

## Shoeless fisherman found safe and sound

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8 hours, 38 minutes ago



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**LINCOLN** – More than three days after he set off to do a little fishing in Franconia Notch, Gerard "Gerry" Perron was found safe but shoeless late yesterday afternoon by two Canadian hikers.

With a relieved grin for his family members -- who had been anxiously waiting all day for some word of his whereabouts -- Perron, 63, of Claremont, said he had been scared for the past several days and "didn't think I would make it."

He spoke briefly with his grandson, Jason, as he eased out of a pickup truck and onto a waiting gurney.

Perron instructed his grandson to "call mom," who is Perron's daughter.

"He said he fell into snow up to his neck and when he got out, he had lost his shoes," Jason Perron said. "He didn't know where he was."



The younger Perron said his family was relieved that his grandfather's adventure had a happy ending.

More than 60 people and several dog teams began looking for Perron late Monday, after he didn't show up at his job at American Brush. They resumed a search of both sides of Franconia Notch early yesterday morning.

Just after 5 p.m., two Canadian hikers came upon Perron on the Falling Waters trail, about a 1 1/2 miles from the trailhead.

After more than three days out in Franconia Notch without shoes, Gerry Perron of Claremont eased back on a gurney to be checked out last night. (LORNA COLQUHOUN)

Fish and Game Lt. Todd Bogardus said a search team had been in the same area 15 minutes earlier.

"He had wandered back on the trail -- he must have been off trail for some period of time," Bogardus said.

Above 2,600 feet elevation, the snow is several feet deep in places, he said.

Louis Bennez of Victoriaville, Quebec, and his hiking partner were coming down off the trail from Franconia Ridge late yesterday afternoon.

"He must have heard us, he called out 'Hey, I'm freezing,'" Bennez said.

While one of them went out to get help, the other stayed and gave Perron some food and water.

Perron was carried off the trail and was reunited with his family just after 8 p.m. yesterday.

Search teams had little information to go on when Perron was reported missing. Officials said that he had called his mother at some point Saturday to tell her he would not be coming home in

time for church on Sunday. About 8:30 p.m. on Saturday, Perron dialed a 911 call from his cell phone, but it was never received, Bogardus said.

Perron had left a fishing pole, a bobber, a sleeping bag and lunch pack in his car. His family said he often slept in his car when he went fishing. They said he had not been to Franconia Notch in the past few years.

While Bogardus noted the weather overnight Sunday and Saturday was fairly moderate and "survivable" the turning weather conditions were making the situation for Perron more dire.

On Monday afternoon, Fish and Game rescuers were helping down a Vermont woman who had fallen in the same area.

Sally Sise, 64, of Vergennes, Vt. was injured about 1.5 miles from the Appalachian Mountain Club's Greenleaf Hut on the Bridle Path and needed to be carried out on a litter.

During the search and rescue operation yesterday, word came that a skier on Mount Washington off the Monroe Brook Trail area near the Cog Railway had fractured his leg.

A group of about four from Pemigewasset Valley Search and Rescue Team left the search for Perron and headed up the highway to assist Fish and Game with that rescue effort.

Assisting yesterday in the search for Perron were New England K9 Search and Rescue, Upper Valley Wilderness Response Team, the Pemi Valley Search and Rescue Team and the Appalachian Mountain Club.

No helicopter was used yesterday because of the poor weather conditions, which were rainy, cloudy and in the 40s by the afternoon.

New Hampshire Union Leader Staff Writer Paula Tracy contributed to this report.

#### YOUR COMMENTS

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Thank God and those 2 Canadian hikers that this gentleman was found and brought to safety. He must be one tough fisherman to survive 3 days in that terrain, barefoot, no less! And thanks go out to all those rescuers who put their own lives on the line to help others. They are true NH heroes. We should all be so hardy as the fisherman, and so hearty as the rescuers.

- **Kathy, Manchester**

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