

Missing: Brandon Lawson



One of the darker stories of 2013 involves a man who apparently went missing in our county in the early morning hours of August 9th. It began with a 911 call about a stranded motorist just south of Bronte on Highway 277. The driver was not at the vehicle when Chief Deputy Neal arrived just after 1 am. However at this time, investigation has revealed that Brandon Lawson was hiding in the brush (due to an outstanding felony warrant) watching Deputy Neal while speaking to his brother, Kyle Lawson, on his cell phone. According to Ladessa Lofton, no one has heard from Lawson since this time.

Law enforcement officials conducted an aerial search the following Tuesday afternoon, August 13. Although the helicopter flew just 30 feet above the ground and Lawson was reported to be wearing a yellow shirt at the time of his disappearance, nothing was seen of the missing man.

The next major search began early Thursday morning, August 29, 2013, as law enforcement conducted a comprehensive and exhaustive search of over 2,500 acres surrounding the site where Brandon Lawson's truck was abandoned south of Bronte. Officers widened their search to include "likely lines of travel", such as river beds, etc., leading away from the main search area. Thursday's search turned up no sign of Brandon Lawson. Assisting with this search were members of the Coke County Sheriff's Office, Texas Rangers, San Angelo Fire Department, Tom Green County Sheriff's Office, Department of Public Safety Highway Patrol, Department of Public Safety Criminal Investigative Division, and a Search and Rescue Tracker. Carl Beal of Texana Ranch provided all terrain vehicles to assist those searching. Officers who participate in undercover investigations are not pictured.

To rule out the possibility that Lawson had become lost in the brush and died, Coke County Sheriff Wayne McCutchen approved a search using cadaver or human remains (HR) dogs. This final search was held Thursday, October 24th. Members of Texas Search and Rescue and various law enforcement agencies began arriving the night before the massive search for Brandon Lawson. Members of Texas Search and Rescue provided six HR dogs, handlers and flankers in addition to numerous support and logistics personnel for this search. According to Greg Pyles, TexSAR Chief Executive Officer and Incident Commander, TexSAR expended approximately \$25,000 for

this search. TexSAR is a non-profit organization completely supported by private and corporate donations. The group only conducts law enforcement approved searches.

TexSAR uses "math and science" based upon information provided by the family to determine the size and area to be searched. The organization has a great track record with a 95% success rate. Their findings and reports have proven accurate and have stood up under scrutiny when used in court cases.

TexSAR's team included officers with Texas Division of Emergency Management, Cen-Tex Search and Rescue and the Lewisville Police Department. They also brought in two game wardens with Texas Parks and Wildlife.

The TexSAR canines are highly trained. These HR dogs will not "hit" on varmint carcasses. However, dead hogs sometimes prove a distraction to HR animals. Each handler wears a gps device which provided an extremely detailed analysis of all area covered.

The search was extended to the northeast following one HR dog showing slight interest. However even with the extension, the search revealed no sign of Brandon Lawson - no remains, no clothing, no wallet, no cell phone, and no keys.

Following a conversation with Sheriff McCutchen and Ranger Nick Hanna, the investigation has turned elsewhere and will not include any further searches unless new detailed information arises. Currently, tips to Crime Stoppers have investigators searching for Lawson in other areas.



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