

## The Pyramid Nugget By: Matt

The whole week had been rainy and the ground was extremely saturated. The seasonal creeks that flow through this area were running hard and that would limit my hunt the benches above the creeks where they once flowed a long time ago. I previously had some luck finding nuggets in the area.

This area is an old mining camp that the old timers had ground sluiced back during the California gold rush. I know that the prospecting in this area dates back a long time because on occasion I dig up old Chinese coins. I don't know how old the coins are because I can't read Chinese. Square nails are in abundance and almost every prospecting trip I take to this spot produces at least one musket ball.

Prospectors have hammered the ground sluice areas with metal detectors over the years. Nuggets are not jumping out of the ground, but with a little determination, patience, perseverance, and confidence it is possible to go home with a dink or even a nugget. Swinging slow, low, and really paying attention are the keys to success.



For a few weeks prior to my afternoon outing, I was reading on Nuggethunting.com Forum that Rob had been having really good success with the Coiltek Wallaby DD coil. Back then, I was swinging a Minelab GP3000 and stuck pretty much to the DD coils, mainly the stock Minelab 11" round DD coil or the Joey DD.



I decided it was time to break out the money and buy a Wallaby DD coil. I know the big gold is down deeper and if I wanted the big gold, I needed the right tool for the job. In fact, I found a nice two-pennyweight nugget with the Wallaby the first time out with it in a hammered patch. That nugget was around a foot deep and made the purchase of the coil worthwhile to me the first trip out.

I would only have a couple hours to hunt and it would be my second time out using my new Wallaby coil. By the time I arrived at the patch it was almost 2:00PM. Since it was the middle of winter, the days were short and the sun goes down fast. I was detecting some ground in an area that I had pulled some nuggets from in the past and was not having any success, not even digging any trash targets. After

hunting at most a couple of hours, there was nothing in my poke. I hoped my detector would pick up a target at depth using the new larger size coil, but I struck out.

I headed back to my truck to take off my detecting gear. I sat on the tailgate of my truck and cracked an ice-cold beer. Looking around I thought to myself “why the hell am I sitting here drinking a beer, wasting my time. I could be swinging the detector till dark.” Visually scanning the area where I was parked, I could see quartz all over the place lying on top of the mineralized soil. Piles of hand-stacked quartz cobbles were scattered here and there.

Why not give this immediate spot a try? Why had I not detected here before? I put my detecting gear back on and started to detect the area right where I was parked. It was a small area that would not take long to detect. I was determined not to leave empty handed. Trash was not in abundance in this location the way it usually is at old mining locations. Had the trash been removed by prospectors prior to me using detectors?



I made my way up a small trough that was so narrow I could barely swing this

big coil side to side. The sweet spot on DD coils is in the center of the coil and I wondered how much ground coverage I was getting with such short side-to-side swings. The trough looked like the old-timers had worked this ground hard, right down into a massive bedrock crevice. Schist type bedrock was exposed on both sides of the excavation for its entire 20' length. Stacked quartz cobbles lined the ground above both sides above the trough. It appeared as though loose material had sloughed in over the years. It was hard to tell how deep the bedrock was in the gut.

Detecting up the trough, not even five feet up it, I heard a faint warble in the threshold. Unsure if it was a target or ground noise, I scratched the grass off the ground with the broad side of my pick and created roughly an 18" circle of bare soil. I like to use a pick with a broader size backside for scraping the soil surface and scooping the material out a deep hole. I re-checked the bald spot with my coil and the target was still there, still just barely audible.

I started to give that ground hell. My pick ripped through the quartz cobble laced clayey soil to a depth of about a foot. This clay-type mud is difficult to dig in because it sticks to the pick and everything it touches. The mud is so sticky that it has to be banged off the pick head after each swing and scoop. Placing a cobble next to the hole to bang against helps to rid the sticky mud from the pick. I stuck the Wallaby down in the excavation and got a really nice sounding target. The target was quite a bit louder now that I was closer to it. Back to digging I went, but digging got more difficult the deeper the target got. Water was seeping through the walls of the hole and the hole was rapidly filling up. I had to enlarge the diameter of the hole

because it was hard to get the big coil down to the bottom as close to the target as I could get it. It was hard to justify submerging a new coil under water, but I had no choice. There could be a nugget at the bottom of the hole. At around 18" deep, I scooped out as much of the muddy, gooey water as I could and stuck my coil down in the hole only to get the dreaded blanking sound. The blanking sound is the target response that a Minelab GP series detector gives when the target is likely to be iron. I was devastated to say the least. I scraped and picked around the hole a little more, checked the target again, and got the same results. More blanking.



I went back to my truck and sat down to finish my beer. Again, I sat drinking that beer and I started thinking about going back over to fill in the hole. What a drag. I was covered in mud and the fog was starting to roll in. Something in the back of my mind was telling me to get that target out of the hole. You never know what the target is until it is actually in your hand. I did not want to home wondering why I did not dig up this target. I changed coils to the Coiltek Joey DD and went back to the hole. The Joey coil would fit perfect without enlarging the diameter of the hole any more.

When I looked in the hole, it was almost filled entirely with water. After getting as much of the water out that I possibly could, I checked the target with the Joey. To my surprise, there was no blanking. The target just screamed on that Joey coil! The kind of scream that sounds good. The hole was deep. I could not even get my pick down in the bottom of the hole to dig any more. I took out a plastic treasure scoop and went to work. I was reaching deep down into that hole. It felt like I was almost up to my shoulder, scraping the bottom of the hole to loosen up the material and scooping out as much material as I could. Each scoop was half water and half of the clay type mud with a little quartz cobble in it. As I was lifting out a scoop of material, water was draining off the top of the scoop as it rose from the depths and I started to see GOLD!

I grabbed the big gold nugget and ran down to the creek to wash it off. It was covered with that sticky clay. At first I thought the gold nugget was solid because all I could see was gold and it was heavy, but as the water cleaned off the clay I began to see white quartz rock. The gold nugget specimen is the shape of a triangle or almost a pyramid. The gold showing is the brightest that I have ever seen come straight out of the ground. The total weight is 42.4 pennyweight or a little 2 ounces. By specific gravity test, the gold nugget specimen has roughly 1.5+ ounces of gold locked inside the rock.

Since that day, I have never left a target in the ground that I start digging on. I have returned to every suspect target I didn't finish digging in the past hoping for the same results. None

have turned out to be gold nuggets, but I learned the biggest lesson in detecting for gold that day. Dig every target. If you don't you will be leaving gold in the ground. I re-checked the hole in hopes there may be more nuggets. There was no target response in the hole or the pile of mud. I happily filled in the hole and went home with a big grin on my face. That was a day that I will never forget.