

It was our 15th wedding anniversary, it was meant to be a romantic evening out, it wasn't supposed to end in the loss of her engagement ring.



Camping at the beach

We'd eaten at the Island View Café, and kayaked to the beach at Drum point on Hart-Miller Island to watch sunset. The water was warm, we swam and sat on the beach.

I'd found the football on another beach a few weeks previously, it was still in the back of my kayak. "Catch", I shouted, as I released the ball towards her in the water. Our throws back and forth took us into deeper water until a wayward pass from me had her reaching wide for the completion.

"My ring flew off" she said.

We search in turn, careful not to move from the spot where she lost it. You can't see your hand in front

of your face in 3ft of Chesapeake water, and despite repeated dives, feeling for a ring with our hands, we had to stop as we got too cold. We took a GPS reading on a phone, and photos of the shore at different angles from the spot so that we could line up features on the beach with the trees behind to re-find the spot. Perhaps there would be better visibility in the morning if the water was less churned up by passing boats.

The water was still inky black in the morning, we headed home.

Back at home the following morning I started looking for a jeweler who could recreate the same design, jewelry prices seemed to have risen dramatically since I'd bought the ring all those years ago, perhaps we should go back again to try and find it with mask and snorkel?

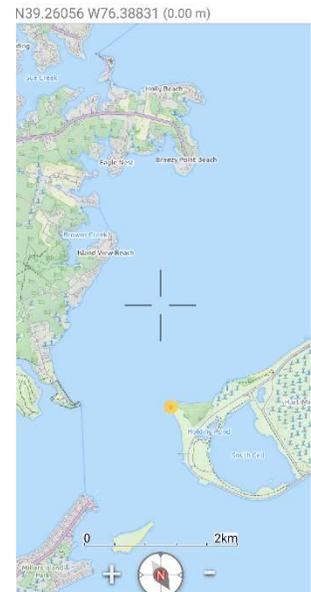
I started searching to find out if underwater metal detecting was possible, I could find some adverts for waterproof units, and some videos of people scuba diving with detectors. The reviews weren't very helpful, everything was about iron or gold, hers was a very small platinum ring, would it be detectable? Also, did the Chesapeake count as salt water or fresh? I needed to find someone with experience to ask.

Searching for metal detecting forums, google returned "metal detecting clubs near you", with Maryland Free-State Treasure Club at the top of the list; no forum, but an email address for the president. Worth a shot, they'd probably know that the Chesapeake water is unique! I emailed Mike, would the ring be detectable, what equipment should I buy?

Mike's reply blew my socks off, "where is it, can I share your email address with the club, we'll search for it with you".

At 6am a week later I was in Wade & Chris' boat, along with Bob, heading back to the island with two Garrett AT Pros and an array of home-made and purchased scoops, sieves and snorkeling gear. I took her wedding ring (safely tied to some paracord and a float) so that Chris and Bob could test what the sound signature would be.

I marked where we'd been standing with a coke bottle tied to a weight, and Bob and Chris started searching. There was a lot of background noise, and the test on the 2nd ring showed that they couldn't use a high elimination setting as we may miss it. Although we'd timed our visit to be close to low-tide, the water was higher than the previous week, as a full moon had brought an exceptionally low tide the day we lost it. Bob and Chris searched, while I dug, dived or scooped any target they found, recovering many bottle tops and multiple shards of one aluminum can, but the ring eluded us.



X marks the spot

We searched for nearly 3 hours, but the rising tide, muscle cramps, cold and audio fatigue bought an end to the search. Talking on the way back, Bob explained the different types to detector technology, explaining how pulse induction would probably give better results in that environment.

Despite not finding the ring, I'd really enjoyed the morning. Chris, Wade and Bob were great company, we'd been out on the water and I'd found technology fascinating (I'm an engineer). I started reading about PI detectors, and quickly narrowed in on the Nokta Makro Pulsedive and Garrett Sea Hunter MkII. The Kellyco sales advisor recommended the PulseDive, but I figured that the Garrett must be more powerful. I ordered both, rationalizing that I could sell them on eBay afterwards and get most of the money back, and that they were certainly cheaper than commissioning a replica ring.

Another week later, we kayaked back to the beach, each armed with metal detectors of our own.



All the gear - no idea

The PulseDive unit is designed for diving, with a very short handle we could only use it in the shallow water. She started her search while I worked out some settings on the Sea Hunter on the beach. In less than a minute, an excited "I found something" from her had me heading into the water with a scoop to dig her target. A corona bottle top was unearthed from the sand, but we were excited (it was her first find), and the PI unit had almost no audio chatter in this environment compared to the Garrett AT machines so perhaps this would work.

I waded out towards the marker, trying to workout if my sweeps were overlapping under the dark water. I got my first signal, as she also said she had another target. We only had a hand-held scoop, so digging a target needed one of us to dive while the other held the detector. I was closer to the marker, so said we should dig mine first, then go back to hers.

I passed the detector and headphones over; she found the same target and I dived. The first scoop came up full of shells, but before I finished searching through them, she said she could still hear the target. I headed back down and scooped again. Once more, the scoop was full of shells, but as she searched again for the target, I spotted the ring!



Beginner's Luck

When I'd spoken to Bob and Chris I'd asked what ratio of junk to treasure they'd say counted as a good day, I think they said they'd be happy with 1 in 10. Well - I'm 1 and 0, 100%, a perfect record! My first ever target was a platinum engagement ring with a small diamond!

Thank you so much to the Maryland Free-State Treasure Club for helping me search, advising on equipment, inspiring us to try metal detecting for ourselves and being such a great group of people!



Reunited