Fitness App Tips (Strava)

You may have seen a recent article on The Journal about organised criminals using fitness apps to track bikes and equipment, if not, it's here.

To try and show how dangerous this can be we decided to put together a document on how easy it can be to find details on someone and then some tips on securing your account/activities.
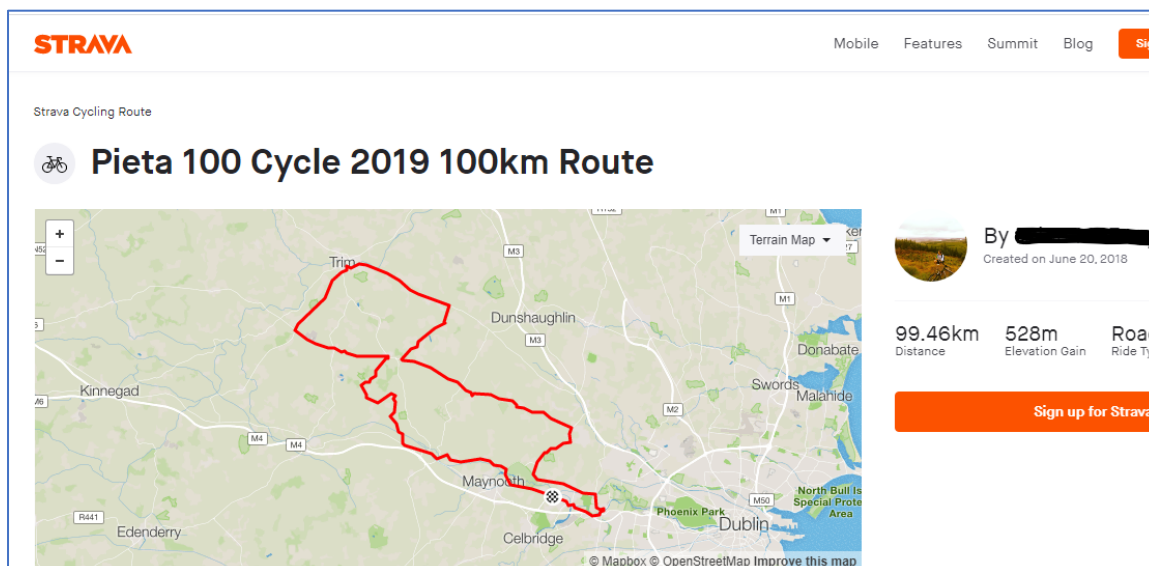
Strava Example

In this example we created an account (it's free), then started searching for Strava routes. The account has no followers or is not following anyone.

Start with a simple search for Strava routes in Dublin, or wherever the criminal is interested in finding bikes:
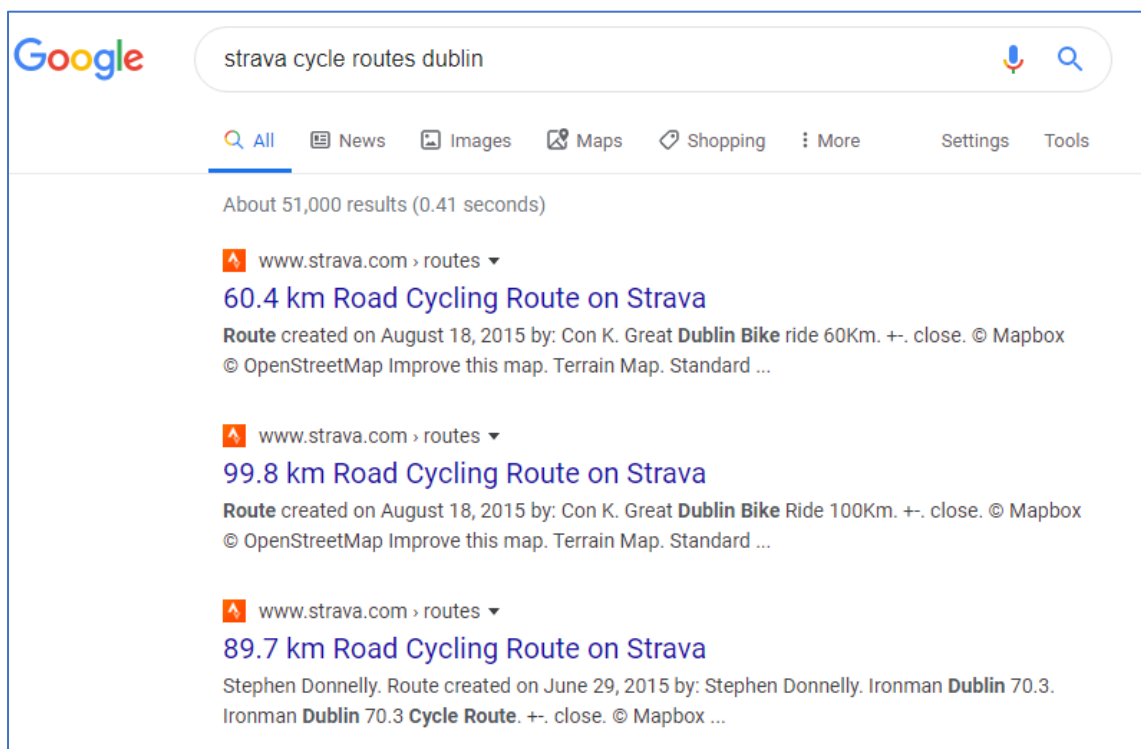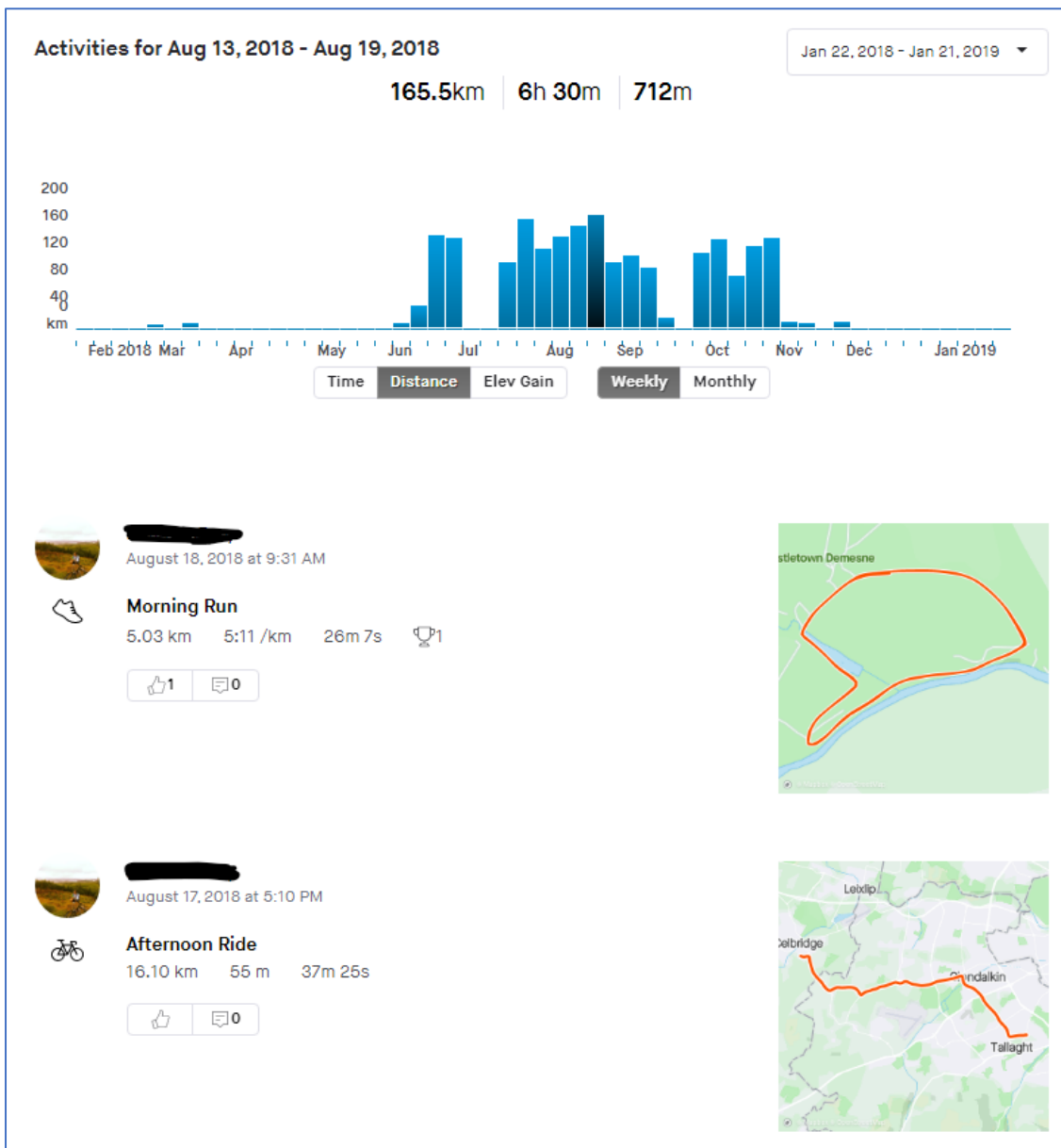

Let's choose one of the results and see what we can learn:

It appears to be one from a sportif the user did on June 2018. Now let's click on the username and see what else we can learn.

Remember: we created an account and just started searching around Dublin.

This account appears more active around 2018 but will do for our example. First piece of information useful to criminals we can see is the make of their bike computer - **Garmin Edge 25**. We now know they carry equipment on the bike, adds to the value.

At this stage it's now all about just looking through the activities and spotting patterns:

- Can we figure out where they live?
- Where they work?
- Regular rides – maybe somewhere remote?
- In some instances, the type of bike being used.

For our example user (who unfortunately is real), this is what we learned:

They cycle to and from work a few days a week. Leave for work between 8-8:30am and leave for home just after 5. They live in Celbridge and work in Tallaght. By viewing the activity maps, you can see more exact details on the home and work location.

Thinking from a criminal's point of view you now know there is a bike at that address.

Our example user did most of their cycling to and from work with no pattern on regular rides bar those. They hadn't specified a bike type or included any pics. However, we can see that a criminal now has enough information to begin scoping out where the bike could be and a regular route it takes.

They can also check through your list of followers and who you are following in the hope of finding similar information. It's easy to see how they can gather quite a few potential addresses and routes on where to steal bikes.

Privacy tips

Everyone on Strava who wishes to use it should at least do the following:

Do not specify an exact location on your profile – leave as Dublin if in Dublin for example.

In your privacy settings - https://www.strava.com/settings/privacy:

Ensure only your followers can see your activities and not everyone.

Same goes for your profile page. If you set to followers, then someone who wants to see your profile will have to request to follow you. If you don't know them then simply reject!

Some details of your profile page will still be visible by anyone on the web but is limited – full details here https://support.strava.com/hc/en-us/articles/115000164850.

Group activities and flybys should also be locked down by default. If you really want to share something you can change the privacy level at the activity level. This is better than having everything open.

Not everyone cares who sees their activities (as they may be participating in Strava segment leader boards!). If you are one of these people at least hide your home address, you can do this by creating a privacy zone. This will basically hide your home from any maps you create during your ride.

Additional Controls

Privacy Zones

Enter an address to hide the portion of any past or future activity that starts or ends nearby. You will not appear on the leaderboard for any segment that starts or ends in your privacy zone. The zone won't be centered on this address for additional privacy. Learn More

| Enter address here | Select Radius ▾ | Create Privacy Zone |

The radius can be set from 200m to 1000m.

You can add multiple ones, so if you do exercise to get to work for example, you can hide this too.