

Media Release

Yavapai County Sheriff's Office

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Recent Rescues Overview

On February 20, 2016, at approximately 11 AM, a group of quad riders came upon a male subject near the east end of Dugas Road, Forest Road 68G, east of the community of Dugas by the Verde River. The 25-year-old male, later identified as Gaston Castro Lopez from Tolleson, Arizona, was wearing light clothing and socks but no shoes and carried no supplies. Lopez stated he had been out in the wilderness for at least a week after being abandoned by the group he was with but would not explain further. He was scraped and sunburned. A record check of his name revealed an arrest warrant out of Maricopa County and a missing person alert from the Phoenix Police Department. Lopez had also been the subject of a suspicious person report on February 14, 2016, near Childs, Arizona.



A YCSO deputy talks with Gaston Lopez pending airlift by Rescue 1 to paramedics

YCSO's Rescue 1 helicopter was launched and flew to the area where Lopez was originally located. The Rescue 1 crew flew Lopez out to awaiting paramedics from the Mayer Fire Department before transportation to a local hospital for treatment of minor injuries. The Phoenix Police Department was notified that Lopez had been found. Lopez was eventually arrested by Maricopa authorities on the outstanding warrant.

The efforts of YCSO's Rescue 1 helicopter greatly expedited the rescue of Lopez and in this instance, prevented the need to call out YCSO search volunteers who have already had a very busy year risking their lives for strangers.

On February 14, 2016, at approximately 7:30 PM, a YCSO deputy was called out regarding 6 kayakers stranded on the Verde River. The group of 6 (5 male/1 female) began their float at Beasley Flat and were going to pull out at Gap Creek, but missed the opportunity and continued down river

approximately 1.5 miles and were lost. Their current coordinates were obtained from the 911 call. The Yavapai County Search and Rescue Team's (YCSRT) Backcountry Unit was called as well as a DPS Ranger helicopter. YCSRT Backcountry members hiked approximately 2.5 miles by trail to reach the subjects at approximately 1 AM the next day.

None of the kayakers had adequate clothing, footwear, food, or water and were very wet and cold. They had started a fire to keep warm. Backcountry members provided dry clothing to the group. Unfortunately they did not have appropriate footwear so the Backcountry team was not able to hike the subjects out. DPS Ranger arrived and eventually transported all subjects to Beasley Flat where Fire/Medical personnel were standing by to evaluate and later release the subjects. DPS Ranger then returned to the Backcountry team for a well-deserved airlift to base camp and the operation concluded at 3:30 AM.

Citizens can contact the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office with information or questions at 928-771-3260 or the YCSO website:
www.ycsoaz.gov