

the gnomons. As a guide, the length of the etched line above the word "North" is the actual height of each gnomon.

The polar dial caused quite a stir among the park staff when it was first delivered. Hopefully it will provide the same level of interest and enjoyment to

the visitors of Big Bend National Park. Thanks to Mike Boren for his continued support of the project.

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Sightings... in a Geocache

Fred Sawyer (Glastonbury CT)

Geocaching is a new sport that has become increasingly popular in the last three years. It has been described as a 21st century treasure hunt and as hiking for nerds. The basic idea is that participants use a GPS system (WGS84 datum) to locate treasures or caches 'hidden' in various places around the world. The latitudes and longitudes of nearly 40,000 caches in over 156 countries worldwide are available on the Internet; the job is to use this information and sometimes cryptic written clues to locate the cache. Once found, the cache usually consists of a plastic bucket with a logbook, sometimes a camera, and several small prizes; those who find the cache are invited to take a prize but are expected to leave another in its place for the next searcher. Instructions, registration information and listings of caches can be found at www.geocaching.com.

At least one well-known U.S. sundial has become the site of a geocache. NASS members in the Seattle area may want to check on pix.paip.net/Travels/20021113/ to see the Gasworks Park dial.

There are many inventive sorts of caches – not all of them are in hidden plastic jugs. Caches may require some detective work or the ultimate prize may come only after multiple caches have been found. Virtual caches are locations or monuments which are interesting, out of the way, and worth viewing in their own right. Most sundials would fall into this category. In fact, there is a virtual cache specifically for sundials. It is "log anywhere", meaning it does not pertain to a specific dial location. To get credit for finding this cache, you need to find a 'unique' sundial (nothing mass-produced), take a photo of the dial with your GPS receiver in the picture, give a brief history and

then post the picture and GPS coordinates at www.geocaching.com/seek/cache_details.aspx?ID=26100. So far, there are 122 loggings of this cache – and that means 122 sundials with photo and exact latitude and longitude information. It's interesting to read that a number of the players found their dials by checking the NASS Registry (sundials.org). Still others have found sundials that have not yet appeared in the registry.

Caches often contain travel bugs – small items that hitchhike from one cache to another. When you find a travel bug, you are invited to take it, to log the information on the Internet, and then to deposit it in another cache in the near future. At least one of these travel bugs is a small equatorial sundial that is recorded as interested in seeing the world by hopping between caches related to the sun or to time. Each of its locations can be tracked on its dedicated website: www.geocaching.com/track/track_detail.asp?ID=11114.

A less traditional search can be found in Sudbury MA with the *Raiders of the Lost Geocache* at

home.attbi.com/~jennings.dh/geocaching/raiders.htm

GPS coordinates are not published for this cache. Instead, you need to use a solar calculator at the given website to determine the exact length of a rod to use to cast a shadow on your selected date and time. When this rod is placed at a particular point on the brick entrance way of a local chapel, the endpoint of its shadow falls on a specific one of 116 possible bricks to provide a key to the exact latitude and longitude of the cache. Indiana Jones would be proud.

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