

## Hunt for missing nurse moves to depths of DeLong Lake

**EXPANDED SEARCH: Dogs, divers search the depths for Schloss.**

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More than two weeks after she vanished, the hunt for missing nurse Mindy Schloss moved to the water Sunday.

Volunteer searchers, FBI agents and Anchorage police and firefighters spent the day searching around Raspberry Road and Kincaid Park. By early afternoon they seemed focused on DeLong Lake, just across Raspberry from Schloss' home on Cutty Sark Street.

About 6 p.m., Anchorage Fire Department divers went into the lake, looking for a body. By 9 p.m., they had found nothing but beer cans and fishing poles and were packing up their gear.

A local group, Alaska Search and Rescue Dogs, provided five dogs and handlers for Sunday's effort. Also, the FBI has sent up five dogs and handlers from its training academy in Quantico, Va., at the request of Anchorage police. Some of the dogs are trained to find cadavers; others specialize in tracking scents.

The divers went into the water in the same area being searched by the dogs -- just offshore of DeLong Lake Park.

Earlier on Sunday afternoon, searchers cruised the lake in a motorized raft with several of the dogs. At least one barked a lot, said a neighbor, Carol Benkovich, who lives in a condo on the lake. She stood on a little wooden pathway using binoculars to watch the action. Other neighbors did the same.

A signal from a dog could mean something interesting in the water -- a hit -- or could be a false alarm, said Danny Brown, director of the Alaska Police Department's volunteer search team. Searchers were methodically checking a number of areas of interest, he said. Police wouldn't say what made them interesting.

Schloss, a 52-year-old psychiatric nurse, was last seen at her South Anchorage home on Aug. 3. Since then, she's missed all of her scheduled appointments, including a flight she was to have taken from Anchorage to Fairbanks on Aug. 5 for work.

Her friends have described her as extremely responsible and predictable in her habits.

Her car, a 2000 red Acura Integra hatchback, was found Aug. 9 near the Alaska Airlines cargo facility, but friends said she always took cabs to the airport.

Police aren't saying much about what they think happened to Schloss, including why they began looking in the lake or whether the daylong search turned up anything.

"It's the nature of the case, this particular case, that it could really harm things to say anything," Sgt. Bob Glen said Sunday afternoon at the entrance to Kincaid Park.



Anchorage Fire Department members and search teams gather Aug. 19, 2007, on the shore of DeLong Lake. (BOB HALLINEN / Anchorage Daily News)

Volunteer searchers also walked along Raspberry Road to Jewel Lake Road checking for any clues in ditches or along the roads. They looked in the woods. They checked around DeLong Lake and Little Campbell Lake.

At DeLong Lake, searchers took different dogs out in a raft one by one. A German shepherd put its paws on the raft's edge and peered intently into the water. The dog shifted from one side of the raft to the other. Soon after, the divers went in at that spot.

Benkovich said it's scary thinking about what might have happened to Schloss. Benkovich has lived in Anchorage since 1974 and at Country Lake Estates for the past eight years. It's a pretty spot. Sunday afternoon, a loon -- part of a nesting pair -- paddled past. Fish jumped. A couple of people hopped in for a dip despite the chill.

But sometimes late at night, things get rowdy at the park across the way, she said.

"For this to happen -- it's still very frightening. I hope it's not a random-stranger kind of thing," Benkovich said.

Police or volunteers blocked off public road entrances to both lakes and didn't let anyone through. They especially didn't want anyone walking a dog in the area of the search, Glen said.

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