

Founding Member: Mountain Rescue Association

Rescue



Web Edition

**IDAHO MOUNTAIN SEARCH AND RESCUE UNIT, INC. Boise, Idaho**

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## SWAN FALLS AREA K9 SEARCH – SEPTEMBER 14, 2017 OVERALL VIEW – MIKE ROWE

Upon the request of a Boise Police detective, I was asked to coordinate another search of the Snake River area east of Swan Falls Dam for a missing, despondent subject. The subject has been missing since April of this year and his vehicle had been located approximately eight miles east of the Swan Falls Dam, near the river. I worked with Rod Knopp, Taylor Grisham and Tom Wheless on the objectives set by Det. Wigington.

Based on the unusual circumstances of this missing person case, Det. Wigington wanted to check another area east of the original search, as he had some specific information indicating that the subject had been there at the time he went missing. Because of our experience with the previous search, we planned this time to move all teams by boat. Also from the previous search, a good location was selected for Base, which provided for improved communications.

At approximately 0800 hours on September 14, K9 teams were moved into their search areas along the river via an Ada County Sheriff's boat. As teams completed their search areas, they were moved to new areas under Taylor's direction. We quickly found out during the boat travels that we were going to spend a lot of time cleaning river moss out of the boat's jet intake. This slowed our ability to move teams in and out of search areas but we still achieved the objectives. According to the K9 handlers, there were several areas that the dogs showed interest in, but no evidence of human remains or property was located.

I would like to thank the members of Snake River Search and Rescue who travelled to assist our efforts. Participants in the search included IMSARU K9 teams Ann Moser and K9 Oskar, Jamie Simpson and K9 Yoki, and flankers Christi Kelley, Dave Kelley and Jim Findley. Snake River SAR members participating were Dave Ferguson and K9 Lily, Kathy Lloyd and K9 Toby, and Janet Yatchak with K9 Neo. Taylor Grisham was K9 coordinator; Mike Rowe was Incident Commander; Charlotte Gunn and Tom Wheless handled Base communications.

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## **SWAN FALLS SEARCH – ON WATER AND ON LAND** **(Continued by) CHRISTI KELLEY**

Five K9 teams were deployed along the Snake River to search for a missing man. The shoreline had thick, heavy reeds and brush. Dogs passed through more easily than people! There was only one injury: K9 Yoki sustained a skin tear from a black locust spine; after a stitch, she is recovering well. Yoki and Jamie were also the only team that had to deploy their raingear.

Finds included two rattlesnakes and dozens of dead fish along the river shore. There were several alerts [the dogs sitting in the water] from water cadaver-certified dogs Lily, Toby and Neo, but no human remains were recovered.



Neither dogs nor people enjoyed the vegetation in the search areas. —Photo by C. Kelley

## **SEARCH AT SWAN FALLS – FROM THE TOP** **(Continued by) CHARLOTTE GUNN**

Last spring, while rivers were flooding due to the runoff of the winter's heavy snowfall, a man disappeared. His truck was found in Swan Falls Canyon, disabled by hitting rocks; he was reported to have physical conditions that would prevent him from walking very far, and mental condition that might have him suicidal. When no sign of the missing man was found, the best guess was that he had gone into the raging river. As water receded toward normal flow, a couple of searches on both land and water yielded no results.

Tom Wheless and I were asked to drive out to the edge of the cliff above the river and act as radio relay for the teams that would be working both upstream and downstream from that point. From the road at the top of the drop into the canyon, we took a nice gravel road for a couple of miles across flat terrain before the fun began: (1) Dirt "roads" in all directions, including tracks that started out parallel and then went their separate ways. Fortunately, Tom had mapped and measured the route, and had put it on his GPS. (2) Flat terrain that became quite steep, with deep ruts in the dirt plus major rocks to be dodged; we were very happy that there had been no recent rain to change the dirt to mud.

Once on scene, the plan worked well. We could see the boat (looking very small from our perch) moving up and down river, and could communicate via radio with the various teams. And, thanks to the GPS and Tom, we made it back to the main road when the search ended. If you ever need to make this challenging trip, call Tom to drive it!

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## **MOCK MISSION TRAINING – SEPTEMBER 16, 2017**

### **ALISA RETTSCHLAG**

Chris Brookman, Jamie Simpson and Jeff Munn set up a mock mission for the record books. With the help of friends as “subjects and family members,” the scenario allowed real-life mission practice for many aspects of our unit: operations, communications, family liaison, tracking, K-9s trained for air-scent and cadaver, and technical rescue. It even allowed all of us working in the “mission” to realize half-way through that the search was possibly a crime scene.

We got a callout at around 6 a.m. to meet at the Compound at 7 a.m. I knew this was coming but didn't expect the formality. Gregg and I got our packs together and headed for the Compound, where close to 20 members were already present. Charlotte, our in-town coordinator, briefed us, stating that a group of four girls went camping at Bogus for the weekend. The mother of one of the girls called the sheriff when her daughter Brandy had not returned home. The sheriff had searched and found a Honda with appropriate license plate near the bottom of the Superior Chair at Bogus Basin Ski Resort. Brandy was last seen wearing a pink shirt with Eyeore on it, tan pants, and a gold necklace.

We loaded into vehicles and headed up to Bogus. Gregg, as OL, met with the sheriff (played by Jamie—even in uniform) who explained that one of the subjects had been seen rock climbing and that a tech team would be helpful to rescue her. Since Gregg was the only tech specialist present, he passed the OL duties to Tom, who quickly assigned a family liaison (Darryl) since the mother and a family friend were on scene. The sheriff also filled in other details about the subjects—what they were doing, what they may have been wearing.

The OL asked the trackers (actually just me) to go up to the car and determine a direction of travel; I took Dodie, a track-aware member, with me. We spotted the car parked on a service road, just below a gate. After giving Dodie a quick Tracking 101 lesson, we approached the car on the driver's side front corner. In processing the vehicle and then following sign up to an empty tent and to the ski lift, we determined the following: There were four people who walked up the hill to the tent; one person for sure came back to the car, dragging something. Drag marks originated from a bloody shoe (found by Anne and K-9 Oskar) about 100 yards from the tent and went down to the back of the vehicle. We noticed some tire tracks down on the main road in front of the Honda, possibly from a truck, that looked like the driver had taken off in a hurry (lots of loose dirt in the tracks.)

Christi and her K-9 found one of the girls, Amanda, who explained that Tricia and Brandy had had a fight over Brandy's lovely golden heart necklace. Somehow, Tricia “hurt” Brandy; Amanda got scared and ran into the woods. She had no idea what had happened to Brandy. Amanda reported that the third missing subject, Ashley, had gone off birdwatching and not returned; shortly after that, Ashley was found walking out of the grasses above the ski lift. She told a story similar to Amanda's, adding that the car belonged to her. Just then, we heard on the radio that the climbing subject, Tricia, had taken our tech team hostage, so the sheriff went up to help with the situation. The sheriff quickly apprehended Tricia, handcuffed her, and brought her down to the command area for questioning.

Just as I was asking Ashley about keys to the car, our unit members pointed to the mother walking to the back of the car, demanding to know what was inside the trunk. The sheriff was there, ready to open the trunk; Darryl and a few others ran up to provide some spontaneous emotional first aid—but too late. The sheriff opened the trunk and there was Brandy (aka “Rescue Randy” with a curly blond wig.)

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We learned that Tricia had accidentally killed Brandy during a fight over the heart-shaped necklace, dragged her body to Ashley's car, and put the body in the trunk. She then stole the truck (that happened to have keys in it) and drove it up to where the tech team found her climbing on the rocks. The team debriefed what went right and what we could do better next time, laughed, and congratulated the "subjects, family members and sheriff" on their great acting skills. Each team learned a great deal on this training mission, and we thank all those involved.

**BACKCOUNTRY PREPAREDNESS PROGRAMS FOR IDAHO POWER  
SEPTEMBER 7 AND 12, 2017  
--CHRISTI KELLEY AND BECKY LOUBER**

In September, IMSARU presented two backcountry preparedness programs to Idaho Power. Many of their people work outside as well as being hunters/outdoorsmen, so a program with a Fall/Winter slant was requested. Christi and Becky presented on the 7<sup>th</sup> to the Nampa Office with an audience of 30 employees; Christi, Jim Findley and Dodi Newbill presented on the 12<sup>th</sup> to the Payette Office with an audience of 49 employees. With the weather still so warm, it felt strange to enter an office building and conference room with our very large 24-hour packs stuffed with what seemed like a lot of clothing and gear.

The presentations included an introduction to IMSARU, the Ten Essentials and Rule of 3's, a demonstration of our pack items with additional needs and concerns during winter. The audiences included a wide array of recreationalists, including hunters, skiers and snowshoers, so we were able to share and listen to many experiences involving new gear and creative approaches to backcountry safety and survival.

Thank you to Idaho Power for hosting us.

**THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!**

Idaho Mountain Search and Rescue Unit is an all-volunteer search and rescue group. We have no paid staff and we never charge the people we are called to help nor those who called us. Our members spend their own time and money to participate in training, safety education, and public events, but we rely on special projects (such as selling corn-on-the-cob at the Western Idaho Fair each August), grants and donations for major equipment purchases. Many thanks to:

**Ms. Valerie Houser**

**Mr. Ron Christensen**

**Those who donate to us via the Combined Federal Campaign of Greater SoCal**

IMSARU is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. Gifts to our unit are considered charitable donations for tax purposes.

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## IMSARU OFFICERS ELECTED FOR 2018

As customary, officers for the coming year were elected on the first Tuesday in October, allowing time for incoming and out-going officers to work together in transition. The 2018 officers will be:

President – Gregg Rettschlag  
Coordinator – Rod Knopp  
Vice-President – Ron Christensen  
Secretary – Alisa Rettschlag  
Treasurer – Phil O’Bryan  
Logistical Director – David Kelley

Rescue Director – Jeff Munn  
Public Relations Director – Ken Swickard  
Medical Officer – Colin Sesek  
Training Director – Chris Brookman  
Facilities Manager – Amanda Leader

Congratulations to these officers, and thanks for being willing to take on the work and responsibilities! (For those of you who were not present, you missed the best campaign speech of the decade...Brad Acker, who has been Facilities Manager for many years and who was on the ballot again, delivered a powerful and entertaining speech on why we should elect Amanda.)

**Please note** that the officers cannot, and should not be expected to, do all the work that keeps IMSARU functioning. Get involved with one or more of the projects that are less glamorous than the missions but are vital to our success!

## SAFETY EDUCATION – AUGUST 5, 2017 --BECKY LOUBER

IMSARU members participated as navigation instructors at the SheJumps Wild Skills day camp for girls. SheJumps is a national organization whose mission is “to increase the participation of women and girls in outdoor activities,” and Wild Skills is one of their youth initiatives.

The day camp in Boise ran from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and 77 girls from the area met at the Foothills Learning Center. After being dropped off (with their bikes for a mountain biking station!) they were split into groups according to their ages, ranging from 6 to 12 years old. Groups rotated through stations and three IMSARU members taught map and compass basics at the navigation station to five groups. Sixteen adults, all volunteers, also rotated through the station. It was a great way to connect with the community and it was so much fun to see those young ladies all following a compass bearing of finding their own route on a map! Thanks to Wild Skills Boise for a great event and the invitation for us to participate!



IMSARU instructors were Becky Louber, Alisa Rettschlag and Ken Swickard.

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## **SUMMER TRACKING PRACTICE** **--ALISA RETTSCHLAG**

Even with the MRA national conference in June and the Western Idaho Fair Corn Booth in August—two big events that required lots of time, effort and planning from our unit members—our tracking team managed to find time to practice tracking. One of those practices happened on the early morning of August 6. Five of our nine-person tracking team members showed up at N. 36<sup>th</sup> Street in an area of cheatgrass and sagebrush to essentially practice looking at the ground...yes, at footprints.

Of course, it is so much more than just looking at the footprints. It is also paying attention to the small details such as the dislodged pebble near an area of compression in the dirt, indicating that our “subject” walked there. It is finding the next footstep in the tall grass that is now lying down and slightly damaged in the direction of travel. It is seeing just the slightest amount of tread pattern that matches the tread pattern of the shoe that our “subject” was wearing. It is following “sign” of our “missing person.”

On this Saturday, for three hours we practiced basic and more advanced techniques of tracking. The scenario presented to us was that a person went for a walk in this area. The person left the trail at some point and had not been seen since. The goal: to find where the person went. In achieving this goal, Scott Walls (team lead) assigned one team who looked for, and found, where the subject left the trail, and he assigned a sign-cutting team who walked along the fence line to “cut for sign,” looking for the subject’s footprints exiting the area along the fence. Both teams achieved success. The trackers found where the subject left the trail, where the subject crossed the trail, where the subject exited the area, and where the sign ended (by the subject getting into a vehicle.)

## **IMSARU CHRISTMAS PARTY—DECEMBER 2**

Our traditional IMSARU Christmas party is on the evening of the first Saturday in December; perhaps this year it will be early enough to avoid conflict with other holiday parties. Spouses and special friends are invited to join us. We start with a potluck dinner, followed by serious awards and not-so-serious awards. The non-serious awards give us a chance to laugh at ourselves and at unintentional happenings throughout the year. If you have noticed/heard of some funny missteps during the year, please let Charlotte know about these ASAP so that she and Diane Mathews can prepare the appropriate “awards.” (These two never reveal their sources.) Give any nominations for serious awards to Gregg or Ron, including a short description of why those people should be recognized.

We will also need volunteers to arrange the location; set up tables and chairs; arrange paper plates and cups, plastic utensils, coffee, tea and cold beverages. There are usually some decorations, but that is up to the volunteers to decide. And of course we all step in afterward to make the clean-up a quick job.

If one or two or three people are willing to volunteer to chair this event, please let Gregg or Ron know ASAP; they have enough other things on their to-do lists without taking on personal responsibility for this event.

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## CALENDAR

Oct. 15	Bike Team train at Polecat Gulch (Meet at parking lot at end of Collister.)	11:00 a.m.
Oct. 16	Tracking Team - Alisa & Jimmie in charge	6:00 p.m.
Oct. 17	Medical Training – at the Compound	7:00 p.m.
Oct. 23	Bike Team ride on Greenbelt - Meet in parking lot behind Payette Brewing	6:30 p.m.
Oct. 24	Business Meeting – at the Compound	7:00 p.m.
Oct. 26	Bike Team meet at Foothills Learning Center parking lot	6:00 p.m.
Oct. 31	?? Board Meeting – at the Compound	7:00 p.m.
Nov. 4	Tracking Team – Alisa and Linda in charge	1:00-4:00 p.m.
Nov. 7	General Meeting – at the Compound	7:00 p.m.
Nov. 13	Tracking Team – Jimmie and Mike in charge	6:00-8:00 p.m.
Nov. 14	SAR Training– at the Compound	7:00 p.m.
Nov. 18	Field Training	Time & Place TBA
Nov. 21	Medical Training – at the Compound	7:00 p.m.
Nov. 28	Business Meeting – at the Compound	7:00 p.m.
Dec. 2	IMSARU Christmas Party – Time & Place TBD but save the date!	
Dec. 4	Tracking Team – Ken and Vicki in charge	6:00-8:00 p.m.
Dec. 5	General Meeting – at the Compound	7:00 p.m.
Dec. 12	SAR Training—at the Compound	7:00 p.m.
Dec. 18	Tracking Team – Kris in charge	6:00-8:00 p.m.
Dec. 19	Medical Training—at the Compound	7:00 p.m.

Check the Web calendar for updates, changes and additions at [http://www.imsaru.org/?page\\_id=34](http://www.imsaru.org/?page_id=34)

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## **PLEASE HELP US UPDATE OUR FILES**

We are happy to stay in contact via our newsletters but they are expensive, both in paper costs and in time spent printing, folding, stuffing, dealing with address changes, etc. If you are no longer the person/group who should be receiving our newsletters by mail and/or would be happy to receive them on-line, please let us know. **If you make any of the changes suggested below, please include the name and address as printed on the current mailing label, so we know what we are changing.**

1. If you are no longer involved with the organization receiving the newsletter but know who should be receiving it, please give that person's name and title (if any).
2. If you would just as soon read the newsletter on-line, please give us your email address. You will then receive an email notice when the latest newsletter is posted at [www.imsaru.org](http://www.imsaru.org)
3. If you and/or your group no longer wish to receive the newsletter, please let us know. You do not need to give a reason.
4. You can make any of the changes listed above either by U.S. Postal Service (to IMSARU at 2519 Federal Way, Boise, ID 83705) or via email addressed to [cpgunn@cableone.net](mailto:cpgunn@cableone.net); just be sure to include the needed information.

IMSARU is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, with the goals of search, rescue and safety education. We never charge the people we serve. We have no paid members; in fact, our members pay an application fee when they first join, then yearly dues to continue membership, as well as using their own personal gear.