

# Around The State

January 2015



*Photo credit: Seth Steben / barnacle9*

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## **MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

[FLASH MOB HANDFASTING KNOT TYING,](#)

January 10, 12:45pm, Talkeetna

[geosocial event,](#) January 18, 1:30pm, Fairbanks

[5th Annual WACO Flashmob and event 2015,](#)

January 31, 10am, Willow

[3.14.15 @ 9:26pm & 53 seconds!!!,](#) March 14, 9:26pm, Anchorage

[3rd ANNUAL MARCH BIRTHDAY FLASH MOB,](#)

March 14, 1pm, Seward

# GeocacheAlaska! Updates

## President's Corner

*By Wes Skinner / NorthWes*



Welcome to the New Year! I'm sure many of us have resolved to spend more time outdoors chasing down geocaches this year than we did last year – just remember that many studies show most New Year's Resolutions fade away, with only 8-12% being kept with any degree of faithfulness. Try combining several of the most common resolutions (such as losing weight, getting in shape, and cutting back on frivolous spending) with getting out to geocache more often. Many of our members have been quite successful in making headway with all these goals through using geocaching as a central activity to get themselves out walking, sometimes miles a day, in pursuit of more smileys. I found myself struggling to bring balance between work and other commitments in a way that left me time to get exercise – and then my daughter introduced me to geocaching. Years later, I've found I can directly correlate my successes with staying in shape in a particular year to my annual geocache find count! My dogs get more exercise, and my wife and I have found the travel times related to our caching expeditions to be the best moments for good personal communication in our marriage. My grandsons are convinced that geocaching is the highest best use of time spent with their grandpa – full of adventures and new places to explore, with the hope of good swag to trade for in the cache. Geocaching is more than a smiley – it's time spent out of doors, moving through whatever weather and terrain the search brings you to, often spent in the company of some of the nicest folks you could ever hope to meet. Make sure your 2015 goals include personal enrichment in the form of more time spent on the caching journey, seeking new places and new people to keep yourself in good form mentally and physically!

## Advocacy Committee Report

*By Wes Skinner / NorthWes*

One of the most beneficial tasks GeocacheAlaska! Inc. performs for its members is to secure a permit allowing geocaches to be placed in Alaska State Parks. From its beginning as a permit focused mostly on Chugach State Park to the scope of 2014's permit which covered Mat-Su, Copper River Basin, Southcentral and Kenai Peninsula state park units, each year has brought new areas into the permit's purview. For 2015, the Advocacy Committee has worked to expand the

scope of the permit to allow cache placements in state park units across the entire state of Alaska. Committee members Mike Malvick and Tom Noble have put in tremendous amounts of time pulling together park unit lists, shape files, and cache placement listings within state park lands towards achieving this true state-wide permit.

Alaska's public lands are a sometimes-daunting variety of land designations with an incredibly broad variety of purposes and land management goals, all overseen by a series of federal, state, and local government agencies and bodies. While it may seem reasonable that such a huge expanse of lands would have some sort of public on-line extensive 'central clearing house' of easily-accessible information, we've learned that's not the case at all. Identifying state park parcels, acquiring their boundary information in 'shape files' usable to define the boundaries for GPS use, and reporting cache placements to the state park permit office has required dozens to hundreds of hours of volunteer work by our committee members. As an added benefit, volunteers are seeking to acquire geospatial information for the broader variety of public lands outside of state park management, including National Parks, USFWS Wildlife Refuges, Bureau of Land Management tracts, ADFG Wildlife Refuges, state critical habitat areas, state recreational river parcels, municipal parks, and a host of other public lands. A committee goal is to identify what is necessary to classify geocaching as an approved public activity for each of these unique land management areas, ensuring members are able to pursue their 'game' across the widest range of public recreation lands found in Alaska. The Advocacy Committee needs members everywhere in the state, in roles as simple as being the local "geocaching point of contact" for land managers, to those skilled "technicians" generating the geospatial information needed to operate our permit. Please consider asking how you can help in your region, either by email or in person at an event.

At the time this newsletter went to press the 2015 Alaska State Park Geocaching Permit is in the final stage of approval in the State Park Permit office. We were told to expect issuance of the permit sometime around the end of the first week of January 2015. Of course, we will pass on the Permit information to our membership in an announcement by email, facebook and forum announcements, just as soon as we have the permit in hand. Thank you for your keen interest in this very valuable benefit provided by GeocacheAlaska! Inc.



## Top Tens: Alaskan Cacher's Caching Achievements

By Scott Aleckson / SSO JOAT

This month's Top Ten list of Alaskan Cacher's Caching Achievements goes to the Alaskan Geocachers that have logged the Top Points in one day. Points are the sum of the Difficult and Terrain ratings of the caches found. For example, if a cacher logs a D2/T1.5 and a D3/T4 cache one day, they would get 10.5 points for that day. And we are only counting Alaskan cachers on their Alaskan cache finds (so, no out of state vacation runs are included here).

- #1 [mtndead](#) = 483.5 Points
- #2 [li1gray](#) = 479 Points
- #3 [Karma!](#) = 345.5 Points
- #4 [Tundra Tim](#) = 337 Points
- #5 [getatm](#) = 332 Points
- #6 [FlightRiskAK](#) = 299 Points
- #7 [firemanak](#) = 292.5 Points
- #8 [dmzlstone](#) = 286.5 Points
- #9 [Polgera](#) = 282.5 Points
- #10 [cavyguy](#) = 273 Points

Look for another Top Ten list next month.

## Editor's Notes

By Cathy Wilmeth / The\_Firefly

### What makes a great newsletter?

Your articles, that's what. Articles from GeocacheAlaska! members and geocachers who have come to our great state. Your thoughts, your ideas, your stories, your photos, your experiences... You get the idea, right? As editor, I take what you send, and polish it up. I put it in a fancy package and make it look good. But it really is all about what YOU submit. So, don't be shy...what can you submit for the February issue?

The submission deadline for the February issue of *Around The State* is **January 25, 2015**. I'm happy to help with any questions or concerns you may have about submitting! Send to [editor@geocachealaska.org](mailto:editor@geocachealaska.org).

## The Most Festive Caching - Ever!

By Mike Malvick / Ladybug Kids

What a difference a couple of weeks makes! Last year, I was in Europe for business the week before Thanksgiving and things were pretty quiet most everywhere. This year, I spent five days in Europe during the first week of December and had a completely different experience because all communities were decked out for the Christmas holidays with lights and decorations and the larger cities were hosting their version of a Christmas festival.

I began my time in Europe with three free days before the business portion of the trip. I flew into Strasbourg, France, where Nick of sTeamTraen picked me up at the airport and took me to his home to freshen up a bit from my trans-Atlantic flight from Houston, Texas. I first met Nick in Oxford four years ago and reconnected with him in Georgia a couple of years later. On those occasions, he wore a kilt, so I was somewhat surprised when he met me wearing denim jeans. After doing a quick wardrobe change at his house, we headed to the City Centre for a tour and some caching. When we got off the tram, Nick turned me loose on one of his caches...in the middle of a busy transportation "plaza." Seriously? With buildings and people all around, I didn't think I had a chance, especially with the Cache Owner hovering nearby ready to heckle me. However, I got lucky during my first sweep and I was able to palm the cache without catching the attention of any muggles. I signed the log, looked around, waited a bit for the coast to clear, and slipped the cache back where it belonged. With this find, my map for the Alsace Department of France was colored in.

Then we headed for Notre Dame Münster, Strasbourg's imposing cathedral where the world's first documented Christmas tree was set up in 1539. Nick tested my gullibility by telling me one of the towers had been removed for restoration, something many tourists will believe because just about every one of Europe's cathe-





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drals are in a state of perpetual repair. Surrounding the cathedral and occupying several other open spaces was the [Strasborgh Capitale de Noël](#) (Strasbourg Capital of Christmas) market. The market occupied several of the open areas around the city center with each having its own theme. I took care of many of my Christmas shopping needs as I moved from area to area, being particularly interested in the hand-made wood and glass ornaments and figurines crafted with a local flair. Nick treated me to a glass of Glühwein, something akin to hot cider, but made with white wine and slices of citrus fruit, and a pretzel to hold off hunger until later in the evening.



As darkness fell, the Christmas lights lit up the trees and buildings, making the atmosphere even more festive. Spotlights highlighted figures with bags of gifts climbing building facades and fire escapes. Not to be missed is the unexploded bomb purported to be a World War II relic protruding from the wall of a local tavern. Sunset also signaled it was time to walk over to the [Stammtisch Strasbourg](#), a regular gathering of local cachers to swap stories and sample the latest local brew offerings. Midway through the event, German cacher Aeon arrived to make the event truly international with at least France, Germany, America, and the United Kingdom represented.

I quietly set on the table the 2014 GeocacheAlaska! geocoins and pathtags I brought with me and quickly sold out, significantly lightening my luggage in eliminating the need to explain geocaching to customs personnel. To top things off, my seasonal ale was paid for by an anonymous benefac-

tor. Just as my head was beginning to hurt from trying to follow conversations in French, German, and English, our Geocaching Stammtisch was brought to a close by a Poetry Slam Stammtisch that moved onto our “turf.”

Aeon gave Nick and me a ride back to Nick’s house so I could collect my luggage and then we drove about ninety minutes to his home in Weil am Rhein, located in Germany where Germany, Switzerland, and France meet at a tri-country monument. After a nightcap of homemade pumpkin soup, I fell into bed to overcome the jet lag that accompanies crossing so many time zones in a single hop. The next morning, we walked down the street to the local bakery to purchase a selection of breads for breakfast. On our way out the door, Aeon found a present of candies, nuts, and fruit on his doorstep, left by Sünnerklaas in on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December. After breakfast, we headed for Switzerland to connect with Worlddiver and s’Rechnerli for a day of caching. We rendezvoused at [Heimatkunde](#), which is billed as Switzerland’s largest cache and is the largest cache I’ve ever visited, with a standing capacity of at least twenty inside its confines. From there, we carpoled to hunt the most favorited caches in the region which involved solving a wickedly well-done field puzzle, finding a sheet magnet cache that puts anything of that style that I’ve found elsewhere to shame, partially dismantling and reassembling a bus shelter and a street sign, and visiting a frog pond. By that point, the group was ready for a warm beverage and snack, so we headed up to s’Rechnerli’s parents’ home where we were treated to fresh espresso coffee and homemade holiday “biscuits” (cookies on this side of the pond). Warmed up and fortified, we walked out the front door and up the mountainside to find the six cache Schlumpfig series which featured a variety of cache types and sizes hidden in large mushrooms fashioned from tree stumps/logs.



By now, the sun was setting and it was time to head for the [Weihnachts- und Christkindli-Märt Bremgarten](#) (Bremgarten Christmas Market). We parked in a parking garage

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underneath one of the local grocery stores and took a short walk to the fest.



The number of stalls and variety of hand-made and commercial goods was impressive as was the crowd that packed the road between the rows of stalls. At regular intervals the crowd was treated to a cacophony that sounded much like Stomp banging on garbage cans. However, this racket was caused by the synchronous ringing of giant cowbells as their traditional-costumed ringers walked the streets. We attempted to complete the [Wherigo Bremgarten](#), but our group was foiled by a trick question asked by a wicked witch and we had to abort due to empty stomachs beginning to rumble. We left the throngs for a quieter venue where we shared pizza and Greek food. After dinner, Aeon and I found one final cache with Worlddiver and s'Rechnerli before we parted ways.

I thought at this point of the evening Aeon and I would be returning to his place, but Aeon had been swapping text messages with [Riepichiep](#) in Aarau. Riepichiep was up for a late night caching escapade, so we took a minor detour and had a wonderful time getting a guided tour of the former Swiss capital while completing a terrific Swiss Monopoly letterbox-hybrid cache that provided a self-guided tour of the historic old town, a mystery cache that featured the painted eaves of the old buildings, and a traditional cache that highlighted the old [Kettenbrücke/Chainbridge](#) that used to span the Aare River. This last cache placement was especially clever because it employed a bicycle chain as a cache hanger in keeping with the Ketten (chain) theme. Midway through the tour, Riepichiep produced a thermos of Glühwein and cups from his backpack for us to enjoy as we wandered the quiet streets. By this time, Saturday had become Sunday and it was definitely time for Aeon and me to hit the rack for Sunday's planned adventure in Freiburg, Germany.

After not nearly enough sleep at Aeon's abode, I arose, packed my luggage, and we rolled out late for Freiburg. Before leaving Basel, we walked across the Rhein River bridge to France and back, found a cache in Basel so I could color in the Baselstadt



Canton on my Swiss map, and visited a TB Hotel so I could drop the last of the travel bugs I had with me because I didn't know if I'd be finding small and regular containers anymore during the trip. Once in Freiburg, Aeon assumed the tour guide role since he attended the University here and his family has extensive ties to the town. The [Freiburg Weihnachtsmarkt \(Christmasmarket\)](#)

was in full swing and we enjoyed passing through the stalls on our way to the The Cathedral of Our Lady, the Freiburg Münster. The Münster was spared when the Allies bombed Freiburg on November 27, 1944,



during World War II and there are striking photos of the devastation in the area with the cathedral rising above it all. We opted to climb the bell tower to find the



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“[Hosanna](#)” cache (the bell was cast in 1258) and see the view. At the entrance to the tight spiral staircase was a sign advising visitors that the entrance fee would be charged at the top of the 209 stairs. Two steps later was a similar second sign that advised the fee would be charged after only 207 stairs. Up we went, clinging to the inside of the stairs to allow other visitors to descend past us. Once we successfully negotiated the 209 stairs, we paid the price of admission and viewed the assorted tools of the trade of watchmen from eras long gone. We entered the bell chamber just in time for the bells to strike the hour and my ears are still ringing from the resonance of the heavy wooden mallets striking the centuries old bells. Once the audio show was over, I got serious about finding the cache and with a few helpful nudges from Aeon eventually found the extremely well-concealed regular-sized box. It’s amazing what a cacher can do when placing a cache at a historic site with permission of the management!

Afterward descending the tower, we wandered the town as Aeon pointed out his college haunts until it was time for him to drive me to the train station in Mulhouse so I could catch the French TGV to Paris. I had a close call with catching my train because there was a protest outside the train station, but some slick maneuvering by Aeon got me to the train station entrance. I settled into my



airplane-like seat on the upper deck of the TGV, plugged in my laptop, and started writing the trip’s cache logs while we seemingly flew across the dark countryside at speeds of up to 200 mph. Three hours later, the train pulled into Gare de Lyon in Paris. I disembarked in a drizzle, pulled up the hotel waypoint in my GPS, find it after a five minute walk, and learned there is more than one Ibis Gare de Lyon. The friendly staff redirected me to the correct Ibis (I highly recommend the chain, having now stayed at one in Lisboa and one in Paris at an affordable price) and I splashed my way to the correct hotel ten minutes later.

Once my two days of work meetings were over, I had a free evening

to cache around Paris and see the sites. I started at Galleries Lafayette, which is Paris’ answer to New York City’s Macy’s or London’s Harrods. One five-story building is devoted to men’s clothing including an entire floor just for shoes and an adjacent seven-story building for women’s fashions. The department store is prominent enough that the Metro station has escalators to whisk shoppers directly into the building. I wrapped up my Christmas shopping there, being assisted by friendly customer service agents throughout who, after hearing my fractured French, politely switched to English to speed the conversation along to completely debunk the stereotype of snarky French shopkeepers. I was even able to navigate my way through an utterly confusing array of French perfumes to purchase selections for my wife and daughters. A highlight of the Galleries is the cupola in the center of the women’s side that extends from the ground floor to the roof. Ornate and worth seeing by itself, it featured an upside down Christmas tree hung from the ceiling. On the hour, the tree would be lit up by a light show while Christmas carols played.

Shopped out, I returned to my hotel room to drop off my purchases and head into the city for a final couple of hours of sightseeing and to find a cache or two to close out my visit. I took the Metro from Gare de Lyon to Concorde and when I climbed to the street level, was greeted by a monster lit Ferris wheel and millions of Christmas lights lining [Champs-Élysées](#). Unexpectedly, I’d also arrived at one end of Paris’ version of a Christmas fest that featured stalls lining both sides of the famous boulevard. I bought a few more Christmas gifts I didn’t know I needed to purchase and had a most enjoyable time walking up one side and down the other, soaking in the atmosphere. I even managed to find three caches, including one I DNF’d four years earlier. Caching and shopping missions complete, I returned to my hotel room for some sleep before beginning the long slog home.



# Caching Tricks, Tips, and Tools

## Reviewer's Corner

By Michael Malvick / Greatland Reviewer



Groundspeak will revise the Event Guidelines and Help Center articles to clarify what constitutes an Event and a CITO Event. Due to abuses in other parts of the geocaching world (events scheduled for just a few seconds and Flash CITO Events, for example), Event and CITO Event pages must state a beginning *and* an end time. Events must be scheduled to be at least thirty minutes long and the minimum length for a CITO Event is sixty minutes. "Flash Mob" type events can still be held if the Flash Mob aspect of the event occurs within the thirty minute time period allocated for participants to stop by and earn credit for attending. "Moving" Events such as hikes, raft trips, and train rides will be required to have a specified thirty minute period during which cachers can stop by and say hello before the crowd disperses for the activity. This requirement is being added due to an increasing number of Additional Logging Requirements (ALR) being attached to events as requirements for attendance. There is not a minimum time a cacher must be present to earn credit for attending the Event or CITO Event. I will share more information on this topic as I receive it.

Scheduled publishing nuance: Groundspeak's scheduled publishing routing is tied to Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and Alaska Standard Time is nine hours earlier than GMT (GMT -9). Therefore, a cache set to publish after 1500 AST will reflect the *next* day's date stamp in the associated "Published" Reviewer Note.

**Helpful Trackable hint:** If you write a cache log and forget to log one or more trackables, you do not need to write a new Note log. You can simply edit your original log and perform any additional trackable actions by scrolling down to your inventory.

### Cachers Seeking Cachers

There are several ways to stay abreast of events around the state that bring cachers together. Events are typically informal affairs at a restaurant or somewhere in the field and present a great opportunity to meet other cachers for story-swapping, tips, general socializing, and perhaps even a side trip to hunt other local caches. There are several ways to find which events are coming to your areas:

1. If you are a Premium Member of Geocaching.com, you can set up an instant notification to come straight to your cell phone and e-mail account. Reference <http://www.geocaching.com/notify/default.aspx>.
2. Visit the Alaska State search page on geocaching.com at [http://www.geocaching.com/seek/nearest.aspx?state\\_id=2](http://www.geocaching.com/seek/nearest.aspx?state_id=2). This can be customized for any state/country you visit.
3. Searching for events by zip code or state/country from <http://www.geocaching.com/seek/nearest.aspx>.
4. Checking the front page calendar of this newsletter.
5. Viewing the newsfeeder on the home page of the GeocacheAlaska! forums located at <http://geocachealaska.proboards.com/>.

## Geocaching At-a-Glance



Sourced from <http://www.geocaching.com/press/faq.aspx>

### What is geocaching?

Geocaching is an outdoor adventure where players use our free mobile app or a GPS device to find cleverly hidden containers around the world.

### How many people geocache?

There are more than 10 million registered users on Geocaching.com, with more than 800,000 in the U.S., more than 275,000 in Germany and more than 160,000 in Canada.

### How many geocaches are hidden?

More than 2.5 million geocaches are waiting to be found in over 180 countries.

### Why do people geocache?

People geocache because it's a way to explore the world around them with friends and family and because it's fun. Geocaching is a game that reveals a world beyond the everyday, where the possibility of a new discovery hides under park benches, in the forest and probably a short walk from where you are right now (literally).

# Around The State

## 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.
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. Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/geocachealaska/>
4. GeocacheAlaska! Facebook Page: [GeocacheAlaska! Page](#)
5. E-mail to [contact@geocachealaska.org](mailto:contact@geocachealaska.org)

## JOIN US ON FACEBOOK & Twitter!

Like our official [GeocacheAlaska! Page](#) on Facebook to keep up to date on things happening with GeocacheAlaska!

Also, join the official [GeocacheAlaska! Group](#) on Facebook to stay in touch and share your activities with fellow members of the geocaching community. 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. Visit our Group and request to Join so you can start viewing and participating with GeocacheAlaska! and your fellow geocachers.

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

## STATE PARKS PERMITS

Caches may be published within Alaska State Parks in Southcentral Alaska! The permit number is **14-KA-973**. The permit number must appear on the cache container and the cache page. Before submitting a cache listing within one of the parks, please thoroughly read the complete list of stipulations in the permit, which may be [downloaded](#) from the GeocacheAlaska! website.

## NEWSLETTER INFORMATION

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

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