



NEWS



News Headlines 07/27/2022

- With mountain waterfalls, a sometimes-fatal attraction lures hikers with its beauty
- Woman arrested for attempted murder after stabbing 2 people in Victorville

With mountain waterfalls, a sometimes fatal attraction lures hikers with its beauty

By Brian Rokos, SBSUN.COM

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From left, Mikaila Keck, 18, with dad, Jonathan, and sister, Maven, make their way to the Big Falls waterfall in Forest Falls on Tuesday, July 26, 2022. (Photo by Watchara Phomicinda, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

They all come to Big Falls.

The 3-year-old from San Bernardino whose father wanted to show her something “dramatic.” The septuagenarian from Las Vegas who squealed when she tiptoed into a frigid pool. The twenty-something co-workers who came to see a “spectacular” natural feature.

And the 38-year-old Moreno Valley man who waxed eloquently about the cool water, the smell of dead pines and the lacquer-like appearance of the rocks in the Forest Falls area of the San Bernardino Mountains.

The lure is simple, said Lynette Paoli, 59, who has lived in Forest Falls for 26 years and manages the Elkhorn General Store on Valley of the Falls Drive.

“It’s the waterfalls,” Paoli said. “Everybody wants to come here and be cooler. It’s so hot down the hill. Bring their family, have a picnic, just have a good time. So that’s all good as long as you don’t try to climb the mountain and fall.”

And that’s the rub. Or sometimes, the slip. Amid the great beauty, there can be great danger.

On Sunday, Riverside residents Annalea DeHaro and husband Richard DeHaro fell 20 feet from the middle waterfall. Annalea DeHaro was injured and Richard, 43, died.

It was at least the second fatal fall in the Forest Falls area this year. On May 2, after likely falling about 80 feet, 33-year-old Robert Carey Jr. of Calimesa was found unresponsive at the base of a Big Falls waterfall.

The San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department has responded to at least two other fatal accidents at the falls since 2016, said Mara Rodriguez, a department spokeswoman said. Each year, the aviation unit will conduct between eight to 10 hoist rescues from the falls, Rodriguez said.

In 2018, the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department responded to accidents at the falls on 19 different occasions, spokesman Eric Sherwin said. Almost all, he said, happened at a “historically treacherous” section of the middle section of the falls, known colloquially as “blood rock.” The large slick rock straddles a pool visitors often refresh themselves in and features a sheer drop of 20 to 40 feet to the shallow, rocky bottom of the falls.

“It’s a rock over the centuries that has had water flowing over it and that rock is slick as glass,” Sherwin said. “People in the morning hiking are wearing appropriate footwear and it’s not uncommon for people coming back down to have their shoes off, and then will slip and fall right over the edge.”

A fall from blood rock can leave a hiker with bumps and bruises or life-changing — or even life-ending — injuries, Sherwin said.

“On the way down, you can hit the side of the falls or ricochet off of rocky walls around,” he said.

However, since 2018, the San Bernardino National Forest has periodically closed hiking sections beyond the observation deck, which is above the lower falls and features a metal railing. As of June 16, forest officials ordered a closure of the area within 150 feet of Falls Creek near the waterfall and the area between the viewing platform at the end of Big Falls Trail and the area past the top of Upper Big Falls, according to the U.S. Forest Service. The closure will remain in effect until June 17, 2023, and can result in a maximum fine of \$5,000 per individual violator, the agency said.

Those closures have sometimes been ignored, however.

Those closures have resulted in dramatically fewer Fire Department responses: They decreased to only three in 2019, one in 2020 and four in 2021, according to Sherwin. Thus far in 2022, the Fire Department has responded just three times.

“We absolutely know there is a difference when there’s a closure in effect,” Sherwin said.

The waterfalls are fed year-round by the snowfall that fills Falls Creek. A narrow jet of water zig-zags down the mountain before dispersing into a wider path through Big Falls. The water cascades into pools where on Tuesday, July 26, visitors set up camp chairs, played with toy boats, snapped photos of themselves and doted on their dogs.

The falls are easily accessible compared to others in the San Bernardino National Forest. The trailhead is a mere 45-minute drive from Riverside, and the lower waterfall is about a 10-minute hike from the parking lot. Trails websites list the hike as “easy,” but one has to step carefully over rocks and fallen trees and navigate elevation changes.

Sherwin encouraged hikers to know their physical limits and stay within them.

“We’ve seen people on San Gorgonio Mountain and make it a two-day camping trip, and there’s other people who will run it back and forth before work in the morning,” Sherwin said. “Those are two different abilities. Please enjoy the backcountry responsibly.”

Few of the daytrippers interviewed Tuesday were aware of DeHaro’s accident or other similar tragedies. But they all expressed the need to use caution.

Jonathan Keck, 39, of San Bernardino brought his wife and their children ages 3, 6 and 18. As a sheriff’s helicopter flew by, he said he wants to be more active and “especially after COVID (I) really want to get back out.”

Keck, visiting Big Falls for the first time, learned about the site on an app.

“I was looking for something a little more dramatic for them,” Keck said, gesturing to his children. “I have no intention of putting them in any sort of slippery situation.”

David Romero, 25, of Redlands, was also a first-time visitor and was accompanied by three co-workers. He saw pictures of the falls and their steep drop, “but it’s quite spectacular,” he said.

Marc Tutwiler, 38, of Moreno Valley, has visited Big Falls four times in the past two months. It’s a special sensory experience for him.

“I like the noise, the coolness of the water. When rocks are wet they have a different visual effect,” he said.

Tutwiler also talked about a hike to the upper falls. At the observation deck, where the trail ends, there is a metal railing from where visitors can watch others playing in the pools below.

“It gave us the impression that you are supposed to go up — but you’re not,” he said.

<https://www.sbsun.com/2022/07/26/in-forest-falls-a-sometimes-fatal-attraction-lures-hikers-with-its-beauty/>

Woman arrested for attempted murder after stabbing 2 people in Victorville

By Staff Writer, VVNG.COM

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VICTORVILLE, Calif. (VVNG.com) — A 21-year-old woman was arrested for attempted murder after stabbing two people at a home Monday afternoon in Victorville.

It happened at about 3:40 pm, on Monday, July 25, 2022, in the 10000 block of Goodwin Avenue.

This training is vital in the execution of a water rescue. There were approximately 30 first responders from different agencies involved in the training. All agencies involved are dedicated to making the waterways safer for the public on the Colorado River.

Deputies from the Victor Valley Sheriff's Station responded to the residence regarding a stabbing.

Sheriff's spokeswoman Mara Rodriguez said that an adult female suspect stabbed a male and a female at the home. "The suspect and victims were all known to each other," stated Rodriguez.

San Bernardino County Fire responded to the incident and requested a helicopter to land in a field of a nearby elementary school. A white male adult victim was flown via a Reach helicopter to an out-of-area trauma center. The female was transported by ground ambulance. The spokeswoman said both victims had non-life threatening injuries.

The suspect, identified as Kayleigh Thomas, was arrested for PC 664187(A) Attempted Murder and is being held on a \$1 million dollar bail. According to arrest records, her home address is the same as where the incident occurred. Her next hearing is scheduled for July 27, 2022.

<https://www.vvng.com/woman-arrested-for-attempted-murder-after-stabbing-2-people-in-victorville/>