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Close to 200 people search for Victoria hiker missing near Sooke

Search-and-rescue teams from Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland have intensified efforts to locate a missing Victoria woman.



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Search-and-rescue personnel search for Melissa McDevitt near the Charters Creek fish hatchery in Sooke on Saturday, Dec. 17, 2022. The Victoria woman was last seen in surveillance video from the parking lot on Dec. 9. DARREN STONE, TIMES COLONIST

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UPDATE: The search for Melissa McDevitt has been suspended, Sooke RCMP said Monday.

Search-and-rescue teams from Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland intensified efforts to locate a missing Victoria woman on the weekend.

Paul Berry, president of Comox Valley Search and Rescue, said 170 professional search volunteers, including dogs teams, were on the ground Saturday looking for Melissa McDevitt and will continue their search at first light Sunday.

The 38-year-old was scheduled to travel from Victoria to Vancouver on Dec. 10 for a flight to North Carolina to visit family. Her grey Subaru Forester was found in the parking lot of the Charters Creek fish hatchery in Sooke that same day.

Just before 2 p.m. on Dec. 9, a surveillance video captured the avid hiker in the parking lot carrying hiking poles. A powerful windstorm hit Vancouver Island that night, leaving thousands without power.

“We anticipate it will be a recovery operation, given the time that has elapsed — unless Melissa sought shelter some place where she has food and water and sufficient warmth,” Berry said Saturday afternoon from the command centre at the hatchery. “But based on everything we’ve covered today, we believe that highly unlikely.”

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