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Virtual Monsterhunter

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EVE Online Exploration Guide

Thursday, May 01, 2008 3:59 PM

EVE Online Exploration breaks down into three distinct phases; Scouting, Scanning and Processing.

1. Scouting
========
This stage is where the initial trace is located.

Tools/Skills Needed:

- Skill: Astrometrics I
- Module: Scan Probe Launcher I
- Ammo: One or more Multispectral Frequency Probes

Pretty much anyone, in any ship can do this bit, with only the very minimal skill and equipment listed above, and it doesn't take very long.

Load up the scan probes, above, and set out. For each system you want to take a look at, warp to some place quiet - a planet or the star preferably - and launch a Multifrequency Scan Probe. Wait until the highslot stops flashing green, then open the Scanner window, and select the System Scanner tab.

From the list of possible types, ensure that *only* 'Cosmic Signature' is selected. (Even if you can pick more than one group, still only pick Cosmic - adding other groups runs the risk of the Multi picking up abandoned shuttles, drones, etc, which also register as traces if you aren't careful.)

Select the Multifrequency probe from the lower list, and select Analyze at the bottom.

Now you must wait until the progress bar runs down. At minimal skills, in a non-astrometrics ship, this can be as long as 600s (10 mins), but training and equipment can bring that down to a possible minimum of about 120s, or less with implants. You can fly about locally, fight, activate other modules, etc, but DO NOT WARP until the bar is finished. Warping will abort the scan, making you have to start again at the warp destination. You do not have to be next to the probe to start a scan though, and can be anywhere else in the same star system.

You can use the Directional Scanner while the System Scan is processing, although the Exploration sites will not show on this list. Interesting to see if anyone else is about though, in particular, Scan Probes that you didn't put down yourself, indicating that someone else is also exploring in that system.

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The Multifrequency Scan Probe is strong enough and accurate enough to ALWAYS find anything that might be in the system, so only one is needed, and it never lies. The probe generally only lasts long enough to do one scan with it, but one scan is all that is needed to know for definite, what is in a system. You'll get one of six results:

- Nothing Found: - There is no Exploration Site in the star system at this time - move on, or try again in a day or two!
- Unknown: - Indicates the presence of a hidden deadspace complex.
- Gravimetric: - Indicates the presence of a hidden asteroid belt. These typically have rarer asteroids than can be found in the surrounding regular belts, and have the added bonus of semi-privacy.
- Magnetometric: - Indicates the presence of an Archaeology/Salvage Site.
- Radar: - Indicates the presence of a Hacking/Salvage Site.
- Ladar: - Indicates the presence of a Complex/Gas Cloud Harvesting Site.

It is quite possible to get more than one result in a given system. Correct use of the right type of probes, (see below) will help pick out the site you actually want to find.

Once a result is obtained, its on to step 2, Scanning!

2. Scanning
========

This is where a positive Multispectral Trace, is turned into a warpable bookmark, and takes a lot of patience, and a few more skills:

 Skills/Tools Needed:

- Skill: Astrometrics IV (Minimum, to be able to use Sift probes)
- Skill: Signal Acquisition (Higher the better)
- Skill: Astrometric Pinpointing (Higher the better)
- Skill: Astrometric Triangulation (Higher the better)
- Skill: Caldari/Gallente/Minmatar Frigates (Whichever is your highest level)
- Skill: Covert Ops (If possible)
- Skill: Cloaking (Optional)

- Module: Scan Probe Launcher (Required)
- Ammo: Quest, Pursuit, Comb and Sift Probes (per type of trace, see below) (Required)

- Ship: Heron, Imicus or Probe (Highly recommended - choose the one you have the highest corresponding Frigate skill in.) (Optional, but non-Astro Frigates will have a hard time with the fitting, and take much longer to do the scans)
- Ship: Helios, Buzzard, Anathema, Cheetah (Optional)

- Rigs: Gravimetric Capacitor Upgrade (Optional)

- Implants: Hardwiring - Poteque Pharmaceuticals 'Prospector' PPF, PPG and PPH series. (Optional)

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Once the existence of a trace has been confirmed, by the Multispectral scan, the actual position of it needs to be narrowed down to a warpable bookmark. This is done using the four probes above. Load up the cargo bay with the following:

- 10-20 {type} Quest Probes
- 4-5 {type} Pursuit Probes
- 2-3 {type} Comb Probes
- 5-10 {type} Sift Probes

{type} should correspond to the type of Trace revealed on the previous Multispectral scan result, EXCEPT in the case of 'Unknown' traces. These emit on all four flavours with equal strength, meaning that any flavour of probe is just as likely to find the spot. This makes life difficult if the system has an Unknown AND another type - you are just as likely to find either, and will probably have to pin down both to be sure which is which.

These quantities are guestimates, and you may need more or less depending on skills, and indeed, luck!

Head to the target system and open the Solar System Map. The entire exercise can be conducted from this screen, and there's no real need to actually see what your ship is doing. Identify the system's Planets, then head to the one in the farthest out orbit, and launch a Quest Probe. Open the scanner and click the probe in the list. Don't start the scan yet! The Solar System map should now display a faint blue sphere, indicating the volume the probe will be able to search.

Clearly, this isn't enough to cover all the possible places the trace could be. Exploration traces all exist *somewhere* within 4AU of a Planet (Quest *radius* is 4AU, giving 8AU diameter), so this narrows the inky infinite down a bit, but for the Quest stage, as many planets as possible need to be covered simultaneously.

However, you can't launch a probe while inside the bubble of another of your own probes, so study the layout of the inner planets carefully, to decide which Planets to put probes on, for the maximum coverage. Ideally, bubbles should overlap as much as possible, with the actual probes themselves still being more than 4AU apart.

Warp around to the various Planets you've picked out, dropping a Quest probe at each. When you're happy with the coverage, ensure that only Cosmic Signature is selected from the groups, and then CTRL +Click each of the probes in the list, until they're *all* highlighted (**v. important!**), and *then* click Analyze.

The familiar progress bar will start counting down. This gets a bit tedious, and can it help to have some surfing to be getting on with, or a film, or whatever else miners do to stay sane. Very similar!

Ways to reduce the timer:

- Fly an Astrometrics Ship - look for *"X% reduction to the duration/activation time of modules requiring Astrometrics per level"* in the ship info text - that's us! The non-bomber covert-ops ships offer the best bonuses, but the Tech 1 Astro Frigates are extremely cheap, easy to fly, and nearly as good.
- Train Signal Acquisition: -10% per level
- Install 'Gravity Capacitor Upgrade Rigs': Expensive, but -10% per rig.
- Plug in a Hardwiring - Poteque Pharmaceuticals 'Prospector' PPH implant: -3%, -6% or -10% by rank.

When the timer completes, check the results. This is likely to say nothing found. Forum posting suggests that the chance of getting a hit varies between 1 in 2.5 through to 1 in 40 for the really

valuable sites, so as long as your coverage is good, (all the main planet groups inside the blue bubbles) it's just a question of being patient and hitting Analyze again for another roll of the dice.

If you've been at it a while, and are losing faith a bit, try a single Multispectral probe again; this will confirm that the trace is still there and hasn't been found and exploted by some other player, or will show Nothing Found if the thing really has vanished. An extra cost, but worth it for the peace of mind.

As long as the Multispectral had a result, there *is* something out there. Extra levels in Astrometric Triangulation, and the PPG implants, make the probes stronger, increasing the chance of a successful ping. Keep re-pinging as long as the probes are still alive, and if they all die, replace them with a fresh set and continue. It's not unexpected to have to go through two or three complete placements of Quests before finding the first 'breadcrumb' for the more valuable, and hidden, sites.

Eventually, you'll get a 'Deadspace Signature' in the scan results. That's the most tedious bit over. It also lists the Signal Strength, (a variable number made up from the base strength of the site itself - lower being more difficult/valuable, and your distance from it), the distance to the breadcrumb, and an Accuracy, which basically tells you how much margin of error there is between the spot the scan just found, and the site's *real* location in space. This accuracy can be improved by training more ranks in the Astrometrics Pinpointing skill, or using PPF series implants.

Warp to the new spot the scanner gave you, select New Scan and in the probes list, right-click and *Destroy* any remaining Quest probes you have in space - they'll just interfere at this point, and we need more precise tools now.

Once at the new spot, check the accuracy value, which will be 4AU or less:

- If it's between 4AU and 2AU, launch another Quest Probe
- If it's between 2AU and 1AU, launch a Pursuit Probe
- If it's between 1AU and 0.5AU, launch a Comb Probe
- If it's less than 0.5AU, launch a Sift Probe

Here's that again in kilometres:

- 598,000,000 to 299,000,000: Quest
- 299,000,000 to 149,500,000: Pursuit
- 149,500,000 to 74,750,000: Comb
- 74,750,000 or less: Sift

The shorter range ones are more powerful, and accurate, so you always want to be using the smallest one that will still cover the accuracy drift.

Just one probe at a time is needed from this stage on - we've already eliminated the other planets, and are just narrowing down the result. Keep re-analyzing and dropping new probes per the above list, moving to each progressively more accurate spot. Sifts burn out very quickly - 8 minutes or so (480s), so having a short a scan time as possible is especially useful here. Without at least an Astro Frigate and some minor skill training, the Sift will actually burn out before a scan completes!

(If you can't use Sifts, it *is* possible to find the last spot using only Combs, but this takes a lot longer and takes (more) patience.)

Eventually you'll have an Accuracy down to a few hundred km or less, meaning that you've found it, well done!

- ## When Teh Interwebs R Down

One last warp should take you into visual range of the site, which won't actually spawn until you go there (same 'grid'). Be careful here, as the combat sites tend to be much more dangerous than the surrounding regular Asteroid Belts. Go cloaked if you can, or consider leaving the ship itself at the previous bookmark, and making the final recon warp in a pod, if it's anything other than a Gravimetric site. (NPCs won't attack the pod - just remember where you left your ship!)

Regardless, you will need to actually travel to the site to get a bookmark for further exploitation; see 3. Processing, below!

3. Processing
===========

This is the bit where you get rich!

Tools/Skills Needed:

- Various depending on type of trace:

- Unknown:
  Strong combat ships mostly. These are likely to have weight-restricted acceleration gates, so ideally Assault Frigates or Heavy Assault Cruisers are the best bet here, or a large and co-ordinated fleet of standard frigates and cruisers. These sites generally put up a much stiffer site than that systems normal belt rats, so be prepared. Escalation is common here (The Expeditions tab in the mission journal), so make sure you blow up everything you can to trigger it.

- Gravimetric:
  These are mining sites, with minimal standard belt rats for that system. The usual mix of miners and haulers here, but bring a few combat drones just to be on the safe side. The rocks here are often of much rare and more valuable types than can be found in that system's normal belts, and offer a way for carebears to find Zydrine in Empire, with a bit of work. Don't expect Megacyte or Morphite though, unless in 0.0 when you start.

- Magnetometric:
  These are Archaeological dig sites. Again, combat ships will be needed, but also Salvagers, and ships equipped with Analyzer modules, used by people with the Archaeology skill, to get the most out of them. Skill books and T2 Rig BPcs can sometimes be found here, along with parts used in invention.

- Radar:
  As Magentometric, but for Hackers instead of Archaeologists. Site contains a number of faction pirates (Guristas, Serpentis, etc), along with several cargo container-like objects which require a Codebreaker module to open. Data Decryptor and Data Interface BPc can sometimes be found here, along with the books needed to use them, as well as invention parts.

- Ladar:
  These are complexes in general, so combat ships again, but also apparently have Gas Clouds - the raw resource for Boosters and such. I've never seen one of these show up in Empire, mind you, so probably one for the 0.0 crowd really. Watch your back!

All of the above sites offer greater rewards and greater challenges, the lower the sec status of the system you start hunting in.

Anyone can help out at this stage, as these sites often require a variety of different skills, most of them unrelated to the actual business of scanning itself; combat, mining, salvage, hacking, archaeology and so on. Simply make a copy of the bookmark to pass on, (or even sell), or just form a gang and have them warp to you.

The person who does the initial recon trip should be extremely careful! It's is unlikely a single Heron, Probe or Imicus, geared for scanning, will be able to last very long against any of the combat sites, so the key priority is to get a bookmark, and get the hell out of dodge, allowing you to come back in something more suitable.

Covert Ops pilots will have an easier time of it, but ideally in either case, a quick assessment of what is there is very helpful, allowing you to work out what will be needed to do it properly. (Some sites include large dust cloud objects which can sometimes cause proximity decloak, so even invisible, don't hang about, and avoid Warp to 0km.)

The site, once found, will remain where you found it for some time, until a little while after *someone* completes it. (Kills everything, Mines everything, etc)

Note: The site does not care WHO 'completes' it, and any other passing scanner who works through the above probing can turn up and start digging/shooting too. These sites are **NOT** private, merely very difficult to find. This all places a bit of time pressure on whoever finds the place, to make the most of a site as soon as possible. Get friends to help!

(Also, large numbers of mining barges and barrels called '00:15' and the like, can be scanned for using the much faster Ship Scanning, so simply you *being there* makes it a lot easier to find by someone else)

4. Anomaly Scanning
================

Added somewhat later, this cut-down version of scanning is more aimed at folks who just want a quick fight, without going through all the above, or necessarily committing to a long and involved Agent Mission.

All ships, regardless of type, have a built-in scanner. This requires no modules or skills to use; simply open the scanner window, ensure that only "Cosmic Anomaly" type is selected and press Analyse. The scan takes a flat 30s or so to run, and has a range of 5AU, making them best used at, or near a planet. This raw module-less on-board scanner cannot be used to do the above Probe-based scanning, and will instead find you straight combat-based deadspace pockets, largely for a bit of quick fightey fun.

While no cool Invention Stuff can be found like this, the Anomalies do often include rare Faction ships which will drop rare faction modules, so can be quite lucrative in their own right, as well as bounties and scrap-loot/salvage that you'd also find in agent missions.

As with the proper probe scanning, the sites exist objectively, so other players can also find the same site, and you, if you're there!

Feedback

re: EVE Online Exploration Guide

In the scouting stage, is the probe required actually a Multispectral Frequency Probe? 5/2/2008 9:19 PM | *wilhelm2451*

re: EVE Online Exploration Guide

Sorry, yes. Just need to launch one of those, once, at the start of it all. The Multispec is powerful enough to cover the entire star system in one pass.

It's a preliminary step to check if there's anything at all worth looking for, before you roll the sleeves up and get into it with Quests, Pursuits, etc. 5/3/2008 12:35 AM | *Van Hemlock*

re: EVE Online Exploration Guide

What is the purpose of the "Observer Deep Space Probe"? I have trained for this, but now I'm not sure why!

5/16/2008 1:59 AM | *Gauder*

re: EVE Online Exploration Guide

Those are used in the Recon Probe Launcher, along with the Snoop, Spook, Ferret and…er…weasel? Probes.

That is all for the scanning down of player ship positions, a process broadly similar to the above, only much faster. Not really the same thing, and you won't need those for hunting down PvE Exploration Sites.

The skills trained for the above are the same as used for the Ship Scanning though, so you haven't wasted any training time - merely bought the wrong ammo! 5/16/2008 10:17 AM | *Van Hemlock*

re: EVE Online Exploration Guide

Nice presentation of info. Based on my alt's considerable experience in scanning down gravimetric, radar, and magnetometric exploration sites, I'd suggest swapping the recommended numbers of Pursuit and Comb probes…I usually carry 2 Pursuits for each probe category, and 6 Combs. Can't recall the last time I had to use a Pursuit but Combs are called for fairly often. This may be due to skills (my alt has all explo related skills to 4 or 5), but I'm not sure about that.

I enjoy your blog and podcast!
6/2/2008 12:55 PM | *Mynxee*

re: EVE Online Exploration Guide

very nice, detailed and helpful guide, thanks a lot for this information. i just get started with exploration and find it a very interesting part of eve, cause i dont know what will be waiting there for me if i find something. 6/20/2008 12:31 AM | *Timon Jameson*

re: EVE Online Exploration Guide

thanks, quite useful. 6/21/2008 3:41 PM | *PapaRed*

Cool.

I just got my Kestrel from the starter missions. My agent sent me off to find a new agent… so I asked in new people help about my options… just in general, like what kinds of things could I possibly do if I didn't want to mine or run corp missions for a living. THIS is exactly the kind of answer I was looking for. Very, very helpful. You've completely invigorated my archeology plans. Thanks, dude. Nice post. 7/10/2008 12:21 PM | *Thirdrail*

re: EVE Online Exploration Guide

I've got this bookmarked as essential material, and am earning about 50 mil isk a day minimum from exploration sites.

Superb guide - thanks! 7/30/2008 2:19 PM | *chorizo chorizo*

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