

Reliance on technology makes backcountry more dangerous

By J.R. Sullivan, *Outside*

In July 2013, 66-year-old Geraldine Largay was hiking in western Maine, nearing the end of a three-month, northbound solo journey on the Appalachian Trail. She'd logged more than 950 miles and traveled through ten states, sending regular texts to her husband, George, who was pacing her by car and meeting up with her from town to town with fresh supplies. On the morning of July 22, the two arranged via text to meet at a nearby trailhead the next day. George arrived on time and waited, but Largay never showed up.

George phoned authorities, and a search party combed the wilderness near Largay's last known location on the trail, but found nothing. Then, last October, more than two years since Largay vanished, foresters surveying a U.S. Navy facility near Mount Redington found Largay's remains and some of her belongings near a stream about two miles from the AT, not far from where she was last seen, the *Morning Sentinel* reported. According to the coroner's report, released in January, Largay died inside her tent, zipped in her sleeping bag. The official cause of death: inanition—the effects of dehydration and starvation—from prolonged environmental exposure.

It's unclear what exactly happened to Largay, but wilderness experts familiar with the AT point out that a potential factor in her death reflects a major problem among hikers: an over-reliance on technology to navigate and call for help in times of distress.

“One of the worst trends we've seen in the past 20 years is the proliferation of cell phones and technology in the

backcountry,” says Tim Smith, a registered Master Maine Guide and the founder of the Jack Mountain Bushcraft School, which instructs students in brush living, guide skills, and long-term winter survival.

Read the whole story