

Dozens search for West Island man Gone three days. Believed to have drowned

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Police and dozens of volunteers combed through a West Island park and water's edge yesterday, searching for a man believed to have drowned in Lake of Two Mountains.

Robert Cliffe, 43, of Dollard des Ormeaux, went to the Cap St. Jacques nature park in Pierrefonds on Thursday afternoon to take pictures of the sun setting over the lake, said his brother-in-law, John Luch.

"He liked the way the ice crystals looked with the sun's rays hitting them," Luch said yesterday afternoon, after organizing teams of volunteers to search the park.

Cliffe is an amateur photographer who loves the outdoors, Luch added.

Montreal police said witnesses told them they saw a man on the ice taking pictures on Thursday evening. Police aren't sure if that was Cliffe, said Constable Laurent Gingras.

Cliffe's car was found in a parking lot in the north end of the park. Luch said family members had an extra key, and were able to start the car, so they don't believe he had car troubles.

Cliffe, who is single, was reported missing Friday by a co-worker at the company where he works repairing building foundations. The colleague usually car pools with Cliffe, Gingras said.

Police searched the park on Friday, and abandoned their efforts at nightfall.

Yesterday morning, they searched along the river banks in boats, while the volunteers, several with dogs, spread out through the 288-hectare park. Many were from a curling club where Cliffe is a member, while others were with West Island search-and-rescue teams.

Visitors to the park's sugar shack watched the searchers as they took a wagon ride into a wooded area in the park yesterday afternoon. There was very little ice around the point of land where Cliffe was believed to have been on Thursday night, but there was ice all across the waterway further east on Riviere des Prairies yesterday.

Luch said Cliffe is an avid outdoorsman who had a season's pass to the park because he went there so often.



CREDIT: JOHN MAHONEY, THE GAZETTE
Michel Deguire, of search organization Quebec Secours, ties a marker to a tree during the search for Robert Cliffe yesterday.

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