



Search Tails

Dedicated with Love to Stacey Savoy

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MESARD Newsletter

MESARD

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Baxter State Park
Search & Rescue
Pg 2-3

Angel & Luca
Pg 4

MESARD News
Pg 5-6

Gear review:
Astro 220/DC30
&
New Dogs
Pg 7



A year has gone by without a MESARD newsletter because we decided last Summer to drop from four publications down to two. To do a newsletter justice takes many hours, days and weeks to pull together. It becomes very time consuming for everyone involved in it's publication. Our first love is training and fielding search dogs and that's what we wanted more time to do. With cutting back to two newsletters, it will help us find that balance.

Last Fall, when the last newsletter of 2009 was due out, our team suffered a devastating loss with the death of two of our team mates. Stacey Savoy, our beloved Secretary, became a victim of domestic homicide by the hands of her husband and our teammate, Bruce Savoy. We have struggled as a team to understand this nightmare. Each of us has had to come to terms with, not only who they were but also who each of us are as individuals. More importantly who we truly are to each other within MESARD. Nothing is as it was, but for Stacey's sake and in her memory, we go on and as a team we are stronger than ever.

Stacey would except nothing less.

Baxter State Park Search Irene Morey's "9 hours of Hell"



Late afternoon on Saturday May 29, our pagers went off. This was to be expected, it was Memorial Day weekend after all. Holiday's brings out the best in searches and this one wasn't going to be an exception. Baxter had an overdue hiker and they had been actively searching for him since Friday evening. We were to meet at Park headquarters in Millinocket the next morning and to plan on a search that could take us up to the tree line. Most of the team are familiar with Baxter State Park, either as a hiker or as a searcher. Mt. Katahdin might be a small Mountain, what it lacks in size it makes up for in terrain and vegetation. Teams who participated in the search knew that they were in for a long hard day or two. The crew MESARD where Paul, Dan, Troy, Irene, Jim, Leslie, Kelly, Jay, John & Spencer. We split up our flanker and downloaded our areas. The average size of each area was around 200 acres with Paul's area being well over 300 acres. The focus of the dog teams was large drainages coming off Katahdin and many empty into Avalanche Brook. This was the first search that we had four teams using the Garmin Astro 220 with the gps collars. Spencer, Leslie, Troy & Irene each had the capabilities to watch each others dogs work in the field. Little did we know what an important job the Astro would do. At around 10:30 a.m, we all set out on our assignments. The start of the drainages where thick bush and boot sucking off muck. It only improved when we hit the boulders but there wasn't much improvement in vegetation. It was thick for everyone. Kelly and Spencer took areas up higher than the drainages. After the search Kelly said "Before returning to Maine in 2002, I had the opportunity to participate in searches in several western states. These searches have included the flank of Mt. Rainier, below a glacier on Mt. Olympus and very rocky terrain on numerous Rocky Mountain peaks. This search in Baxter State Park was equally as challenging as those. However, the thickness of the brush on Mt. Katahdin's shoulder was beyond compare. The vegetation of the larger western mountains was not as thick and hard to navigate as Maine's highest peak. This search definitely provided the dogs and their handlers the a real test of their stamina and endurance".

Many times while scrambling up over boulders, we'd break through the thin soil covering and fall between the cracks. John at one point broke through to his waist and his feet never touched anything below him. This wasn't something to search quickly. We had to be smart. For the first hour or so, the teams made steady, slow progress but at little past noon. The sound on the radio was of a searcher who had fallen and was injured. The communication was spotty at best and it took some concentration and close listening to find out that it was Jim on the radio and it was Irene who had been injured. Irene had been scrambling over a boulder and her foot slipped on the wet moss and she fell backwards, her upper body rotating but unfortunately one of her feet had been planted securely and she severely injured her knee. She had landed on her side, pinned between rocks and small trees. Jim knew that he and Irene where going to need assistance as soon as possible. While CP where arranging for Warden's Andy Glidden and Ron Dunham to head to the scene, Spencer and Troy where the closest searchers in the area. The Garmin Astro's paid for themselves at that point. Because Irene's position was displayed, all Spencer had to do was a GOTO and this is all he need to get to her location as quick as possible. Right behind him was Troy with his Astro. Spencer having been in many a rescue, got right to business of assessing the extent of Irene's injuries and formulating the next move. Irene was relieved to see Troy & Sorcha arrive, Irene said "Troy's my rock, I can endure anything because he's with me". After Troy, in came Paul and Dan from their area below Irene's.

You now have a good idea how Irene's rescue got started, Jim Bridge will continue the story below.

Some of the things that really stuck out to me were the skill and caring of all the SAR folks there, most of whom I'd never even seen before. It took nearly an hour for the first people (Spencer and Troy) to arrive and without exception as more people arrived they figured out where their skills were needed and got to work. There are only so many people that can crowd around a person on the ground and we quickly had that filled with Wilderness First Responders, EMT's, and WEMTs from MESARD, The Warden Service and MidCoast SAR. Others brought equipment (a litter, an incredible blanket, and air splint to name a few items). The area around Irene quickly became a triage/treatment center of equipment. Quickly people offered up a wide assortment of items to use as packing and padding wo we could make Irene as comfortable as possible (note; you can never have too much padding). Unbeknownst to me while we were doing that Dan realized we needed an escape route and the way we cam in was impassable for a litter crew (nearly for people) so he set off to find and blaze a trail to the road in case we needed to carry the litter out as it was obvious that Irene was not going out under her own power.

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Volume 1, Issue 3

Others assessed the difficulty of a carry out and started coordinating a National Guard helicopter evacuation and hearing that start yet another group set about to clear enough trees to permit the helo to get close enough to drop a cable. Surely, much to the initial dismay of the Park Rangers because there is a tree cutting ban in the park, trees started to fall and when all was said and done there was a sufficient opening for the helo and even a crib work built up over the stream should we need to position Irene and the litter in the middle of the opening for the lift. In the mean time and probably with one of the mentally harder jobs, there were about 20 more people standing by out of the way in case we needed to carry her out. The whole evolution was one of the best examples of self directed teaming I have ever seen, was truly impressive and would make anyone proud to be part of that crew.



Irene, although in a great deal of pain and only able to get ibuprophen from us, was the best patient one could ask for. After the initial period of anger at herself for having this happen she quickly shifted to the business at hand and was extremely helpful as to what she needed, what would hurt less and more than once said "do what you have to do, just let me know what you're doing before you do it and I'll deal with it". Her dog, Eiko was also wonderful; initially wanting to be a little protective he permitted me to move him away from "Mom" without much objection and had an incredibly obvious facial expression of confusion and concern. One could not have asked for a better patient or better dog throughout the entire evolution.



The extrication was delayed by many factors all falling under communications.

Although an exact LAT/LONG had been passed at some point there was an error in transcribing it but the helo got close. Then with no radio communications between those on the ground and the helo a signal fire quickly brought them to us. The fire danger in the woods was extremely high and a Baxter Park Ranger was heard to mutter something about "our names going down in the report of The Great Fire of 2010"... mostly in jest, though it was a great fire and the green pine bows made a wonderful smoke plume. When the helo found us the Rangers were no doubt greatly relieved to quickly push the fire down into the stream and out. It had been a long time since I worked under a helo but the memories of smells, sounds, and buffet-

ing returned immediately and were once again very positive giving me a warm sense of pending safety.

We were lucky to have a very senior and experienced crew as the extraction was difficult and dangerous for the crew hovering amongst the trees with gusting winds. Finally, a little over 8.5 hours after her injury, Irene disappeared into the helo, they climbed out of the stream bed, banked off and had Irene at the hospital in about 10 minutes. By 1000 that night I was out and made it to the hospital to see Irene and to see her no longer in pain, smiling and even laughing a little was great (even though her eyes were still crossing and not focused from the drugs). Later, I realized just how much I needed to see that.

Working in adversity makes for strong bonds of trust, respect, and connection between team mates.

We usually work in adverse conditions to some degree during our searches (night, rain, pucker brush, etc) but that day was an extreme even for us and has no doubt formed some bonds that will last a life

time. To me, those bonds are a lot of why MESARD is such a valuable experience and they will be a very positive result from a tough day on Mt Kathadin (aka The Mountain to Mainers). I am grateful for being able to be there and help in my small part. Jim Bridge



Laying on the ground feeling very vulnerable and broken, with no choice but to trust and depend on others, I realized that the general SAR community was really a was really a wonderful group of people who have the hearts of gold. That the professionalism, commitment and genuineness of Maine's Game Warden's makes them and their profession truly unique. That MESARD members are not only truly caring, thoughtful and wonderful people but they are my family. That people I have never met gave everything they could to protect and care for me.

It was the most incredible outpouring of kindness.... Words cannot begin to describe the appreciation I have for all the wonderful people who helped me in Baxter at the time of my injury and to all the people who offered their time and thoughtfulness during my recovery.

Irene



By Jennifer Rocheleau

On November 16, 2009 our dear friend and team member Stacey Savoy was tragically taken from us. As a way to heal, to create something good from this senseless loss and to honor Stacey, her co-workers at Unum and Towers Perrin decided to take up a collection to purchase a search dog for Maine Search and Rescue Dogs (MESARD). This effort was spearheaded by Ann Houser at Unum. There was such a tremendous response that they in fact collected enough to purchase two dogs and team members Beth Swartz and Jennifer Rocheleau were selected to receive the funds as they were ready to select new puppies for training.

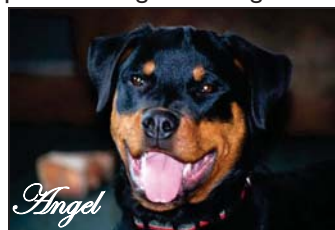
Beth, who has certified two Rottweilers in the past with MESARD, chose a Rottweiler puppy from a breeder in Massachusetts and named her Angel. Angel arrived in Maine on January 16th. Jennifer, whose current search and rescue dog, Kierka, is a German Shepherd, chose another Shepherd puppy from a breeder in Arizona and named her Luca. She arrived in Maine on March 27th.

On March 31st, Beth and Jennifer traveled down to Portland with Angel and Luca to meet the folks at Unum who so generously made the purchase of these dogs possible. There was a lot of snuggling and picture taking and it was wonderful to meet and spend time with Stacey's co-workers and let them see and play with the puppies.

"Stacey's" puppies have begun training and are doing well.



Unum Family



Best friends always



Ann Houser and Luca

Time to catch up with MESARD News

We'll start with important accomplishments that didn't get recognized last Fall. First, Debbie and her dog Quinn, Spencer and his dog Moxie both earned their IPWDA advance cadaver certification and Leslie completed her IPWDA basic. In October Jennifer F. and Leslie took their GSD family down to Portland to take the "American Temperament Test" Accompany Freya were her adult pups, Franny, Frida & Hasty. It was impressive to see them all together, they were the first four dogs to test and they set the bar for the rest of the day.



Nancy and Spirit

As hard as it was for the team after November, Nancy and Spirit completed their last test, the 160 acre in December. As Nancy said "Stacey was pushing her the whole way". Congratulations Nancy!

Our annual business meeting was held in February in Bangor at IF&W. The slate of officers stayed the same for another year with the exception of Kelly Pontbriand who became the teams new Secretary. Training committee, finance committee, new applicant committee all gave their reports and with brief discussion on them all, the meeting adjourned and we moved on to more important business of K9 and team so-



cialization in the parking lot.

Credentialing & legislative actions

This year has seen a couple small but significant changes in MESARD's acceptance within the state beyond being the premier volunteer K9 search team. First, The Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) used us as a beta volunteer SAR team to test collecting qualifications, credentialing and issuing MEMA identification cards. These cards will be critical for gaining access to large disaster areas (floods, ice storms, major airplane crashes, etc) should we be called upon to support one. After many questions on what various qualifications meant each member (both humans and dogs) were issued a pictured ID card.



Second, State Senator Stan Gerzofsky of Brunswick, a former SAR dog handler, sponsored legislation (LD 1519) to ensure that our dogs would be permitted into any hotel or motel without additional cost the same as a service dog would be. The legislation did not include restaurants and other public areas as the political process would have been much more difficult and in reality what was the concern to us was only the ability to find a place to sleep between search assignments on a long search. On March 24, 2010, Governor John Baldacci signed the legislation into law giving SAR K-9's from organizations recognized by the Maine Warden Service the same rights as service dogs for accommodations.

In May, MASAR held the annual Spring Training by Jim Bridge –Sixty-six hearty soles from MASAR and other teams came together to get training from the Navy's Survival Evasion Resistance and Escape (SERE) School on 8 MAY. Some camped over night in the facility's lean-tos the night before and some came in Saturday morning. The day presented many learning opportunities, some from the instructors and some from Mother Nature as it never reached 50 and rained or drizzled most of the day. Several of the students mentioned that they would be upgrading their rain gear and bringing more layers next time. MESARD was represented by Paul, Deb, Spencer, Cindy, Nancy, and Jim. One of our flanker trainees, Roger David, was there representing his other team, Lincoln County SAR. After the morning safety brief, the class was broken into three groups and ventured out into the cold and wet. Training consisted mainly of methods of building shelter and a fire, with little or no materials that you brought with you, properly clothing and layering, obtaining water and staying alive and reasonably comfortable. Our instructors, all either active duty or retired military had extensive experience in the field using survival skills and then teaching them at SERE School. After a bone chilling morning, hot soup and sandwiches were served, thanks to Steve Yates of Franklin SAR, and people had a chance to rewarm before heading out for the afternoon session. A lunch time working session to Train the trainers in the Lost But Found Safe and Sound program was held and five teams took copies of the disks and materials back to their communities to teach to school kids. After lunch, more training and more learning. After the outdoor work was done, the instructors gave a presentation inside about being more observant and seeing things differently and better to help with evidence detection for us as we are out on searches





Camp Winne.....
Overnight accommodations



SERE School
Overnight accommodations???



Camp Winne....
"Warmth"



SERE School
"Warmth???"



On the same weekend as MASAR, the Downeast teams held training at Camp Winneaugwamauk in Brooksville, down in Troy, Irene and Chip's neck of the woods. Troy, Irene, Chip, Kelly, Jay, Jenn R., Leslie, Beth, Michelle & Justin were in attendance. Some of the teams came in Fri. night and worked on night problems over at the Cooper Farm area but everyone got finished up and tucked in by midnight. Sat. was again outside in the elements, The rain held off for the morning problems and when the rain finally arrived it was lunch time. We all gathered into a wonderful old lodge, heated by "Dry" firewood. Our lunch was generously provided by Brad Billings, Lobsterman by trade but Chef by training. The meal was a wonderful Crockpot full of sweet Italian Sausages with sliced apple, onions and spices. He also included a pasta salad and rich chocolate bars for dessert. After lunch teams headed out into the rain to continue training. Irene worked in the lodge with Jenn R and Luca, Beth and Angel. Irene introduced both dogs to clicker work and they learned to whip their feet on a mat and work the "Easy Button". A fun two days of training.



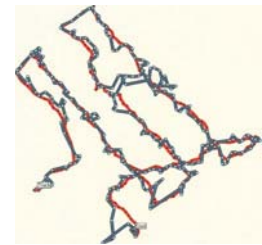
Chip, Irene & Troy again hosted June's training at the Holbrook Island Sanctuary in Harborside. They put together another amazing mock search for the team. The theme was Mardi Gras and as the story goes, all the victims (Tonya, Beth, Jim, Jennifer R., Roger, Lulu and Jack) had been celebrating Mardi Gras since February and "Now" their families thought it might be a good idea to start looking for them. Irene manned CP and ran a tight ship and handed out new assignments as quickly as assignments were finished. Beau and his radio crew were on hand to assist in communications. It's always a radio challenge out at the sanctuary but not this time. The morning temps and humidity made it uncomfortable. We had to rest and rehydrate more often and it was a good reminder to all of us going into Summer. They had airscent teams overlapping with trackers. They even placed a young porcupine in Cindy's area to simulate real life for Questa. Everyone was located, sometimes multiple times. It was unfortunate that Jack and Lulu didn't survive their ordeal. By the looks and smell of em' they didn't make it past February. The search finished up around 2 p.m and our lunch break was spent cooling in Chips front yard. Know one was in a rush to wind up the business meeting during lunch, we'd all trained hard in the morning and were pooped. Spencer brought company, Luke, his grandson. What a great sport. He flanked for Spencer and quietly sat for a loooooong business meeting, without complaint at doing either. He'll make a great searcher someday!



Gear Review: Garmin Astro 220 /DC30

This Summer's new Geek gadget for MESARD is the Garmin Astro 220 GPS with the DC30 collar for the dog. The Astro 220 GPS is virtually the same as the units we are using now but with two crucial improvements. One is it's ability to lock on Satellite signal much quicker and the signal is stronger too. No longer is it taking 5 min. or more in some locations to lock on to satellites and it holds them much better in deep cover. The other improved feature over the 76 series is the electronic compass. No more having to move to see what direction your going in. As you turn, your cursor turns. For grid work this saves time and headache. We can make corrections instantly without waiting for the satellite to recognize what direction we are traveling in.

Now for the fun part, the DC30 or DC40 Collars. This is what separates this Astro out from the other Garmin units. This GPS was developed for hunting dogs. The handheld unit receives gps information from the collar through a transmitter. The dog collar is gps equipped and it's track of the dog is being saved and sent to the handheld unit. You can track 10 individual dogs on one unit. The applications for K9 SAR work is boundless. When our dogs leave our sight. It's no longer a mystery. We can also see other dogs in adjacent areas with Astro collars. The Baxter search showed us how quickly this became a safety and a rescue tool. Our dogs will come to our aid and stay with us if we become hurt. Another team with this capability can immediately get a location of a downed searcher and get to their location quickly. As this proved the case at the Baxter search. The track pictured is of Leslie (red) Eron (blue). They worked over an hour and her victim placed himself after they'd searched awhile. On the final grid they did a goto to the start location (truck) knowing they'd hit the victims air. By looking at how the dog worked you can decide to check out an area of interest. Sometimes wind conditions make it that the dog goes in and out of scent but can't find it's source. You might take a second look at an area your dog showed interest in. Foul weather can make you lose contact with a large ranging dog. You can't hear them or see them. Not only will this tool aid us in searches but it's uses for training are of great benefit too. The victim can take a collar with them when they hide. The searcher will know when a young dog has made contact and from what direction they went in on the re-find. As long as the batteries are charged, you'll know were your dog is. There are range limitations and the unit works on line of site. If your on the prairie, the range will be many miles. That's not usually the case in Maine. Baxter searchers got signal 1 1/2 mile away, no problem.



New Dogs on the Block

We didn't get a chance to introduce these young dogs last fall. They are no longer puppies and are well into their training. Look for some to start certifying this Summer. Dave's new dog, Pepsi "Hum, did Moxie have something to do with her name?", she's a talented young Bloodhound and will do trailing. Zeke is Sarah's new Nova Scotia Duck Toller. This guy is all Retriever, just in a smaller package. Zeva is Irene's new project. A rescued stray from Puerto Rico, ask Irene about her story if you see her. Zeva's a dog that likes to have fun. Leslie's new Dutchie, is Eron. He's all go, go and some more go, all that for airscent .



Pepsi



Vrijheid's Eron



Zeke



Zeva

Check us out online at www.MESARD.org