

# Park rangers warn of quarry's hazards after drowning

BY JACQUELYN MELINEK AND SIMONE JASPER  
jmelinek@newsobserver.com  
sjasper@newsobserver.com

**DURHAM**

The body of a teen who died in the Eno River Rock Quarry was found Thursday morning, two days after he slipped into the deep waters of the abandoned stoned pit.



Nicklaus Brown

The 95-degree sun shined down onto the quarry, moments after 18-year-old Nicklaus Brown was found close to where he had jumped in Tuesday night.

Sonar scans helped lead divers to the teen, who removed him from the water. First responders, their search over, carried their rescue boats and gear from the quarry.

"It is painful to share this news," said Katie Hall, spokeswoman for N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation. "Halifax County Rescue Divers recovered Mr. Brown's body in approximately 25 feet of water near where he was last seen Tuesday after jumping into the quarry."

Brown graduated last week from Eno River Academy (formerly Orange Charter School) in Hillsborough, where he was on the swim and baseball teams. He was set to attend the University of North Carolina at Wilmington in the fall.

"Nick was one of the most gregarious students that we knew," executive director Lisa Bair told WRAL. "He knew everybody by name, and all the younger students really looked up to him."

The teen was with a friend Tuesday night when he jumped from an embankment, Hall said. He resurfaced briefly but went under the water and wasn't seen again.

Crews responded at about 5:25 p.m. Tuesday and searched for Brown for more than four hours Tuesday and again Wednesday when the effort turned from a rescue to a recovery operation.

On Thursday, respon-

ders spent almost five hours searching before they found him.

**'A VERY DANGEROUS PLACE'**

"The quarry is a beautiful place, however, it's also a very dangerous place," said Jay Greenwood, the Piedmont region superintendent for North Carolina State Parks.

"This is not a designated swim area, so it's very hazardous," he said. "There are a lot of rock outcrops and stumps, making the bottom very treacherous."

Greenwood said he and other rangers in Eno River State Park continually advise people against entering the quarry. There is no law in North Carolina that can keep people from swimming in non-designated bodies of water, he said, but they try to warn visitors with signs and by word of mouth.

"At one point in time there was a fence around here, but people would just climb the fence,"

Greenwood said.

"It's next to impossible to keep people out of the water," he said.

Since May 1, 2018, there have been 16 medical calls to the quarry, from broken ankles to near drownings and deaths. The last drowning happened in 2015, Hall said.

**UNKNOWN HAZARDS**

From the cliffs, one can see the occasional branch or rock jutting out from the surface, but more, unknown hazards lie below, said Alicia Stemper, spokeswoman for the Orange County Sheriff's Office.

"Even small, little distances [to swim] are enormous and dangerous when you can't see," she said.

After Hurricane Florence, about a foot and a half of rock ledge collapsed at one of the popular jumping areas — the same cliff that Brown jumped from.

"Since it is a quarry, there is a lot of erosion on these cliffs," Greenwood said. "The cliffs erode away and trees fall into the quarry ..."

People jumping off the cliffs sometimes don't jump far enough away, he added, so they end up hitting stumps or rock outcrops in the lake.

**ORIENTAL RUGS**  
*Beauty, Artistry & Tradition*  
FOR OVER 40 YEARS

Monday-Friday 10-6  
Saturday 10-5

5634 Chapel Hill Blvd., Durham  
*Corner of I-40 and 15-501 at Exit 270*

**PERSIAN**  
CARPET  
persiancarpet.com  
919-489-8362

**Niche Gardens NURSERY**

**NATIVES GROW WILD!**

- WILDFLOWERS
- Perennials, grasses, shrubs
- JAM-PACKED for spring

Open every day:  
Monday - Saturday 9-5  
Sunday 10-5

1111 Dawson Road, CH 27516  
West of Carrboro off Old Greensboro Rd.

919-967-0078  
www.NicheGardens.com

2019 May 18-year-old drowns in quarry

Clipped By:  
usmra rob  
Sep 28, 2024