

# 14-year-old missing on South Fork Catawba River found dead



*Updated: Jun. 14, 2019 at 1:10 PM MDT*



GASTON COUNTY, N.C. (WBTV) - A 14-year-old who went missing while swimming in the South Fork Catawba River Monday night was found dead on Friday.

Ethan Danny Britt and a friend, David Winder, went swimming in the South Fork Catawba River around 6:30 p.m. Monday in an area off Stanly Spencer-Mountain Road in Lowell. Both teens were swept away in the current, officials said, and were taken over the dam.





below and downstream from where Ethan was last seen," officials said during a press conference Friday. "Please continue to pray for Ethan and his family, and our responders, during this difficult time."

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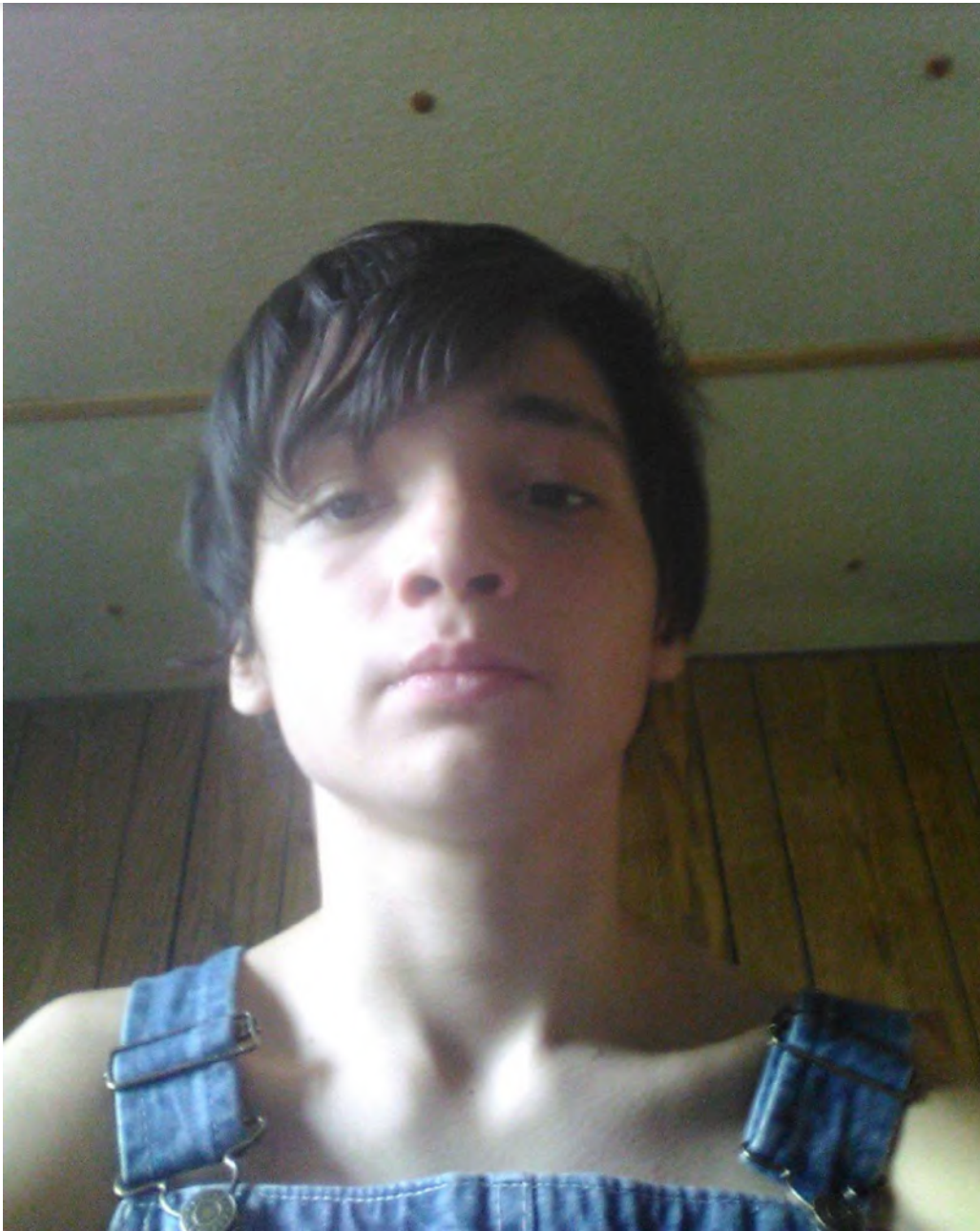
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Ethan's friend, Winder, was rescued after he became stranded on an island Tuesday morning. Rescue crews said Winder was conscious and talking when he was transported.

Just after 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, officials released a photo of Britt, and Britt's father provided a picture to WBTV Tuesday evening.





14-year-old Ethan Danny Britt went missing while swimming on the South Fork Catawba River on Monday, June 10, 2019. (Provided by Family (custom credit))

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## **'I believe he's still alive.' Father holds out hope in search for 14-year-old along South Fork River**

On Tuesday morning, a passerby called 911 after seeing one person in the water. Rescue crews say they had to use a swift water boat to rescue Winder, which was difficult because of moving currents and debris.

In the 911 call released Wednesday, the caller told police that they saw a person, presumably Winder, stranded in the water on the South Fork River, yelling for help.

"He's standing up. he's OK, he's just panicked, has no clothes on and wanting help. He's stranded, he surely can't get in the water," the caller said.

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**Rescue crews still hopeful they'll find missing teen swimmer in South Fork River**





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During a press conference on Tuesday, officials said Winder was able to grab onto trees growing on an island that was underwater due to the flooding.

"They were caught in this water, just before it peaked at close to 15 feet. So it was at its highest point when they were out there in it," officials said. "A lot of people go white water canoing, kayaking on it, when it's at a normal level. Right now however, it is extremely dangerous."





While searching, officials say they had to fight rapids, debris, poisonous snakes and high waters.

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Wednesday, efforts to find Britt will begin again at 7 a.m. with the introduction of K9s to the search, and hopefully, they say, more electronic equipment, as waters settle.

Runoff from previous heavy rain has worked its way further downstream, the National Weather Service says. A flood warning remained in effect for the area Tuesday.

Residents say recent flooding in the area has caused water levels to rise extremely high.

"This is the highest I've ever seen it, this time of year," 69-year Cramerton resident Herman Beaty says.

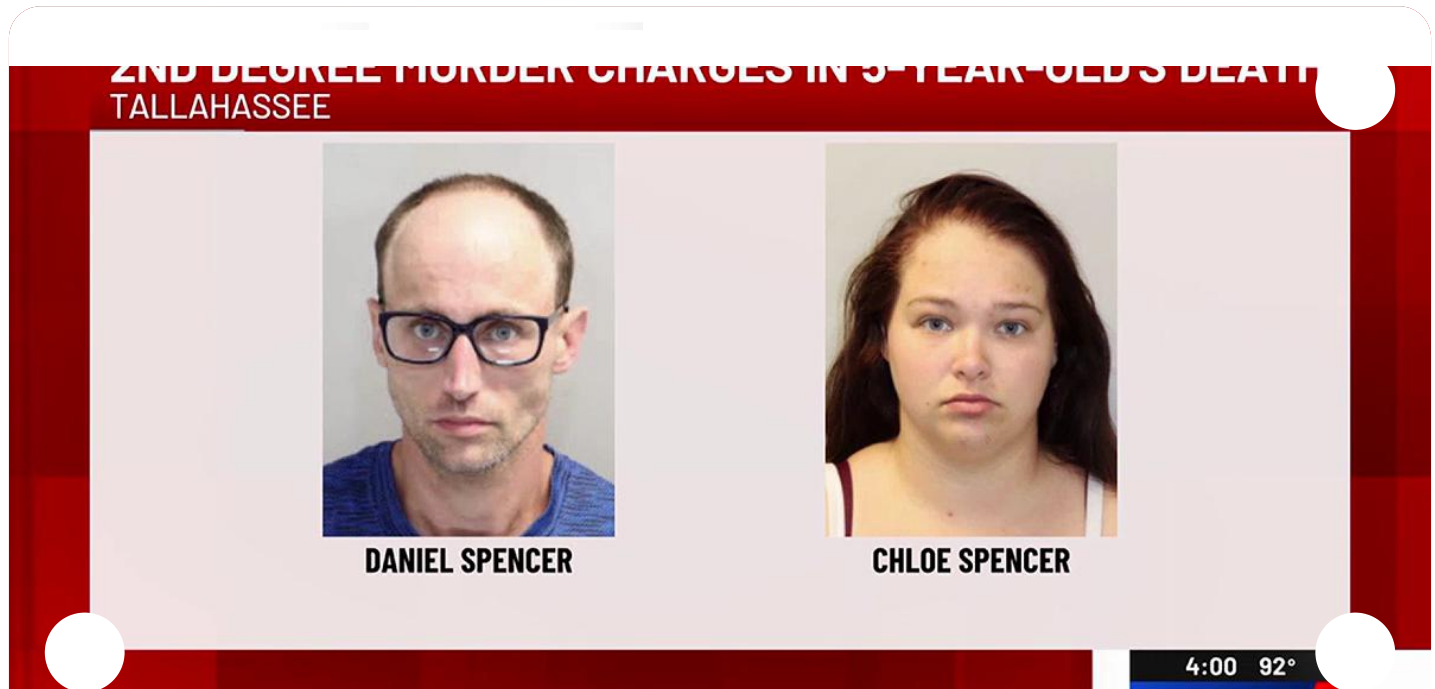


## Cramerton neighbors, businesses deal with rising South Fork River water

Crews changed tactics with search efforts Thursday, focusing on particular locations rather than covering "everything" again, officials said.

Teams from multiple agencies searched the South Fork Catawba River again on Friday, ultimately finding Ethan's body.

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