

Around The State



December 2015



Photo credit:

Category: Winter
Seth Steben / Barnacle9
[GC514FZ](#)



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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

[50 States with the Lackeys](#), December 5, 12:30pm, Juneau

[Did Juneau that Lackeys are visiting Alaska?](#), December 5, 5pm, Juneau

[Stammtisch Taco Taco Tuesday!](#), December 8, 5pm, Anchorage

[4th Annual HOLIDAY BASH December 13](#), December 13, 2pm, Fairbanks

[Stammtisch X - Eagle River](#), December 16, 7am, Eagle River

[11th Annual Geofest](#), December 18, 5:30pm, Anchorage

[I forgive you, JackCat14](#), January 1, 2016, 2pm, Anchorage

GeocacheAlaska! Updates

President's Corner

By Wes Skinner / NorthWes



Winter has established a firm grip across the state, with every region experiencing the delights of snowfall and temperatures well below freezing. Caching in winter has its own special treats here in Alaska, where many areas become more accessible thanks to freeze-up and the ease of travel that brings to cross-country travel. We also need to be aware of how some trails become set aside to ski or dog team use only in the wintertime.

Member-financed user groups such as the Nordic Ski Association of Anchorage pay ALL cost for trail grooming and maintenance, with the understanding that groomed ski trails are exclusively reserved for skier use only. The damage a walker creates on a groomed ski trail can only be corrected with a follow-on grooming run (which costs real money). The presence of a walker on a groomed ski trail is a safety hazard for the fast-moving skier. A dog on a ski trail just magnifies the surface damage, and adds the complications caused by urine and feces. Just because the trails exist in city parks does not mean walkers have unlimited access, as the city licenses particular user groups to do maintenance and grants specific use designations for these trails. All trails are clearly marked at main access points as to their winter use, and it's pretty obvious when you encounter a groomed ski trail at any point.

Those trails marked for dog-team use only (whether for ski-joring or sled-dog use) are likewise meant for the exclusive use of the designated user group – and note you create unsafe travel conditions for both dogs and yourself when you violate that designation. Postholes in dog trails create an immediate and deadly leg-break hazard for canine athletes. Further, dogteams are so quiet and travel so quickly that they'll overtake unauthorized users before the interlopers can react and get off trail.

There is no excuse for a geocacher to make improper use of a designated ski or dog trail. If you want to use that designated trail, use correct gear. Many cachers ski, and you'd be surprised how many ski-jor or run sled teams. Snowshoes let you go anywhere in the wintertime, so if you need to access an area that's got a web of special-use trails around it, simply snowshoe in off the side of those trails. Be a good park special user group – acknowledge and respect those who play outdoors in the parks and underwrite the cost of groomed trails, and help

keep the trails safe for designated users too. No smiley is worth the bad relationships created by improper trail use!

Top Tens: Caching Achievements of Alaskan Cachers

By Scott Aleckson / SSO JOAT

This month's Top Ten list of Alaskan Cacher's Caching Achievements goes to the Alaskan Geocaches that are the Top Favorites as calculated by the "[Lower bound of Wilson score](#)". Basically, these are the caches with the most favorite points and having many logs. It only counts Premium Member logs, since only Premium Members can award Favorite Points. Archived caches that appeared in the Top Ten at Project-GC were skipped for this list.

- #1 [Code 1](#) = 62%
- #2 [Battleship \(CGS #1\)](#) = 57%
- #3 [The Deathly Hallows](#) = 55%
- #4 [Ida Lake & the Bench of Enviably Comfort and Joy](#) = 54%
- #5 [Halloween Night Cache--Bad to the Bone!](#) = 53%
- #6 [Radio Days](#) = 51%
- #7 [backWARDS](#) = 51%
- #8 [Lily Way](#) = 51%
- #9 [Jimmy and Debbies TB/GC Hotel](#) = 50%
- #10 [No Fowl Play Suspected \(aka Birdville TB Lodge\)](#) = 50%

Editor's Notes

By Cathy Wilmeth / [The_Firefly](#)

All geocachers are invited to submit articles, photos, and ideas! The submission deadline for the next issue of *Around The State* is [December 20, 2015](#). I'm happy to help with any questions or concerns you may have about submitting! Send to editor@geocachealaska.org

GeocacheAlaska! Board of Directors Elections

Voting results are in, and the following members have been elected to serve two-year terms in their respective positions:

Wes Skinner – President
Trish Fredieu – Secretary
Scott Aleckson – Webmaster
Mike Farmer – Member at Large
Louise Kempker – Member at Large

These join Vice President Dana Ross, Treasurer Mike Malvick, and Members at Large Sean Gaither and Ericka Rud in making up your Board of Directors. Please contact any of them with questions or suggestions you have regarding GeocacheAlaska! Inc.



Reviewer's Corner

By Michael Malvick / Greatland Reviewer



Groundspeak, also known as "Geocaching HQ Admin," recently archived unpublished cache pages that did not have any activity during the past six months as part of routine site maintenance. If you were actively working on any of the archived cache pages, you may contact me through my [geocaching profile](#) with the GC number of interest and I can unarchive the cache page for you.

In the future, you may avoid the "archive bot" by posting regular Reviewer Note updates and/or editing the cache page at least every three months.

Cachers who plan to host an event are encouraged to read the [Solicitation and Commercial Content Guidelines](#) prior to submitting their event cache page. Events may not promote a commercial business or charitable organization. The reason for this is that Groundspeak provides a free cache page listing service to geocachers and they are not in the business of providing free advertising or promotion of commercial and non-profit entities. Groundspeak acknowledges there are many worthy charitable organizations, but it is not part of their mission to determine which organizations should be promoted and which should not.

Geocachers also may not host events that are held within events that would happen whether or not geocachers were present. A guideline-compliant means to bring cachers together for a non-geocaching event is to host an event nearby so cachers can talk all things caching and then disperse for the other activity. Attendance of the bigger event cannot be a requirement to log the geocaching event.

On an unrelated topic, Groundspeak has updated cachers' profile pages to use an iframe for the player-entered field under the "Profile Information" section so cachers can no longer add things such as a DNF count, hash marks across the message center link, or other make other alterations. One's individual content may still be edited, but it is confined to a window inside the façade of the main page. Users still using older browsers that do not support an iframe "sandbox" will get a warning that their browser is old and is not taking advantage of all the security features of the site.

Caching Tricks, Tips, and Tools

Story of a Lost Travel Bug

By David Thomson/ davidaknz

TB: Yannes' Mimbres 2.0 Geocoin - TB2W9MJ

I finally have this geocoin (back) in my hands. This all started on October 10, 2015, as I was driving east through Watson Lake, Yukon. I stopped to view the Sign Post Forest and found the cache, "CLAYTON - SAVAR crossroads bug hotel." I left a TB that wanted to go west to Alaska and picked up this cool red geocoin - Yannes' Mimbres 2.0 Geocoin

I drove on and spent the night at the Blue Bell Inn, Ft. Nelson, British Columbia. Decent spot. I reviewed my caching experience for the day, logging finds and checked out Yannes' geocoin. It was not logged into the Watson Lake cache, it was still in the hands of Kayakate, a cacher from Alberta. I didn't want to grab it immediately as maybe someone was late in logging it into Watson Lake. I contacted Kayakate to say I had the coin. She said she had given it to another cacher, goalwest, who actually took it to Watson Lake. She said it should be logged in within a few days.

I arose the next day and continued my journey east and south. I arrived for the next night in Grande Cache, Alberta. I again reviewed my caching activity and looked at the TBs and geocoins found that day. It was then that panic set in! I couldn't find Yannes' cool red geocoin! What did I do? I thought deeply and remembered handling the coin the night before in Ft. Nelson. I then exclaimed, "I left it in the hotel room in Ft. Nelson!" Agh!



Well, I wasn't going to drive back 500 miles to get a geocoin, although if it had been 50 I might. I found the receipt to the Blue Bell Inn and gave them a call. I described my plight and sure enough, they had found the red coin while cleaning the room. We left it that I would contact them again so it could be mailed to Alaska.



About a week later, the coin shows up as "dropped" in the Watson Lake cache, goalwest had indeed logged the cache. In the grand scheme of things, fixing the location of a geocoin probably isn't all that important. But, I felt badly that I had taken such poor care of Yannes' coin so I had to get it back in play or it would just go missing in the frigid north and it would sit as a curiosity in the lost and found of the Ft. Nelson hotel.

In early November, I sent \$10 Canadian to the Blue Bell Inn to cover the cost of postage. A package arrived in Alaska on November 23 with Yannes' coin. Yahoo!

The lesson to be learned, always look carefully through the hotel room you are vacating!

Caching Tricks, Tips, and Tools

Finding the Favorites (FTF)

By Mike Farmer / Farmergang

When I look back and think of my favorite caches, or caches I point people to when I'm asked for a cache which sums up "what makes geocaching so special in Alaska" BoulderField ([GCD9A](#)) is usually at the top of that list. This cache has it all; a non-technical hike, scenic vistas, wildlife of all kinds, fishing (check regs before you go), a well maintained trail, only slight elevation gains, winter and summer access, and of course more geocaches to find on the hike out, as well as others placed higher and farther for the more adventurous types.

Placed in June of 2001 this is one of Alaska's earliest geocaches. The container is an ammo can and rests in the boulder field just prior to the banks of Eagle and Symphony Lakes. For a cache of this age it amazingly has only 60 logged visits since being placed. What's not surprising is 33% of people who have logged it have given it a favorite point. Keep in mind favorite points were not around prior to 2010. I searched this out in 2010 accompanied by my dad (oldfarmergang) and my faithful geomutt Oscar. I've been in the area several times since; chasing caches farther down the trail, fly-fishing for grayling in the lakes and the views have always left me in awe of this beautiful state.

The trail is a well maintained, clearly marked, 13 mile roundtrip hike, paralleling the South Fork of Eagle River at the base of a valley. It has only slight elevation changes, and the only real difficult part would be the last 1/4 - 1/2 mile crossing the actual boulder field.

So grab a friend, a good pair of shoes, snacks and maybe some bear repellent and get out and spend the a day exploring one of Alaska's earliest and best caches.

Fall-out from Geocaching

By Cheryl Reynolds / FrodoOfoi

Present for my 4 year old Grandchild. Everything came from the dump and at the tail end of garage sales while searching for toys to put in Geocaches.



This has a xmas teddy bear at the bottom and one of the tubes has a fleece hat in xmas colors. Lot of fun for a little one. So if you're wondering what to do with your excess swag, recycle.

Caching Travelogues

Hawaii or Bust

By Melanie Stone / Green M&M



As we planned our trip to Hawaii to celebrate our 27th anniversary, David was excited to get GC23 and another Cache-across-America. Lucky for me, they were on the same trail. So our first mission was to obtain a big map of Oahu. Not the easiest task since most of them cut off the least populated areas (where a lot of caches are). Finally we found a big atlas.

We both marked the areas we wanted to go. David marked the geocaches, and I marked the shopping.

Time to plan the relaxing vacation. Some might think just go to Hawaii and relax by the beach all day. My OCD self won't allow that. – MUST HAVE SCHEDULE – We are staying with our friends to save money (which proved to be very helpful since I planned lots of activities)

First mission: get a cache in Alaska and Hawaii on the same day. Luckily there was a PNG right close to the rental car office. We had to wait out a guy feeding stray cats but in the end we had success.

We decided to do our longest hike on day 1 which turned out to be a great decision because by the end of our trip we were too exhausted. So off we go with my friend to hike Aiea Trail loop so we can get GC23, Cache across America GC10RJA, a Wherigo GC55FX7, and several other caches.



Let's pause for a moment and talk about weather in Hawaii. It is funny how the weather changes there. It can be beautiful, not a cloud in the sky and then start raining. It will rain for 15-30 minutes then clear up and look like nothing happened.

Back on the trail, it rained periodically which caused some "fun" patches to hike across. Since I'm not the most skilled hiker, I had to do a little "scooting"

In case you are curious, it didn't wash out.



The 5 mile trail ended up being about 8 miles with all the off-trail searching, but we were victorious at getting 13 caches including the special ones.

Caching Travelogues

Day 2 was a checkmark on the bucket list (one of many on this trip). Off we go to swim with the dolphins. We get there and start the day with a sea lion encounter.

David got pretty cozy with Puna. And I got to confront my fear of birds



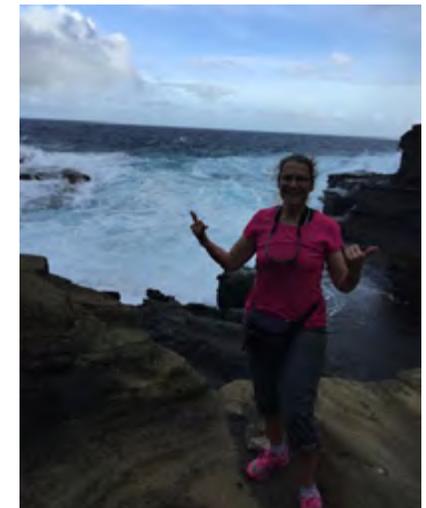
Then off to the dolphins. We got to have them pull us through the water and push us standing and lots of hugs and kisses. By the way the dolphins from the movie 50 First Dates are at this Sea Life Park (but they were a little stingy with giving



out autographs). We are trying to get a cache a day and luckily there was a puzzle final right at the sea life park. Oops! David left the solution at the house so I had to quickly re-solve it and in a few minutes we had the find.

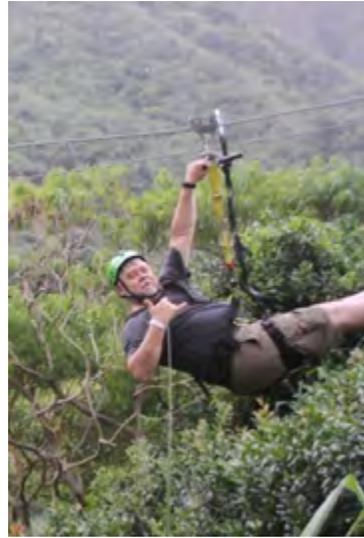
After the park, David starts driving and I questioned that he was going the wrong way. He said there is a special cache we should try to get, GC-MFAC. No big deal. It is a 2 terrain and 1.5 difficulty. Should be pretty easy. I quickly discovered that Jack-cat14 must have a relative here.

I know it might be hard to see from the picture but this picture is at the top looking down – straight down. More scooting on the tush for me. There was also a tunnel next to it that David thought we should go through. Hmm dark-uneven terrain and short tunnel but the end was beautiful so I guess it was worth it.



Caching Travelogues

On Friday we went to Kualoa Ranch. This is a beautiful location with many activities and where lots of movies have been filmed. We went ziplining. Another bucket list item that scared me to death. But I survived and discovered I really liked it.



Our last activity was parasailing. I discovered I didn't enjoy it at all. Glad I did it but not for me.



The Luau on Saturday was a great relaxing day.

Of course, I had to get a picture with the hula dancers.

That night we flew home. As we were waiting to board the aircraft, I was so tired I almost fell asleep in the airport. We got on the plane and I took my valium (a necessity for me to fly). I woke up and turned to David and said the flight attendants didn't do the safety checks. He said you're right. It turns out we were so tired, we fell right asleep before take-off. I think it was a successful trip but next time we need to plan a vacation to recover from our vacation.

Recent Events

Benchmarking Eduvent

By Wes Skinner / NorthWes

[November's Eduvent](#) featured an hour-long presentation about the Benchmark aspect of the Geocaching game. Topics included:

- What is a benchmark?
- Why search for benchmarks?
- "Adjusted" vs "Scaled" vs "Cadastral"
- Types of Bench Mark Stations
- Reading NGS / GC Datasheets
- Finding Benchmarks
- Logging Benchmarks



Eduvent presenter NorthWes shared his passion for this lesser-known part of geocaching with more than three dozen attendees at the BP Energy Center, as well as several remote sites dialing-in from around the state. If you'd like to know more about benchmarks, check out the presentation under the Education tab on the GeocacheAlaska! Inc. website.

Halloween

By Trish Fredieu / AKLoisandclark

WOW. What a turn out. Thanks to everyone that attended the annual Halloween Party. We had a blast. There were witches, goblins, very scary reapers and even A Man in a Yellow Hat. Star Wars was big this year. Was that Obewan or a pilgrim? Curious George and the Man in the Yellow Hat were winners. The Grim Reapers left with a prize and the best muggle was Harry Potter? Hermione Granger won a prize as well. The Butterfly/Fairy had a birthday. Happy Birthday to Green M&M and thanks for all your help. There were lots of yummy appetizers and desserts. The cake pops won for the best dessert and the Bat Things won for best appetizer. Thanks to EVERYONE because without you there would be no party. Can't wait til next year.



GeocacheAlaska! Inc GIFF Weekend 2015

By Wes Skinner / NorthWes

Although the original 2015 Geocaching International Film Festival was rained out on the night prior to this year's Block Party in Seattle, cachers around the world were given the opportunity to view the 16 short films at locally-hosted events on the first weekend in November. GeocacheAlaska! Inc. Vice-President DR-AK set up an event in Anchorage and filed the necessary paperwork to have it sanctioned as an official GIFF showplace. A local church offered its fellowship hall, members set up a delicious catered lunch, other members borrowed projectors to make sure we had a primary and a backup, and a Film Festival event was born.

More than forty persons attended the showing. A broad variety of film styles were presented, ranging from high adventure cache hunts, thru ballet-dancing one's way to a find, all the way to a piece on what our canine caching partners do during the day when we think they're home alone. As impressive as the presentations were, many attendees kept saying 'there must be someone who can make a short film with an Alaskan twist that would be a winner!' – so the gauntlet's thrown down. Who will produce a short flick worthy enough to become a semi-finalist in the 2016 Geocaching International Film Festival?



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 a few ways you can join GeocacheAlaska! at the Sourdough level for \$20/year.

1. Navigate to the [GeocacheAlaska! webpage](#) and:
 - A. Click on the "Subscribe" button to set up an automatic subscription which will renew annually. Please enter your caching name in the provided box. OR
 - B. Click on "Add to Cart" to purchase an annual membership. OR
 - C. Download a membership form you can print and mail with your payment.
2. 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. Follow us on Instagram [@geocachealaska](#)
6. Follow us on Twitter [@GeocachAlaska](#)

Questions? E-mail to contact@geocachealaska.org

JOIN US ON FACEBOOK, Twitter, and Instagram!

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!

Follow us on Instagram! [@geocachealaska](#)

STATE PARKS PERMITS

Caches may be published within Alaska State Parks! All caches must have the permit number on the inside of the cache along with the cache owner's contact information. On the outside of the cache, you must write "Alaska State Parks Permit #15-KA-1994 Geocache AK" in permanent marking. The cache listing must state "Cache placed under GeocacheAlaska! Park Use Permit #15-KA-1994" within the description section. 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 Previous editions of *Around the State* are now on our website. If you have missed previous newsletters, check out the series [here](#).

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