



Found toddler was clinging to tree in swamp

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RICHMOND – Jesse and Katie Griffin experienced a parent's worst nightmare when their little boy disappeared from a family gathering, but their prayers were answered when searchers discovered the 2 1/2-year-old clinging to a tree in the middle of a swamp just after 2 a.m. yesterday.

"We're very glad we got him back," Katie Griffin said of Rowan.

The toddler was evaluated by EMTs after spending hours in 30-degree weather.

"He's now bouncing off the walls," Jesse said yesterday afternoon.

Rowan was found about a mile by three men who had been at the family party -- Stephen Carpenter of Winchester, Corey Carpenter of Keene and Shawn Lamoureux of Spofford.



"They knew the area because they hunted in there," said Jesse Griffin. "One of the guys said he just had a feeling that the swamp was where he needed to look. He heard crying and starting yelling, and Rowan started yelling back."

Stephen
Rowan
Griffin

Rowan had been playing outside Saturday afternoon with his brother, Justan, 4 1/2, and his cousins at a birthday party at his paternal grandmother's house. Jesse Griffin, 29, was outside with the children and had turned his attention to his youngest son, Kieran, 9 months. When he looked up again and did a head count, he noticed that Rowan was gone.

"We started running around, checking the house, looking in vehicles, trying to find him," Griffin said. "After probably fifteen or twenty minutes of looking, my mom said she was calling 911."

Shortly after 3 p.m., State Police arrived, followed by local police and officers from New Hampshire Fish and Game. The children at the party said they had seen Rowan go into the woods chasing after a cat, said Lt. Craig Morrocco of New Hampshire Fish and Game.

Conservation officers, along with New England K-9 Search & Rescue, Upper Valley Wilderness Response Team, Richmond and Fitzwilliam Police, Cheshire County Sheriff's Department, New Hampshire State Police K-9 and helicopter, Richmond Fire and Rescue and local volunteers conducted K-9 and on-foot searches throughout the night.

"It got a little crazy," Jesse Griffin said. "So many people wanted to help, but we were trying to keep people out of the woods so they wouldn't throw off the dogs."

Around 9 p.m., according to Morrocco, Rowan's shoe was found.

"That was so scary," said Jesse, "but it also meant that they were on the right track."

The Griffins traveled back and forth between Jesse's mother's house and the search headquarters set up at the nearby Richmond VFW Hall. Between 1:30 and 2 a.m., the couple took another ride down to headquarters. They were waiting outside to talk to Fish and Game officials when they heard shouting in the woods. Suddenly, two

officers in cruisers took off from headquarters with their lights on, and the next thing the Griffins knew, their little boy was in their arms -- cold and scratched, but otherwise safe.

The Griffins said they're grateful to their friends and the officials who came to their aid when they needed it most.

"The police, Fish and Game, and the searchers were wonderful," Katie Griffin said.

For New Hampshire Fish and Game, the State Police, and New England K-9 Search and Rescue, the weekend has been a busy one. On Friday, a Temple boy got separated from his mother during a hike in the woods. After a night-long search, 7-year-old Erahil Chao was found Saturday morning by a good Samaritan, Lucy Houck, near the parking lot of the former Temple Mountain Ski Area.

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