

METAL DETECTING TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

For the Bounty Hunter Detectorist

By Mickey Cochran

Relic Hunting

What is a relic? Something that has survived the passage of time is a limited definition. A relic can be anything of historical value, personal value, associated cultural value--in fact, anything that reflects another age. There truly is no price that can be put on a relic. Relics aren't being made today; they are being copied. Because a relic is impossible to define, we can only make allusion to what we are looking for when operating a metal detector. Where do you hunt for relics? Remember, relics can be anywhere and are truly impossible to define. If hunting private property, always gain permission. The areas to hunt for relics can be old abandoned homes, plowed fields, remote woodlands, mountains, ghost towns, and if your home is fairly old, in your own backyard. Again, it is advised to always gain permission when hunting private property.

If you ever find anything that you feel would be of historical significance for your local community, contact your local museum and let them know the exact location and depth of the item you found. This will enhance the local lore of your community and may even add another page to a history book.

Take the effort and time to study the art and science of archaeology. You will gain a finer respect and learn proper techniques by researching this science in detail. There are areas considered archaeological sites that usually have restricted access to qualified archaeologists only. By contacting your local university and offering your services as a volunteer in any future archaeological digs, you may work under the auspices of these scientists and gain much more knowledge and respect for the art of relic hunting.

Cache Hunting

What is a cache? Pronounced "cash", a cache can be many things. Hidden valuables such as: one's life savings, a coffee can of loose change, a strongbox of paper money, a bag of jewelry are only a few samples that can be classified as a cache. A cache is usually not found in parks or ball fields but near old homes, caves, remote countryside, etc.

Points to keep in mind when cache hunting include:

I. A cache is usually buried one to four-feet deep. Adjust your Bounty Hunter for maximum sensitivity.

II. Caches may be hidden in an aluminum or tin can, iron box, steel containers like a strong box--all of these metals are eliminated once you turn on your Discrimination even though there may be silver in the same metal container. If any of these type of metals, that normally would be discriminated out, come in between your coil and the precious metal you're attempting to find, the detector will not emit a tone unless you're operating your Bounty Hunter with the Discrimination off.

III. You will be able to see through all surface trash when operating with the Discrimination off, because you will be digging everything. The surface trash would have been a buffer to you with the Discrimination turned on, for you would not have gotten a signal in that same spot even though there might have been a coffee can filled with old silver dollars below the surface trash. Of course, this requires that you dig the surface trash and check the same spot where you've removed the trash.

Coin-Shooting

Coin-shooting is a true art form and is the most popular approach to applying a metal detector. It can take many years of practice to achieve mastery. There are many things to watch and listen for and to truly tune into your detector requires devoted persistence.

Why would coin-shooting be the most popular application of a metal detector? If a coin is old enough, it's usually worth much more than the effort it takes to dig it. There are many other reasons to coin-shoot besides finding pieces of metal authorized by a government as being money. Money defines the age it was minted in revealing interesting historical knowledge.

Coin collecting, as a hobby, is enjoyable in itself. The challenge of hitting the field with a metal detector to find collectible coins, is more interesting and less costly than having to buy your coins for your collection from a coin dealer.

Where do you find coins? Anywhere that there is dirt or grass and people had dwelled there in some manner. Everyday people are losing coins. There probably are more coins lost or hidden that exceed the value of all the coins in the banks of the world than anyone will ever be able to attest to--mainly because older coins exceed their face value. Imagine the possibilities! Just about every yard in the world has coins in it. If the home was recently built, you'll find more recent coins called "clad" coins. Now if the home is older, you may find older more valuable collectible coins. Every ball field that has been used is guaranteed to have coins in it. Many school yards can have thousands of coins strewn all over campus. Beaches are also considered "hot spots" for coin-shooting. It is good practice to map out your coin-shooting area while being careful to properly excavate the area. While hunting parks and sport event areas, always be careful to use a small digging trowel and to cover your holes properly.

Jewelry Hunting

Jewelry items are like coins, they can be lost as coins, just about anywhere there is dirt or grass and people have dwelled there. To concentrate on just finding jewelry requires that you set up your detector to eliminate most of the pull-tabs you encounter by adjusting your Discrimination accordingly. The main problem with hunting for gold rings is that you'll dig many "Beaver Tails" (a pull-tab broken in half), pull-tabs, nickels, etc. before finding your first gold ring. Even though, this should be looked upon as a challenge instead of a drudgery. Silver jewelry items will emit a high tone, similar to copper and silver coins, and are easier to find.

Gold chains, as gold rings, can also pose a problem when detecting. Chains are the hardest to find out of all jewelry items. Small chains are next to impossible to detect at any depth unless they are piled up. This would allow your detector to have more to detect than just one thin side of the chain. The best place to hunt for jewelry items are swimming areas, beaches, soccer fields, football fields, and anywhere sporting events may occur.

You need to keep in mind that jewelry is not very easily lost as are coins. Yet, anywhere that activity may have been a little more intense, such as sporting events, jewelry is commonly lost. The main reason is that many people become involved in the sport and usually forget what they're wearing or storing in their pockets while at the same time tumbling, falling and biting the dirt.

Gold Prospecting

Metal detectors have been instrumental in creating another gold rush in the last two decades. Older gold mines that have long closed down have reopened using metal detectors as the main tool for gold retrieval. Today, metal detectors are used in every aspect of gold prospecting. From searching out the mother lode to finding "placer" deposits, metal detectors have been found to be indispensable.

Your Bounty Hunter was designed to have the capability to eliminate highly mineralized soil conditions commonly encountered when prospecting. It will even permeate "black sand" in many instances, a high content of iron ore in soil, while still detecting gold nuggets.

The main objective in discovering gold with your Bounty Hunter, is determining a prime location to hunt. This will more than likely be the determining factor of whether you find gold or not. The most important approach to gold prospecting, especially if you're a novice, would be research. It's a good idea to spend some time understanding how gold forms and where you're likely to find it through research.

The Bounty Hunter Metal Detector comes standard with a waterproof coil allowing for more versatility when gold prospecting. A lot of nuggets and flakes of gold are discovered in stream beds. These nuggets and flakes usually originated from an outcrop in higher regions that were washed down by rain to be eventually carried away by streams. When prospecting with a metal detector it is very difficult to find the flakes of gold because of their small size. Nuggets are easily detected and can be found in stream beds, especially where a stream slows down or takes a sharp turn.

A Note on Pinpointing

As you sweep the coil in a half-circle format as described and illustrated in your operations manual, you'll notice that sometimes you'll get a tone that seems to disappear. These are usually best ignored (these "ghost signals" can also be minimized by turning down the Sensitivity). If you cannot achieve a repeatable signal after waving the coil over the same spot a few times, it is most likely trash. If you do achieve a repeatable signal, pinpointing properly will facilitate recovery of the target.

Take your coil and sweep it at angles over the same spot as if you were drawing an "X". This will assist you in isolating your target to determine the exact spot to dig in without having to dig unnecessarily. Take your spade and draw a small circle around the exact area that you think the target is in. Now, dig in and see if you have learned to pinpoint your target properly. As you dig, carefully pile the dirt to the side of the hole. Periodically, check the hole to see if you're still getting a signal and that it is still centered and not to the right or left of the hole. If you lose the signal directly over the hole, check the pile of dirt and see if you may have already dug up the target. With practice, you should be able to isolate your target within a four to five-inch circumference. If digging in a manicured lawn, this will minimize any destruction that may concur in your detecting efforts.

It is always a good idea when digging in grassy areas to use a method called the "trapdoor method". If you carefully dig three sides of the hole and leave one side uncut, you'll be able to lift the grass in a "trapdoor" fashion and still retrieve your target. After replacing the dirt, lower your "trapdoor" and your grass will remain intact.

RECOMMENDATIONS WHEN OPERATING YOUR DETECTOR

1. Always gain permission when detecting on private property.
2. Learn all of your state and federal laws and know how they apply to metal detecting.
3. Be careful to wear protective clothing especially to guard yourself from the elements.
4. Wear gloves at all times when recovering metal objects.
5. Do not wear headphones when it is critical to be able to hear any oncoming traffic or imminent threats from wild animals.
6. Pace yourself and try to take a restful break at least every hour.
7. Wear high boots to protect yourself from snake bites.
8. Attempt to be friendly and polite to all those you meet; make a good impression as a representative of the hobby.
9. Carry sunscreen with you to prevent skin damage.
10. Wear a ball cap with a visor to increase visibility and prevent eye strain-consider wearing protective sunglasses.
11. Clean up parks, swimming areas and playgrounds of trash metal and glass to assist in preventing injury to others.
12. Always be considerate of others when detecting.

TREASURE HUNTER'S CODE OF ETHICS

1. Respect the rights and property of others.
2. Observe all laws, whether national, state or local.
3. Never destroy historical or archaeological treasures.
4. Leave the land & vegetation as it was. Fill in all holes.
5. All treasure hunters may be judged by the example you set. Always obtain permission before searching any site. Be extremely careful with your probing, picking up and discarding of trash, and ALWAYS COVER YOUR HOLES!

The main code of ethic: DON'T TAKE THE HOBBY TOO SERIOUSLY...
HAVE FUN!

TREASURE HUNTING TIPS FROM THE BOUNTY HUNTER ARCHIVES (Author Unknown)

Try to run your detector's searchcoil as close to the ground as you can without actually touching or scuffing the ground.

In order to thoroughly cover an area, always search in both directions. Many deeper coins on edge might be missed going North and South, but detected going East and West. After you have dug up a coin, always re-check the hole. It is not unusual to find several coins in one hole. If a strong signal is received but then lost after cutting a divot, check the loose dirt at the bottom of the hole for a coin on edge. In order to do the very best in a particular area, try searching immediately following a good rain while the soil is damp. Coins, jewelry, and relics oxidize. This oxidation causes a "halo" effect surrounding the item. The longer an item is buried, the larger it appears to the detector. This halo effect is more pronounced when the soil is damp. Not only are the signals stronger at this time, but probing is also easier when the ground is soft.

When beachcombing, look for the concession stands. Around these stands and the surrounding beach area is excellent for coinshooting. Don't forget to check the shallow water in swimming areas. Many rings and coins are lost when people enter the water. When beachcombing on ocean beaches, check history records to locate sunken ships. Rare old coins, gold pieces, and artifacts will sometimes wash ashore after a storm.

When ghosttowing, try to get a picture or a layout of that old town in order to determine where the church, post office, saloon, general store, etc. were located. This will also show you where money was handled and most likely lost. When ghosttowing or hunting around old buildings try to think like the oldtimer thought: "If I couldn't get to a bank, where would I safely hide my valuables?"

Don't worry about how many times a particular area has been searched. Usually the very best finds still remain in a supposedly "worked" area. Persistence and a positive attitude are the two main ingredients for successful treasure hunting. Use your imagination. It's your best source for ideas of places to search-- possibly productive areas previously overlooked by other TH'ers, but . . . Also listen to the "pros" with many years of TH-ing experience. If they say that old church yards are good for old coins, or swimming areas are the best places to find lost jewelry, etc., you can bet that they know what they are talking about.

Never ask permission to treasure hunt over the telephone. People tend to visualize you using a pick and shovel, making large holes. Join a local

historical society or get acquainted with its members. Join or form a local treasure club. In many cases, clubs and organized, responsible groups can gain access to areas that individuals could not.

AGAIN. . .Remember, in the modern metal detector, modern science has given us a valuable and exciting way to search the past for objects of historic and monetary value. Let us consider it a privilege to keep alive by careful and considerate hunting. In many countries of the world today, metal detection and the treasure hunting hobby have been drastically curtailed as a result of inconsiderate actions of treasure hunters who did little more than vandalize!

PLEASE--Help protect our great hobby by respecting the rights of others. Always obtain permission before searching on private property. Be extremely careful with your probing, picking up and discarding trash, and ALWAYS COVER YOUR HOLES.

Approaches to Pinpointing

Patience, patience and more patience. Patience is a virtue; especially when it comes to metal detecting. This month's topic is pinpointing. We're going to try to cover every facet and approach to pinpointing using your Bounty Hunter. Our objective is to narrow our detection field so that we can properly recover a small target without digging a crater.

Coin-Shooting becomes frustrating unless you learn how to pinpoint properly. No-Motion ALL METALS allows for easy pinpointing since no movement is required to isolate your target. The current models we carry today that offer No-Motion All Metals include both the Land Star and the Time Ranger. The Quick Draw II and Tracker series still require movement in the ALL METALS mode to detect a target.

There are many effective techniques for pinpointing your detected targets. By making an effort of pinpointing accurately before digging, you will save yourself the time and frustration.

1. Drawing an "X"

This is a simple but effective technique when attempting to pinpoint in a Discriminate mode or with a motion-only detector--such as the Tracker series and Quick Draw II. After receiving a signal, swing the coil a couple of more times horizontally making sure it is a repeatable signal. Now swing the coil vertically at the same point you have determined the target to be attempting to draw an "X". When you have your signal centered on the "X", where the crosshatch meets, the target should lay within a 5-inch circumference.

2. The Pendulum

Again, in the Discriminate mode or with a motion-only detector--With this technique, you will raise your coil a few inches above the targeted area waving it more like a pendulum listening carefully where the signal seems to be the strongest. Try drawing an "X" at the same height over the target making sure you have centered where the target is located. Now slowly lower your coil making sure you're still getting your strongest signal at the center of the "X".

3. "All Metals" Pinpointing

(As Applied to No-Motion ALL METALS offered by the Land Star or the Time Ranger)

By using your ALL METALS mode, you can determine the size of the target along with its location. It's important that you do not tune your Ground Balance for its highest threshold when using this mode for pinpointing. The reason you have the capability of determining a target's size in ALL METALS is because no motion is required when you're over the target. A continuous tone will be emitted as long as the detector is over the target. This makes it easy to delineate the size of a target while pinpointing at the same time.

Notes for Older Units with Manual Ground Balancing:

When coin-shooting, it's important to adjust the Ground Balance so that it is over compensating for the mineral condition you're hunting in. In other words, adjust your Ground Balance another quarter-turn counterclockwise after adjusting for mineralization. You will lose depth, but it will be far easier to pinpoint small targets like coins, especially in heavily trashed areas. If your detector is Ground Balanced for its maximum threshold, as is described in your operations manual, you will get too many signals in heavily trashed areas to determine the location of the target.

Land Star: With the Land Star, you'll start off by placing your detector in the All Metals mode. Do not use the instruction offered by the manual for ground balancing. The manual instructs how to ground balance properly for the optimum depth. What we're trying to accomplish is to desensitize your All Metals mode so that it's easier to pinpoint small targets.

To do this, simply turn your Ground Balance control counterclockwise, usually around 12:00 on the dial, so that you're overcompensating for the soil conditions. This will desensitize your unit to where the target will now emit a short tone as you sweep over it. You have now narrowed your detection field and can properly recover the target within a 4-inch circumference.

Time Ranger: In the All Metals mode, the Time Ranger offers a very unique feature unto itself. First, ground balance the unit as instructed in the manual. The Time Ranger Sensitivity touch pads can now be used to desensitize the All Metals so that there's a narrow detection field for easier pinpointing. Simply keep pushing your minus touchpad until you're getting a short beep as you sweep the coil over the target. Notice that the Sensitivity dial on the readout has an arrow that jumps in the direction of which touchpad you're pushing (plus or minus). The arrow will jump back and remain stationary at the "5" on the dial when operating the Sensitivity touch pads in the All Metals mode. This is one of the finest features offered by the Time Ranger.

A Note on the 4-Inch Gold Nugget Coil System

One of the most useful coils available from Bounty Hunter is the 4" Gold Nugget Coil System. Pinpointing is narrowed down to a 4-inch circumference making coinshooting fast and easy in any mode of operation. It also works effectively when hunting in highly trashed areas. The 4-Inch coil can better isolate a good target amongst trash items without the masking problem that normally occurs.