



Lost Hiker South Ridge

November 11, 2016
South Ridge Trail to Tahquitz Peak
2016-045

Written by Glenn Henderson

On Friday November 11 at 5:30 PM we received a call of a missing hiker from the South Ridge Trail in Idyllwild. The report said that Clive was last seen on Sunday, November 6. Clive and his hiking partner Troy became separated with Troy making it back to the trailhead but not Clive. Troy was able to make contact by cell phone around 10 pm. Clive said he was out of water and food. He was cramping up and out of energy. Clive said he was going to bed down and hike out the next day. Troy went back to the South Ridge Trail Head looking for him on Monday and saw him about half a mile away, shouted out to him to go up the mountain and he would eventually get to the South Ridge Trail and he could hike out. He never showed up. Troy searched for Clive every day until Friday when he called 911 and we were activated.

Michael, Cameron, Gary, and Tony rolled up to start the search. While driving up they heard that Clive's phone was pinged showing it to be in McCall Horse camping park which is a few miles from the trailhead. They stopped there and searched around with no luck. The team then proceeded on to the South Ridge Trailhead and searched until 2:30 am when they rolled out sleeping bags and got some sleep.

I arrived at 7 AM with information that they may have been in the Chinquapin Flats area. Ray Weden had arrived by then so I sent Michael and Ray up the trail to the flats area, about 5 miles and 3000' higher. I then had the other three research the area around the trailhead but no sign was found. Tony, Gary, and Cameron had to leave so I put in a call for reinforcements from Desert Search and Rescue (DSAR). While I was waiting for DSAR Matt Jordon arrived and I sent him along with Cameron, who was leaving, to look around McCall Horse Park in the daylight. Again, nothing.

DSAR arrived with 4 members. Still fixated on the Chinquapin Flats area I sent all four of them up the South Ridge Trail to carefully check both sides of the trail where someone may have gone off the trail or walked off the end of a switchback and gotten lost.

Deputy Frank James arrived on scene and we tried to figure out what else to do. He was finally able to locate Troy and get him to base so we could talk to him some more about

where he last saw Clive. When Troy arrived, it took a little while to figure out that they were never at Chinguapin Flats but down a seldom used trail that goes to Garner Valley. When I got that information I immediately called all field teams back to base as they were all in the wrong area.

We had Troy lead us to exactly where he saw Clive last Monday. Deputy James, Matt, and I followed Troy about half a mile down the trail to a rock he said he was standing on when he last saw Clive. He pointed to a pair of large boulders about a mile away and said he was standing on them. This was not close to where any of my search teams were and when they did return to base it would take another 3 hours or so to get to the boulders due to steep terrain and dense brush completely covering the hillside.

We turned to leave when Matt said “Want to try a shout out?” Deputy James and I said ok but he has been gone from here for 5 days. We all shouted Clive’s name to the southeast. Waited. Nothing. We then tried to the northeast and as soon as we shouted got a response of “HELP!” WOW!! If Matt had not stopped us from leaving I do not believe we would have ever found Clive. Deputy James and I decided to try and hike to him but he was so far away we could not see him or get an exact location.

Deputy James then started his cop magic and got in touch with CHP to help with air surveillance. Star 9 was not on duty but did have a pilot and a TFO (technical flight officer) on standby. He got them rolling to the Hemet Ryan Hanger and get a helicopter in the air. Deputy James then got a CHP fixed wing plane that arrived on scene and had them stay in contact with Matt. He kept shouting to Clive and then directed the CHP plane to the area. After 30 to 40 minutes of flying tighter and tighter circles CHP Officer Jennifer Earle spotted Clive with binoculars from 4000’ up! WOW! She said he was waving something white but was not moving around. As soon as she reported his location we heard that Star 9 was almost ready to launch. They said they would be there in 30 minutes and wanted two RMRU members at the Forest Service Keenwild Heli base.



**TFO Eric Hannum getting ready to fly
Photo by Matt Jordan.**

Since my other teams were still a long way from getting out of the field I quickly called Matt back to base where we both got our harness's on and left for Keenwild. Star 9 was waiting for us when we got there. After a short planning talk we lifted off. We were on scene in about 4 minutes but could not find him. Officer Earle kept sight of him from 4000' while we were only 60' foot off the deck and could not fine him. It took over 20 minutes of flying in tighter and tighter circles until TFO Eric Hannum spotted him. He was wearing dark pants and shirt and blended into the bushes so well that I am amazed that Officer Earle ever saw him.



**Brushy Location Subject was Found
Photo by Matt Jordon.**

As Pilot, Mike Calhoun steadied the helicopter Eric hooked Matt up and lowered him to the ground with me close behind. By the time I got to Clive, Matt already had a helmet and screamer suit on him. Eric lowered the hook and away Clive went. They flew him to Keenwild and a waiting ambulance. Star 9 had to leave for more fuel so it gave Matt and I time to reflect on the day. If Matt had not insisted, we do a shout out I do not believe we would have found Clive in time or if we would have ever found him. If CHP Officer Jennifer Earle had not spotted him we may not have found him that day. We do not believe Clive would have lasted another day of cold and no food or water.



**Matt and Glenn waiting were Subject was Found
Photo by Matt Jordon.**

Star 9 came back and hoisted Matt and myself up and back to Keenwild. There all team members gathered to do a quick debrief and then headed home.

RMRU Members Present: Cameron Dickinson, Gary Farris, Mike George, Glenn Henderson, Tony Hughes, Matt Jordon, and Ray Weden.

Desert Search and Rescue (DSAR) Members Present: Sharon Ollenburger, Mike Smith, Jacob Paull, and Joe McEuen.

Riverside County Sheriff Officers Involved: Deputy James and Star 9 TFO Eric Hannum and Pilot Mike Calhoun.

CHP Members Involved: Fixed Wing Officer Jennifer Earle.

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.