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Hot treasure hunt uncovers fiddler crabs strolling



A fisherman in a small boat is seen in action Friday afternoon (July 6) as he is viewed from the observation deck at the end of the boardwalk near the archeological site area of Shell Mound Park in Levy County.

Story, Photos and Video

By Jeff M. Hardison © July 8, 2018 at 10:48 p.m.

LEVY COUNTY -- Hunting for treasure is a sport that is best enjoyed for the participation rather than the end result.

<https://youtu.be/JEkPpXAINuk>



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In this video fiddler crabs are seen strolling in the inter-tidal mud flats near Shell Mound Park. A fiddler crab is any of approximately 100 species of genus *Uca*. As members of the family Ocypodidae, fiddler crabs are most



closely related to the ghost crabs of the genus *Ocypode*.

Oysters seen at low tide from the observation deck at the end of the boardwalk near the archeological site area of Shell Mound Park in Levy County are one type of treasure by showing the outer homes of these creatures.

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Looking from the observation deck at the end of the boardwalk down that stretch shows some of the natural beauty of this park.



This salt marsh, also known as a tidal marsh, is a coastal ecosystem in the upper coastal intertidal zone between land and open saltwater or brackish water that is regularly flooded by the tides. It is dominated by dense stands of salt-tolerant plants. There are many acres of this ecosystem in the area of Levy County's Shell Mound Park.

A single-man expedition during the height of the heat on Friday afternoon (July 6) provided one hunter with insight as well as a relatively easily anticipated final result of

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natural treasure, although there were some surprises along the way.

Hobbyist treasure hunter Jeff M. Hardison began his sojourn through Levy County with a plan made on the fly as he went to the center and then to the west center of Levy County.

“The first surprise I uncovered,” Hardison said, “was a spotless city park. The James H. Cobb Memorial Park was spotless. I was amazed at how well Bronson Parks and Recreation Director Curtis Stacy, and town workers Russell Mitchem and Glen Smith cleared the area of litter after the big Fourth of July fireworks event.”

The journalist mentioned that Deputy Town Clerk Melissa Thompson was among the town workers who helped during the fireworks, as did Town Councilwoman Katie Parks, who is the council member that is the liaison for events in the town.

Hardison used a metal detector as he searched for dropped coins. The treasure hunt was on!

He searched far and near in the huge complex, only to find zero that dropped coins were to be detected there. (Unless or except some metal objects indicated to be beneath the dirt – that may have been coins. However, with him not wanting to dig up the pretty grass in the park, they remained there below the surface.)

Not only was the park very clean, but the water fountain near the area where the fireworks were launched this year provided a cool drink of water on that hot afternoon.

From Bronson, where not another soul occupied the park for those 30-plus minutes at the peak of afternoon, the treasure seeker went to Cedar Key.

“My plan was to visit the nice sandy beach next to Cedar Key City Park,” Hardison said. “As I drove there, my vision was of an empty beach, where I would be scanning and finding lots of coins.”

Upon arrival at Cedar Key City Park on Friday at 1:45 p.m., the man who was certain he would label himself as a “treasure finder” or “coin recovery specialist” that afternoon found there were not enough parking spaces to put the 2008 PT Cruiser (Newser) near to the potential search area.

The visitor to Cedar Key remembered how there are times when parking is a premium there.

“I have driven onto Cedar Key only to find parking on Dock Street and the City Park to be so scarce that it was an indicator that too many people had arrived before me,” he said. “My theory that the Fourth of July fun would have wrapped up by Friday was incorrect.”

Forever undaunted, the explorer aimed the PT Newser at its next destination – the unrecorded subdivision known as Jemlands, which is home of The Ink Pad campus that includes the Code Orange Office.

“I was cruisin’ in the Newser,” Hardison said, “because my next hunt would be at The Ink Pad. On that road, though, it dawned on me that the wonderful people who work in the Levy County Road Department have paved Levy County Road 326 off of CR 347.

“So, I pointed the nose of that vehicle down that nice, smooth road,” he said. “As I rode along it, I noted the 45 m.p.h. sign and I knew this was going to be one, smooth,

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pretty and relaxing cruise to Shell Mound Park,” he continued.

The metal-detector remained in the Newser as the photographer-videographer exited the vehicle. Shell Mound Park, boat ramp and camping ground is part of the Levy County Parks venues.

It is located about nine miles north of Cedar Key, off of CR 347 by going down CR 326. Surrounded by the Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge, the park offers a small campground with hookups and is a mecca for fishermen and their airboats.

While he was tapped for energy to wave the metal detector over areas in search of coins, hobbyist treasure hunter Hardison, however, had a feeling that he might be able to capture on video some fiddler crabs strolling.

He was correct. Mission accomplished. Treasures found and shared.