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Features

[WheresGeorgers gather at The Lost Sea](#)

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SWEETWATER, TN. - This past weekend, I took a break from covering the sports news here in Grayson County to take a trip to Tennessee where I met with a group of people who share my fascination with www.wheresgeorge.com.

In case you might be among those who have no idea what that might mean, a little explaining should clear things up. Wheresgeorge.com is a site on which you can track where the money you spend every day goes after it leaves your hand. It can be extremely addicting once the bills you have entered start showing up in other people's hands.

For me, it all began back on February 2 when I went to pay for a milk shake at Sandy's and saw these red stamps on one of the one-dollar bills I pulled from my wallet. There was a circular stamp around the Federal Reserve Bank seal on the front and a straight stamp in the margins and they both read: "Track this bill at www.WheresGeorge.com."

Being a curious fellow by nature, I put the bill back in my wallet and replaced it with another one. When I got back to the office, I logged on to the site and was immediately hooked. As of deadline day on Tuesday, I have entered 281 bills worth a total of \$1,284 and have received a total of 18 "hits," that is bills I have spent which other people have entered into the Where's George site.

So far, all but one of the hits have come in Kentucky, which is one of the reasons I took the trip to Tennessee over the weekend. Georgers, as people who pursue this hobby call themselves, love to "gather" and trade war stories. They also trade bills, hoping that those bills they trade will be taken to other areas of the country to give the users hits from outside their own states.

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Greeting Cards

The gathering in Sweetwater took place at The Lost Sea, a tourist attraction that features a large underground lake. After many of the Georgers took the tour, everyone met in a picnic area to get down to the business of swapping bills.

Chuck Zigmund, from Maryville, Tennessee, who goes by the name "CZhuckles" in all forum postings on the Where's George website, has been a Georger for a couple of years. He travels the country attending craft shows and he takes his Where's George stamps with him wherever he goes, entering, marking and spending (EMS) his money as he does so.

So far he has hits on bills from 31 states and three foreign countries. He said he will be taking a trip to Europe in a few weeks and told everyone he would be sure to spend the money he traded for that day while he was over there.

Scott Julius, who goes by the forum handle of "TYSTravelnut," is from Oak Ridge, Tn. and has been a Georger since June of 2004. Julius has over 4,000 bills entered and as of Saturday had hits on 467 bills, with 526 total hits. The difference there is that many of his bills had been hit more than once. One of his bills has been hit four times. In a bit of Georger irony, CZhuckles found one of TYSTravelnut's bills in a church he attended.

Julius has hits from 26 states and has a George Score of 915.33.

Okay, now you want to know what a George Score is, don't you?

A George Score is a very complicated formula based on the number of bills you have entered, the number of hits you have received and the number of days since you have refreshed the data on the Where's George website. It's doubtful anyone understands how to figure their own score, but that's okay because the computer does it automatically every time you hit the refresh button (you can only refresh once every day).

Darren Grifken ("Darren in B-ham") was attending his 22nd gathering and said what he most liked about the whole experience was getting to know his fellow Georgers.

"Don't get me wrong, I love to get hits just like everyone else," he said. "But what I really enjoy is traveling around and meeting all these different people."

One of the people he met during a trip to New Mexico is now his wife, Tasia, who hailed from Michigan.

Grifken's George Score of 981.36 ranks him 22nd in the state of Alabama. He has entered 6,899 bills with 802 hit

and 934 total hits. That seems like a lot of bills until you click on the Top-10 list of users, where a fellow with the forum name of Wattsburg Gary, from Pennsylvania, is at the top of the list.

A gun store owner who enters all the bills that go through his business, Gary has a George Score of 1,485.69 with 444,994 bills entered. He has hits on 64,455 bills with 76,924 total hits. It is unlikely anyone will ever catch Wattsburg Gary, though the number-two man, ChuckB, from Kettering, Ohio, is not far behind in George Score at 1,458.38. He has entered "only" 128,888 bills, but he has a much higher percentage of hits than Gary, 33.33 percent with 42,960 bills with hits and 69,811 total hits.

One of the Georgers at the Lost Sea, Angela Kerns, who goes by the name "Bama Daisy," has only been a Georger since December but already has more than 2,500 bills entered.

"I don't have a checking account and pay all my bills with money orders," she explained. "I didn't even have to change my spending habits."

Many Georgers combine their Georging with other hobbies. Steve Patterson is from Knoxville and goes by the name "Cardeologist" for his other hobby of collecting business cards. He asked everyone to bring cards with him to the gathering, so of course I forgot. I did promise him I would send him cards from everyone in the office when I got back.

Another hobbyist, MsMatch, collects matchbook covers and has all the Georgers use their stamps on the back of the matchbooks to record all their vital information during gatherings.

One thing that most Georgers will tell you if you start this business is to be persistent and keep entering bills, even if you don't get a lot of hits. Wes Moore, "Big Dawg Wes" from Decatur, Alabama, said it took seven months before he got his first hit. He kind of lost interest for awhile, but once he started getting hit, he began becoming more serious.

"Now I'm surprised if a day goes by when I don't get a hit," he said.

Of course, by now I'm sure you are all dying to know what my George Score is, aren't you? Well, as of Tuesday it was 531.90, which ranked me 96th in the state of Kentucky out of 1,291 users. It also ranked me 8,411 in the country out of 15,958 current users.

Keep those hits coming!

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