

Treasures in every journey

Build memories by sharing the world through the eyes of a child

How many of you are treasure hunters? Photographers are treasure hunters. So are birders. I know a local woman who hunts for Monarch caterpillars in her yard to rear so that her children can observe in wonderment. She is a treasure hunter. So are the boys and girls in backyards collecting toads and lightning bugs.

Nature writers and artists collect treasures every time they write or paint. People do this sort of thing all the time. Rock collecting, hunting, and geocaching are all pastimes that involve treasure hunting. So what if the treasure is not gold and jewels. Rather, it is an unusual warbler, a serene sunset, or even finding a plastic container with a message inside of it. Either way, treasure hunting is exciting and enjoyable and gets people in nature looking and listening carefully.

With children, I prefer to use the term "questing." Children may think there really is a treasure and that the first person who finds it claims the prize. As a result, they may run past very interesting things.

Questing, on the other hand, places emphasis on the most important part of all — the journey. This is the real reason why we enjoy these types of activities. I have yet to speak to a birder who didn't enjoy a couple of hours walking through the fields at dawn, even if they didn't view the rare bird they were searching for in the first place.

For children, scavenger hunts are a great way to get excited about being outdoors. The best thing is that you just need some space, such as your backyard, the neighborhood ball field, school yard or on a hike/bike trail in the Portage Parks. Have children pull crayons out of a box and then search for things outdoors that match the colors of the crayons.

Search for things that are soft like a teddy bear and rough like sandpaper. A plant that is taller than Mom and another that is smaller than your thumb. Spiders in their webs, ants marching across the sidewalk, bird nests, and even tracks and scat make good objects for quests as well.

Two-hugger trees (those big enough to take two

GREEN

PORTAGE

Matt Sorrick

Portage Park District



people to put their arms around); seeds that roll, helicopter, or stick; and clouds that look like dragons are more things to search for outdoors.

One of my favorite ways to quest, especially for older children, is Letterboxing. Letterboxing gets its origin in England during the 1800s when passers-by placed notes in bottles at crossroads that eventually were picked up and carried to nearby villages. Today, letterboxing has a website (www.letterboxing.org) and thousands of hidden "treasures" throughout the country.

Letterboxing equipment includes a compass, notebook, stamp pad, and pen. Visit the website and search for clues near your home or where you travel. The clues, sometimes riddles, rhymes, stories or informational descriptions, tell you where to start the quest, what directions to travel, how many paces to walk, and maybe interesting facts about the nature and history of the area.

The goal is to find a small box. Inside each box is a notebook, rubber stamp, an ink pad, and a pen. If you are lucky enough to find the letterbox, sign the notebook in the box (be sure to read what other people wrote) and stamp your own notebook (almost like a passport).

No matter how you get out to treasure hunt or where you go, remember that your journey will be filled with memories and experiences. These are far more valuable than anything you may find in a hidden box, or a bird book, or a scavenger hunt checklist. Happy questing!

Matt Sorrick is director of the Center for Science Education at Hiram College where he creates programs to explore nature. Green Portage is a monthly feature of the Record-Courier in cooperation with the Portage Park District.

OPINION

Record-Courier

WEDNESDAY

JULY 13, 2017

PAGE A4



EDITORIAL BOARD

DAVID E. DIX, *Publisher*

ROGER J. DI PAOLO, *Editor*

HEATHER CONDLEY RAINONE,

Managing Editor

CHAD MURPHY, *News Editor*

Serving Portage County since 1830

