

Crevice/Sniping

This topic is dear to my heart. I've found more gold here in AZ using this method than any other. The main reason for that is most people don't want to hike for miles, get down on their knees and get dirty, and work for it. Consequently, it's still there, and if you're willing to really get close to Mother Earth, she will reward you. If you're in an area where there isn't much exposed bedrock or heavy vegetation prevents crevice, this may not work for you. But what the heck - it's winter - come on down to southern CA or AZ. Recently I watched a "Gold Fever" show where Tom and Perry were "cracking". Don't like that term. I think Tom made it up, because I never heard it before. They put out some basics, but they came off looking like amateurs to me, and I don't think they got across the really great rewards that can be derived from this meager activity. How can you tell a real "Crevice"? He's the one whose Estwing rock hammer looks more like a ballpeen hammer. I've gone through several.

HOW TO:

Let's talk about the basic tools first. I'm not mentioning the standard stuff (water, first aid kit, lunch, etc.)

- *Large Estwing rock hammer. (Go for the best - it's worth it).
- *3 prong garden fork (hand size)
- *4 prong garden rake (with handle cut down)
- *Garden trowel (hand size) *Plastic scoop (1 gal) and plastic scoop (small - cut from soda pop bottle)
- *Variety of crevice wires and spoons
- *At least two sizes of brushes
- *Classifiers and buckets (strap on the outside/back of your pack with bungies. I carry two, 5 gal, one w/ 3/4" holes in bottom, and 1/4" and 1/8" screen sleeves to fit in top.
- *Pry bar - (size depending on weight - larger the better)
- *Canvas sample bags (for carrying con to water for panning, and labeling area of find).
- *Backpack (note: total weight of pack with basic tools should be about 25 lbs)
- *Pan, snuffer bottle, magnet, magnifying glass, and plastic straw (more about that later)

Advanced tools:

- *Large pick or shovel
- *Metal detector/Gold spear
- *Dry Vac
- *Standing screen
- *Underwater suction tool
- *Backpack dredge
- *Drywasher

I don't usually carry any of these advanced tools except my Gold Bug on the first exploratory trip, until I've done my testing. I prefer to go light. The large size Estwing rock hammer is my pick, and a plastic scoop is my shovel. The whole idea of crevice is not to process quantity, but rather to take the very best of the best. Take a one gallon plastic bleach bottle and cut a portion out of it, keep the handle, so that it forms a big scoop. The reasons for this are: 1. It's extremely light and surprisingly strong. 2. It's flexible and will fit into those crevices much more easily than a garden trowel or shovel. Your crevice wires should be cut out of 3/16" hard steel about 16 - 18" long and bent on both ends at 90 degrees. The end portions are 1 - 2" long and flattened

and sharpened at 90 degree to each other. So you have one end for narrow cracks and the other end for slightly wider cracks. Another one I use sometimes has been hammered out and formed into a spoon at the

end with a 90 degree bend. It's real handy. I carry two brushes. One is an auto parts cleaning type brush that I cut the bristle down to about one and a half inches to give it more stiffness. (It has to be new. Don't want to mix oil or grease with your gold). The other brush is a general purpose brush with very stiff bristles. Narrow handle widens out to about a 3" circle. You'll have to shop around. I don't recommend a wire brush. Mainly because I'm also a metal detector, and those little wires that fall out of those brushes will drive you crazy. But they also clog up too fast. I use several pry bars depending on where I'm going, but I usually start light and work my way up as I get to know the area. Remember your rock hammer will pry out many of those spots. My favorite was made for changing truck tires, I believe. Weighs about 7 lbs and is 1" X 30". They've got to have a good angle on the bottom edge to give leverage on the boulders. I recommend carrying 4 or 5 canvas sam

ple bags about 1/2 gal size. Your flexible scoop will act as a funnel and fill them nicely. Often you'll want to take a sample, but you have to walk some distance to water. Each bag will weigh about 10 lbs when full of cons, so be careful not to overload yourself, but I have worked in a dry area and carried all my cons in buckets and bags to water - it's no fun. But the idea is that next time you can take in the drywasher if it's a good spot.

Let's go on to some of the advanced tools now: Remember: these are not for your first trip into an area. I have the 3" crevicing coil on my Gold Bug, and I've cut the handle down to make it easier to backpack. If you have metal detecting experience, you'll know what to do with that tool. If you don't have that experience, I suggest that you forget it and think about a dry vac instead. I have the "Vac Pac" brand and have used it for years. If I'm in an area where I can carry my 60 lb generator, I prefer to use a shop vac because it has almost twice the suction. But the Vac Pac works very well in conjunction with the Gold Bug. **HERE'S HOW:** when you've screened or shoveled off the overburden and you get down close to bottom of your crevice, a quick check with the Bug will tell you if there are any nuggets in the hole. The Vac Pac will then pull out the remaining "good stuff" to be panned. Recently my partner and I cleaned out a hole that someone else had left. We didn't find anything in the bottom. He looked up and said "do you think we should vacuum it?" "Can't hurt". As soon as we started scraping and vacuuming the bottom - 3 golden flashes hit us. Vacuuming is like dredging in that you will usually see the gold before it enters your hose. What a thrill. The standing screen, drywasher, or dredge will be brought in only when you find an area that requires moving quantities of material. The suction tool may be useful in areas where the crevices go down into the water, although if you find good color above the water line, it's time to bring in some kind of a dredge.

The question I get most often is "how do you read a stream?" or "how do you know where to look?" etc.

HERE'S HOW:

Step 1. Forget everything you've heard or read.

Step 2. There's only one rule (it's: there are no rules) Gold is where you find it.

Step 3. Get you mind "right". Stop looking for the short cuts. Get back to basic prospecting methods.

Step 4. Don't be afraid to get down and dirty. Work, work, work. The '98ers had a saying as they hiked the Chilcoot pass on their way to Dawson, "If you ain't Bold, you get no Gold!"

Let's talk about these steps. First make sure you do your home work and you're on a gold creek. The worst thing a beginner can do is just go off in the woods and think he is going to find a "new strike" before he knows what he's looking for or how to find it. Now, when you arrive on the creek with your backpack and basic tools mentioned before, just start walking and be prepared to walk all day. I prefer to walk upstream to start out. That means you're walking downhill coming home when you're tired. You are going to see areas where others have worked. Don't stop. There's a reason they're not still working there (or if I do stop, it's usually to just check it out with the Bug. Many people go off and leave a nugget just out of sight). TIP: There are three things that Mainly effect the location of the gold. 1. The weight of gold. 2. The amount of erosion, rain and floods in the area. and 3. Topography. Think of these things as you walk. Here in AZ we don't get many rains or floo

ds, consequently the old rules don't even apply (like - the inside bend, etc.). Keep focused on your job of finding crevices that will hold the best of the best. TIP: look for areas of exposed bedrock that:

1. Have weathering cracks in them. The best ones are usually 1/2" or wider.
2. Some bedrock is crumbly, and gold works its way down and out of sight. These are excellent areas to metal detect.
3. Some excellent bedrock areas are only covered by a foot or two of rocks and boulders and are virgin because no one likes to do the work.

Generally I don't move boulders to work under them. Usually I use my prybar to split a boulder apart and clean out the crevice (best of the best). Under the boulder you may be dealing with 20 gallons of dirt or more. In the crack there will be a very rich gallon or two, and you can be sure it's never been worked before. One thing I want to mention here is that there is no substitute for a quick test. As you walk, don't be afraid or too lazy to test any likely spot. It's not how far you walk on the creek that counts, it's how much gold you get in the snuffer. Practice your panning until you can do a test in less than a minute. HERE HOW: Use a 1/4" classifying sleeve over your pan and in the water vigorously classify and get rid of the rocks(10 seconds). As you agitate the pan with one hand use the other to "knead" the material and get it all into suspension (if you don't k-need the gold, you don't get any)(20 sec). At this point, 90% of your gold should be on or near the bott

om of your pan. Using the back edge of one hand scrape off and inch of material off the top (I know- I know. Just do it) (2 sec). Put all material back into suspension by agitating and kneading, and repeat the scraping 2 or 3 times depending on how much is in your pan. Now slurry off the remaining lighter - brown sands until you get down to black sand(20 sec). Now backwash the black sands with a swirling motion and just a little water in your pan and take a QUICK visual check of the gold. Don't try to recover it from the black sand at this time. Using your flexible plastic scoop, just pour your black sands into a canvas sample bag to process later or take home. I'm going to close now with this thought: Don't get discouraged. Be persistent and consistently use good technique. Avoid fads, miracle tools, and "professional advice" from people who don't have a jar of nuggets to show you. Good luck, and I appreciate the Emails that I have gotten. I understand your hesitancy to res
pond on the ng (been there). As the "Buzzard" used to say, "May the bottom of your pan turn gold"

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