an app that located Dan's phone. Star 9

lifted off and within 30 minutes was back with Dan.



Ray and Subject reunited with Wife
Photo by Eric Holden.

It turns out that Dan tried to hike up one of the canyons and not use the trails at all. The canyons are so choked with brush that he immediately got into trouble making his way out. He abandoned his bike and continued up the canyon finally getting cell service about 5PM when he texted his wife. He was pretty scratched up and thirsty but otherwise in good health. All teams were now back in base and we headed home at 6PM to rest up for the next mission which happened at 02:00 AM the next morning. See mission 19 – 16.

RMRU Members Involved: Cameron Dickinson, Gary Farris, Glenn Henderson, Eric Holden, Tony Hughes, Judy Spowart, and Ray Weden.

Others Involved: Riverside County Sheriffs Aviation Unit Star 9 and Orange County Sheriff's helicopter Duke 60.

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.