

# Around The State



January 2016



*Photo credit: Alan Geraldi / cacbag*  
*View from The Alaska Onion*  
[GCSNHFE](http://GCSNHFE)

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## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

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

[Happy New Year 2016](#), January 1, 10am, Palmer/Wasilla

[Bugbug's Hot Chocolate Event - :\)](#), January 3, 2pm, Anchorage

[Stammtisch Taco Taco Taco Tuesday!](#), January 12, 5pm, Anchorage



# GeocacheAlaska! Updates

## President's Corner

By Wes Skinner / NorthWes



**Why do you geocache?** Are you a treasure hunter, certain that you're going to find something worthy of trade in that next cache? Are you on a quest for numbers, looking to see just how many park'n'grab caches you can find in a day? Are you on a puzzle quest, certain that you've cracked the secret to a themed cache that makes no sense on its first read? Are you looking forward to the heady scent of ink as you carefully mark your precious record book with a stamp found in a letterbox hybrid cache? Are you out to chalk up one more mountaintop cache? Are you seeking a special secret spot shared by locals showing off their favorite sights and hikes? Are you trying to build up to 90 minutes of heart-rate-boosting walking time per week using caches as a goal? Are you looking forward to the fun and fellowship of a relaxed event gathering of like-minded cachers? Whatever your answer(s), there's a way to make it happen here in Alaska. GeocacheAlaska! Inc was founded specifically to advocate for permission from land managers to place caches, to educate the public and geocachers of all skill levels about how to have a great time out of doors, and to help build a social network of fellowship that enhanced the game for all players regardless of age and ability. This is your organization, and you have plenty of opportunities to make it both a better game and a better group through participation. Many opportunities exist for persons interested in building up the Geocaching Game in Alaska – simply ask a board member at an event, or contact them by email links found on the [geocachealaska.org](http://geocachealaska.org) website. Opportunities are available to help with events, with training, and with several other initiatives needing helping hands. The game only gets better when people step up their involvement!

## 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 **January 20, 2016**. I'm happy to help with any questions or concerns you may have about submitting! Send to [editor@geocachealaska.org](mailto:editor@geocachealaska.org)

## 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 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 D2T1.5 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 [ftl-ak](#) = 491.5 Points on 8/2/15
- #2 [hockey chicks](#) = 488.5 on 8/2/15
- #3 [freeweewz](#) = 484.0 Points on 8/2/15
- #4 [mtndeal](#) = 483.5 Points on 9/9/12
- #5 [li1gray](#) = 479.0 Points on 9/9/12
- #6 [Karma!](#) = 361.0 Points on 5/29/15
- #7 [Tundra Tim](#) = 337.0 Points on 9/9/12
- #8 [getatm](#) = 332.0 Points on 5/27/13
- #9 [FlightRiskAK](#) = 299.0 Points on 9/30/12
- #10 [AKbike&ski](#) = 296.0 Points on 5/24/15

Look for another Top Ten list next month.

# GeocacheAlaska! Updates

## 2015 Eagle Geocoins by Chris Mackey

By Scott Aleckson / SSO JOAT

We still have a number of these coins available for purchase. You can buy online via our webstore by visiting <http://www.geocachealaska.org/alaskageocoins.htm> and entering the store from the link on that page. Sourdough members get a discount by going into the Sourdough member's only store from the main store page. Look for the link at the top.

The 2015 geocoins were created by geocoin artist Chris Mackey, author of the book, *Discovered: Memoires of a Geocoin Designer*. This large coin is a full 2 inches in diameter with a hefty 4mm thickness (0.1575" or about 5/32"). It features full color enamel fill on both sides. We had the coins manufactured in three different shiny metal finishes: gold, silver, and black nickel.

The front of the coin features a bald eagle in flight with a fish tight in his clutches over a river backdrop with fireweed and mountains. The back of the coin features a log cache against a mountain backdrop with another bald eagle flying overhead. The rim of the coin is edge-stamped with the tracking number.

Every coin includes a 1-3/4" anodized aluminum proxy from GxProxy. These coins are anodized in various colors and have the images from the Eagle coin laser etched onto the surface. The same tracking number from your coin is etched onto the proxy. This allows you to keep the original coin safely in your collection, but set the proxy coin free to travel in its place. If your proxy should ever go missing, you may order a replacement directly from GxProxy with the same tracking number on it for a small fee.

The coins are being sold individually and as a set of three with one of each metal finish. Additionally, we are offering a discount package of three coins with a set of 2015 Wildflowers of Alaska pathtags while supplies last. Inventory of the wildflowers pathtags is dwindling fast, so hurry if you want to order a set of coins with pathtags, or if you just want to buy some pathtags.

In addition to the coins and wildflower pathtags, our mail order store still has a very limited supply of trackable AK license plate tags, Trek Tags and Nomads. These are likely to be the last of the license plates and Nomads as we look to remove older products and add some new items over the next couple years. In our pathtag collection, we have the glow in the dark Aurora pathtags in stock, however we just sold out of the new GeocacheAlaska! Wolf Logo pathtags. More of those will be placed on order soon.

And just a reminder, these geocoin projects are not done to make GeocacheAlaska! a bunch of money. The basis of these projects is to pool our club resources to make coins and other trackables that you, our members, would like to have. It's pretty expensive to make a personal geocoin, so having a unique club geocoin is the next best thing. We are always looking for new ideas and would love to hear what you want from your club. Contact a Board member to share your ideas with us.

Thank you for your support. Visit our online store at <http://www.geocachealaska.org/alaskageocoins.htm>



# Caching Tricks, Tips, and Tools

## Reviewer's Corner

By Michael Malvick / Greatland Reviewer



### Events and Mystery/Puzzle/Multi-Cache Hidden Waypoints

This month's column covers [Event](#) and [Cache In Trash Out](#) (CITO) Guidelines and tips to help your Event or CITO published when first submitted. The first consideration is that Events are about bringing cachers together and building a sense of community, so the location should be carefully considered. While it might be appealing to host an event five miles from a trailhead at a scenic lake, such a location will be accessible or appealing to a limited number of cachers. A more inclusive alternative would be to host the event at the trailhead, at a breakfast place before the hike or a dinner place after the hike. Because the event must occur at the posted coordinates for a minimum of thirty minutes (the start and end times must be posted on the cache page), the hike itself cannot be the event.

Events should not be held with the intent to hunt a cache or caches. Cachers oftentimes go caching after the Event, which helps extend the social aspect, but the Event must stand on its own merits. This Reviewer has had a couple of cache hunt events slip through the review process, sometimes because the original cache page language was changed after publishing or sometimes because I simply wasn't paying enough attention. Because an event must stand on its own merits, it cannot be a part of a bigger event such as a fundraising event (running race, polar plunge, auction, etc.), the Alaska State Fair, watching New Year's fireworks, or other events that would occur whether or not the caching event would occur. The way to work around this limitation is to host an event with a geocaching focus close to the bigger event for a minimum of thirty minutes and manage the other activity through social media or other means.



CITOs are held by cachers to improve parks and other cache-friendly places and are a wonderful way to strengthen Land Manager relations. CITOs have morphed from merely being about picking up trash to any number of service-oriented activities including

removing trees from trails after a windstorm, planting new trees, removing invasive species, building trails, and any number of other constructive activities. If your CITO involves trash removal, please coordinate with the Land Manager for proper disposal of the debris shortly after the event. CITOs must have a posted start and end time and last at least one hour.

Both Events and CITOs must be submitted a minimum of fourteen days in advance.

Cachers are reminded to update the hidden coordinates for their puzzle and multi-caches if they change the location. Recently, I published a traditional cache and soon received an e-mail from another cacher that the new cache is too close to a hidden intermediate or final stage. A comparison of the current versus posted coordinates indicate the stage was apparently moved since the original publishing date. In this case, I opted to let the traditional cache ride because it wasn't the new Cache Owner's or the Reviewer's fault the cache has a proximity issue and in my judgement, the two caches were still separated by a sufficient distance to avoid any confusion in the field.

## Geocaching Goals

By Sean Gaither / ftl-ak

So every year New Year's resolutions happen and every year people try something new. A few years ago I myself set up some goals for myself. In September of 2012, I was living in California and needed a distraction. Already geocaching for 4 years, I knew I could go find things. I decided to start geocaching every weekend. That turned into geocaching every day even, before or after work. After a few months, I had my longest streak of 99 days! This was one day over my longest slump: 98 days. I decided to keep going. I was averaging over 100 geocaches a month because on my days off I wanted to get more than one. In 2013, I decided to make this my best year Geocaching. In 2009, I found 438 geocaches so I wanted to beat that. If I got one a day and a few on weekends I would be able to do this. At the end of 2013, I had 1016 geocaches - well over what I had intended. I felt pretty good. In 2014, I was trying to get 365 just one per day and came just short with 348. So for 2015 I set my goal for 730. That's an average of 2 per day. I end at 730 for 2015!

# Caching Tricks, Tips, and Tools

So what are my 2016 goals?

- Hide 24 geocaches and maintain them! (Excluding events \*no maintenance required! - That should be an event!)
- Find over 732 because this year we have a leap year so a 2 per day including Feb 29th will be 732.
- Have fun with friends. (Any time I am geocaching I usually am.)

What are your geocaching goals for 2016?

## Fairbanks Very Unique Cache

*By Louise Kempker / freeweez*

Going to visit Fairbanks? There is one very unique cache in Fairbanks: GCKK54 – Black & White & Red All Over.

This cache is unique in a couple of ways – first—look at the icon for the cache. It is very unique! I did not know about this cache, until I happen to tell some caching friends that I would be making a road trip from Anchorage to Fairbanks for the New Year. Planned on visiting the North Pole and Hot Springs.

Well---as all wonderful cachers do –they told me that getting this particular cache was a Must Do! Their exact words were something like, “If you go to Fairbanks, you absolutely MUST go and log this cache!” I usually listen to the wise words of other cachers, especially when it comes to logging a unique cache. Although—there was that one time I listened to other cachers and went for it, and .....well, that’s another story!

This cache is a ‘Web-Cam Cache’ and it is the ONLY one in all of Alaska!!! That is what makes it so unique! And I would not have known it was there if my friendly caching friends did not tell me about it. So now the news is passed along to you!

The cache page is very descriptive, and lets you know exactly how to go about logging this cache. Having friends/family/muggles along to help is a bonus! Since it was hidden in 2004 – that makes it about 11 years old!

Once this cache is logged by you....you can use it for a challenge cache in Anchorage, where you need to have logged one of every kind of cache! This one counts for that!!! So.....if you do not live in Fairbanks, or even if you do and have not logged this cache---this one is for you! Put it on your ‘to-do’ list! Every cacher has one of those!

Happy New Year ---Cache On!

## Anchorage Police Want Geocachers to Report Illegal Camps

*By Tim Obst / Dogliest Cache*

I was trying to fill a D/T square by going after a cache a ways into the woods of a large undeveloped area inside the Anchorage municipality ([GC3KW38](#)). But right next to the cache ground zero I found a large spruce tree being turned into a hunting stand with a cross pole to hang game. I reported it to the Anchorage Police Department and they sent a team out the very next day to check on it. The police found a large illegal camp nearby and they put into motion procedures to evict the illegal camp off of the private property. APD has to give a 15-day notice for abatement of illegal camps on public lands before they can make arrests of those refusing to leave.

The Anchorage Police Department said they would “absolutely like to know about camps you folks find in the woods”. They would like them reported to APD Dispatch at 786-8900 and would be very grateful for GPS coordinates for the camps. “GPS coordinates would absolutely help us in locating these camps, which are often very well hidden.”



# Caching Travelogues

## Changes in Latitudes...

### NorthWes travels from Alaska to Aruba (and back again)

By Wesley Skinner / NorthWes

Jimmy Buffet's song kept trickling through my brain on a recent cruise to the southern Caribbean...

*"These changes in latitudes, changes in attitudes, Nothing remains quite the same.*

*Through all of the islands and all of the highlands, If we couldn't laugh we would all go insane"*

Our family sailed out of Fort Lauderdale on a nine-day cruise in mid-December. The ship went south out of the port in late afternoon, turning southeast once it met the northern coast of Cuba. By late afternoon it turned south again to make the run through the Windward Passage between Cuba and Hispaniola, and the second full day at sea found us in the midst of the Caribbean without land in sight. The destination still lay many hours ahead – a trio of islands two dozen miles off the coast of Venezuela. Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao (known collectively as the ABC islands) are part of the 'Dutch Caribbean' (also called the Netherlands Antilles), under Dutch control since the early 1600s. These islands are allied with the Netherlands, and have a distinctive Dutch feel to their architecture and lifestyle. Geocachers will notice extensive use of Dutch in cache descriptions and logs. Their unique location well south of the storm belt means these islands are much drier than other Caribbean islands, with desert vegetation (including cactus) being the norm.

When the sun rose on the third morning Aruba lay in sight on the southeast horizon. Within an hour the ship was docked at Oranjestad – and so began our geocaching forays in latitude 12 North, just about 5,000 miles from Anchorage's latitude 61 North! Aruba's west coast features a broad band of casinos and high-rise hotels rising above golden sandy beaches ideal for sunbathing and snorkeling, while the wilder rocky east coast has few beaches and no safe water access. We rented a car and explored the entire island in one day, snorkeling at Arashi Beach, visiting California point and lighthouse, climbing the rock formations at Casibari (to complete the learning tasks for an earthcache), and

finishing up our day with a visit to Baby Beach at the island's southern tip. Of course, we found geocaches at each location!



*GCZ6JR Aruba Postcard Cache, looking north to the Caribbean*



*GC17WZE Casibari – Hooiberg earthcache*

Day four found us docked in Kralendijk, Bonaire. This island is an uplifted coral reef with layers and exposures studded with desert vegetation. There are *no* sand beaches, meaning access to the fabulous sights available to divers and snorkelers is across a coral rock formation awash in the surf. We braved the rocky zone to get in a couple of hours of snorkeling on the island's southwest corner, and can confirm the reef is gorgeous. Bonaire is rated the top diving destination in the Caribbean, and driving around the fringe of the island meant frequent encounters with small groups of divers at their vehicles. The most common warning sign along the narrow pavement shows a diver waddling across the road! Our sightseeing rewarded us with some great views and interesting caches, including a find on the oldest cache in the Dutch Antilles (placed in 2001). This island had a far more 'local' feel to it, without the high rise buildings we'd seen on Aruba.

# Caching Travelogues



*GC316E Welcome to Kunuku-Land (ammocan in place since 2001, in the midst of the roughest ground I've ever walked across to find a cache)*



*GC3CXXC Bonaire's Staghorn Coral Beaches earthcache (looks like sand at a distance... but it's loose staghorn coral on top of a slickly-worn solid coral base)*



*Gateway to Paradise – GC5HC7N Beautiful Cas Abao – the beach beckons*



*Cas Abao, Curacao – Sand, sea, and sky – uncrowded except for fish – there were crowds of fish from the beach to the outer edge of the reef a hundred feet offshore.*

The fifth day of the cruise began with a pre-dawn docking at Willemsted, Curacao. Our schedule only allowed the ship to stop here for six hours, which limited the amount of sightseeing we could squeeze in. Curacao has perhaps the most extensive continuous European history in the islands of the Caribbean, with strong mercantile influences dating back into the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately the few hours available on our port visit kept me from having time to wander through the well-preserved downtown and port areas of Willemstad, but I'll catch up on my next visit. The oldest synagogue in the Western Hemisphere is here, as well as one of the most interesting pier-side open-air markets we've ever encountered (including merchants from nearby Venezuela). Of the few caches we did, the one located at the beach where we spent the bulk of our time was a real delight. The big cache is hidden right in amongst the structure at the watersports desk, meaning we got to sit and chat with the locals (who use the cache to meet visiting geocachers!) I'm a big fan of caches that bring me to new places and show me local residents' favorite vistas, and this cache earned its favorite point easily for those reasons. This opening line from my cache logs sums it all up: *Hands down, this is one of the top five destinations geocaching has brought me to visit in the past decade!* An added plus to our beach destination was the access route, which passed right by an earthcache (are you surprised?) featuring flamingos feeding amidst a



*NorthWes was here, and GC5HC7N can be found in the structures seen beyond the Wolf. This beach is far enough from the port of Willemsted that it's not flooded by waves of cruise ship visitors, yet it's fully-equipped for divers, snorkelers, folks looking for lunch, and geocachers too...*



*GC2AQ6P Salt Pond Curacao – with a large complement of wild flamingos.*

geologically-unique salt pan feature.

Leaving Curacao behind was difficult, but after another two full days at sea we were alongside the Navy Pier in Key West, Florida for a full day of activities. I went ahead of the family to get the rental car from the airport, and planned my drive back downtown to let me stop for a couple of iconic virtual caches, earthcaches, and one webcam find. Our explorations took us out to the Key West Deer National Wildlife Refuge, where rangers have placed a letterbox, a physical cache, and an earthcache which help educate visitors about wildlife encounters and the geology to be observed in the lower Keys. We pushed on



*GC2WGQ8 – Later Alligator! – 2006 GeocacheAlaska geocoin and a six-foot local, on the Key West Deer National Wildlife Refuge. This alligator was patrolling alongside the observation deck.*

just a bit farther to drive the Seven Mile Bridge and poke around in Bahia Honda State Park. This gem is an anchor site for Florida's robust geocache placement series made by state park rangers across the entire state, and the hunt here didn't disappoint us at all in terms of great views and neat little hidden places we'd otherwise have just driven past. The Key West area has a huge variety of cache opportunities, and is an ideal 'caching vacation' destination in the winter months. Once away from the bustle of the town, we relaxed again into island mode – a great way to finish a wonderful cruise!

A cache worthy of additional mention is a travel bug hotel near the Fort Lauderdale Airport and Cruiseport. Tucked away on a dead-end road beyond a municipal park, the IGFA museum, a huge Bass Pro Shop, and the largest retail store I've ever seen aimed specifically at scuba/snorkel divers was a big beautifully-made cache hidden in plain sight. **GC64W6R Tag Nine – DIVE DiVe** cache was a piece of craftsmanship, and the 'found it' logs reflect how well it's being received by finders.

### Check out the cache pages for these other events!

[50 States with the Lackeys](#), December 5, Juneau

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

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

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

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

[11th Annual Geofest](#), December 18, Anchorage

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

# 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](mailto: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](mailto: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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