

**GEOCACHE ALASKA!** Inc.   
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**Cache Hunting FUNdamentals**  
 by  
 Wes Skinner  
 (NorthWes)

Anchorage, Fairbanks, and the  
 rest of Alaska via WebEx  
 16 May 2013

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*The Rundown:* 

- ▶ Getting to Ground Zero (GZ)
- ▶ Sizing Up the Hide Area
- ▶ The Circle of Accuracy
- ▶ Read the Cache Listing
- ▶ Hints and Past Logs
- ▶ Alternate Coordinates
- ▶ What if you can't find it?
- ▶ Logging your Find
- ▶ Tools of the Trade



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**Getting to Ground Zero** 

- ❖ Load the Coordinates into your GPSr
- ❖ Look at the map and satellite images of the area to figure out the best approach
- ❖ If the cache is off the road system, using the NW Trails overlay in your GPSr can help show you the trails to get there
- ❖ Additional waypoints may have recommended parking or trailheads

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**Maps & Satellites**

Satellite view can get you close to the cache

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**Sizing Up the Hide Area**

- Upon arrival near the cache site, stop and look around, taking an inventory of possible hides
- In the urban environment, stay back for a bit and look for Muggle activity and try to plan your approach so that you don't compromise the hide
- Sometimes it is better to plan on returning during other times of the day, week, or season
- In the wilderness, it's often best to just walk right up to the cache marker on your GPSr (zoom in) and then take a good look around you for all the places that one could hide a cache of that size

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**Finding Geocaches**

- Be sure to consider the cache title and description as you look for the host or hide
- Caches can be very cleverly hidden, so pay attention to objects that look like they belong that might actually be a disguised container
- Lift – Look – Replace is the proper search technique so that you do not damage the area
- If you are in view of the public (muggles), use stealth so as not to advertise the location of the geocache, which can lead to it being stolen

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**Dedication...**



Sometimes you just need to put your gloves on and get down and dirty to start looking! However, remember to respect the environment as you go... Lift, Look, Replace!

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**The Circle of Accuracy**

- Remember that the GPS satellites and atmospheric conditions that affect the signals are constantly changing, so you may have a slightly different position than the hider did
- Modern GPSr's are generally accurate within about 30 feet, but if the hider was off by 30 feet one way and today you're off by 30 feet the other way, that can give you up to 60 feet of ground error between the two measurements
- If you don't find the hide right at GZ, increase your search area in a circular pattern outward

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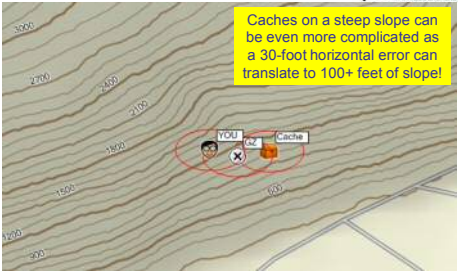
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**Circles of "InAccuracy"**



Caches on a steep slope can be even more complicated as a 30-foot horizontal error can translate to 100+ feet of error!

Errors can compound between when the CO saved GZ and You show up to search

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### Read the Cache Listing!



- With all the paperless caching methods available, reading the cache listing in advance has fallen by the wayside with many cachers
- If the hide is not immediately obvious, you can save yourself a lot of frustration by reading the entire cache listing online or via your paperless device if you have entire cache listings saved in it
- If the CO was nice, they might give you hints or perhaps even tell you outright where the cache is hidden
- As CO's, remember that you're hiding the cache from Muggles and you should try to at least give some hints as to where the cache is hidden; spoiler photos in the gallery are also a great idea for really tricky hides

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### Hints and Past Logs



- Some like to start the hunt without the hint, but remember to check it if you're having a hard time finding the cache
- If the cache listing and hint don't get you there, try reading through some of the past logs as there can quite often be spoilers and hints that other cachers have left when they found it
- Simple direction and distances are common, such as "found the cache 20 feet north of GZ" are often indicators of "fuzzy" coordinates

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### Alternate Coordinates



- Some finders will take a new set of coordinates when they find a cache seems to be "off" and post them along with their found it log
- If you look through past logs on the cache listing and see alternate coordinates, consider entering these as a 2<sup>nd</sup> waypoint when you load the cache to your GPSr before heading out
- Using a 2<sup>nd</sup> point allows you to look at both locations, as the alternate coords may not be any better than the CO's original coords
- Using programs such as GSAK can make capturing these alternate coordinates easier

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### What if you can't find it?



- Step back and look the area over – are you getting “tunnel vision” on where you initially assumed the cache might be hidden?
- Open up the search circle around GZ and look for other possible locations
- Reread the cache listing, hint, and past logs
- It's perfectly fine to log a “Did Not Find” and come back another day!
- DNF is NOT a failure! It just means you're trying and you haven't quite got there yet

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### In the Field – After the Find



- When you find the cache, take a good look before you grab it from the hiding spot so you don't damage anything and you can put it back exactly as found
- Find the logbook or logsheet and enter your geocaching “handle” and the find date – with regular and large caches that have a larger logbook, you can enter a longer log describing your adventure, the weather, the view or whatever you wish to write for others to read
- With micro and “nano” caches, please write small and enter just your name and date so the log will last longer
- Trade fair with SWAG! Pick up and/or drop off your trackable travel bugs and geocoins as appropriate

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### In the Field – After the Find



- If the inside is wet, please dry it out if you can
- Replace the log and contents into the cache and put the cap or lid back on securely
- Micro capsules usually have the log rolled up and placed in the cap first, and then screw the body of the cache back onto the cap
- Put the cache back exactly in the same place that it was found and replace any “natural” camo materials that you moved to get to the cache

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**Logging your Find** 

- Promptly enter your online log, especially if you dropped or picked up a trackable item
- Refrain from using super short logs such as "TFTC" or just a smiley face symbol. These logs are generally demeaning to the CO's efforts to place the hide. Be nice and write something about your trip or your visit.
- Consider entering your own alternate coordinates if the published ones seemed off
- Do not enter blatant spoilers about where the cache is hidden or post photos of the container

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**Logging your Visit** 

- ⊕ **Found It** – You found the cache and signed the log
- ⊕ **Didn't Find It** – You searched but did not find (DNF) the geocache container... on this visit – Multiples are OK
- ⊕ **Write Note** – Used for a subsequent visit to drop trackables or to add more information about your visit than the original Found It log can hold (non statistical)
- ⊕ **Needs Archived** – This log type should ONLY be used in a situation where the geocache listing needs to be permanently removed by a GC Reviewer
- ⊕ **Needs Maintenance** – This log type is used to flag a cache that has an issue requiring the Cache Owner to visit the cache to perform some level of maintenance – **The inability of the geocacher to find the cache is NOT justification for a NM log; use DNF instead**

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**Tools of the Trade** 

- ⊕ Flashlight
- ⊕ Screwdrivers
- ⊕ Inspection Mirror
- ⊕ Magnetic retrieval tool
- ⊕ Hemostat, Tweezers
- ⊕ Black Light for UV Puzzle or Night Caches
- ⊕ Good eyes, glasses, and/or magnifying glass
- ⊕ Gloves

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## Coming Events...



- **May 17-19** – “HOBO CITO” A bunch’a bums camping and cleaning the Kenai – **Homer, Soldotna, Cooper Landing, Girdwood**
- **June 20-21** – H.E.L.P. Summer Solstice Campout – **Eklutna Lake**
- **July 13** – Caching on the Kenai Picnic **Kenai Municipal Park**
- **December 13** – GeoFest



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## Join the party



**Grab your Cameras!**

- ❖ It’s time to start thinking about the Calendar Photo Contest!
- ❖ Open to all **Cheechako** and **Sourdough** Members
- ❖ Take pictures while out caching and submit them to the contest
- ❖ All valid submissions will be posted to a photo album on our website plus they will all be part of the GeoFest Slide Show!



Send all entries via email to: [PhotoContest@GeocacheAlaska.org](mailto:PhotoContest@GeocacheAlaska.org)  
 Include your name, the Alaskan cache it was taken at, the category, and the title or caption you’ve given to the image.

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## Resources



- GeocacheAlaska! [geocachealaska.org](http://geocachealaska.org)
- GS Knowledge Books: [support.groundspeak.com](http://support.groundspeak.com)
- GeocacheAlaska! Forums: [geocachealaska.proboards.com](http://geocachealaska.proboards.com)
- Switchback’s NW Trails: [www.switchbacks.com/nwtrails/](http://www.switchbacks.com/nwtrails/)

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