

Silent Doug, who runs a letterboxing Web site, has also been to the birthplace of letterboxing. He first heard about the hobby in 2002 while reading an in-flight magazine. He loves the “artistic and intellectual pursuits” that go hand in hand with the activity, and he also loves to be outdoors.

“I’ve found letterboxes in just about 25 states and three countries at this point,” he says. “I’ve found 1,385, planted about 70 or so.”

When Silent Doug first began in 2002, he had to drive hours to find any boxes. Now, he estimates that there are hundreds of thousands all around the country.

Unfortunately, we are unable to find the boxes associated with the bird series today. Hikers and Hounds says that perhaps 10 percent of the time she doesn’t find the box she’s looking for. “I don’t get upset even when I don’t find a box, though,” she says, “because I’m outside with my dog and not just sitting on the couch watching TV.”

Gecko Spot says she’s usually pretty fortunate at finding boxes, but every now and then boxes will go missing. One day she found all of the boxes she was looking for, but the next day, after searching for four boxes, she found none.

Hikers and Hounds, Cyclonic, Dude, and I head back after an exhausting (but scenic) trek that involved a bit of uphill walking. Sewsowbizzy and Gecko Spot journey on, determined to find the bird series.

Hikers and Hounds says that letterboxing doesn’t just promote physical health but can be mentally rewarding, too. She recommends the activity to anyone hoping to improve his or her reading, writing, art, math, science, and orienteering skills.

“I could barely read a map before I started letterboxing,” she says. “But I don’t panic anymore when I get lost...I acquired new confidence in an area where I had none before.”

She also finds that letterboxing has improved her vocabulary, taught her about nature, and most importantly, showed her that there is a world outside waiting to be discovered.

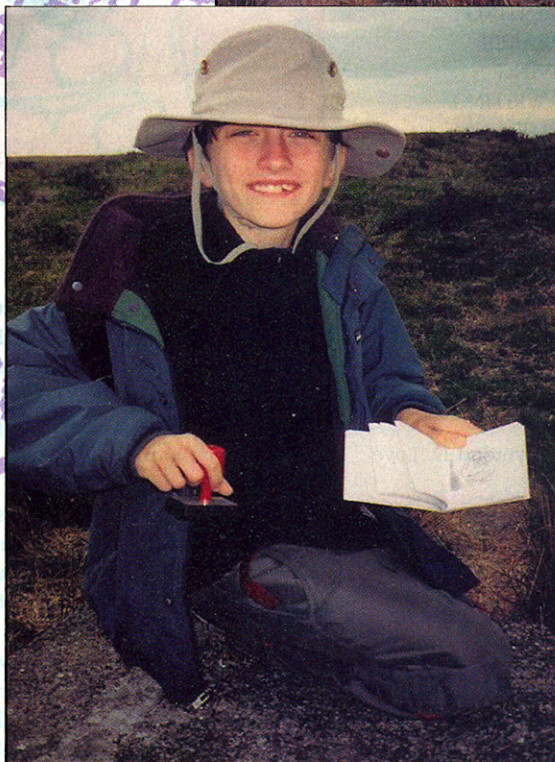
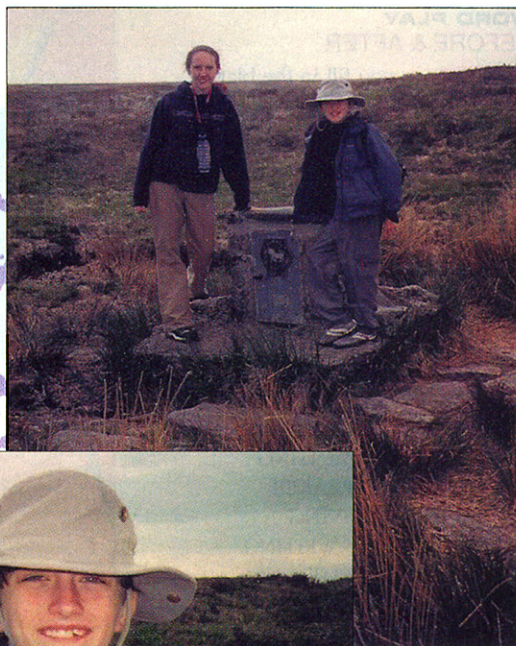
“I just love the places [letterboxing] takes me. The beautiful things I see on trails, I won’t get to see sitting around at home,” she says.

She stresses that you do not have to be an athlete to enjoy the hobby. “You just have to love the outdoors and be willing to search for a piece of rubber in a plastic box,” she says with a laugh.

“There’s something for everybody,” she adds. “Some people like hiking, some like art, some like being a part of a community, some like clue solving...You just have to find where your passion lies in the hobby and make it your own.”

*There are numerous Web sites and books devoted to letterboxing. A good place to start is [www.letterboxing.org](http://www.letterboxing.org).—Ed.*

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At Cranmere Pool in Dartmoor, England, MizScarlett’s son Mambo Dog (left and above right) and daughter Nevermore (below and above left) display the letterbox, stamp, and logbook.



PHOTOS: MIZSCARLETT