



## Around The State

February 2014

### IN THIS ISSUE

[News](#)

[Events](#)

[Cache Reports](#)

[Travel Caching](#)

[Caching Tips](#)

[GeocacheAlaska! Information](#)

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR—EVENTS

[4th Annual WACO Flashmob 2014](#), Willow, 2/1/2014

**GeocacheAlaska! Board of Directors Meeting**, 2/20/2014, BP Energy Center,  
Call-in Available by Request.

**GeocacheAlaska! Founding Day**, 3/11/2014

**Pi Day**, 3/14/2014

[MO' PIE TURNS IV!](#), Anchorage, 3/14/2014

**14 Years of Geocaching**, 5/1/2014

**Tenth Annual GeoFest, Anchorage**, 12/19/2014

### RECENT EVENTS

[New Year's Eve: Last Cup of Hot Cocoa](#),  
Anchorage, 12/31

[New Year's Day: Racing your TB's through 2014](#),  
Anchorage, 1/1

[Happy New Year 2014](#), Reflection Lake, 1/1

## President's Corner

By Wes Skinner / NorthWes



### Special Recognition within the Geocaching Community

During December of 2013 I was nominated to be one of three geocachers to be considered for the coveted Geocacher of the Month award presented by Groundspeak. This surprise nomination came via Dianne Butt-Fortin, President of Bermuda Island Geocachers and one of the leaders of the 2013 Alaska Geocaching Cruise experience. As part of the nomination, Darlene cited the efforts of Alaska's geocachers in making the Geo-cruiser's visit a success, and specifically named myself as a key player in making the visiting group feel welcome. The nomination gave our new Communication Committee an opportunity to test methodology for getting a message out which wasn't just aimed at local cachers. They did well at extending our reach past our local organization as they announced the nomination and encouraged folks to vote in support of Alaska's nominee. The nominated cacher from Puerto Rico won by a landslide, while the nominee from Iowa and I were sincerely thrilled just to be considered for the honor!

It's no small thing to be nominated by the president of another country's geocaching group from more than 4,000 miles away, and this illustrates once again the connectivity we in Alaska have with geocachers from around the globe who see Alaska as a premier geocaching destination. Credit for the success of GeocacheAlaska! Inc's support for the visiting geo-cruisers belongs to all the Alaskan cachers who'd placed caches subsequently sought by the visitors, and to those persons who turned out at the event and in the field to help welcome and guide our visitors during their mid-summer caching adventure off the ship in southcentral Alaska. I'd like to thank everyone who helped make our visitors' experience something that exceeded their expectations, and gave them stories to tell about Alaska which will draw more visitors our way.

There's another kind of recognition I'd like to highlight for your attention and participation. GeocacheAlaska! Inc.'s own CACHE Committee works behind the scenes to recognize Alaska's geocachers whose actions have contributed in significant and measurable ways to their local caching community. The CACHE (Celebrating Alaskan Cachers' Hallmark Experiences) Committee hosted their inaugural award event ([GC463RA](#)) in Anchorage last fall, establishing a pattern for publicly 'celebrating' Sourdough Members who have passed thresholds of service and activity in a wide range of tasks. Most areas of recognition are for actions which 'give back' to our community of players. I have to admit that the Ammo Can I received last fall with its variety of recognition decals means far more

## Reviewer's Corner

By Michael Malvick / Greatland Reviewer



Recently, questions about placing night caches have been asked. The simplest night cache must have GPS navigation required to reach the starting point where one or more fire/hunter/reflective tacks/markers can lead to the final location. There must be a physical container, with hidden coordinates provided on the cache page, which meets the 528' proximity guideline for any other physical caches in the area. The reflective markers do not contain additional information, so they do not have to meet the proximity guideline.

Use of cache page attributes such as  and  and , is also encouraged to help cachers locate night caches when setting up Pocket Queries on [geocaching.com](#) or running cache filters in other applications such as Geocaching Swiss Army Knife (GSAK). In addition, if there is a puzzle to solve

in the field, the field puzzle attribute  should also be placed on the cache page.

Finally, the night cache should be listed as a multi-cache since each reflector represents a virtual stage. Historically, many night caches were listed as puzzle caches to raise cacher awareness that there was something more to the cache than just showing up with a GPS. Proper use of cache page attributes negates the need to do that. However, the cache type of the older caches should not be changed now because doing so will affect previous finders caching statistics.

More information about night caches may be found in [here](#) in Groundspeak's Help Center.



CACHE Award presented to recognize areas of service and involvement – an opportunity to recognize fellow Sourdough Members for their contribution to geocaching in Alaska.

# News

to me than the nifty collection of trackables and nice note from Groundspeak I received as a 'consolation prize' for my Cacher of the Month nomination! The CACHE Committee's work is designed to provide public recognition while giving cachers a take-home item to remind them of just where their work has been valued by fellow Alaskan geocachers. Future CACHE events are under development for the Fairbanks, Mat-Su, and Kenai regions, with an effort to bring the recognition to other areas in the state as well. Let your board members know if you'd like to help host these recognition efforts.

Take time to say 'thank you' to those persons who've made a positive impression on your geocaching experience here in Alaska. It can be something as simple as a sincere log note online about how much you enjoyed your visit to their cache, or a Facebook post about what a great job someone did at event hosting, or taking time to email or text the person directly to express your delight with their actions. Positive feedback from fellow cachers motivates us all to try harder at our game, and it rewards the sender and recipient with a well-deserved glow. Make it a habit, and see how 'paying it forward' can circle back and surprise you with a positive moment you never expected!

## Sandbox Snippets

*By Joel Vos / NeverSummer*

It's officially a new year! The new Board of Directors has been seated, and we're all getting to work on the various parts of serving GeocacheAlaska!

2014 Pathtags are on the radar again, and the process is just beginning. The first step is to develop designs for the four pathtags between now and February 28, 2014. Visit [this thread](#) in the GeocacheAlaska! forums for contest details. There is also some talk about future designs for Alaska Geocoins, and we're looking forward to the fun designs on the horizon. If you'd like to get involved, be sure to check in with Fundraising Committee Chair [Scott Aleckson/SSO JOAT](#). You can learn more at [pathtags.com](http://pathtags.com) about how to design pathtags, and the GeocacheAlaska! forums have some resources about past contests and designs.

The [Advocacy Committee](#) is forming up, and there is already talk about how to get involved with some of the celebrations the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) are planning in the Spring. Some events are on the horizon, and there will likely be some volunteer opportunities

for all of us. If you'd like to help out with some advocacy work, please be sure to get in touch with someone on the committee. Remember: Our efforts that help keep areas open for our use, and can open doors to new lands to play our game.

The Education Committee is working out the details about scheduling EduVents. If you would like support from the Education Committee for your educational events, let them know. I, [Joel Vos/NeverSummer](#), will be chairing this committee this year, and would love to help out with creating your Powerpoint presentations or handouts if you want to hold a "How To" or "Geocaching 101" event in your area. Stay tuned to the upcoming newsletters, the [forums](#), and our Facebook Group for more information as it comes out. Dates for the Education Events are posted in [this thread](#) of the GeocacheAlaska! forums.

Not to be outdone, the Events Committee, chaired by [Dana Rosso/DR-AK](#), is also working on some plans for supporting and hosting events around the state. From the Hobo CITO events, to SSO JOAT's annual Kenai Picnic, to a GeocacheAlaska! Summer Campout, the planning is underway. Stay tuned in the forums to learn more about the big plans for the year, and also to share what you'd like to host around your area. GeocacheAlaska! is here to support members like you and me, and the committee will be happy to talk about how they can help.

We have two somewhat new Committees to introduce as well. One is the Communications Committee, and the other is the CACHE (Celebrate Alaskan Caching Experiences) Committee. The Communications Committee, chaired by [Scott Aleckson/SSO JOAT](#) is hard at work to help streamline the way you all see GeocacheAlaska! information and news. We know that some folks prefer email, others use Facebook or Twitter, and others our website or forums. As we look to make things flow to our members more smoothly, the goal is to reach you in the way that you prefer.

The CACHE Committee is all about recognition. As of now, the state is being approached in sections, with the goal of celebrating the members and geocaches that make our great state so special. From recognizing advocacy work to celebrating milestone finds, the Cache Committee is hot on the trail of recognition for our members. If you have an idea about how to recognize Alaska's geocachers, be sure to get in touch with the Cache Committee chaired by [Victoria Noble/blazingpathways!](#)

That's the update from the Sandbox. Keep coming back to see what's going on in your GeocacheAlaska! organization!

# News

## We Miss You!

Are you a GeocacheAlaska! Sourdough member who does not have your membership set to auto-renew? Have you remembered to renew? If not, do so now! It's easy - you have a few options:

1. Navigate to the [GeocacheAlaska! webpage](#) and click on the "Subscribe" button to set up an automatic subscription which will renew annually. Please enter your caching name in the provided box.
2. Navigate to the [GeocacheAlaska! webpage](#) and click on "Add to Cart" to purchase an annual membership that will run through December 31, 2014.
3. Navigate to the [GeocacheAlaska! webpage](#) to download a membership form you can print and mail with your payment.

## Don't forget to update!

Have you changed your email or other contact information recently? Don't forget to update your information with GeocacheAlaska! Promptly send your updates to [secretary@geocachealaska.org](mailto:secretary@geocachealaska.org).

## Groundspeak wants to see how you love geocaching!



Get ready for a test of a new way to explore through geocaching beginning on February 3. It's an experiment and Groundspeak would love to hear what you think once you've played or created a new I <3 Geocaching Lab Cache. Whether you create a trek through nature, a romantic

quest or even a trip guided by robots, the I <3 Geocaching beta-test is a new way for Geocaching Premium members to experiment with what might be part of the future of geocaching. Geocaching Premium members can take part in the beta-test by using the Lab Cache creator to craft a one-of-a-kind adventure for someone special. (Hint: It can even be indoors.) Each I <3 Geocaching Lab Cache will be a personalized, temporary Lab Cache meant for just one person. Get creative, and share your ideas on our GeocacheAlaska facebook group! Check out [this YouTube video](#) to get inspired and learn more. Visit the [Groundspeak blog](#) to read the announcements. Not sure what Lab Caches are? Visit [here](#).

## 2014 GeocacheAlaska! Calendars Now Available!!!



Alaskan geocachers submitted their favorite Alaskan caching photos to the scrutiny of their peers and the thirteen favorite photos were chosen to adorn the cover and pages of this 2014 calendar. There are even more photos on the back cover!

These calendars are printed at [Zazzle.com](http://Zazzle.com) and you may view all the photographs by clicking [here](#). Calendar size is nominally 8.25" x 10.5" closed and 16.5" x 10.5" open.

Calendars may be purchased online by clicking [here](#). The price per calendar is \$20 for GeocacheAlaska! Sourdough members and \$23 for all others, plus shipping.

Many thanks to Anchorage cacher [SSO\\_JOAT](#) for making this calendar possible!



# Events

## It's A Travel Bug Race!

By Anna Bosco / abosco13

The New Year started off with a bang for a bunch of cachers that gathered at 12:05am on January 1, 2014 to start a 2014 travel bug race! Everyone dropped their travelers into an ammo can then grabbed a different one to begin their race.

The rules are very simple:

1. Trackable must have a release date NO Earlier than December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013.
2. Trackable must be added to race watch list no later than January 15, 2014 (we are changing this to allow for more people to join after this article)
3. No mileage added to trackable by owner will be counted in standings
4. Long-jump rules apply - if a single cacher moves your trackable more than 1 time only the Longest Jump will be counted in standings, this will prevent virtual and proxy logs.

If you have a travel bug that should be part of this race and we some how missed it please email me ASAP at [abosco13@gmail.com](mailto:abosco13@gmail.com) - we also have decided to extend the deadline of the entry to allow anyone who is just hearing about this now to join. Email me your reference number and we will get you started!

After the travel bugs were distributed we finished the night with some great hot applesauce provided by RCWARD and a group photo by FTL-AK. Thanks to everyone that participated and also thanks for helping me learn as I go!



Here are the standings as of January 20, 2014:

(I swear it's not rigged, my little Mr. Baguette just really likes to travel.)

<u>CACHER</u>	<u>Reference Number</u>	<u>Miles traveled as of 1/20</u>
ABOSCO13	TB5K5M9	5129.19
KR-AK	TB634T7	5128.67
FTL-AK	TB5CX9P	5118.56
AKGH519	TB3DKH4	5097.99
CAVYGUY	TB555G7	2905.06
MamaMouse	TB5Z2WD	2903.31
DR-AK	TB3B62X	2896.9
AKLOISANDCLARK	TB4XW99	2893.59
AKGH519	TB5NM2T	2798.63
RCWARD	TB67DTZ	66.9
RCWARD	TB61A3M	66.82
AKGH519	TB5EPQF	66.14
CAVYGUY	TB5HO5P	35.14
AKGH519	TB5EPQ3	31.68
FuzzyBelly	TB2KBD9	31.68
FTL-AK	TB3N1KX	11.7
BlazingPathways	TB5PC7T	9.72
MamabearAK	TB5NM6C	9.72
NOBLECRUZ	TB5YAX2	9.72
AW-AK	TB634TW	0
BaraDora	TB4YDQX	0
Jackcat14	TB5PC9Y	0
LostBug	TB5RQAQ	0-Still with Owner
LostBug	TB5Q1G9	0-Still with Owner
Twinkywalks	TB634TJ	0-Still with Owner
Twinkywalks	TB5YAWY	0-Still with Owner
Tomanoble	TB5NM1Q	0-No qualifying Miles

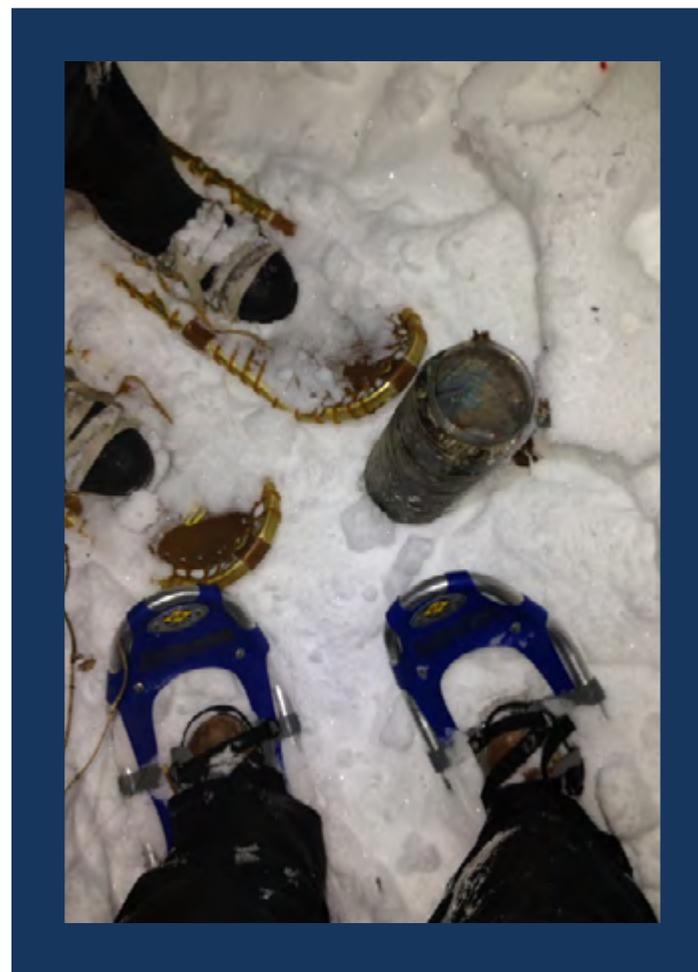
# Cache Reports

## A New Year's Eve Smile!

*By Shawn Horning / Leftfootlarry*

On the afternoon of New Year's Eve, Ponkyhead and I had our evening plans fall through. We thought of some other last minute ideas, but in the end thought, "Why not a night cache as a plan "B"?" It seemed a rare opportunity to be free on this particular evening and a walk in the woods sounded great. We discussed a few possible caches and ended up tackling a puzzle cache with a night cache component. Ponkyhead had solved the puzzle part quite some time ago. The solved coordinates took us to the starting location for the night cache and the first reflector. We took off and picked up the tack trail right away. Maybe a half a dozen tacks later our route detoured to a much less traveled path. Even with snowshoes this section was a heavy slog. Soon reflectors seemed to become less frequent when by chance I brushed some snow off of a heavy laden bough and found a reflector. Great! That was good news. The bad news was that it became clear that we were going to have a tough task probably missing tacks due to the snow conditions. Onward we went until the trail went cold. Eventually we resigned to try this cache again some other day after the wind blows the snow off the limbs.

In an attempt to still walk out with a smiley we went for a different nearby cache that was winter friendly. In short order we made the find, an ammo can in a tree. Ponkyhead and I took a moment and flumped down into the snow. We looked up at the night sky reflecting the city lights off of low scattered clouds with stars peaking through the cloudless pieces. We listened as the quiet evening was interrupted by fireworks of lower hillside parties in anticipation of midnight. Happy to call it a night, go home and ring some pots and pan to usher in the New Year, we headed back to a main trail and headed for the rig. However, back on the main trail we spied a reflector. Could the trail have double backed? We began to piece together a possible path. We were still having the heavy snow problem but were able to use geo-senses and saw enough reflectors to keep moving. On down the trail thinking that we must be close to the end, we again as much earlier hit a dead end. We went back to the last known reflector and spread out slightly instead of moving down the trail. One reflector, two, and then the smiley face made out of tacks! Yahoo! We were persistent but I think that we lucked out too! There was even a party popper as part of the swag in the cache. We pulled the string to a "pop" and confetti! Looking forward to a great 2014! Happy New Year!



*As an aside, it might be a good reminder for night cache owners to check on their caches if they have not been found in a long time and "post a note" that the cache has been checked on and is in good condition. I think that our problem on New Year's Eve was clearly the heavy snow on the branches hiding fire tacks. Nevertheless, our environment is constantly changing. Winds blow trees over, muggles remove tacks (hopefully not through malice), etc... Through consistent maintenance we can ensure that other cachers will still be interested in the cache and have a positive experience.*

# Travel Caching

## Geocaching Hawaii – an Oahu snapshot...

By Wes Skinner / NorthWes

For the past three years my family has joined my father in a winter pilgrimage to Honolulu's Hale Koa Hotel (for active-duty and retired military), located right next to the Hilton Hawaiian Village at the west end of the Waikiki beach. While the urban Waikiki district is the most densely-populated square mile in Hawaii, there's a surprising diversity of caches to be found here. Puzzles, a letterbox hybrid, a couple of webcams, an [EarthCache](#), and a wide variety of regular caches are hidden amidst the hustle and bustle of the hotels and glittery shopping opportunities of Waikiki. Taking advantage of Oahu's surprisingly inexpensive rental cars lets you broaden your caching reach and experience all the island offers.



*Honolulu City Lights – an overview of the city towards Diamond Head*

up Tantalus Drive rewards you with a fistful of caching opportunities and more absolutely incredible views, including the vista from Pu'u 'Ualaka'a Park and its "[Strangled Palm](#)" geocache, as well as "[Honolulu City Lights](#)" (a great spot to view the city by night). No visit to Honolulu is complete without visiting the volcanic craters dotting the city, such as Diamond Head (and its caches and [EarthCache](#)) as well as the Punchbowl National Cemetery (one of the most heart-wrenchingly beautiful National Cemeteries I've ever visited, featuring the added dimension of the emotionally-charged [Puowaina Challenge Virtual Cache](#)).

Within Honolulu itself there are caches anchored to buoys just off popular beach parks, and those which require an easy hike through the heights above the city center such as Hawaii's "[Cache Across America](#)" cache. On the same hiking loop you'll come across GC23 "[Geocache](#)" – the eighth oldest active cache on the planet! A scenic trip

Two EarthCaches combine geocaching with kayaking on Oahu. After practicing off the calm Waikiki beach with rented kayaks from our hotel, we dropped by Go Bananas Watersports in Honolulu in advance of our planned expeditions to reserve rental gear and grill the staff for their ideas on how to enhance our experience. We showed up right at opening both days, loading our little Ford Escape with two kayaks and heading out to our destinations, over and through the mountains to the Windward Shore. The first paddle trip took us to Kahana Bay Beach Park's "[Ahupua'a 'o Kahana](#)" Earthcache (rated as a 4/5 cache, but my 83-yr old father made short work of it!) A quick launch and paddle along the beach brought us to Kahana Stream and a peaceful trip up the island's largest flowing body of water, past agricultural and fishing sites on into the jungle to where we could barely turn our kayaks around. Our second day's paddle took us out into the wide-open waters of Kaneohe Bay to the "[Ahu o Laka](#)" EarthCache. This 3 mile round-trip takes you out amidst a collection of coral reefs to a vast sand bar which 'dries out' at low tide. The contrast between the two kayak expeditions was incredible – from a scenic jungle cruise to a something right out of a South Pacific movie – and I'd never have attempted either adventure without the lure of an EarthCache to draw me onward! While you're out here on the Windward Coast, don't miss a fabulous spot just a couple of miles up the road from your kayaking adventures, where the island's famous shrimp truck cuisine merges with a regular ammo can geocache at "[Suck Peel Dip Eat!](#)" Where else can you meet a top local geocacher



*Mrs NW and akbeluga (wife and daughter) up Kahana Stream beyond the EarthCache site.*



*Mrs NW and NorthWes out on Kaneohe Bay at "Ahu o Laka" EarthCache.*

# Travel Caching

and sample her award-winning shrimp cooking all at the same time?



*"Lost" – The Crash Site – deserted beach on Oahu's North Shore.*

Fans of the TV series "Lost" will enjoy chasing the caches placed at significant filming locations around the island. On the North Shore, "[Lost](#) Cache – [Othersville](#)" and "[Lost](#) Cache – [the Crash Site](#)" bring you out near Dillingham airport to absolutely recognizable (and incredibly scenic) "Lost" locations. Right around the corner from the famed snorkeling park at Hanauma Bay (with its requisite [EarthCache](#)) is another "Lost" location on the cliff overlooking the "[Spitting Cave of Portlock](#)" EarthCache – again very recognizable to "Lost" aficionados (why am I not surprised that so many geocachers like a show named

"LOST"???) All of the North Shore's famed beaches host a nearby geocache or two, among them the [Honu Beach Cache](#), where you're likely to find several huge sea turtles hauled out right in front of you on the sands as you sign the logsheet.

Not to be missed during your travels across the center of the island are two well-favored caches fairly close together geographically but separated immensely by culture and focal point. The "[Pineapple Experience](#)" is a regular cache artfully hidden right outside the Dole Plantation's main building, on a site which introduces you to how the pineapple became an agricultural product during a recent era in Hawaii's history. This is the only cache I've ever seen located within a hundred feet of a place to get a Dole Whip (a very tasty pineapple-based soft ice cream product, absolutely fabulous on a hot Hawaii afternoon!). Barely a mile away, in a forest grove accessed by a several hundred yard walk across fields from the roadway is "[Wahine Hapai](#)", a virtual cache in a Hawaii State Park preserving the birthing grounds of Hawaiian royalty. This area was in use for hundreds of years before European contact, and the sacred history of the place leaves an indisputable aura for visitors (as well as persons who still venerate the memories found at this site). It's well-worth additional research into its history. Another historic Hawaiian site is the featured focus of the [Kaniakapupu](#) Letterbox Hybrid geocache, where a short scenic walk from the parking area through a bamboo forest brings you to the utterly isolated ruins of King Kamehameha III's summer palace in the midst of the Hawaiian jungle.

One of the less-visited portions of Oahu is the Leeward Coast, out beyond the Waianae Mountain Range along the island's west coast. Anchored on its

south end by the Ko Olina lagoons (home to Disney's relatively affordable Aulani resort, which advertises on [geocaching.com](#)), the Leeward Coast offers plentiful geocaches from the beaches all the way up into the Waianae highlands. The fine beaches here are deserted compared to Waikiki or the North Shore, and this stretch of coast seems to have the highest density of regular-sized caches on the island. Typical of this area's hides is "[The Moi Hole](#)" geocache, my furthest-west find in the United States, placed near a sea cave well-known for its treacherous currents and booming surf. Sunsets are fabulous out here on the Leeward Coast.



*Mrs NW and akbeluga (wife and daughter) at The Moi Hole cache on the Leeward Coast.*

As Hawaii goes, Oahu offers terrific opportunities to combine vacation with unique and beautiful caching experiences unlike any you'll find here in Alaska. If the relatively low cost of an Oahu-based Hawaiian vacation is calling you, go and enjoy the great geocaches of this most-populous island!



*NorthWes at "Suck Peel Dip Eat"*



*Shrimp Truck's coconut shrimp plate*

# Travel Caching

## Christmas Caching in the Tar Heel State

By Joel Vos / NeverSummer

I took a trip to North Carolina over the Christmas holiday and happened to find some time to geocache along the way. The trip started with an attempted TB swap event in Homer on December 22, where I enjoyed some quiet time waiting for other folks to show up to send some Trackables on their way across the continent (next time will be better attended, I'm sure!).

With a handful of Trackables from Homer, I stopped in at the revived and improved Anchorage Travel Bug Drop cache (<http://coord.info/GC4THFB>) and grabbed as many bugs as I could for a visit to North Carolina. With a red-eye departure from Anchorage, the trip was going well until an unexpected 4-hour maintenance delay in Chicago.

With some extra time to wait for the flight to depart for RDU, I discovered a Virtual cache in the airport at O'Hare, "ORD Layover" (<http://coord.info/GC5165>). With a quick shuttle trip from our concourse, we had the necessary information and logged a find on Christmas Day in an airport.



The Bell Tower at UNC, and very close to GCP2YB!

After arriving late on Christmas night at the RDU airport, it was off to rest and relax with family in Durham. There wasn't much time for geocaching with all of the celebrating (and most of the caches around my parent's home have been found already), but my parents, MNLoon, had planned an event in my honor on 12/30. With most of the celebrating on hold until New Year's Eve, I found some time to grab some caches around Durham, including a fun multi.

That multicache, "Bull City Painted Bricks" (<http://coord.info/GC4P4NB>), takes you on a tour of "old" Durham. The fun really comes together when you start to see all of the old and repainted advertisements and building names all over town. After some problems with fuzzy math, we were

able to get to the final—very close to a special piece of Durham history, and one of my favorite sports movies, Bull Durham!

By the time a few caches around downtown Durham were in the bag, it was time for more family time. Geocaching was put on hold until December 30<sup>th</sup>. That night MNLoon put on an event at a local southern food mecca: Waffle House! Before heading to the event, we spent some time taking my wife on a walking tour of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill campus. Many great sites were visited, including a simple microcache that took us to an important icon of the UNC campus at the bell tower. ("Tar Bell" <http://coord.info/GCP2YB>)

That night was the event at Waffle House. Many new and familiar faces were there. The conversations were great, and the food was greasy! With a belly full of some "scattered, smothered, and covered" and a peanut butter waffle, the real fun came with reacquainting with cachers I hadn't seen in more than 4 years. Trackables were covering an entire booth, and the conversation was lively. (I blame the free coffee refills.)



The happy gathering at "What Light Through Yonder WINTER Breaks?" (GC4VFA8)

## Travel Caching

More real fun was arranged by MNLoon to see if [dflye](#) might take me for a spin in his amazing Tesla Model S (Trackable via TB55B38). With a red light switching to green, I was the lucky pilot taking the machine on a launch to what felt like outer space! That trackable electric machine was incredible, and certainly makes for a great cachemobile. With a 240-mile range, you could make it from Homer to Anchorage on one charge...so long as you go easy on the “go” pedal! (Which I had a very hard time doing...)



*Look at that giant touch screen in the middle! All car controls are handled from that screen, including mapping and geocaching!*

All in all it was a great trip. The focus was very much about family for the week we were there, but we still found time to geocache—as a family! After another set of airline delays, we were very happy to make it back to Anchorage on New Year's day, and dropped off a bunch of trackables in the Anchorage Travel Bug Drop. With one last stop to start the new year off with a find, [ftl-ak's](#) “25 Days of Christmas. Day 16” cache, we drove back to Homer in time for the evening news.

If you ever have a chance to be in the Raleigh/Durham area, let me know! There are many great people there, and some very fun and challenging caches. With a few emails, you'd be able to find a handful of folks willing to take you on a tour of the city, or even the underground unknown beneath your feet. When you're there, say hello to the Tar Heel State, and get some scattered, smothered and covered with MNLoon and friends!

## Caching Tips

### Finding The Most Favorited Caches

*By Mike Malvick / LadyBugKids*

Want an easy way to highlight caches other cachers really enjoyed? One can use the number of favorite points awarded to a cache by Premium Members in any region to high grade the list of caches you load to your GPS in a few simple steps.

These instructions are for GSAK version 8.3.0.1.

1.  Set up a pocket query on [geocaching.com](#) for the area or route you will be seeking caches in/along.
2.  Upload the pocket query into GSAK (Geocaching Swiss Army Knife).
3.  In GSAK, click on Geocaching.com Access > Refresh Cache Data > All in current filter, Light (quicker) > OK (choosing “light” lets you update 10,000 caches a day whereas “full details” limits you to 6000 caches per day)
4.  The favorite points load into the column with the blue ribbon.
5.  You can then use Search > Filter > “General” tab at bottom, Favorite points, Greater than or equal to > and change the number until you get a reasonable number of caches in your filter (in some regions, the cut off may be 20 favorites, in others, it could be as low as three or five...it just depends on the number of cacher visits a region receives and whether or not those cachers tend to award favorite points)

I'll then filter on caches less than three to six months old with one or two favorite points to pick up the better new caches that haven't been around long enough to have many cacher visits.

# Caching Tips

## Night Caching - Wintertime Fun!

By Raymond Menzie / akh519

What is night caching? Traditional night caching involves following reflective 'tacks' to a final cache container. A flashlight or other light source is used to 'see' the reflective tacks. The coordinates shown on the cache page take you to the beginning of the trail of tacks. Night caching 'tacks' can be white, orange or green in color. Several tacks, a different color or a combination of the two are used to mark the final and the cache container.

Other night caches can involve UV lights and in-field puzzles. Night caches have been used as parts of other 'multi' type caches. The use of night caching as a part of our game can lead to some very creative hides!

While the 'other' forty-nine states may consider night caching a year round caching experience, most who cache here in the '49' consider night caching to be a winter time activity. The main reason we do this is obvious, but there are other reasons to pursue the night cache smiley during our colder months. Many night caches are in swampy areas and it is much easier to cross them when they are frozen. [Fuzzy's](#) favorite four legged friend of the family Ursidae is napping! And the Alaskan Air Force is on hiatus, too!

Thinking of trying your first night cache? Not sure what you will need? Most important of all is a good flashlight with a clean crisp white light. LED is definitely the best option here. I use a 3-D cell LED Maglite when pursuing and when placing night caches. Don't forget extra batteries!

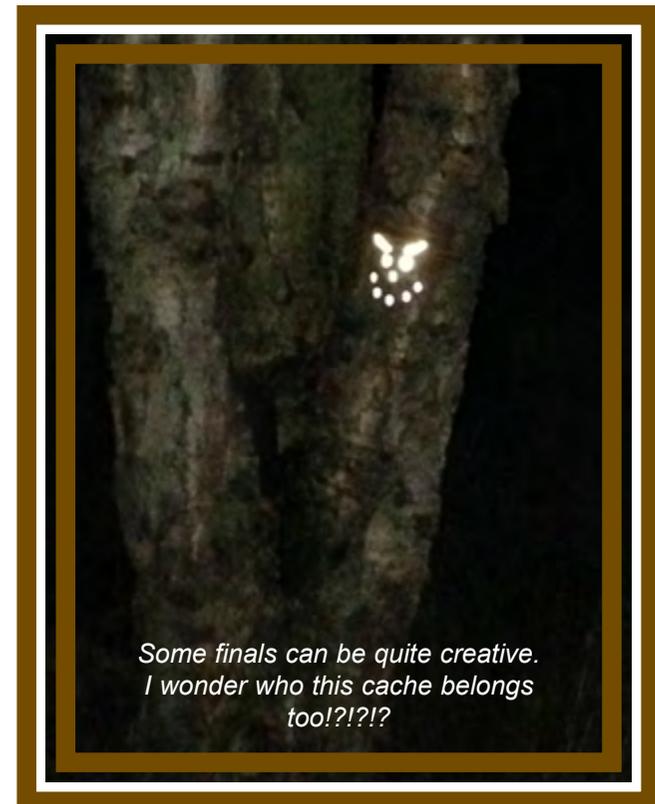
Headlamps are good to have with you, but a lot of time they are not bright enough to see the next tag. If you do bring a headlamp, turn them off while following the trail so you don't blind who is with you by looking at them with your headlamp on! Or have them do the same to you! They are great at the final when signing the log.

Dress appropriately wearing layers underneath ski pants and a shell. Waterproof footwear is a must for those times when that ice is not as firm as you might have thought and you break through it. Top everything off with a hat and you should be good to go!

As with all caching adventures and especially with night caching, set a waypoint at your vehicle so you can find your way back. Consider resetting your GPS 'track' for reference also.

Wondering how to find a list of night caches? There is a specific night caching attribute that you can use to create a pocket query for the caches containing that attribute. For those of you caching in or around Anchorage, I created a bookmark list of the night caches in the area. Should you find one missing from the list let me know and I will add it. The bookmark list can be found through my profile or [here](#).

For those of you needing a reason to get outside when it is dark and cold, gather up a group of friends, grab your gear and give night caching a try. I think you will find it a whole lot of fun!



## GEOCACHEALASKA! MEMBERSHIP

There are two membership levels at GeocacheAlaska! Inc.

Sourdough Membership (formerly known as Premium Membership) affords you discounts in the GeocacheAlaska! online and traveling stores and events that have an entrance fee (Geofest, etc.), voting rights in Board of Directors elections and a warm fuzzy feeling for helping underwrite the organization's operating expenses that include web hosting, printing, banners, post office box fees, event prizes and lots of other things that are required to make things happen. Because GeocacheAlaska! is an incorporated 501(c) (3) tax exempt organization, your membership dues are tax deductible.

If you cannot join as a Sourdough at this time, you may support GeocacheAlaska! by joining as a Cheechako (formerly known as Associate) Member. This will allow you to receive the monthly newsletter and e-mail announcements. More members at any level gives GeocacheAlaska!'s more clout and credibility during land manager conversations, so sign up today!

There are four ways you can join GeocacheAlaska! at the Sourdough level for \$20/year.

1. Navigate to the [GeocacheAlaska! webpage](#) and click on the "Subscribe" button to set up an automatic subscription which will renew annually. Please enter your caching name in the provided box.
2. Navigate to the [GeocacheAlaska! webpage](#) and click on "Add to Cart" to purchase an annual membership that will run through December 31, 2014.
3. Navigate to the [GeocacheAlaska! webpage](#) to download a membership form you can print and mail with your payment.
4. Attend one of the upcoming GeocacheAlaska! events and speak to any Board Member.

Find us online at:

1. GeocacheAlaska! Website: <http://www.geocachealaska.org>
2. GeocacheAlaska! Forums: <http://geocachealaska.proboards.com/index.cgi>
3. GeocacheAlaska! on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/geocachealaska/>
4. E-mail to [contact@geocachealaska.org](mailto:contact@geocachealaska.org)
5. Interior Alaska Geocachers: <http://alaskageocachers.org/>

## JOIN US ON FACEBOOK & Twitter!

Join GeocacheAlaska! Inc. on [Facebook](#)! Stay in touch and share your activities with fellow members of the geocaching community by visiting our Group and clicking 'Join'. This is where GeocacheAlaska! members can plan caching adventures, post photos, and pass messages within the membership ranks. This Facebook Group is designed to be yet another member benefit for Sourdoughs and Cheechakos alike.

 [@GeocacheAlaska](#) Follow GeocacheAlaska! Inc. on Twitter!

## STATE PARKS PERMITS

2014 State Parks permits are pending. Stay tuned for updated information.

## ONLINE ARCHIVES

Previous editions of "Around the State" are now on our website. If you have missed previous newsletters, check out the series (including previous Trail Reports) [here](#).

The editors of "Around the State" would like to hear from you. Submit articles or suggestions to [newsletter@geocachealaska.org](mailto:newsletter@geocachealaska.org) Subject: Around the State.