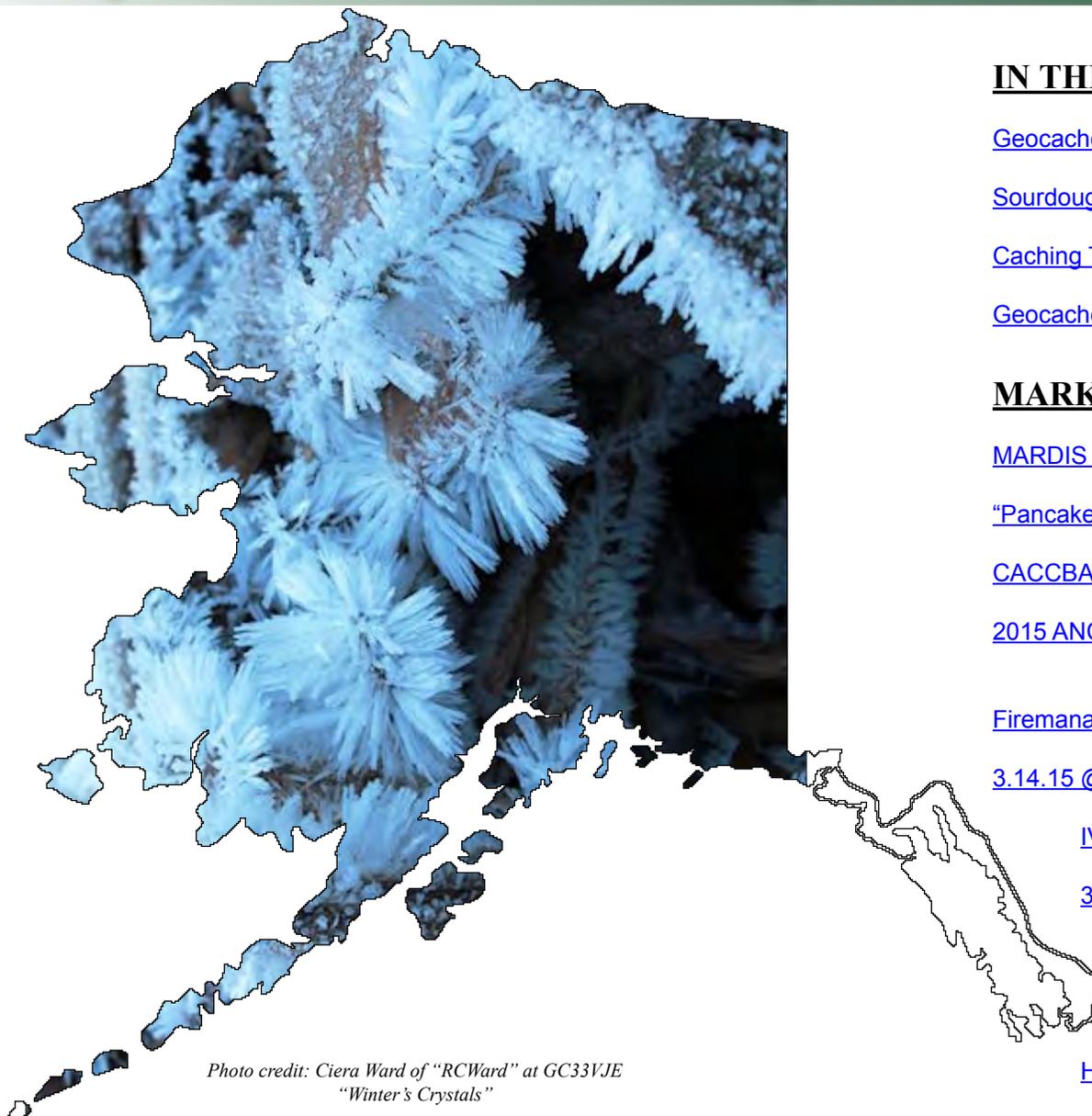


Around The State



February 2015



*Photo credit: Ciera Ward of "RCWard" at GC33VJE
"Winter's Crystals"*

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

[MARDIS GRAS POTLUCK](#), February 15, 1pm, Talkeetna

["Pancake Day" Stammtisch](#), February 17, 6:15am, Anchorage

[CACCBAG's Northern Lights Visit Event](#), February 26, 6pm, Anchorage

[2015 ANCHORAGE FUR RENDEZVOUS](#), February 28, 9am,
Anchorage

[Firemanak And Friends](#), March 1, 9am, Anchorage

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

[IV + I = MO' PIE!](#), March 14, 6:28pm, Anchorage

[3rd ANNUAL MARCH BIRTHDAY FLASH MOB](#),
March 14, 1pm, Seward

[Geocaching for Fun - SCS EduVent](#), March 16, 6:30pm,
Soldotna

[How to Build and Hide a Geocache - SCS EduVent](#), March 18,
6:30pm, Soldotna

GeocacheAlaska! Updates

2015 GeocacheAlaska! Membership Survey Results

By Scott Aleckson / SSO JOAT

Back in November, we ran an online survey to solicit GeocacheAlaska! (GCAK) member feedback on a number of topics about the organization. This is the first of a multi-part series addressing this survey. Over the next couple months, the Board of Directors will be addressing the specific areas of the survey and what is being done within the organization.

This survey was done to help the Board of Directors (BoD) on where we should focus our efforts for the coming year. We had exactly 100 people participate in the survey. The first question asked about membership status in GCAK. From that, there were 86 Sourdough members and 11 Cheechako members who took the survey. The remaining 2 people indicated that they were not members, which caused the survey to exit without collecting any more responses from them.

The Sourdough members were first given 5 questions about their Sourdough membership status. The Cheechako members were given one question about their membership. After that, all 98 members were given the same questions. This article provides the raw results of the survey. Most questions would allow the participant to skip if they chose not to answer, so the number of responses to a given question may be less than the 98 people who completed the survey. The questions were broken up into topic groups, as follows.

Membership

Sourdough members were asked, "As a paying member of GeocacheAlaska!, do you feel that your membership dues of \$20 per year are reasonable and appropriate?" Of the 84 responses, 93% of them said yes and 7% said no. This question was followed by an open-entry comment box, which had entries by 16 people. All comments are being considered by the BoD.

The next question asked Sourdough members, "As a Sourdough Member, you were issued a personalized, trackable nametag. How important is this to your decision to be a Sourdough Member?". Of the 83 responses, 77% said it was a nice benefit, 12% were indifferent, 8% said it was very important, and 2% said they don't like the nametags. There were also 24 open-entry comments.

Sourdough members were then asked, "As a Sourdough Member, you receive discounted pricing on purchasing items from our event and online stores. How important is this to your decision to be a Sourdough Member?" Of the 82 responses, 74% said it was a nice benefit, 15% were indifferent, 9% said it was very important, and 2% said they don't agree with having Sourdough pricing. There were also 10 open-entry responses.

Sourdough members were also asked, "As a Sourdough Member, you are eligible to serve on the Board of Directors and vote in general elections. How important is this to your decision to be a Sourdough Member?" There were 82 responses that break down as 70% saying it was a nice benefit, 17% saying they were indifferent, 11% saying it was very important, and 2% saying that they disagree with limiting voting and board service to Sourdough Members. We also had 9 open-entry comments provided.

The last question for only Sourdough members was an open-entry comments field asking, "As a Sourdough Member of GeocacheAlaska!, what do you want to see your organization focus on to ensure your continued support as a Sourdough Member?" There were 63 responses that included a wide variety of suggestions. The BoD is working through the list and assessing viability of these entries.

Our Cheechako Members did not see the previous questions and our Sourdough Members did not see the following question. We asked Cheechako Members, "As a Cheechako Member of GeocacheAlaska!, we would like to know why you are not one of our Sourdough Members (Select all that apply):" We only had 8 responses to this question and remember that one person could provide multiple answers. The results were: 50% do not see any benefit to being a Sourdough Member, 38% were just casual geocachers, 25% do not know what a Sourdough Member is, and 13% say the cost was too expensive. There were also 4 answers that received zero votes: Not interested in Sourdough benefits, only here for the Newsletter, do not agree with what GCAK! is doing, and do not like the way GCAK! is being managed. There was room for open-entry comments at the end, which received just 5 entries, all of which were neutral comments with the predominant theme being along the lines of not knowing what Sourdough Membership was.

GeocacheAlaska! Updates

Advocacy

The remaining questions on the survey were provided to all members with the next section relating to Advocacy issues. The first of these questions was, "Are you aware that GeocacheAlaska! obtains a permit from Alaska State Parks on an annual basis that allows geocachers to place geocaches within many of our State Park lands?" There were 92 responses to this question, with 87% saying yes and 13% saying no.

They were then asked, "Have you placed a geocache using our Alaska State Parks permit during the last 3 years?" There were 93 responses with 80% saying no, and 20% saying yes.

The final question on this section was, "Which of the following statements most closely matches your general impression of GeocacheAlaska! inc." There were 89 responses, which included 82% choosing "The state-wide Alaskan geocaching organization" and 18% choosing "That geocaching club in Anchorage". This was followed by an open-entry comments field, which received 19 replies. These are being closely reviewed by the BoD.

Education

This section relates to the activities of our Education Committee and starts by asking, "Have you attended (in person) any GeocacheAlaska!-hosted Educational Event (EduVent) at a formal event site (either hosting or satellite) during the last 12 months?" We had 94 responses which broke down as 52% saying no and 48% saying yes.

The next question asks, "Have you remotely attended (via phone and internet connection) any GeocacheAlaska!-hosted Educational Events (EduVents) during the last year? (Do not include attending at any satellite event sites that had a published event listing)." There were 93 responses which included 76% saying no and 24% saying yes.

The next question was an open-entry comments field asking, "If you have attended any EduVents, what topic have you found most useful?" This was answered by 43 people with a wide variety of topics that they find useful.

The final question on Education was also an open-entry field, which asked, "Please list any topics you'd like to see presented at an EduVent during the next year." There were 29 responses to this question that included a wide variety of EduVent topic suggestions. The BoD and Education Committee are closely reviewing all the open-entry suggestions to help develop a plan for future EduVent offerings.

Events

This section is related to the Events Committee and starts off by asking, "Have you attended an event published and hosted by GeocacheAlaska! during the last 12 months?" This received 91 responses which break down to 66% saying yes and 34% saying no.

We then provided an open-entry response question, "Think about all of the events you have attended over the last 12 months. List one or two events that you felt were the best event of the year and briefly explain why they were the best." There were 49 responses to this question with a very wide variety of responses. The BoD and Events Committee are reviewing the listed events and other comments.

Next we asked, "Are you aware that GeocacheAlaska! helps our members host events by donating some door prize items or limited financial support for your geocaching events?" We had 91 responses including 73% saying yes and 27% saying no.

The next question asked people to select one choice for, "How do you generally learn about upcoming events?" The responses were 28% for Instant Notifications, 24% at the geocaching.com website, 16% in the geocaching.com newsletter, 14% in our GeocacheAlaska! Newsletter, 8% by word of mouth, 7% on Facebook, and 3% on our GeocacheAlaska! Forums. There were also 13 open-entry comments entered after this question which described combinations of the above answers or suggestions about using the media tools.

GeocacheAlaska! Updates

The next question was a bit of a novelty item and asked folks to rate 9 different types of Events on a 6-point scale of how much they like that type of event. A score of 1 is “strongly dislike” and a score of 6 is “strongly like”. The combined average rating of these event types, according to 87 responders, is:

- 5.35 – Outdoor Adventures
- 5.24 – BBQ or Picnic Outdoor Meet-n-Greet
- 5.13 – Educational / Classes (EduVents)
- 5.08 – CITO Events
- 5.02 – Holiday Social Events
- 4.82 – Themed Social Events
- 4.78 – Camping Events
- 4.72 – Restaurant-Based Meet-n-Greet
- 4.59 – Flash Mobs (Brief <30 minutes)

Then we asked the folks to select, “What days of the week do you prefer to attend an event?” The question allowed multiple choices and was completed by 77 of our poll takers. The results are:

- 88% - Saturday
- 51% - Sunday
- 49% - Friday
- 48% - Thursday
- 38% - Wednesday
- 35% - Tuesday
- 34% - Monday

Continuing with the event theme, we asked, “What time of day do you prefer to attend geocaching events? Again we allowed multiple selections to be made by each of the 81 responders with the following results:

- 73% - Evening
- 56% - Afternoon
- 37% - Noon
- 36% - Morning
- 17% - Late Night

Finally, we provided an open-entry comment question asking, “Are there any specific Event ideas you’d like GeocacheAlaska! to host during the next year?” We received 23 responses filled with suggestions, which our BoD and the Events Committee are reviewing for ideas as they plan the coming year.

Fundraising

This section is seeking feedback on our branded merchandise, such as geocoins and pathtags. We start off by asking, “Have you purchased any GeocacheAlaska!-branded Trackables (geocoins, nomads, license plates, trek tags or other trackable products featuring GeocacheAlaska! name and/or logo) in the last 12 months?” We received 91 responses, of which 65% said yes and 35% said no.

Next we asked, “Are there any specific geocaching products (trackables, tools of the trade, etc) you would like to see in the GeocacheAlaska! store which are not already stocked?” We had 80 people respond with 80% no and 20% yes. This question allowed for open-entry comments and 18 people provided a variety of suggestions for products to sell. The BoD and Fundraising Committee are considering these suggestions in planning for future store stocking.

To get some ideas about why people buy our geocoins, we provided a number of statements and asked, “Consider GeocacheAlaska! geocoins that we have produced over the years. Select all the statements that you agree with.” There were 81 people who responded to this question with the following ratings:

- 64% - Buy geocoins for my personal collection
- 41% - Buy geocoins to financially support the organization
- 38% - Buy geocoins to trade or give away (such as FTF prizes)
- 26% - Buy geocoins to release for traveling
- 25% - Prefer the expensive precious metal geocoins
- 19% - Prefer the cheaper enamel colored coins
- 17% - Are not interested in buying geocoins

This question also allowed for open-entry comments and we received 19 suggestions about our geocoins and what people liked or wanted to see more of. The BoD and Fundraising Committee are looking at all suggestions.

GeocacheAlaska! Updates

The next question was very similar, but about pathtags. We asked, “Consider GeocacheAlaska! Pathtags that we have produced in recent years. Please select all the answers that apply:” There were 77 responses, which ranked as follows:

- 57% - Buy pathtags for my personal collection
- 52% - Buy pathtags to trade, give away, or use for SWAG
- 47% - Buy pathtags to financially support the organization
- 26% - Are not interested in buying pathtags

We again allowed open-entry comments and received 12 comments with ideas and suggestions about our pathtags. These are being reviewed by the BoD and the Fundraising Committee.

The final question in this section asked, “Do you have ideas for the 2015 GeocacheAlaska! geocoin or pathtags? For instance, is there any particular subject, theme, or design that you would like to see on a geocoin or a pathtag set?” There were 32 open-entry responses to this question containing a very wide variety of suggestions. These are being reviewed by the BoD and Fundraising Committee for future ideas on geocoin and pathtag projects.

Communications

This section deals with the communications between our organization and its members. The first question asks, “GeocacheAlaska! maintains a website at <http://www.geocachealaska.org>. On average, how often have you visited the website over the last 12 months?” We received 89 responses as follows:

- 31% - Quarterly
- 26% - Daily
- 19% - Weekly
- 18% - Once or Twice
- 3% - Never
- 2% - Daily

Next, we asked the open-entry question, “What information or features would you like to see added to the website to make it more useful for you?” There were 29 responses provided to this question with a wide variety of suggestions. These are being reviewed by the BoD and Communications Committee.

We next asked, “GeocacheAlaska! hosts a discussion forum at <http://geocache-alaska.proboards.com>. During the last 12 months, how often did you visit the forums?” There were 88 responses to this question as follows:

- 42% - Never
- 32% - Once or Twice
- 10% - Weekly
- 7% - Quarterly
- 6% - Monthly
- 3% - Daily

We followed that with an open-entry comments question asking, “What information or features would you like to see added to or changed in the forums to make them more useful for you?” And we have 20 responses that the BoD and Communications Committee are reviewing for suggestions.

The next question asks, “GeocacheAlaska! has a Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/GeocacheAlaska> and a members-only Facebook Group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/geocachealaska>. On average, how often have you used Facebook during the last 12 months?” Our 89 responses were as follows:

- 37% - Daily
- 32% - Never
- 13% - Weekly
- 10% - Monthly
- 8% - Once or Twice
- 1% - Quarterly

GeocacheAlaska! Updates

We next addressed our Newsletter (which you are reading right now, thank you!) by asking, "GeocacheAlaska! published a monthly Newsletter, which is emailed to our members, available for download from our website, and posted on our Facebook Group. Please select the sections that you like best." The 81 responders were allowed to select multiple answers with the following results:

- 83% - Caching Tips, Tricks & Tools
- 72% - Upcoming Events
- 63% - GeocacheAlaska! Updates
- 62% - Photos
- 62% - Reviewer's Corner
- 53% - Top Ten List
- 49% - Caching Travelogues
- 49% - President's Corner

There were also 16 open-entry comments left as well, which are being reviewed by the BoD and the Communications Committee.

We separately asked, "What features or content would you like to see added, changed, or removed from the Newsletter?" This received 11 responses, which are being reviewed by the BoD and the Communications Committee.

Finally, we asked, "What methods of communication would you prefer for receiving GeocacheAlaska! news and information? (Select all that apply)". We had 87 folks respond to this multi-selection list with the following results:

- 89% - Email
- 55% - Newsletter
- 36% - Facebook Page
- 32% - Website
- 28% - Facebook Group
- 10% - Forums
- 1% - Twitter

There were 9 open-entry comments also provided with this question. These are being reviewed by the BoD and Communications Committee.

Board of Directors

The final section of this survey asked for some feedback on the Board of Directors. We started by bluntly asking, "How well do you think the GeocacheAlaska! Board of Directors is doing?" We received 87 responses with the following results:

- 54% - Excellent
- 22% - Good
- 11% - Don't Know
- 6% - Average
- 6% - Poor
- 1% - Terrible

This was followed with an open-entry comments section that received 21 comments from the membership. The BoD is closely reviewing all of these comments and suggestions.

The last question asked, "Would you be interested in serving on the GeocacheAlaska! Inc. Board of Directors?" and we had 83 responses to this question. A full 88% of them said no and 12% said yes. This was also followed by an open-entry comments area that received 23 comment entries, which are being closely reviewed by the BoD.

The Board of Directors would like to thank everyone who participated in this survey. It was by far our largest turnout on a member's opinion survey. Over the next couple of Newsletter editions, the BoD and the various Committees will be publishing articles that address specific issues from this survey.



GeocacheAlaska! Updates

President's Corner

By Wes Skinner / NorthWes



There are three items to draw your attention to this month. Please take time to read and follow up on my remarks.

Trish Fredieu (AKLoisandClark), by invitation at the last Board meeting and following a discussion of the responsibilities involved, has graciously offered in writing to accept the position of Secretary on the GeocacheAlaska! Inc. (GCAK) Board of Directors for a term of two years. Article VI of our Bylaws describes how vacancies are filled on the Board in between elections as follows: "Vacancies on the Board shall be appointed by a majority vote of the remaining Directors." Your Board of Directors were delighted to vote their approval of Trish to the Secretary position. When you see Trish, be sure and thank her for stepping up to fill this important need! We're seeking a member-at-large candidate right now, to include attributes requested during our recent membership survey.

Speaking of that membership survey, the Board identified several themes across the remarks made. Members want more education opportunities, with our Eduvent Series drawing strong support. Expansion of material benefits for Sourdough membership has driven study of what might be added. Many of the comments illustrated support for maintaining and building up a broad range of communication methods with membership as well, including this well-liked newsletter, our Facebook outreach, our website, and our emails regarding specific issues. The Board is still engaged in discussion of what membership has expressed in the survey, with a goal of implementing what members have requested. Don't hesitate to make remarks to your Board regarding ideas to build up GeocacheAlaska! Inc.

By now you're probably aware our Alaska State Park geocaching permit has been approved, with two major added benefits. First, the permit now covers ALL state-park-managed units across Alaska. Additionally, based on our long track record of maintaining a good working relationship with the land managers at Alaska State Parks, their Permit Officer has issued the permit for a six-year period (renewal's not needed until January of 2020) with an annual requirement to report cache listings by park unit. The work done by your Advocacy Committee in 2014's drawn-out detailed review process reaped an incredible dividend in the form of this long-term permit covering the *entire* state. With our State Park per-

mit firmly in hand, we're turning our attention to other advocacy goals to further secure our ability to geocache on public lands. Visit your GeocacheAlaska! Inc. [website](#) to learn more about the permit, how you have to mark containers, and other important details regarding the statewide park permit (and your statewide caching organization too!)

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 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](#) = 264 Images
- #2 [Anchorage – Big Wild Life](#) = 143 Images
- #3 [Lil Miss Mollie](#) = 117 Images
- #4 [Bin Caching TB Hotel](#) = 106 Images
- #5 [A Tribute to Patsy Ann](#) = 90 Images
- #6 [Mendenhall Glacier Mini](#) = 81 Images
- #7 [Revilla up Hilla](#) = 78 Images
- #8 [Mt Roberts Tram/ Fr. Brown's Cross](#) = 76 Images
- #9 [Cache Across America – Alaska \(Version 2.0\)](#) = 72 Images (PMO)
- #10 [Gaawt'ak.aan](#) = 72 Images (Tied with #9)

This marks one full year of unique Top Ten lists in our Newsletter. Next month we will start to revisit some of our old Top Ten lists to see if the standings have changed in the last year.



GeocacheAlaska! Updates

GeocacheAlaska! Mail Order Store Sale!

By Scott Aleckson / SSO JOAT

A number of items have been put on sale through our online mail order store! You can access the mail order store on our website by clicking the [Alaska Geocoins](#) menu button from any page of our site. At that page you'll find detailed information about our currently stocked GeocacheAlaska!-branded items. Click the link near the top of the page to enter our online store pages, which are serviced through PayPal. Please note that we have two different online stores based on your level of membership. Our paying Sourdough members receive a discount on all merchandise orders. Once you enter the store, Sourdough members need to click the link at the top of the page to get your discounted prices.

We are just about out of the 2014 Spectacled Eider geocoins, so if you meant to pick up one of these unique GeocacheAlaska! coins, you better do it now. There are still a number of 2014 Birds of Alaska pathtag sets in stock and we have just reduced the mail order price per set of 5 tags. There are a few 2013 pathtag sets left as well. These have been discounted for the last few months, but we have cut the price one last time. These coins and pathtag sets are limited to original production. When they're gone, they're gone.

We also have a few copies of the 2015 Photo Calendar left. We've knocked the price down to try and clear the last of those before they "spoil". Remember that all of these GeocacheAlaska! brand items were developed by our volunteer members and purchased by the club as fundraising items. All proceeds from these sales go back into club functions to support things like geocaching events and door prizes. Your support is greatly appreciated!

Editor's Notes

By Cathy Wilmeth / The_Firefly

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



Where has your Sourdough Nametag been seen lately?

One of the signature benefits of Sourdough Membership is your Trackable Nametag. If you don't have yours in hand, contact us to find out how to get in on the upcoming Nametag contests! Here's a few photos from Sourdough Member NorthWes' files.



Next month we're announcing retroactive winners for 1) most Discovery logs from 2013, 2) most Cache Visits from 2014 and 3) most logged miles from the original issue date through January 31, 2015.



Start recording your nametag's adventures now! From March 1st to May 31st we'll be looking for the most Discoveries, most Cache Visits and most miles logged - get your Sourdough Nametag in action now!



Beaches from Barrow to Bermuda!



Caching Travelogues

Caching Hawai'i

By Wes Skinner / NorthWes

The New Year found my wife and I on Oahu, at the Hale Koa Hotel with my dad. The hotel (a 'military recreation camp' nestled amidst the 72 acres of green space on Ft Derussy) sits on Waikiki Beach right next to the Hilton Hawaiian Resort. We've made this a tradition over the past few years, relaxing mid-winter on the fabulous beach with occasional forays out for geocaches.

Honolulu traffic is among some of the worst in the country, and we carefully plan our trips out of the city so as to miss as much of the bad traffic as possible. This year we accomplished five finds (and one DNF) walking around downtown Waikiki, and nine other cache finds on a drive out to the North Shore of Oahu. Another day found us at the airport very early for a hop over to Hawaii (the big island), for a madcap one day visit with 15 cache finds and another DNF. On prior visits we'd hiked some of the incredible ridge trails, kayaked across Kaneohe Bay, and paddled up the Kahala Stream, but this trip saw us target caches which were for the most part more accessible due to my dad's mobility issues. Here's a



GC59GT7

few of our favorite caches from this trip, with a picture or two to illustrate why.

While strolling the beaches along Waikiki, you'll notice they're very wide in some spots and very, very narrow to non-existent in other spots. No matter the condition of the beach, you'll find there's access across the properties right on the shoreline. The Sheraton has a narrow sidewalk on a sea wall above the ocean, where you can peer down and see tropical fish at the foot of the seawall in calm conditions when the light's good (like the half hour before and after sunrise). Right there along the beach walk above the water (and a small beach too) is [GC59GT7 Waikiki Tiki Torch](#), one of the best urban hides I've ever found. It's simple, with plenty of distractions to make your stop seem 'necessary', and blessed with one of the best audiovisuals you'll ever experience in an 'urban' cache setting. After completing the necessary logging tasks, we stood and watched the sun climb over Diamond Head while listening to the susurrations of the gentle surf on the sand just below us. A smiley of great simplicity and beauty found here!

On a drive around Oahu, heading out to the North Shore, a unique and unusual cache is [GCMFAC Secret Menehune fishing spot](#), where a tunnel through lava leads you to the shoreline – and a 'Lost' filming location. My log photos document the huge cache guardian we found hovering over the cache, the wildflowers scattered about, the gorgeous ocean views, and that tunnel passage...



GCMFAC

Caching Travelogues



GC1G3C8

No visit to the North Shore is complete without a stop at one of the iconic Shrimp Trucks, but geocachers know the place to go is [GC1G3C8 Suck, Peel, Dip, Eat!](#) Park, walk up to the order window, and ask for the ammo can. Oh – and you’re missing out if you don’t order the coconut shrimp plate! I’d eat here every day if the truck was next to our hotel. This is a pretty secure place to drop off geocoins and travel bugs too, since the cache is out of reach of muggles!

Of special interest to us was [GC40NJ4 Pu’u o Mahuka Heiau](#), located on the ridge above Waimea Valley with a view of the beach below. This religious site (whose name means ‘Hill of Refuge’) is the largest of its kind on Oahu, and had ties with the heiau (pronounced ‘hey-ow’) at Wailua on Kaua’i. It is reported that signal fires at these heiau provided a visual communication between the islands, and the commanding view here supports that claim. This is one of those places



GC40NJ4

where the geocache drew us in to learn about the early history of the Hawaiian people while enjoying the incredible scenery. The photo is from the heiau’s overlook above Waimea Beach, near sunset.



GC102CV

One of the best-known beaches on the North Shore (outside of the surfing spots) is Laniakea, where we visited [GC102CV Honu Beach Cache](#). It’s lived up to its name every time we’ve stopped here, with one to five turtles in plain view on the beach. This is where green sea turtles (called honu in Hawaiian) come in close to shore to feed on seaweed, and to haul out and bask in the sunshine. You just have to visit if you’re out on the North Shore, to see both Honu and surfers!

We tried something new this year with an inter-island 40-minute hop over to the Kailua-Kona airport on Hawaii’s west side. Our rental car (a comfortable Chrysler Town & Country minivan) only cost \$48 for a day, including the drop-off at our outbound airport at Hilo on the east side of the island. The ‘Big Island’ is huge – the size of Connecticut – so a one-day drive around the south end of the island barely scratched the surface of what can be seen on island. Our goal was to visit South Point (the southernmost spot in America’s 50 states) and Hawaii Volcanoes National Park (with two fistfuls of earthcaches to hunt). It was tough to zoom past all the Kona Coffee Plantations offering tours and samples, but the three of us had agreed on our driving plan the night before. With a 180 mile drive to do, and sixteen caches spread along that route, we needed to stay on task with our planned sightseeing/caching stops.

After several worthwhile large roadside caches we turned off the main highway and headed straight down to South Point. This is where people jump off a 40-foot high cliff for fun. Although there are several caches (and an earth-

Caching Travelogues



GC312D

cache) to be found here (and we found 'em), we were especially drawn to the 12-yr old ammo can at [GC312D South Point Cache \(TB Hotel\)](#). Trust me, the scenery here is pretty neat, but the old cache was a real highlight! We didn't have the vehicle or the time to reach the Green Sand Beach (and its earthcache), so that will have to wait for another visit.

experience the turtles were after. Just offshore, another two turtles were feeding in the surf.



Returning to the main road, we pushed on eastwards to the Hawaiian Volcanoes National Park (HVNP). Since our landing we'd seen the evidence of volcanic activity everywhere we looked on this

island. Relatively recent flows had crossed the road in numerous places, so we were a bit surprised to discover HVNP was greener and more lush-looking

Although we couldn't reach the Green Sand Beach, we had no problem finding the Black Sand Beach and completing the excellent earthcache found there ([GC3GQ9B Black Sand Beach – Big Island](#)). This water-side learning experience was a great introduction to what we'd see just a few miles down the road at 4,000 feet above sea level. I'll warn you in advance – this black sand beach is a one of a kind, and it's populated with sea turtles as well. The sand was almost too hot to walk on but it apparently was just the kind of spa

Although we couldn't reach the Green Sand Beach, we had no problem finding the Black Sand Beach and completing the excellent earthcache found there ([GC3GQ9B Black Sand Beach – Big Island](#)). This water-side learning experience was a great introduction to what we'd see just a few miles down the road at 4,000 feet above sea level. I'll warn you in advance – this black sand beach is a one of a kind, and it's populated with sea turtles as well. The sand was almost too hot to walk on but it apparently was just the kind of spa



GC3GQ9B



GCNJJEY

than most of the island we'd just traversed. We only had time and resource to do about half of the caches in the area, so we did the easy roadside earthcaches. Three were just off the charts for learning and photo opportunities.

The ground was venting steam all around us as we walked to [GC3NJJEY HVNP – Sulphur Banks](#), where signs warn you of the health hazards as you approach ground zero on a boardwalk that keeps your feet from harm. It's one of those places where kids shouldn't venture, at all. As you walk through the drifting sulphur fog, you'll wonder if you shouldn't have stayed away too.

Caching Travelogues



GCNJFY

A little further down the road is [GCQV5G HVNP – Caldera and Crater](#), an earthcache that brings you to the very edge of the Kilauea Caldera and Halema'uma'u Crater. Located at Jagger Museum, you can peer across the planet's most active volcano from a vantage point that's actually closer than the geologists' observatory. In fact, the road was recently closed just past the parking lot because of ongoing emissions and fumes from Kilauea. For Alaskans who've experienced large earthquakes, this is a different kind of exposure to primal geologic force.



GCQV5G



GCQV5H

Just beyond and a few dozen feet lower than the Kilauea Caldera, there's an earthcache that leads you below ground to experience what it's like to travel through a lava tube. [GCQV5H HVNP – Rain Forest and Lava Tube](#) teaches you how lava can flow through solid lava rock and leave an empty passageway behind, as well as how rangers help preserve the rainforest above. We were at least 30 feet under the rainforest floor as we traveled well over a hundred yards along the tube, within a mile of that steaming caldera we'd just visited.

We managed to get downhill to the lovely town of Hilo just before sunset, where we did the webcam at [GCMF77 The Pacific Tsunami Museum ~ Hilo, Hawai'i](#) and the earthcache at [GC2MQ2H Tsunami Clock](#) before having to head over to the airport and our plane ride back to Oahu. All of the earthcaches on the Big Island address geological power in one form or another, but these two Hilo caches are monuments to the loss of life which this community has experienced at the hands of that geological force.

The islands of Hawaii are a popular destination for Alaskans, and they offer an incredible variety of geocaches for visitors to enjoy. If you're planning a trip to the islands, take lots of time to research the opportunities you'll have to see somewhere much different than usual. Look at the photos other cachers have logged, and ask yourself how to strike a balance between finding that next hide versus thoroughly enjoying the journey. Talk to other Alaskans who've cached over there, asking them for tips on travel and what they'd have done differently now that they've been there and done that. Strive to build a journey that you'll enjoy reliving over and over again, thanks to photos and a shared experience with a close companion. Hawaii is an exquisite place to use geocaching to discover the very best places out there!

Caching Tricks, Tips, and Tools

Reviewer's Corner

By Michael Malvick / Greatland Reviewer

Know Before You Go (part 2)

When a cacher submits a geocache for review, the cacher checks a box that state "Yes. I have read and understand the guidelines for listing a cache." Section I.1.2 of the [Guidelines](#) states "You assure us that you have the land-owner's and/or land manager's permission before you hide any geocache, whether placed on private or public property." The GeocacheAlaska! [Land Manager webpage](#) provides information about known Alaskan Land Manager policies. Any other locations are up to the individual cacher to obtain adequate permission to place a cache.

Sometimes, it is challenging to determine land ownership. A wonderful resource to determine land ownership that is available in many communities is a web-based Global Information System (GIS). These online databases/applications provide means to identify land ownership and use designations using a combination of mapping tools and tax records. A non-comprehensive list of links to Alaskan GIS databases follows:

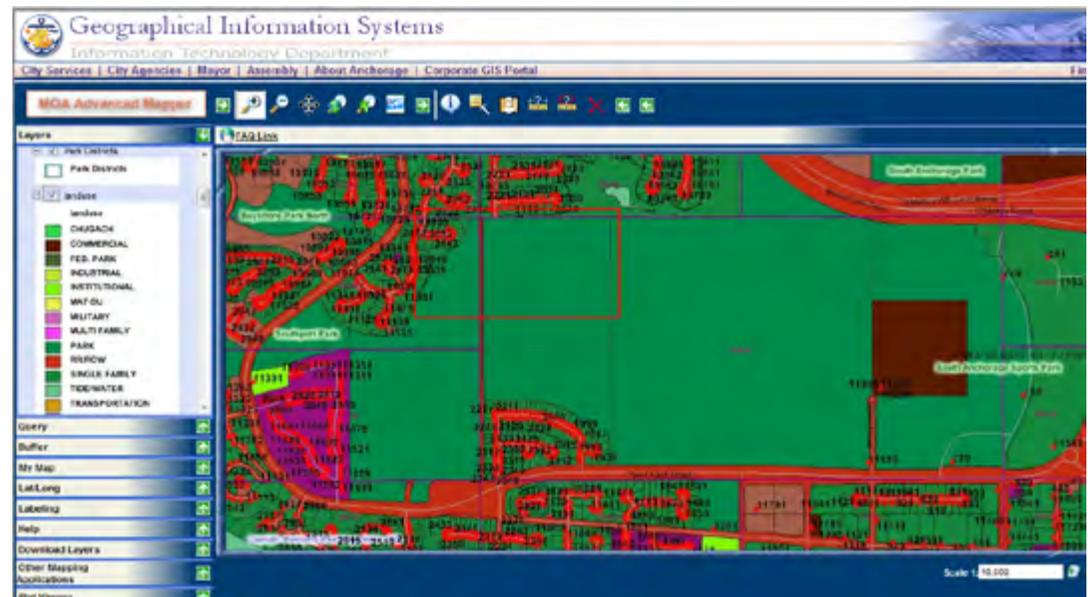
- [Alaska State Geo-Spatial Data Clearinghouse](#)
- [Municipality of Anchorage](#)
- [Bethel Planning Department](#)
- [Fairbanks North Star Borough](#)
- [City/Borough of Juneau](#)
- [Kenai Peninsula Borough](#)
- [Ketchikan Gateway Borough](#)
- [Kodiak Borough](#)
- [Matanuska-Susitna Borough](#)

An example of the usefulness of GIS databases is illustrated by looking at the geocaching accessible Municipality of Anchorage parklands comprised of the South Anchorage Sports Complex and Klatt Bog. When in the area, a cacher might think the area from C Street to the east all the way to Southport Park to the west is parkland. However, a look at the GIS indicates a 21 acre



parcel (the brown square) is located within the 151 acre MOA parcel. Clicking on the brown parcel reveals that land is owned by MCC Radio LLC. The cacher can define the boundary of this inholding by hovering their mouse over the corners of the parcel and recording the provided coordinates. The coordinates may then be entered as waypoints into a mapping program such as Garmin's BaseCamp and then a route connecting the points can be drawn. This route can then be exported from BaseCamp as a gpx file and dropped into the GPX folder of your GPS. The boundary for the commercial inholding will then appear in your GPS and you can avoid the area.

My alter ego, Ladybug Kids, has established a pilot program for cachers to load Alaska State Parks boundary files on their GPSs. For more information and to give it a try, please visit the GeocacheAlaska! forums [here](#).



Caching Tricks, Tips, and Tools

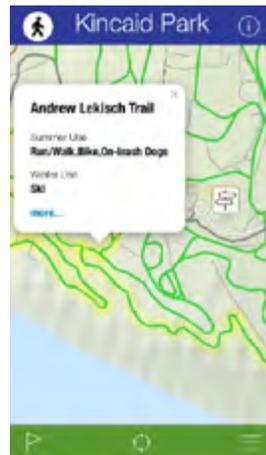
Geocaching Software for Smartphones

By Wes Skinner / NorthWes

In addition to such well-known applications such as the Geocaching app, there are a host of other 'applications' available for your smartphone which add value to your geocaching experience. Some are obvious, such as mapping programs which help you get through city traffic with turn by turn directions. One that's put out by the Bermuda Island Geocachers was useful during my visit on the islands, as it coordinated public transportation with geocaching targets. I've recently come across two other little applications for my iPhone you may find interesting.

With a very 'local focus' comes an application designed to help you navigate the more than forty miles of trails woven across Anchorage's Kincaid Park. My first reaction was "I have the NorthWest Trails map overlay on my GPS – why do I need this tool on my smartphone too?" I downloaded the free application and set out to answer that question myself. Aptly titled "**Find Yourself in Kincaid Park**", the app uses your phone's GPS to locate you on a map page.

The map features all of Kincaid's trails, and each trail's seasonal attributes are called up when you select that trail with a couple of clicks. That was the first bonus – I didn't need to coordinate a paper map in advance with my GPS to see what trail use was 'in season' – I could just glance at my phone and see the trail details. Let me also assure you of the app's ease of use; I had the application down pat



within minutes of loading onto the phone. The intuitive nature of the app is a real delight. There's a marker you can place on the map so you can 'remember' a particular location too. As a final plus, the app works regardless of your phone's connection to cell service – my iPhone's GPS remained in touch in notorious cell phone 'dark zones' in Kincaid. My oldest daughter fell in love with the app as she followed her boys around Kincaid trails during their Junior Nordic sessions, with it helping to keep her sense of direction on track. As negatives from a geocacher's point of view, the app doesn't allow importing any geocaches, nor does it report out your location in any form except as a blue dot on the map. However, the app turned my phone into a trail data source and a backup method for finding myself in Kincaid Park, which is exactly what the app was designed to do.

< Andrew Lekisch T...

Andrew Lekisch Trail

Summer Use
Run/Walk, Bike, On-leash Dogs

Winter Use
Ski

Skating
Skate or Classic
advanced

Lighted
No

Surface
Earth

Handicap Accessible
No

Total Distance
2.2 miles / 3.5 km

Whether you're a long-time Kincaid user, or a cacher from out of town on their first visit to the park, this app is recommended for your iPhone. The design team from Alaska App Works is developing a similar app for the trails on Anchorage's Hillside, which will make its way onto my iPhone when it becomes available.

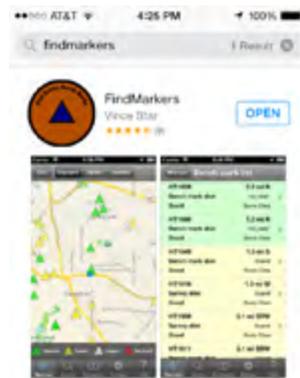
Turning from the intensely local nature of "Find Yourself in Kincaid Park", my next iPhone application involves a narrowly-focused part of the geocaching game called benchmark hunting. I love the challenge of seeking out these geodetic control points, and have more than 1,200 finds logged on geocaching.com. The only way you can download benchmarks to your GPS involves a fairly complicated series of steps where you download an entire county's worth of marks at a time to a Geocaching Swiss Army Knife (GSAK) database. In Alaska, the downloads are truly huge in size, leaving you to pick and choose what marks you'll transfer from your GSAK database files to your GPS so you don't overwhelm your memory. The preparation work involved in looking for benchmarks when I traveled easily took more than 4 times the effort of setting up geocache 'targets', which took a lot of the fun out of the hunt. Imagine my delight to discover there's a simple easy-to-use benchmark hunting program for the iPhone! In a very general sense, it's much like the geocaching app, except it looks for benchmarks near your location. Called "**FindMarkers**" in the App Store, when you download the free app it installs as "**HuntMarks**" – an oddity related to this

Caching Tricks, Tips, and Tools

being the 1.0 version, with a few other details to work out as well.

In any case, this app locates benchmarks nearby your location, or by zip code. It's particularly useful in that you don't have to pre-load the files to your GPS, and you can supplement your caching fun by looking for benchmark 'targets of opportunity' when you're out in a new location. As long as you have cell phone service, you're set up with a very precise location tracker which shows you nearby benchmarks, with a very complete variety of details. There's even a link to the benchmark's geocaching.com listing, which lets you see prior logs and photographs directly on your cell phone. The 'log it' feature just records your find in the app – not via a direct log link to geocaching.com – but that's a small detail compared to the huge benefit of having an 'at your fingertips' guide to what benchmarks lie nearby. The benchmark details and previous history are all at your fingertips, giving you a huge degree of easy access to expanding your find count in this very narrow angle on the geocaching game. This app's simplicity, accuracy and huge database has guaranteed its place on my iPhone, as a primary application to be used in one of my favorite aspects of playing the geocaching game – hunting for benchmarks!

Please note: the screenshots are blurrier in our newsletter than they actually appear in the applications.



Recommended Caches

Come join us!

[2015 ANCHORAGE FUR RENDEZVOUS](#)

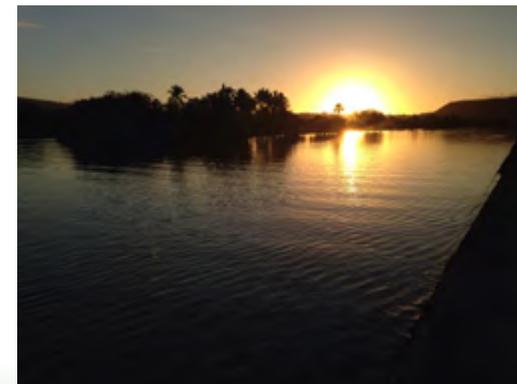
- Andrew Harrell / OP_Beardo

"We were coming back from Seward a few weekends ago. The Nordic Ski Divide got a fav from us. Because we hike, we had our TOTT in hand. Also, there was a 1/2 of snow, not 13 feet, lol!"

- Joy Latham-Hahn

"GC5AK09 [Free Willy](#) - photo taken at ground zero - sunrise 1-10-15 on the Alai Wai - Waikiki!"

- Wes Skinner / Northwes



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

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! 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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