

Airboat helps save man from drowning

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An airboat helped rescue a Yuma man who was drowning in a shallow area of the Colorado River that was inaccessible to rescuers by vehicle Sunday afternoon, the sheriff's office said.

The man, identified as 32-year-old Bruce Guinn, has been released from Yuma Regional Medical Center following treatment for the near-drowning on the river near Avenue 2E, the Yuma County Sheriff's Office said.

He was swimming in the river about 4:30 p.m. when a diabetic seizure apparently left him helpless, the sheriff's office said.

Sheriff's Cpl. Phil Spongross and Deputy Mike Kofta were patrolling the river on the airboat when the department dispatched them to the area in response to a report of a man floating downstream in the area of 2E.

"You couldn't get to it from shore, and most of the area is not passable except by airboat," sheriff's spokesman Capt. Eben Bratcher said.

Deputies found the man floating face down, pulled him onto the boat and brought him to a location on shore where a Rural/Metro ambulance could pick him up, the sheriff's office.

The sheriff's office typically uses the flat-bottom boat for patrols in areas of the river that are not accessible to other watercraft, Bratcher said.

Sunday was the first time the boat was used in a rescue, he said.

A state grant enabled the sheriff's office to purchase the \$46,000 boat a little more than a year ago, Bratcher said.

"I'd say one life (saved) has probably made it worthwhile," he said. "Being out there in the right place at the right time turned out to be good for everyone involved."