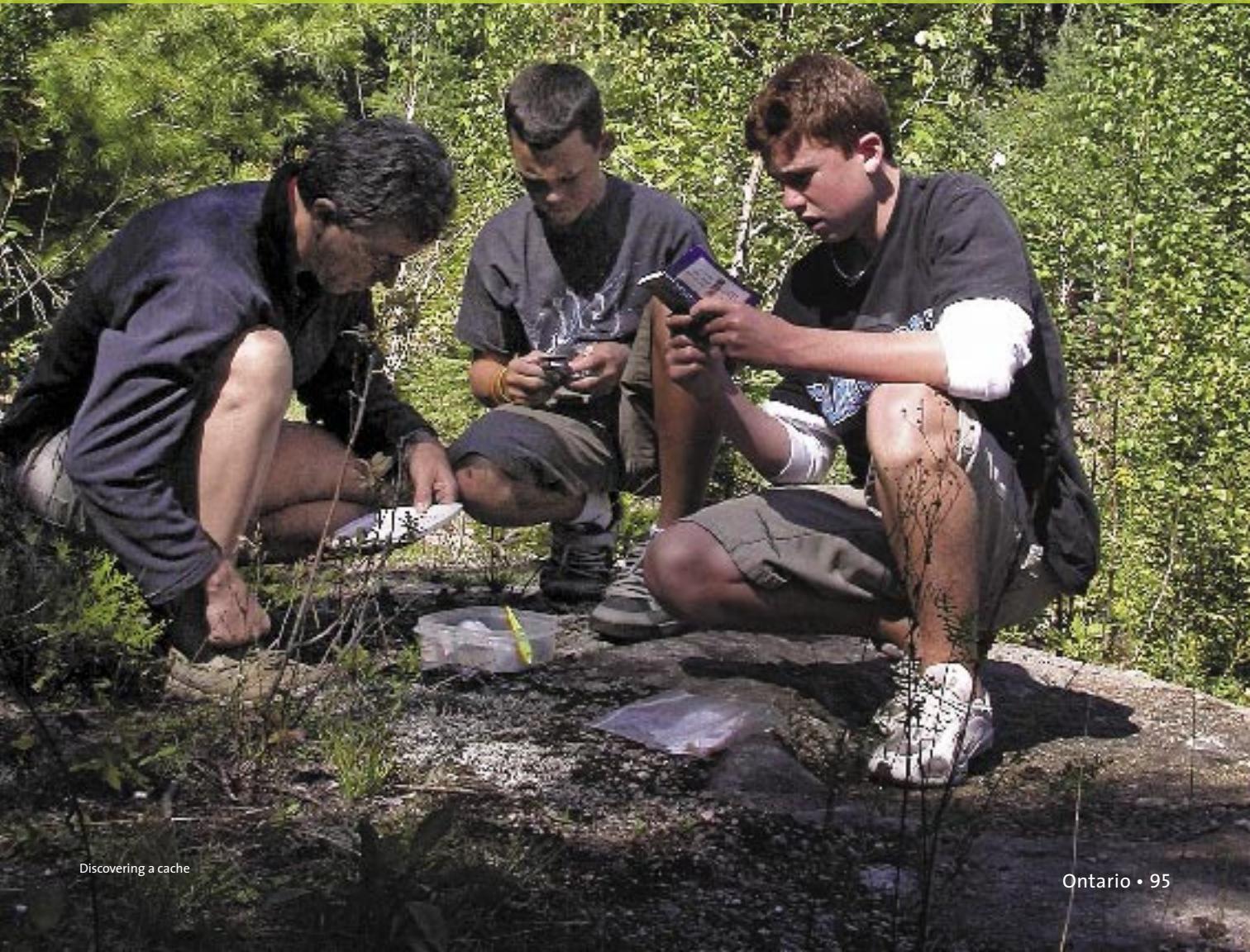


IT'S 'CACHING ON'

all over Ontario

– By Nicole Leaper

Electronic games in the wilderness? Sounds like an oxymoron but it's the real thing and if you want to get kids away from the TV screen and out into the wilderness this is the way: **GEOCACHING**.





Eventually we found the cache at **BIGFOOT ROCK**, a geological mystery that has big footprints along the rock face.



Bigfoot Rock

Never heard of it? Well, you're not alone, this is one of the fastest growing fun activities around and it appeals to the whole family regardless of age. To add to the cool factor even Tony Hawk, skateboarding guru, lists it in his top 10 things to do on the weekend.

Geocaching is basically treasure hunting in a very organized fashion. It can be experienced in any rural, urban or wilderness area and can be as simple or complicated as you're willing to get. But the best way to get started is to go to one of the several Ontario resorts offering geocaching packages. They'll even provide the equipment.

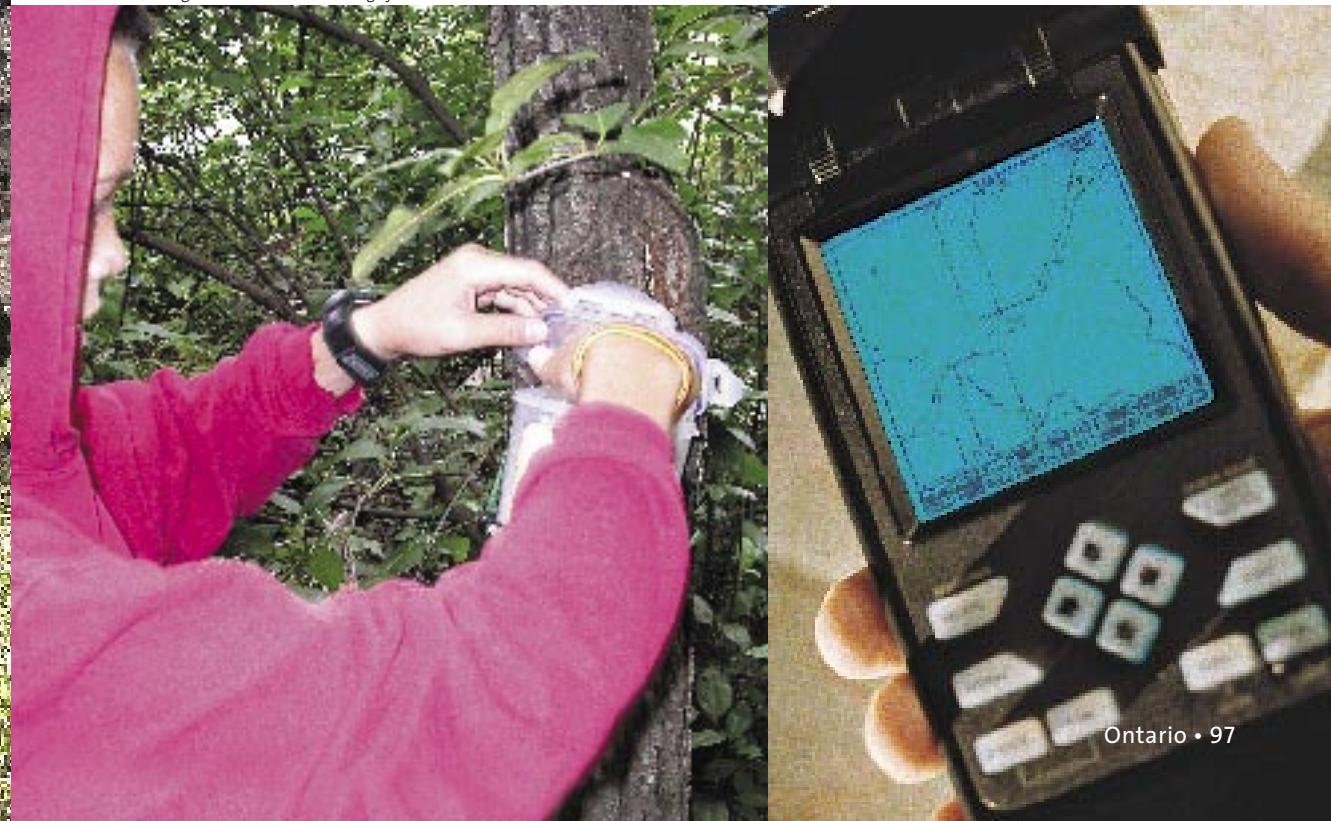
My family arrived at Woodland Echoes Resort on the Magnetawan River to be greeted by the very enthusiastic Ken Turner and his family. The family has been operating the resort for 56 years and have stayed up to date. They were the first resort in Ontario to offer geocaching packages and have three caches right on their property to get you started.

Ken gave us a quick tutorial on how to use the Global Positioning System (GPS) and we were off

to find our first cache. The two teenage boys were pretty unimpressed with the whole idea until they got hold of the GPS handset. All of a sudden they were off searching and following clues. It took no time to get the hang of it and we found our first cache on the property. Our teenage son Matt, and his cousin McKenzie, took a fridge magnet, replaced it with a dollar store item we'd brought along and recorded it in the logbook in the cache. We were all hooked and ready for cache number two. Ken provides a book of caches in the area with coordinates and details, but you can also get the info from the geocaching website.

After our first day of geocaching and three finds under our belts we retired to our cabin by the water. The boys took advantage of the beach, waterslide and a mean game of tetherball while we relaxed on our private deck. After a lovely dinner in the main lodge we enjoyed the peaceful evening on the Magnetawan River and planned our next day of geocaching. An unexpected highlight of the dining experience was the fantastic bird watching right

L-R: Finding a cache; Global Positioning System receiver





L-R: Enjoying the activities at Woodland Echoes

Seek and Find

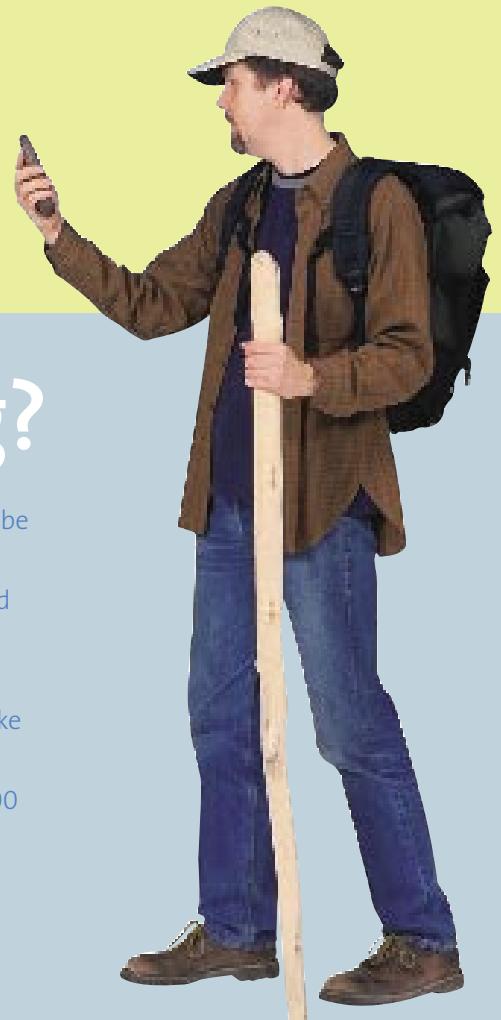
Ontario Geocaching Association
www.ontgeocaching.com

Geocaching
www.geocaching.com

Woodland Echoes Cottage Resort
www.woodlandechoes.on.ca
1-888-661-3669

Ontario's Near North
www.ontariosnearnorth.on.ca
1-800-387-0516

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outside the picture window. There were even binoculars and field guides right on the table. Ken has bird feeders all over the property attracting many beautiful birds. His wife Carol has her award-winning bird sculptures on display in the dining room.

The next day we decided to tackle a more challenging cache. This one involved several stops, deciphering clues along the way and incorporating the history of the area. We travelled on the historic Old Nipissing Road and found an old limestone kiln along the way. Eventually we found the cache at Bigfoot Rock, a geological mystery that has big footprints along the rock face. We rewarded our efforts by stopping by the fish and chip stand in the charming town of Magnetawan on our way back to Woodland Echoes. ☀

Postscript – the first week back to school and my son tells me he's already doing well in geography, this year's studies include the use of GPS.

– Nicole Leaper is Publications Manager at Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership, publisher of Ontario magazine.

What is geocaching?

Geocaching was born in May 2000 when 24 satellites around the globe were activated, instantly making GPS (Global Positioning System) pinpoint accurate. One curious owner of a handheld GPS unit decided to test the accuracy of the system by hiding a bucket filled with inexpensive items and a logbook. He recorded the exact location and challenged other GPS users to find the cache. The only rule was to take something, leave something and record the visit in the logbook. And modern treasure hunting was born. There are now more than 346,000 active caches in 221 countries.