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# London native, Western grad Simon Donato mixes passions for greater good



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Metro London



London native Simon Donato, 35, stops for a picture while trail running in the Rockies last summer. Donato, an extreme athlete, now lives in Calgary where he runs a company that leads scientists and search parties into remote locations.

Submitted

Simon Donato isn't your average run-of-the-mill geologist.

Rather, you might consider him an ultra-geologist — mixing a love of extreme sport and science that pushes each to new bounds.

A London native, Donato, 35, has been leading scientists and search parties into rugged terrain since 2008 through his Calgary company [Adventure Science \(http://www.Adventurescience.ca\)](http://www.Adventurescience.ca).

Donato put his first search under his belt the year the group was formed — scouring the mountains of California for adventurer Steve Fossett.

“We were searching areas ATVs couldn’t access,” Donato said. “Places they couldn’t see from airplanes.”

Most recently, Donato and friends helped search New Mexico’s Gila National Forest for Micah True — an extreme athlete profiled as Caballo Blanco in Christopher McDougal’s book *Born to Run*.

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**It’s a hobby, but it can be pretty intensive. — Simon  
Donato**

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Donato spent the night with True’s body after it was discovered March 31 along a remote creek bed by two other searchers. Many, including Donato, consider True a pioneer of ultra-running, a sport that involves running extreme distances over unlikely terrain.

Donato met True when he ran the Cooper Canyon ultra-marathon in 2010, a race True founded.

“We just kind of felt compelled to go down and help in our own little way,” Donato said about the search. “We found out (he was missing) Thursday night. By Friday morning, we had the wheels were in motion.”

The search for True is an example of what Adventure Science is all about, Donato said.

“Caballo’s a trail runner, and he went out on a run (and never came back). So, you have to get into a trail runner’s mentality,” Donato said. “You start to think as a trail runner ... and that’s where the value comes in.”

His next outing is scheduled for late May in Montana. There, Donato and his team will lead scientists into hard-to-access areas for archeological exploration.

“(Adventure Science) kind of came out of my realization that through mountain biking ... adventure racing I could move through pretty rugged, tough terrain at relative ease,” he said. “In doing field research for (my doctorate) it kind of donned on me that most scientists were kind of limited on where they could go because of fitness.

“We add the ability to travel huge distances each day (without burning) your crews out.”

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