

Around The State



February 2016



Photo credit:
Superstar! at [GC5WDF3](#)
By Rion Ward of geocaching team [RCWard](#).

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

[Light Up The Night - Queso and Cocoa](#), February 4, 6pm, Anchorage

[Pop-up picnic](#), February 7, Noon, Anchorage

[Stammtisch Burrito Tuesday: Burrito Strikes Back](#), February 9, 5:30pm, Anchorage

["ROMANCE???"](#), February 14, 2:14pm, Anchorage

[Geocaching Event Hosting FUNDamentals - ANC](#), February 18, 6:55pm

[Resolution 21+](#), February 21, 5pm, Anchorage

[PRE-LEAP FLASH MOB FEBRUARY 28, 2016 3-330PM](#), February 28, 3pm, Palmer/Wasilla

[Who made this extra day!](#), February 29, 6pm, Anchorage

[Leap Year Souvenir Event](#), February 29, 7pm, Bethel

[Stammtisch Taco Tuesday IV Return of the Taco!](#), March 1, 5pm, Anchorage

[4th ANNUAL MARCH BIRTHDAY FLASH MOB \(AN EVENT\)!!](#), March 12, Noon, Seward

[MO' PIE! RIDES AGAIN!](#), March 14, 6:28pm, Anchorage

GeocacheAlaska! Updates

President's Corner

By Wes Skinner / NorthWes



Event – the geocache type that means you have to meet up with other cachers to log a find. This year, one of GeocacheAlaska! Inc's primary efforts is to boost the number of events held across Alaska during the course of the year. Our goal is to equip geocachers with the training and tools to be successful at hosting their own events, and to make sure the resources of GeocacheAlaska! are available to sustain that effort. In the coming month you'll see communication about how to host an event, how to ask GeocacheAlaska! Inc for support, and tips on making your event memorable.

Gatherings of cachers can be as simple as a meet and greet, an organized site cleanup effort (CITO), or a highly organized geocaching education seminar. Regardless of the event's purpose, we've learned that events constitute the fabric holding the social side of our game together. Cachers who attend local events are far more likely to continue with the game across many years, and they also seem to become the steady reliable group who's building up the game by hiding caches for others to find and passing on their knowledge to newer cachers.

Keep your eye on GeocacheAlaska!'s published events, newsletter, Instagram account, and Facebook group to learn about what's coming. For example, the Event Committee has teamed up with the Education Committee to bring a February Eduvent about how to host an event, and there's rumblings ongoing about a return event extravaganza at Spencer Glacier via the Alaska Railroad this summer. Additionally, in response to member feedback in the Anchorage area, GeocacheAlaska!-hosted CITO events are going to target park and trail-head sites closer to the city's core.

Learn how to host an event of your own, and be a part of how the geocaching game grows!

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 Traditional Alaskan Geocaches that have the most uploaded images from cache logs. We have eliminated all Events, Virtual, Earthcaches, and archived caches from the list to look only at active Traditional caches in Alaska, which have spurred geocachers to take and upload images with their logs. Chances are that there is something interesting to see at these caches!

- #1 [Kiss a Moose](#) = 332 Images
- #2 [Anchorage – Big Wild Life](#) = 168 Images
- #3 [Bin Caching TB Hotel](#) = 152 Images
- #4 [Lil Miss Mollie](#) = 147 Images
- #5 [A Tribute to Patsy Ann](#) = 121 Images
- #6 [Mendenhall Glacier Mini](#) = 105 Images
- #7 [Skagway Trail System](#) = 102 Images
- #8 [Revilla up Hilla](#) = 92 Images
- #9 [Mt Roberts Tram/ Fr. Brown's Cross](#) = 90 Images
- #10 [Cache Across America – Alaska \(Version 2.0\)](#) = 90 Images (PMO)

Look for another Top Ten list next month.

Editor's Notes

By Cathy Wilmeth / *The Firefly*

Ahoy there! Your monthly newsletter needs you! All geocachers are **encouraged** to submit articles, photos, and ideas. Have you found a great cache lately? Have a DNF story to share? Want to suggest an event? Send your thoughts this way!

The submission deadline for the next issue of *Around The State* is **February 20, 2016**. I'm happy to help with any questions or concerns you may have about submitting! Send to editor@geocachealaska.org

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



Mystery/Puzzle/Multi-Cache Hidden Waypoints

Last month I reminded cachers to update the intermediate and final waypoints of their Mystery/Puzzle/Multi-Caches if circumstances require changing the cache location so new caches can be checked against the current placement for compliance with the 528' proximity guideline. If you are thinking about placing a Mystery/Puzzle/Multi-Cache, consider the following:

1. The final stage of a Mystery/Puzzle cache must be within two miles of the posted coordinates. This helps cachers determine which puzzles to solve and provides a hint to other hidiers that if an apparently good hide location is uncached, there just might be a Puzzle/Mystery cache final state in the vicinity. There is no limit for how far the final stage of a Multi-Cache can be from the starting coordinates as long as the Cache Owner can provide a maintenance plan for taking care of far-flung stages.
2. The starting bogus coordinates of a Mystery/Puzzle cache should be identified as "virtual." Doing so will keep the starting coordinates from blocking placement of nearby traditional cache. However, if the Cache Owner places something at the starting coordinates necessary to complete the cache (for instance, tools), then the starting coordinates should be identified as "physical" to keep a new cache from encroaching too closely.
3. The starting and subsequent coordinates for a Multi-Cache may be either physical or virtual. A physical stage is *anything* placed by the Cache Owner, including, but not limited to containers with coordinates or other information, tags with coordinates, or coordinates written on an object (in compliance with the [Defacement Guideline I.1.4](#), of course!). Physical stages for the *same* Multi-Cache may be as close together or as far apart as the Cache Owner desires. However, physical stages of a Multi-Cache must comply with the 528-foot proximity guideline with respect to physical stages of any other nearby caches. Reflective tacks for night caches are an exception to the physical stage requirement. Virtual stages are stages where the cacher can find information already at the location (numbers

on an interpretive sign, a date on a statue, the number of windows on a building, etc.) and are not subject to the proximity guideline. For more information about multi-cache saturation/proximity, please refer to [Guideline I.1.7](#).



Due to the miserably low snow year experienced around the state which makes Winter cache maintenance easier, I have been doing some cache reaping for caches that have not been maintained since last Summer/Autumn to get a head start on the Spring cleaning effort. As with past reaping efforts, I always post a note on the cache page requesting the Cache Owner to perform cache maintenance or to post a Note on the cache page to inform the caching community and the local Reviewer about future maintenance plans. I interpret no response to a Reviewer Note as the cache being abandoned by the Cache Owner and archive the cache at some point in the future. Archival is reversible within a reasonable amount of time if the Cache Owner contacts the local Reviewer with a request to unarchive the cache and the cache complies with the current Guidelines. In cache dense areas, it is imperative for the Cache Owner to act quickly because some cachers pounce on newly available real estate literally within minutes of a cache being archived. Reaping is the least enjoyable part of a Reviewer's accountabilities, but it is necessary to maintain the fun-factor of the game because no one enjoys sifting through hundreds of long disabled or missing caches. During five years of Reviewing, I have published nearly 7100 caches and archived nearly 2500 caches. I would really like the publish/archive ratio to be higher, but that is up to Cache Owners to make that possible by following the [Cache Maintenance Guideline II.1.2](#) and [Cache Permanence Guideline II.1.5](#).

Caching Tricks, Tips, and Tools

Footwear Fit for Icy Warm Winter Trail Conditions (An Equipment Opinion Article)

By Wes Skinner / NorthWes

This winter is the third in a row where my jaunts out and about on the trails, streets, and sidewalks of Anchorage are hazardous because of wet and icy conditions. Just getting from the house across my driveway to the pickup has been difficult, and making the effort to remain upright while walking dogs (my primary 'cover' activity while out caching) has become tiresome to the point of keeping me indoors these past few months.

My advancing age has made me wary of falling – in part because I tore a shoulder joint to shreds and had surgery to repair that thanks to a fall several years ago. However, my age hasn't kept me from learning from past mistakes. My footwear hasn't been helping me keep traction on wet ice, and when I saw how my daughters were actually stepping up their running distances outdoors this winter I wanted to know how they kept their footing. Their answer was simple – Icebug brand footwear. They had conquered the slippery running trails, and offered to show me their simple solution.

All three of them had bought a pair of running shoes from Skinny Raven that had carbide steel studs built into the sole of the shoe. Frustrated by the same sort of conditions that were keeping me indoors, an innovative team of designers at a Swedish shoe company came up with a combination of grip pattern, rubber compound, and carbide steel studs that were comfortable to wear while virtually conquering the slippage problem faced in northern tier winter weather. The shoes are expensive, but so was my surgery – and I was going a bit stir-crazy from feeling trapped indoors thanks to slippery hiking conditions. My daughters raved about how comfortable their shoes were (despite having a footbed peppered with steel traction studs), and couldn't wait to see their dad in his own pair. Unfortunately, my foot is a bit wide, and the running shoe versions didn't accommodate that. No problem, as there are several varieties of boots available with the same traction technology. My wife and I now have stylish black side-zip ankle boots that are ideal for our style of winter dog-walking / hiking here around Anchorage's parks. They're comfortable and warm, and we have been amazed at how the boots grip icy walking surfaces and snowy trails alike. After showing

off my new boots at work, several coworkers have purchased the reinforced-toe cold-weather heavy work boot version made to conquer the traction problem encountered working around an icy outdoor construction workplace. I'm eyeing purchasing a pair of those boots for myself, but have to say that my current pair did a stellar job during an afternoon caching dog-walk ramble across the trails of Far North Bicentennial Park.

The Icebug brand of footwear can be purchased online for a bit of savings via Amazon. I suggest rather than saving a few pennies you take yourself down to Skinny Raven and see the fit and finish of the variety of options available. Skinny Raven's a knowledgeably-staffed local store whose employees will make sure your purchase is the best possible 'fit' for your needs. And – the owners have been willing supporters of the Geocaching game in a most interesting way in the past. Do yourself a favor – get your feet shod with the best-gripping footwear available – and buy local from a small business while you take care of yourself too.

(This article does not constitute an official endorsement of Icebug-brand shoes or Skinny Raven by GeocacheAlaska! Inc, and represents the personal opinions of Wes Skinner)



A combination of grip design, rubber composition, and carbide steel studs helps the Icebug shoe conquer winter traction conditions.

Recent Events

Check out the cache pages for these recent events!

[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



Upcoming Events

OFF THE LOG.....

Best Laid Plans – Disasters – Lessons Learned

By Louise Kempker / freeweez

Thursday, April 21st- come and listen as GeocacheAlaska! brings Alaska Cachers to share their personal stories: funny, sad and sweet There's always a place where Cachers gather and stories are told! This evening features true stories born from those moments when the best laid caching plans maybe turn into disaster and then lessons are learned! OR...when we just want to tell someone, "You'll never guess what happened..."
10 Cachers will each have 5 minutes to tell their stories!

Place? BP Center, Anchorage

Date? Thursday, April 21st

Time? 6:45pm

This is the GeocacheAlaska! Eduvent for April and will be available for remote listening pleasure!

The Best Laid Plans.....The Disasters.....and The Lessons Learned!
Yes! You have a story to tell!

Contact: freeweez (Louise) at lekempker@uaa.alaska.edu to get your name on the list!

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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