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Geocaching: Hunting For Treasure

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*By Annabeth Miller,
ShowMe Times Editor*

Driving down the highway with April Isbell can be quite an experience.

It's not her driving skills, mind you. They're first rate. It's just that in the middle of a conversation she is likely to interrupt briefly by pointing out the location of something that cannot be seen!

It doesn't matter if you're on Highway 25 headed north, on a road going around Lake Wappapello, or driving down a street in a nearby town. She's enthusiastic about it!

- "There's one on those woods!"
- "There's a cache in that gazebo!"
- "A cache is under that bridge!"
- "There's one attached to that sign!"

What she is pointing out are spots where she has found geocaches – the objects of discovery in a worldwide treasure-hunt game that is literally taking the globe by storm.

Isbell, of Dexter, has caught the "Geocaching" bug – learning about the game and starting

the play earlier this year. As of 12 midnight Saturday, she has found 340 caches – and average of almost 2 per day since she started the real world, treasure hunting game. .

So, what is GEOCACHING? .

Geocaching is an outdoor treasure hunting game – using new technology, old-fashioned logic, and incorporating discovery and outdoor fun. Players try to locate hidden containers, called geocaches, using GPS-enabled devices and then share their experiences online.

It's a little like the old  compass games Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts would play, but the compass has been kicked up a notch - using GPS units or cell phone technology. .

“It’s a scavenger hunt, in a way,” Isbell said. “It’s like a combination of a scavenger hunt and ‘hide and seek’ all played with high tech toys.” .

For a novice just starting out with the activity, the first place to go would be the Geocaching website – Geocaching.com. The site spells out the activity well – step-by-step. *But basically, -*

- A geocacher gets coordinates where a cache has been hidden by a fellow cacher.
- Using a GPS device to assist you in finding the cache.
- When you find the cache, you open it and find a log sheet – sign in!
- Return to the cache to its original position.
- Log in and share your find online.

“I like puzzling things out and finding things. I like logic problems and puzzles, and Geocaching fits right into that,” she explained while going down a wooded road in search of another cache.

It was a perfect summer afternoon at a beautiful state park in the region.

“It’s a mind game, if you will. You’ve got to think and to search – they are camouflaged

so well many times. You often have to use hints as well as the GPS.”

Isbell says she especially likes the

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ones that are along nature trails and outdoors – ones that may take her somewhere new and different. She works for the Girl Scouts of Missouri Heartland – the Council that serves almost two-thirds of the counties in Missouri. So Isbell gets the chance to see a lot of territory in the ShowMe State.

“It might be a place I might not have ever stopped at, and so I get to see someplace neat. Urban ones can be fun, but I like the rural.”

Many caches are associated with historical spots; she is learning more about the history of the region and state as she geocaches.

“A lot of times, people who have hidden the cache give you information along with the clues,” she added. “Things you might never have known. You learn a little neat history as you go.”

Caches, it seems, can be hidden with great creativity. In the crook of a tree, in artificial flowers or yard ornaments, under a deck, on a sign, simply in a stack of logs, on a superstore parking lot light. Caches can be hidden in rural areas and in towns and cities; you may have to hike a ways or they can be right under your nose.

“Sometimes the coordinates have taken me right to a tree and I reach up and there it is,” she said. And others have stumped her – often. There’s one spot in Cape Girardeau that she has explored several times and cannot find the cache. Another in a recreational area she finally found on our outing after trying to find on other trips.

“Cashes can be in almost anything,” she explained. Almost any type of waterproof container. “That’s part of what makes them hard to find, because you don’t know exactly what it is.”

Photos Above: Top Photo - April Isbell signs the log sheet from inside a cache she just found. Middle Photo - The snall log sheet found inside a small cache. Each geocacher signs the log sheet they find inside a cache. Bottom Photo - The goodies found inside a "Travel Bug" cache - a special type of geocache. This one was all about The Arkansas

Razorbacks!

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Geocaching

What Is Geocaching? Video

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