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HUMAN BONES FOUND IN RAVINE

TREE TRIMMER SPOTS REMAINS AT REMOTE SITE

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Memo: MediaNews staff writer Dan Judge contributed to this report.

Illustration: Photo, Map

Caption: PHOTO: JOANNE HO-YOUNG LEE --
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Sgt. Ed Wise, of the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office, says the bones are not those of abducted Vallejo girl Xiana Fairchild.

MAP: MERCURY NEWS

Bones found along Bear Creek Rd.

Homicide detectives and a team of orange-vested **cadaver dogs** today will resume scouring a ravine outside Los Gatos after uncovering several dozen bones of an adult under a thin layer of dirt and leaves.

Investigators were not immediately able to identify the person, age or gender. Those questions could take time to answer, according to Santa Clara County Sheriff's Sgt. Ed Wise.

After a day of combing the area, 25 to 40 bones -- vertebrae, ribs and arms -- were found in about a 30-square-foot part of a steep ravine off Bear Creek Road near Summit Road, Wise said. No clothing or personal effects were found.

The adult size of the bones rules out the body as the remains of 7-year-old Xiana Fairchild of Vallejo, who was kidnapped

in December 1999. Her skull was found in the Santa Cruz Mountains in January 2001. There are a number of missing people in the Bay Area. Among them: 18-year-old Kristen Modafferi, of San Francisco, 33-year-old Elizabeth Whited, of San Francisco, and 42-year-old Jeanine Sanchez Harms, of Los Gatos.

Wise said the bones found last week in the Santa Cruz Mountains were not buried, but had been covered by leaves, brush and tree limbs that fell on the forest floor over a few years. Some of the bones stuck up out of the brush.

While black-clad deputies from the investigations unit and forensics experts gingerly moved tree limbs in the area where the bones were first found, small yellow flags marked other areas of the ravine where the **cadaver dogs** indicated there might be more remains.

The bones from a torso were uncovered on the upper part of the ravine, close to a curve on Bear Creek Road. More of the skeleton may have washed farther down the hillside.

Wise said the investigators were expected to work into Tuesday night, and plan to return today to look into the other marked spots.

Investigators were led to the bones after a Pacific Gas & Electric contractor stumbled over a rib bone as he made his way out of the ravine Thursday. Eumie Davis, 36, was walking through the isolated Santa Cruz Mountains hillside, scouting the dense canopy for trees that need trimming.

A red plastic tag marked where he found the bones. He said he tripped on the rib, looked down and thought it didn't look like an animal bone, but he wasn't sure. Still Davis, who once worked on archaeology digs, was suspicious enough of his find to snap a picture and mark the site.

He alerted authorities about his discovery Monday after confirming with a friend that bones -- two ribs and clavicle -- were likely human.

"I just kept thinking that if these are human bones, then there is a family out there that wants to know what happened to their loved one," Davis said.

Wise said the coroner's office will examine the bones, but it's unclear whether it will be able to extract DNA from what searchers have found.

Armed with shovels, rakes and hoes, investigators followed the noses of three **cadaver dogs**, digging for clues and clearing brush with their hands.

Campbell police joined sheriff's investigators, but Wise said they were helping as part of a training exercise -- not looking into a particular case.

When authorities ruled out the possibility the remains were of Xiana on Tuesday afternoon, Sheriff Laurie Smith called Stephanie Kahalekulu, Xiana's great-aunt who raised her. Kahalekulu said she was relieved that the bones were not those of the girl.

"I just don't want to open that up again," she said. "I'm content that she is with God and I want to stay content with that. I certainly don't want bits and pieces of her being found just to stir all of this up again."

Curtis Dean Anderson, who confessed to killing Xiana, was sentenced in December 2005 to 50 years to life in prison.