

## [r/MauraMurrayEvidence3](#)

•

Posted by

[u/goldenmod2](#)

11 days ago

### **Thirteen misconceptions (and counting) about Maura being "lost in the woods" ...**

I recently tried to make a dent in some of the "lost in the woods" arguments (and thank you to a couple of you, it felt like an unofficial team effort). I'm going to try to capture some of the key arguments being used. I am not much on theory on this topic - I'm just trying to give them the facts that I know.

The most important thing is the 2/11 search by helicopter. This is the key to everything else.

On Wednesday, 2/11, Fish and Game brought a helicopter with FLIR to check for tracks. They had excellent if not ideal snow conditions. They focused on the roadways because she would have needed to leave the roadways to enter the woods at any point. Bogardus says they covered 10 miles of roadway. Based on the map, they started at the accident site and traced different roads for 10 miles leading away from the crash site: <https://imgur.com/EkiZvdf>

Bogardus notes:

... After covering the significant area at least 112 and outlying roads over probably 10 miles distance the end result was we had no human foot tracks going into the woodlands off of the roadways that were not either cleared or accounted for. **At the end of that day the consensus was she did not leave the roadway.**

Bogardus then addresses the idea that it's difficult to find a body in the middle of the woods:

I do agree it's hard but I can tell you I'm not a big believer in people levitating and going long distances. So she had to have left the track for us if she went into the woodlands. **I'm**

**fairly confident to say she did not go into the woods when she left the area.**

So with that as background:

A LIST OF MISCONCEPTIONS I AM TRYING TO DEBUNK

**Misconception 1: she would not have left tracks in the snow (snow conditions).**

I heard many variations on the snow conditions. Some say they know the snow conditions that day, some are walking through the temperature changes to project what the snow conditions might have been. It was speculated that it was hard packed snow and she wouldn't have left footprints.

**Bottom line: we KNOW the snow conditions** from Bogardus, Scarinza, and others. They had about 2-2.5 feet of snow on the ground. There was also a fresh coat of snow (from Saturday) on top of the winter's accumulated snow. Snow conditions were unchanged when they started the search on Wednesday AM. We also know that they could easily detect tracks from the helicopter. We don't need to analyze, or make things up, or try to remember. Snow conditions were excellent if not ideal for the work they needed to do on 2/11.

Relevant quotes:

Bogardus: we had about a foot and a half two feet of snow there was a very thin crust on the top but if you or I were to walk off this road into the snow we would very easily leave a footprint

Scarinza (TCA): Chief Williams called Scarinza on Wednesday morning to see if the state police could get a chopper in the air. Scarinza reached out to New Hampshire Fish and Game, which had a helicopter equipped with FLIR cameras—military-grade, “forward-looking infrared” scopes, Scarinza explained. Soon, he was flying over Wild Ammonoosuc Road. “What you could see is what you couldn’t see,” he said. “I remember seeing this gorgeous red fox that stuck out against the snow below.

You could see deer stands in the area. I’m seeing deer tracks in the snow. Just great detail. I would have seen human

footprints in a second. It was good, clean snow and it hadn't snowed since the accident. It made for good search conditions." But there were no human tracks. Maura did not walk into the woods.

### **Misconception 2: there have been no searches or there was only one search**

Sample quote: I believe I only read about one search with canines but again, I don't know what's true with this. If true, I do wish they had done more than one.

I'm a little surprised that this is still the perception out there. There were five official searches in 2004. These were done by New Hampshire Fish & Game. After the first search (2/11) by air, land and with one canine, they determined she had not wandered into the woods and had possibly left the area of the crash site in a vehicle. However, on 2/19 they undertook a second search with three cadaver dogs going into the woods in half mile segments. They found nothing and declared the search to be done until or unless there was another lead or clue.

Indeed, a few months later following the RF sighting, they did a thorough search of the area of 116/112 in May 2004 and found nothing (six dog teams).

In July 2004, with the snow melted, they brought together over 100 trained searchers to do a line search of the mile perimeter of the crash site. At this point, they noted they were looking for "clues" and mentioned specifically her black backpack. They found nothing.

From 2006 to 2008, there was a group of private detectives involved in the case, They undertook three large scale searches. However, they were focused on a foul play scenario, not a "wandered into the woods and died of exposure" scenario.

In around 2010 there was another PI involved and he and his team did a search of French Pond.

Starting in 2017, Boots on the Ground has been undertaking searches to support the family.

In July of 2022, there was a one day search by the NHSP/Fish and Game - it was close to the area of the May 2004 search, although a slightly different scope and range. Nothing was found.

For the sake of completeness, on February 20, 2004, there was a search of Burlington, VT. The official search also looked at Bartlett and Conway.

Also, in the early days of the disappearance, there was a family group driving around with posters, walking up and down the roads near the crash site, and driving around following up on tips and leads. Fred and a group of volunteers searched every weekend for the first year.

### **Misconception 3: Additional searches mean they aren't confident**

I guess there's a sense that we need to divide up all of the land as a large grid and then check off each box? That's not how these SAR searches work and in this case shows a lack of understanding of the unique snow conditions involved with this search.

However, looking for a body that has been left, hidden or buried is a different search altogether. The NHLI searches were fairly explicitly focused on places where a body might be left in a foul play scenario. The search of French Pond was also, reportedly, based on a foul play scenario.

At some point, the SAR team only goes back out if they have a lead or a clue. However, I don't sense a lot of "ego" involvement - they don't say "we TOLD you she's not there". They say "here are the tools we have available based on the scenario you have given us".

### **Misconception 4: it has been established that there were no grid searches.**

First of all, we can go back to the methodology on 2/11. Do we need grid searches after that? And why? But if you want grid searches, there have been grid searches. To give one example, the NHLI used grid searches in 2008 although, again, they were focused on a foul play scenario.

Quote:

"... during the course of that the way we did the searches is that we took tape and we just make grids of the whole area the whole five mile area that we were gonna search"

**Misconception 5: ok, so there have been grid searches, but what we need are line searches and there were no line searches**

In July 2004, there was a massive search of the one mile perimeter of the crash site using line searches. They noted they were looking for "clues" and specifically mentioned the black backpack.

Source:

(July 13, 2004) HAVERHILL -- Search teams fanned out through fields, woods and drainage ditches yesterday on another search of the area where a Massachusetts woman was last seen more than five months ago.

Nearly 100 people, including 60 state troopers from as far away as Exeter, conservation officers, and volunteers from search-and-rescue organizations, spent the day on line searches, painstakingly looking for any clue that would shed new light on the disappearance of Maura Murray.

Search was 9am until dark

**Misconception 6: the cases of the Lear Jet or the Appalachian hiker mean that she might be lost in the deep woods**

Largay went missing in (if I recall) July. A summer search is completely different from this search which was aided by the unique snow conditions.

The Lear Jet is an example of something that went straight into the deep woods. That is a completely different scenario.

**Misconception 7: cases where someone was eventually found near a car are proof that Maura is or could be nearby**

There is NO question that this is something that happens: someone goes missing from a car and is found months or years later, nearby. But there are also cases where someone goes missing from a car and is found months or years later hundreds or thousands of miles away - even alive. There are cases where the accident was staged and the person was never there (example: S. Stern).

Individual cases are interesting to explore, but they are not proof of anything; they are just anecdotes or maybe heuristic tools useful for thinking through scenarios.

### **Misconception 8: they based everything on the dogs used on 2/11**

This was a trick question because there was only one dog on 2/11: a bloodhound, air scent trained. There WERE three cadaver dogs on 2/19. I'm not sure why everyone thinks there were 2 dogs on 2/11: maybe because of the Oxygen demonstration?

The following is a little more of my opinion. It is clear that LE gave some weight to the dog track on 2/11. However, I would say the helicopter search was the key element of the 2/11 search. Once they determined that there were no tracks whatsoever, then it was reasonable to infer that she had possibly left the area in a vehicle. The dog may have indicated that Maura/the driver left the area in a vehicle but it may have only given direction of travel. Or it may have just been a false track altogether.

Quotes:

(Scarizza/TCA): "The state police took a bloodhound to the scene of the accident and used a "scent article" from Maura's car to get the dog to follow her trail. "The bloodhound went a hundred yards east and then appeared to lose track of her scent," said Scarizza. "Does that mean she got into a vehicle there? Perhaps. Does it mean that enough time had gone by that it wasn't a scent opportunity for the dog? Perhaps."

### **Misconception 9: the helicopter with FLIR doesn't matter because she could have already been dead**

I'm not going to speculate on how long a body could be detected by a helicopter because it really doesn't matter. They were looking for tracks going off the roadways. Let's call the FLIR a "bonus".

### **Misconception 10: she's probably on private property since that hasn't been searched**

Again, we should probably be very specific here about what we mean. The helicopter search would have seen private property - and/or tracks leading onto private property. Could she have knocked on someone's door without leaving a track? I have not necessarily seen this addressed in any official way but - I would say that is possible.

But that means she is INSIDE someone's property and the person hasn't come forward. Could she have been abducted and then buried in someone's garage or basement? Of course, but that's a completely different type of "private property" search.

### **Misconception 11: saying she is lost in the woods solves the case**

As I read through much of the comments (more so in some of the True Crime subs), there seems to be a lot of back slapping - like "she died in the woods, end of story".

Whatever happened, Maura is still missing. If someone wants to craft a theory of where she could be in the woods, based on the searches that have been done, they should do so. But thousands of people in the TC subs declaring the case is solved is not really helpful and they haven't solved anything.

### **Misconception 12: the search team doesn't know what they are doing**

New Hampshire Fish & Game is by all accounts outstanding at conducting searches. They have an excellent track record and, obviously, they know the terrain. Searchers use tools that incorporate thousands of past searches to gain insight into how lost people behave in all kinds of scenarios. They had access to all sorts of tools, including the helicopter with FLIR, highly trained dogs, predictive models, and a lot of experience and knowledge of the terrain.

### **Misconception 13: the search on 2/11 just missed her - she probably ran/walked just outside of the search range**

This is my opinion but it's also reasonable inference. Based on the map, the helicopter followed these roads for 10 miles away from the crash site. That's a lot of distance. These roads are often narrow with no shoulder, and snow accumulated on the sides and cars coming in all directions. I think they have a good sense of how far someone could have gone without leaving a single track. They always "profile" the lost person at the outset so they knew she was a runner. If someone thinks they covered 10 miles and should have gone 11. I don't really believe that.

In addition to the list of misconceptions I wanted to quickly mention a couple of theories (without calling them misconceptions):

... AND A COUPLE OF THEORIES

**Theory: She went down Old Peters Road**

OPR was the staging ground on 2/9. According to Whitewash, it was searched by the FD on 2/11. It's unclear what this means, but it certainly seems that someone would leave tracks if heading down OPR (see post on road and snow conditions with images of OPR).

OPR would have been part of the helicopter search on 2/11. It was confirmed searched by cadaver dogs on 2/19. The family group in the first weeks walked up and down OPR. It would have been part of the July search. It was searched in 2006 by the NHLI. It was part of the 2008 search by the NHLI. And finally, my softest evidence is that the dog didn't head in that direction on 2/11.

**Theory: she probably got a ride outside the search area, then went into the woods and died of hypothermia**

I can't counter this with any facts because it's so broad. But does it make any sense? Seriously? She caught a ride just to then go into the woods and die? And then we have the person who gave her the ride, possibly leaving her in the middle of nowhere, and has never said anything.

To be honest, if I hear of a body found in the woods in Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, the Berkshires, etc., I am going to be curious. I just don't think she got a ride to mile 11 or mile 20 and then turned and walked into the woods.

Sources:

Bogardus transcript from Oxygen:

<https://mauramurrayblog.wordpress.com/2020/01/04/search-for-maura-murray-transcription-of-the-oxygen-interview-with-todd-bogardus-of-new-hampshire-fish-and-game-who-supervised-the-official-search-for-maura-in-2004/>

Road and snow conditions (many photos of OPR)

[https://old.reddit.com/r/MauraMurrayEvidence3/comments/14pk9sg/what\\_were\\_the\\_road\\_conditions\\_and\\_snow\\_conditions/](https://old.reddit.com/r/MauraMurrayEvidence3/comments/14pk9sg/what_were_the_road_conditions_and_snow_conditions/)

Post on searches:



<https://mauramurrayblog.wordpress.com/2020/01/26/could-maura-have-vanished-into-the-woods-an-overview-of-searches-in-the-maura-murray-case/>

Third Official Search (May 2004)

[https://old.reddit.com/r/MauraMurraySub/comments/gcx72t/official\\_search\\_3\\_may\\_2004\\_the\\_intersection\\_of/](https://old.reddit.com/r/MauraMurraySub/comments/gcx72t/official_search_3_may_2004_the_intersection_of/)

Current summary map:

<https://imgur.com/cWI9wud>

10 points

[13 comments](#)

159 comments