

[potluck]

High-Tech Hide-n-Seek

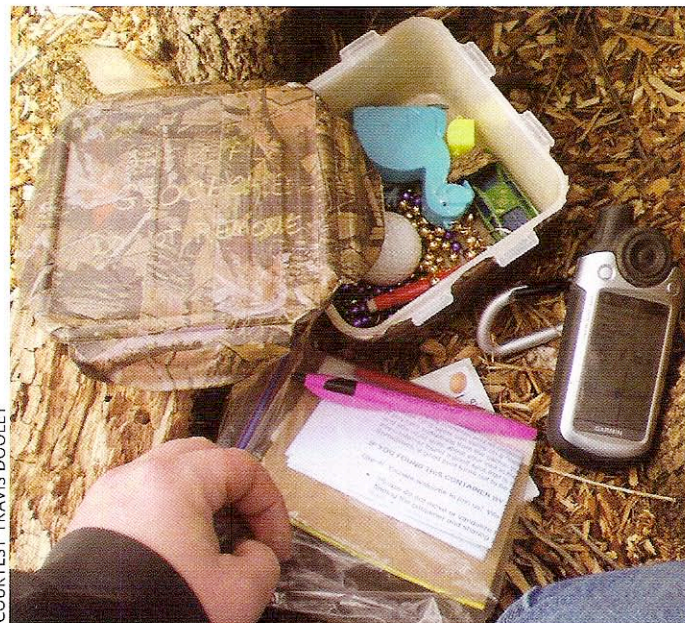
The treasure is hidden on an island in a manmade pond. Seekers can see it; getting to it will be the challenge. In winter some hike over the ice; one actually crossed on bicycle. In warmer weather people use canoes and kayaks. The myriad of strategies tickles Travis Dooley of Anamosa, an avid geocacher, who hides caches and seeks those hidden by others.

“Some caches are easy to find and get to, but some are like looking for a needle in a haystack,” says Dooley. “The cache could be a small container deviously hidden that takes a lot of patience to find.” Plus, the GPS coordinates will only get you within 30 feet. The rest is up to you.

If you have a passion for the outdoors and a Global Positioning System (GPS), this game is for you. Part geography (geo), part hide-and-seek (caching), geocaching (pronounced “geo - cashing”) can be a hobby, a sport, an adventure, or a hike with a purpose. It’s a 21st-century version of the scavenger hunt, beginning when someone chooses a location, fills a container with “treasure” to trade and a logbook, and registers the site coordinates on www.geocaching.com. Anyone worldwide can download those coordinates on a GPS receiver and set out to find the cache.

The rules of geocaching are few. If you take something, leave something of equal or greater value, sign the logsheet, and log your experience online. And always respect the environment: Cache In, Trash Out.

Several versions of the sport make it appealing to individuals and families. Multi Caches involve several stops leading to the final goal. Mystery Caches require seekers to solve a puzzle. Event Caches include several participants who



COURTESY TRAVIS DOOLEY

come together for a day of cache seeking. Dooley geocaches with his son, who calls it “treasure hunting.” “We get in some great father-son bonding time.”

Iowans can join a caching group — Iowa Geocachers Organization (www.iowageocachers.org) — with some 900 members. An active online forum offers help whenever it’s needed. — C.B.

Explore further:

www.geocaching.com

www.terraccaching.com

www.navicache.com

www.letterboxing.com