

Black Mt. Research

June 29, 2019

Black Mt. Road near old YMCA camp

2019-035A

Written by Eric Holden

On Saturday a large-scale search was made to find any evidence of John Sturkie who had gone missing back in January. See mission on 3-20-19 for more background information. With well over 30 searchers from at least 8 different RSO teams we were hoping to bring a conclusion for the Sturkie family.



James Repealing Waterfall in Canyon
Image by Tyler Shumway.



Tyler Ascending Waterfall in Canyon
Image by James Eckhardt.

(DSSAR, SWAT, ROVE, SERT, RSO Drone Team, Star-9, RMRU, Riverside Search Dogs). We sent searchers into many difficult to reach places, some involving rappelling down waterfalls. After about 4 hours of searching the DSSAR team located John's body down a steep ravine. Star-9 assisted with lowering the coroner to John's location and retrieving him via stokes litter. Our thoughts go out to all of John's family and friends.

Written by DSSAR Member

DSSAR received a call for mutual aid from RMRU requesting assistance in the search for missing hiker John Sturkie after numerous attempts to find him over the past 5 months. DSSAR members met at the Black Mountain Command Post at 8:00 am and received our assignments from RMRU OPS Leader Eric Holden.

Jason, Joe, Mark and Allen were assigned to Search Area 13 and assigned a remote canyon just north of the area where John's truck was found. Jason, Joe, Mark, and Allen proceeded down the search area. Mark Bachli found a black and grey pullover jacket at 1:11 pm believed to be worn by John on the day he disappeared. The team photographed the jacket, marked the GPS coordinates, and called it in to the Command Post. The team then continued down the search area looking for other signs of John before noticing a smell coming up the canyon. The team spread out as far as possible in the narrow canyon

filled with boulders and overgrown brush to locate the source of the smell. Mark Bachli reached John at 1:49 pm, followed by the other team members, and called the Command Post with the GPS coordinates for John Sturkie's remains.

The Command Post relayed back and asked us to stay with the remains until the Sheriff's Deputies were able to hike down to our position and call in STAR 9 helicopter for extraction. We stayed with the remains to assist with extraction until 3 members of RMRU team (Blake, James, and Tyler) reached our location and advised us to start hiking out, as we did not need 7 SAR members and 2 Deputies to assist.



James waiting to hook litter to Helicopter
Image by Tyler Shumway.

On our way back up the canyon to await the extraction via helicopter, Mark Bachli found a cell phone. He immediately marked the GPS location and called it in to the Command Post. We then bagged the cell phone and continued our climb out of the canyon to wait for further instructions and possibly assist with the extraction. Once the helicopter arrived

with the coroner and both the remains and the coroner had safely been extracted, we proceeded down the Black Mountain truck trail to the Command Post for debriefing and sign out.

RMRU Members Involved: Pete Carlson, Cameron Dickinson, Blake Douglas, James Eckhardt, Michael George, Glenn Henderson, Eric Holden, Shani Pynn, Tony Hughes, Tyler Shumway, and Gwenda Yates.

DSSAR Members Involved: Sharon Ollenburger, Mike Smith, Michael Fogarty, Jason Roberson, Joe McEuen, Mark Bachli and Allen Langenbahn.

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.