



## May 2014

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### MARK YOUR CALENDAR—EVENTS

**Sunday, May 25:** [FNBP Hilltop Trailhead CITO Event](#), 2:30 p.m., Anchorage

**Monday, May 26:** [Meet & Greet from SD](#), 7:30-8:00 p.m., Fairbanks Westmark Hotel Lobby.

**Saturday, May 31:** [Start Your Day Right with Dhaulaghiri](#), 8:00 a.m., Anchorage

**Saturday, May 31:** [Splash and Cache](#), 1:00 p.m., Chena River Cabin, Chena Hot Springs Road, Fairbanks.

**Friday, June 6:** [Dhaulaghiri's Alaskan Adventure Meet & Greet](#), 6:00 p.m., Valdez.

**Saturday, June 7:** [WWFM XI - Anchorage AK - Town Square Flash Mob!](#), 9:00 a.m., Anchorage, [WWFM XI - Mat-Su - FlashMob](#), 9:-- a.m., Wasilla, and [WWFM XI CAMO'D CACHERS!!!!](#), 11:00 a.m., Ketchikan.

**Friday, July 18:** [Spencer Glacier Whistle Stop Camping Kick-Off](#), 2:00 p.m., Spencer Glacier.

**Saturday, July 19:** [Spencer Glacier Whistle Stop Camping Day Two](#), 3:00 p.m., Spencer Glacier.

**Sunday July 20:** [Spencer Glacier Whistle Stop CITO](#), Spencer Glacier.

### RECENT EVENT HAPPENINGS

**April 26:** [Geocaching for Fun - Soldotna Community Schools](#) and [GeocacheAlaska! 2014 Adopt-A-Highway Spring CITO](#)

**April 27:** [Lunch Potluck Event at Knik Glacier](#) and [Flash Mob at Jim Creek Parking Lot](#)

**May 11:** [GeoWoodstock XII or Bust !!!](#)

**May 19:** [Meet & Greet chiefsfan19 & merrittsbadges](#)

**May 21:** [Swedish Geocachers in Town](#)

Geocachers enjoying an unusually warm and dry spring have been out day and night hiking trails, strolling through our parks, and stealthily accessing urban hides in pursuit of the smiley that results from a 'found it' log. Unfortunately, I've also received some logs letting me know that certain of my caches need maintenance, have missing logbooks (including one where I'd just put a new logbook in the cache!), or (worst of all) the cache is apparently missing since several cachers in a row have failed to find it. I'm pleased when a cacher takes time to let me know my cache needs maintenance, and I'm quick to write an e-mail thanking those cachers with enough foresight and preparedness to be able to make right some of the maintenance needs they've found with one or two of my caches. Community maintenance practices, where individual cachers carry enough supplies with them to make right issues like full log sheets (especially on nano or micro hides), go far in making our state a well-respected and desirable caching location.

I'm disappointed to say I've held this newsletter for several weeks in hopes of announcing completion of the permit process with Alaska State Parks. While we don't have the permit number in hand, I've been told we are down to one final signature in getting our permit approved for the remainder of 2014. Lessons learned this year from both sides of the permitting process will make accessing approval for future permits a matter of thirty days or less from submittal to approval. This is the first year where the report of placed caches submitted to Parks has received any review in detail, and that process has changes which will preclude delays for future permit applications as well. Most of all, this delay has highlighted a need for more members to be involved in the Advocacy Committee's efforts to establish personal relationships with land managers, as the logjam in our permit process was broken free through using personal relationships to point out how we are unable to even conduct a CITO Event in a State Park without the permit's completion. This reminder to several key State Park rangers about our CITO practices has helped push the permit process to closure.

GeocacheAlaska! Inc. exists to Advocate through land manager contacts for areas to geocache, Educate geocachers and the public about how to play the game, and to provide Social Activity opportunities for geocachers. Each of these primary tasks has a committee behind it where members work to support each tasks' goals to completion. Please consider helping our game continue to be successful here in Alaska by helping out – a little of your time goes a long way to keeping geocaching alive and well.

Stay tuned for a major announcement in June's newsletter regarding a social event opportunity which had never before been made available in Alaska!



### President's Corner

*by Wes Skinner/NorthWes*

I've received literally hundreds of cache logs in the past several weeks in my email inbox.

## Reviewer's Corner

by Michael Malvick/Greatland Reviewer



I began the Spring cleaning process during April in an effort to stay ahead of the mosquitoes and tourists. My first step was to write a Note to each cache page with the "Needs Maintenance" attribute set. I used GSAK to automatically post the notes because there were 370 caches statewide that were displaying the attribute and visiting each cache page would have been very time intensive. Eight days after the Notes were posted, cachers cleared the attribute from only fifteen of those cache pages, which indicates there are more than three hundred potentially abandoned caches in Alaska.

My next step was to look at each of the 86 caches in Alaska that are "Temporarily Disabled." Those caches that were disabled over the winter received a courtesy Reviewer Note to nudge the Cache Owner to fix things up now that Spring has arrived. Caches that had been disabled since Summer or Autumn 2013, had a Cache Owner that had not been online for several months, or a Cache Owner that had not responded to a prior Reviewer Note were Archived with instructions for how to have the cache unarchived if the Cache Owner was still interested in maintaining the cache. Eleven caches were archived during this round. Statistically, active Alaskan cachers are doing a better job of maintaining their caches and abandoned caches are being archived because as recently as 2012, there were more than 200 Temporarily Disabled caches at one point.

My next step was to review caches that had growing streaks of DNF logs. This required looking at 316 Cache Pages and making a subjective determination about whether the cache was missing or had other issues. Those caches received a Reviewer Note encouraging the Cache Owner to check on their cache. Caches with known histories of being very difficult to find or with high Difficulty ratings are given more leeway before receiving a Reviewer Note. Caches that previously received a Reviewer Note to which the Cache Owner did not respond were archived with instructions for how to have the cache unarchived if the Cache Owner was still interested in maintaining the cache. Thirty-eight caches were Archived and 105 Reviewer Notes requesting cache wellness checks were written.

In no case was a cache archived upon "first contact" from me. I will always post a Reviewer Note to a cache page requesting action or an update and give the Cache Owner several weeks or even months to do what is needed. My archive notes always provide for the possibility of having the target cache unarchived. In almost all cases, a cache can be kept alive by merely communicating with the Volunteer Reviewer and the Caching Community via Notes to the cache page or e-mail.

If you aren't receiving Reviewer Notes, instant notifications, and Groundspeak notices, verify your spam/junk mail settings are set to allow e-mails from the geocaching.com domain and verify that the e-mail address in your geocaching.com profile is still correct. You can check your e-mail address of record at <http://www.geocaching.com/account/default.aspx> and scrolling down to "Your Validated Email Addresses."

## Alaskan Cachers' Caching Achievements

by Scott Aleckson/SSO JOAT

This month's Top Ten list of Alaskan Cacher's Caching Achievements goes to those who have found the Most Caches in Alaska... in One Day! Of course, we're not counting any caches that they found Outside of the Great Land.

- #1 [mtndeal](#) = 101
- #2 [li1gray](#) = 100
- #3 [Karma!](#) = 69
- #4 [getatm](#) = 67
- #5 [Tundra Tim](#) = 67
- #6 [firemanak](#) = 64
- #7 [skifast](#) = 63
- #8 [retrochild67](#) = 60
- #9 [FlightRiskAK](#) = 58
- #10 [NeverSummer](#) = 58

Do you have what it takes to make the list? From midnight to midnight, how many caches do you think you can log in a single day in Alaska? The lack of Alaskan "Power Trails" makes this a true challenge.

Look for another Top Ten list next month.

## Sandbox Snippets by Joel Vos / NeverSummer

It must be Spring! There is much work going on in the field—what with the new caches being published, cache maintenance happening, and many things in the works at GeocacheAlaska!

The big news coming out of the committees is all about our 2014 Pathtags, plans for a 2014 geocoin, and coming summer events.

Be sure to take a peek at the [2014 Pathtag forum topic](#) to see the four pathtags for this year. We've got some talented artists out there, and we're already looking forward to what you all might have in store for us for 2015! Be ready to see these tags hitting the production line soon! A 2014 geocoin is in the works, and there will be some news coming soon with the design and production timetable. Be sure to keep stopping by the GeocacheAlaska! forums, Facebook, and Twitter for more information!

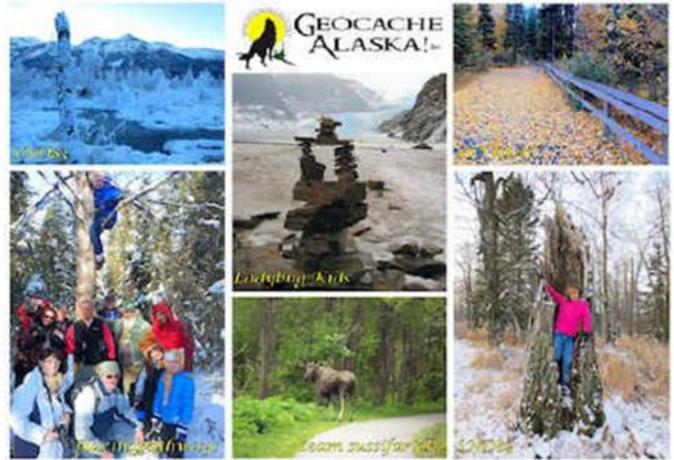
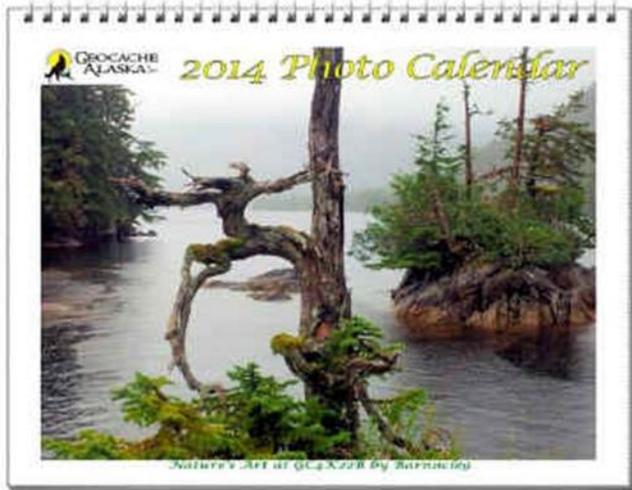
If you haven't already heard, we're looking forward to the first of what is likely to become a really big annual campout—the [Spencer Glacier Camping events](#)! There's many more fun events in the works for this summer, so be sure to stay on top of the list of upcoming events in the newsletter and on Geocaching.com. Just after these great campout events, we have SSO JOAT's Kenai BBQ on July 26.

That's it for now from the Sandbox. Happy caching!

**2014 GeocacheAlaska! Calendars Still Available!!!**

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.

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!



Many thanks to Soldotna cacher [SSO JOAT](#) for making this calendar possible!

**Renew Your Sourdough Membership!!!**

Is your GeocacheAlaska! Sourdough Membership current? If not, you may renew online or download a membership form to mail in by clicking [here](#). Sourdoughs receive a trackable Sourdough nametag, select the Board of Directors, and receive discounts on bling and events. Questions about your membership status should be e-mailed to GeocacheAlaska! Secretary Michael Malvick/Ladybug Kids.

These calendars are printed at 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.

**Deep in the Heart of Texas – San Antonio** by Michael Malvick/Ladybug Kids

My current work assignment regularly requires travel to Houston, Texas, and through geocaching and other geocachers, I have begun exploring the country's second largest state. About three years ago, I met Houston cachers [Rich & Lola](#) and [Kirbydox](#), while caching in [Jesse H. Jones Park and Nature Center](#). We struck a quick friendship and connect almost every visit I make to the Houston area. They serve as "inside" guides and trip planners and they've taken the edge off of my business travel by setting up night-time cache runs of up to sixty finds, kayaking in bayous with alligators and water moccasins, visiting the [Necropolis of Britannia Manor III](#) in Austin, and attending local Events. Most recently, they met me in San Antonio, Texas, to introduce me to that historic city (home of The Alamo and lots of art deco and much older architecture) and pursue their quest to find a cache in each of Texas' 254 counties by taking a roundabout backroad drive from San Antonio to Houston via eight counties (Bexar, Medina, Frio, Atascosa, Wilson, Karnes, Goliad, and DeWitt).



My hosts picked me up at the San Antonio airport after they arose at 0400 back home in Houston to get a flying start on their [Texas County Challenge](#)



effort for the day. I flew into San Antonio via an United Airlines redeye flight through Denver since the open-jaw itinerary into San Antonio and home from Houston was significantly cheaper than a round trip in an out of Houston. I also prefer to fly at night and use my allocated “travel day” to geocache and sightsee rather than be cooped up in an aluminum tube during my normal waking hours. From the airport, we went directly to the [San Antonio River Walk](#). I didn’t get off to the most auspicious caching start with a DNF on a traditional cache, but followed-up with finding the [Riverwalk Cache](#) virtual cache that

featured an outdoor theater, and then we sat down to an al fresco TexMex lunch right next to the water within arm’s reach of the passing tour boats and begging mallard ducks. It *almost* didn’t feel right given that my yard back home had twenty inches of fresh snow.



Our party of four walked off lunch by finding a few more caches along the main channel of the San Antonio River including the obvious, but not so obvious, [Easy Riverwalk Cache](#), and the double-container [Dam Geocoin Exchange: 1 In 1 Out](#), where we enjoyed watching a trainee learn to steer on of the river tour boats through bridge pilings and cormorants sunning themselves. Not wanting to get stuck in rush hour traffic leaving the city and



still having three hundred miles and seven counties on the evening’s agenda, we made our way back to Rich & Lola’s georig, but not before paying our respects at The Alamo and paying homage to the Texans and

Mexicans who died in battle with General Santa Ana’s army. Unfortunately, the [13 days in 30 seconds](#) webcam wasn’t functioning, so I couldn’t log it. Nonetheless, it was fascinating to wander the grounds and visit the onsite museums to learn more about this very important historic site of Texan history. Also on the way to the parking garage, we stepped into the Menger Hotel, established in 1859, to admire the lobby. They simply don’t build hotels with the old kind of opulence they once did! Once on the road, a detour around an out of service bridge took us past [Crofton and Constance Park](#) where we found the cache and Rich booted up his laptop so I could load my Garmin Oregon with his pocket query for the evening.

We eventually departed San Antonio and headed a bit southwest enter Medina County. We started at [Country Music Playlist #2 - "Water"](#), which was our easiest cache find of the day, spotted before the georig rolled to a stop. We were careful to keep our mouths closed as we gawked at the plethora (gaggle?) of vultures roosting on and circling around the Devine water tower. A subsequent DNF on a cache at a nearby Mason Lodge prompted us to move on Frio County where the only cache along our route (one of four in the entire county) was [Hwy 173 Frio county corner](#). Here we let preconceived notions of where a cache would normally be hidden sway where we first looked for the cache before we came to our senses and actually believed our GPSs to make the find. I couldn't help but ponder why this county is called "Frio," which means "cold" in Spanish, because I've yet to find a place in Texas that is ever truly cold.



(mix of Spanish and English which translates to "Flower Town"), but not before stopping for the [Birthplace of the Cowboy](#) virtual cache to collect the answers for another smile. Once in Floresville, we hunted down the correct buried time capsule to answer the questions for the [Nuts...??](#) virtual cache and took photos of what could be the world's largest peanut sculpture. We also took time to admire the courthouse and the old town jail before racing the setting sun to the next county.



We arrived in Falls City, the seat of Karnes County, before sunset, and quickly found [Falls City Center](#), located in front of the building that houses the City Offices, City Hall, and the Library. Other noteworthy aspects of this cache include being started by a cat lurking in the upper branches of the tree sheltering the cache and the interesting cocoons hanging from the tree's branches. Our next stop was [GCC-Peck Cemetery](#), in Goliad County which was located just outside an old local cemetery enclosed by a rock wall. Goats bleated in the background as we signed the log and contemplated the neatly kept plots. The cache also counts toward the [Texas Cemetery Challenge](#), which requires a cacher to find caches related to one hundred cemeteries within Texas. Finally, before bee lining to I-10 for the final sprint to Houston, we stopped for [No Garbage](#) in DeWitt County. The cache itself was a nice-sized container tucked up and inside a large live oak, but the highlight of the stop was the absolutely incredible overhead night sky which prompted all of us to take a few minutes to identify the constellations. Doing so while wearing only t-shirt and shorts brought back childhood memories of learning the sky with my father in Arizona, which is in contrast with teaching my daughters while we struggle to stay warm in our down parkas.



With a hard deadline of midnight for me to collect my rental car at the Houston airport, Rich made good time to Katy where Kirbydox had left her car in a park and ride lot, and then dropped me off with fifteen minutes to spare. Always the good hosts, Rich & Lola waited for confirmation that my rental was there before they headed for home. I'm really looking forward to my next caching adventure with Rich & Lola and Kirbydox, especially since it could involve flying into El Paso to work on West Texas counties with a trip across the New Mexico border that would enable me to find caches in the last state I need to visit to complete my United States map.

## Caching Montana *by Cathy Wilmeth, TheFirefly*

A trip to visit family in Montana would be incomplete without at least attempting a few caches. There was not a lot of time for caching, so we slipped in one here and there whenever we could grab a few moments wherever we were.

The first one we found was [Kentrasaurus](#) which was nearby to where we were going to see the dinosaur exhibit. My favorite part of this one was handing the GPSr to my 5 year old and having her direct her grandfather to GZ, where they quickly made the find. After signing the log and returning the cache to its hiding place, we wandered over to take a look at "Big Mike" before entering the museum. Another day found us stopping for a hot cocoa and chai break. I couldn't help but peek to see if a cache was near. Hooray – there was! [Quigley Down Under](#) Once again, I handed my 5 year old the GPSr and off she went. I so enjoy watching her make these finds. We had a really nice day and a few free hours, so we decided to head over to a nearby playground (which happened to have a cache...) The cache had gone missing over the weekend, but we still had fun playing on the equipment. And while the kids and kids at



heart were engrossed in climbing and sliding, I slipped away to find [Three Little Pigs](#). Indeed, the three pigs could have built their houses from these materials! Our time in Montana quickly came to an end, but just before we left, I made sure we could get over to [Surrounded By Mountains](#). We took my father-in-law here, so he could see what an earthcache was like, and because he loves to talk about the mountains and the area around Bozeman. The girls didn't like being on the side of the road (because they couldn't run free, but they did enjoy their grandpa telling them stories about the area.

We caught an early flight out of Montana the next day, looking down on the mountains we'd been looking up at the previous day. A few smileys richer, we headed off to our next adventure....Minnesota!



Despite intermittent windy snow/ice pellet showers, a large number of geocachers turned out for our first [GeocacheAlaska!](#) [2014 Adopt-A-Highway CITO](#) of the summer. As we picked up more than two dozen bags of trash along the shoulders north of Girdwood, we took time to appreciate yet another aspect of the natural beauty found along America's premier scenic highway!



## JOIN US ON FACEBOOK!

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!

## 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, 2013.
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/>

## STATE PARKS PERMITS

Caches currently may not be placed in Alaska State Parks. Once the appropriate permits are awarded, downloadable copies of the permits can be obtained from the GeocacheAlaska! [Land Manager webpage](#) or the GeocacheAlaska! [Land Use Forums](#).

## 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.*