

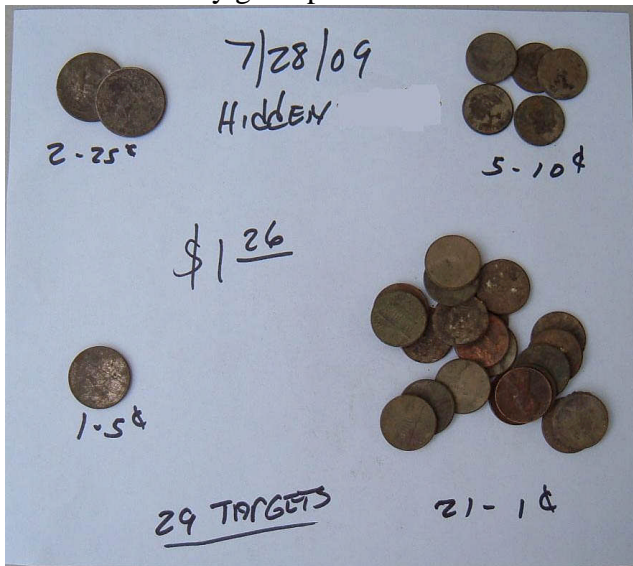
# Metal Detecting On The Road

John Leahy (June, 2010)

My wife and I are retired “fulltimers” and have been since 2006 or so. Fulltimer means that our “home” is on wheels and we are “foot loose and fancy free” as the old saying goes. Living in this manner allows us to travel wherever and pursue the enjoyment of the outdoors, the variety of people, foods and other opportunities that abound in this great country.

Quite often when we find ourselves in a quiet campground or “resort” I’ll dig out my Whites MXT and do a little checking around our site and depending on what pops up I’ll continue to others in the area of our site.

You just never know what could be hiding around a campfire ring! I have found many, many coins, none old but some silver (pre ’64). As one would guess, pennies would top the list of finds followed by dimes, quarters and then nickels. I have yet to find any coin that is very old, rare or larger than a quarter but find them I do and it is really great practice too.



The above photo shows a typical ½ -3/4 hour hunt in a “family campground”. I record many of my finds and outings to get a better understanding of this hobby and how my equipment functions.

I can typically get 15-30 finds in 4-6 sites. It really depends on the age of the campground and

each particular site and how much it is used of course. Almost all of these coins are within a few inches of the surface and it takes very little effort to reclaim them and no trace is left behind. Sometimes they are right on top and all you have to do is bend down and pick it up!

The reason I don’t find so many nickels probably is because the darn “pull tab” runs right in the same range as a nickel and I get tired of digging up trash. Practice, which is what I am getting here, has allowed me to get better at picking out the nickel from the trash but I still get fooled more often than not.

Research and awareness is essential when you hunt a campground. We all want to just pull out the machine, turn it on and find some stuff..... well, take a look around. Are there older worn or burned out marks that show where the fire ring used to be? Perhaps the old camping area was in another field or section, don’t forget to check them out too, maybe first

When you hunt a campground you really need to decide how much trash you want to dig because people are quite careless when they camp and they discard all kinds of things you may not be interested in so set your machine at your tolerance level and swing away.

I only search a campfire itself if I think that it has been moved recently a few feet or so, otherwise, don’t go there. Most of my “campfire” finds are from 2-4 feet from the edge of the fire ring or pit. If there are logs or some type of seating surrounding the fire pit then check behind AND under them. Look for where vehicles may have been parked, this is where folks go looking for keys and spill coins on the ground, it’s often dark or raining so the coin is yours.

There are many types and reasons for camping. Knowing them may help you in your quest for buried treasure. Tent camping, pop up trailers, travel trailer, pickup campers, 5<sup>th</sup> wheels and motor homes would cover the types or methods. The reasons people camp can affect what you may find as well. In a typical family facility one can expect to find a lower number of coins

compared to a facility that might sponsor a music event. The coin count I suspect will go up proportionally to the amount of alcohol consumed.

I mentioned the types of camping so that you don't waste your time searching ground that will probably be barren. For example, it wouldn't be likely that coins would be found under where some of the units would probably park, so don't bother to look there. When tent camping is in the search area, you need to start where the cars are usually parked and check the path to the tent area and then around the whole site as people are usually free to pitch the tent anywhere. Almost all tents have had floors for the last 50-60 years. If you can find a real old campground (old Scout site or other training area) you have some potential for sure! Tent sites are quite often in places that are harder to get to, like up or down a hill.

Look for places someone could have fallen. These areas require that you look for anything metal so a change in your detector settings may be in order. Watches, rings, necklaces, knives and such would be lost in a fall and usually only "good" targets will be found in bad places.

The last campground that I hunted a few days ago surprised my wife. We were at a place where music and alcohol are consumed many times during the year. The question about my machines' ability to pick out coin among trash (**there was a lot of trash**) was questioned and answered! After about 45 minutes or so and 4 campsites I had 29 hits and \$2.28 in real U.S. coin. I was surprised myself! I attributed the 7 quarters and fewer pennies than average was due to a more adult aged group. Three of the quarters were in a 4-6 diameter inch area. I figured somebody was on their back for the count!

This campground has over 600 sites, several concert areas and several concession areas too. Based on what I found in my sample hunt there probably is between 3,000 & 8,000 coins worth at least \$500-\$1,000 waiting for me..... 200 miles back down the road as I write this. Since

this place has been in existence for some time, there could be some old stuff buried also.



I have long ago lost track of the number of holes I've dug looking for the "big" find. I will continue digging all of the pennies until somebody designs a machine that shows the date of the coin that is lurking below the surface..... you should too!

You can never know your equipment too good. I often bury coins in different soils, depths and angles. Try it and learn what your unit calls a penny on edge in sand or in clay. Also take coins from your collection and note the different readings from date ranges of 20-50 years. You may just decide to dig up that "screw cap" next time! Could be that the "iron" reading is a small handgun or a Swiss Army collectors item.

I hope that I have helped you in some way for you to enjoy and make more profitable your investment of equipment and time in this great pastime of metal detecting.

**DO NOT DETECT WITHOUT PERMISSION**  
**and be sure to fill your holes in .**

Look for my other articles on Streambed Detecting, Fairground Hunts and Old Flea Markets. There's much to be found and it's not all money!

'Til next time, JL