GEOCACHE ALASKA! Inc.

Exploring the Last Frontier • www.geocachealaska.org

Geocache Placement FUNdamentals

presented by

Wes Skinner

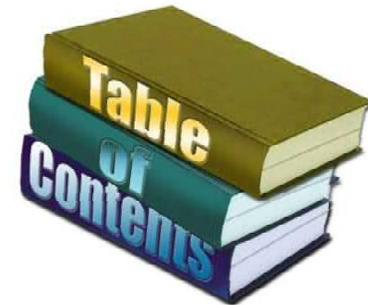## (NorthWes)

Prepared by SSO JOAT

Anchorage BP Energy Center
& Broadcast over the Internet via WebEx
24 April 2014

Tonight's Topics:

- ▶ **Cache Site Selection**

- ▶ **Permits and Permissions**

- ▶ **Container Selection**

- ▶ Camouflage

- ▶ Obtaining Accurate Coordinates

- ▶ Cache Hiding Tips

Cache Site Selection

- **Location – Location – Location!**

- There should be a reason to put a cache here

- Scenery, history, education, challenge, etc.

- Poor Reason: *"Look, a parking lot without a cache!"*

- **Good Reasons…**

Tutka Bay Lodge in Homer, AK

Cache Site Selection

Think about how much damage a herd of wild geocachers could do while searching a pristine area before you decide to hide a cache in there!

Cache Site Selection

"Please take me to an area that features a great view, a historic site, an oddity, a cool geological feature, an area of special interest, or a pleasant walk through an area I wouldn't have otherwise known about. It doesn't have to be a place of outstanding beauty, but it should be a cut above the ordinary and will make me say 'cool'!"

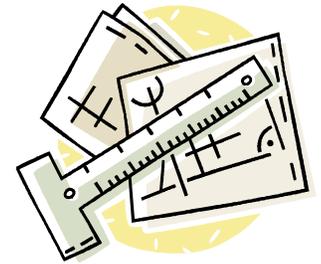-Briansnat, Geocaching Charter Member

Cache Site Selection

- Some questions to ask yourself:
  - Will this cache placement create new "geo-trails"?
  - What will the Land Owner/Manager think of this cache?
  - Are Muggles going to accidentally find it?
  - Are Muggles going to easily see Cachers searching for it?
  - What kind of environmental conditions are going to affect the cache (water, rain, wind, snow, ice, vegetation, shifting terrain)?
  - What kind of hazards will Cachers face to get here?
  - Is this a place and cache that I would choose to hunt for myself?
  - Am I going to come back for Cache Maintenance when needed?
- Take all of these things and more into account as you pick the location and the container for your new hide

Cache Site Selection

Review the Geocache Placement Guidelines and become familiar with rules such as this one:

"Geocache placements do not deface or destroy public or private property. Geocaches are placed so that the surrounding environment is safe from both intentional or unintentional harm. Keep both natural and human-made objects safe. No object or property may be altered to provide a hiding place, clue, or means of logging a find."
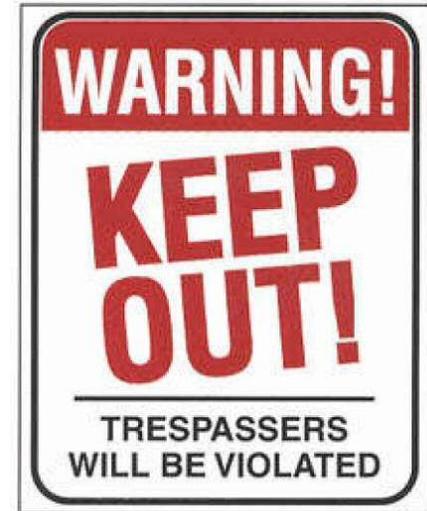
Permits and Permissions

- You MUST have permission from the property owner or manager

- Failure to obtain permission has caused geocaching to be banned in some areas

- Some public lands allow geocaching by default or permit; others have banned it

- The presence of a cache in an area does NOT automatically mean it is open

Permits and Permissions

- These areas are **Banned**:
  - Fort Richardson & Elmendorf
  - National Parks (EarthCache exceptions are handled on a case-by-case basis)
  - US Fish and Wildlife Refuges, for example the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge which covers most of the central Kenai Peninsula
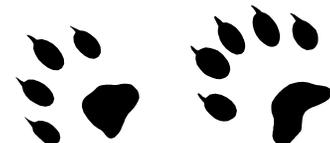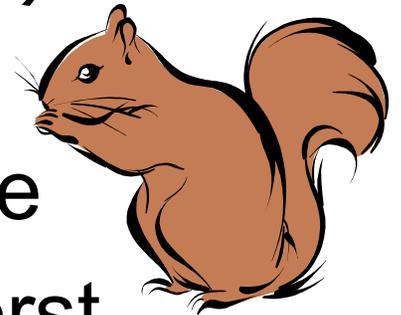
Permits and Permissions

- **GeocacheAlaska! Inc.** has negotiated geocaching permits in some areas
- A complete list of blanket permits for Alaska lands is available on the GeocacheAlaska! website: geocachealaska.org/landmanagers.htm
- Some of these areas include Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge, Chugach State Park, and Chugach National Forest

Container Selection

- Containers must be durable enough to withstand critters <u>and</u> Geocachers

- Containers should be waterproof

- Some permits require bear proof metal containers (Ammo Cans!)

- Poor Container = More Maintenance

- Can we all agree that one of the worst things in Geocaching is finding a broken container with a soaking wet logbook?

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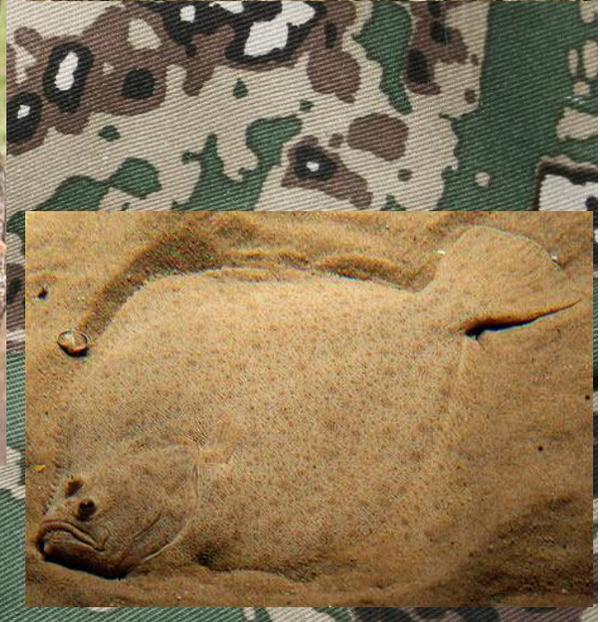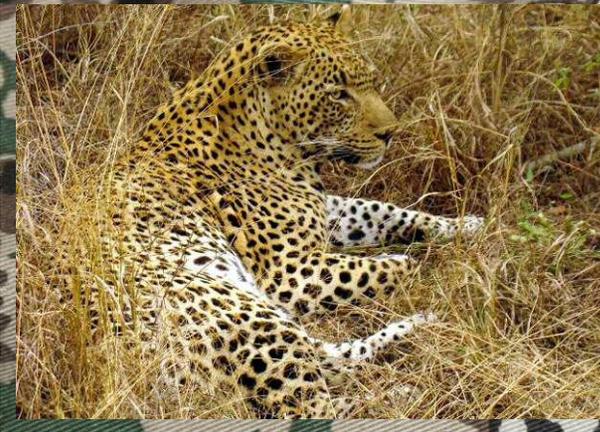
Container Selection

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Container Selection

- When reusing military ammo cans or decon containers, please remove and/or cover all military and hazard markings!
- Clearly mark the outside of all containers with "**GEOCACHE**" or similar wording
- When placing caches under most Park permits, write the Permit # on the outside
- Put your personal contact information (email) on the inside of the container
- Mark the **GC#** on the Container & Log!

Camouflage

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Camouflage

- UPS or "Unnatural Pile of Sticks" (Stones) is one of the more common methods

- Place the cache in a natural "cubby" and obscure the opening with natural materials

- The container may be camouflaged by covering with camo tape or painting it

- In the urban environment, the cache is made to look like it is supposed to be there

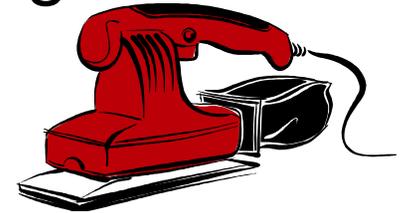- Camouflage will affect the Difficulty rating

Camouflage

- Wilderness cache camouflage is a trade off of Difficulty vs. Muggle Spoofing

- You "can" take an olive drab nano capsule and drop it in the middle of a dense forest and never worry about a Muggle ever stealing it… or a Cacher ever finding it!

- The best hides have just enough camo to prevent casual Muggle exposure while leaving enough "flaw" for the Geocachers

Camouflage

- Painting Plastics – A Quick Primer *(Pun Intended)*
  - Thoroughly clean the plastic with detergent
  - Scuff all surfaces with fine sandpaper
  - Mask off all gasket sealing surfaces
  - Wipe with Paint Thinner just before painting
  - Use plastic paints such as *Krylon Fusion*
  - Spray with several very LIGHT coats
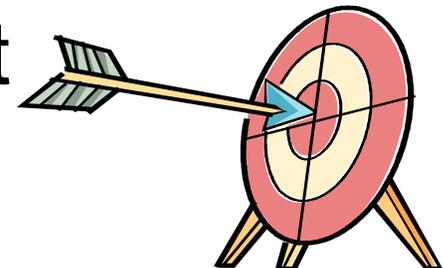 - Let the paint dry in a warm place for several DAYS to get a fully cured, durable paint job

Look for a detailed plastics painting article in the June 2012 Newsletter!

Obtaining Coordinates

- When placing a geocache, please use a "real" GPSr to collect the coordinates

- Many 'smartphones' and GPS-enabled devices do not record accurate waypoints

- Use the Averaging function of the GPSr

- To get the best possible coordinates, visit the hide location at least two times, separated by several hours or even days

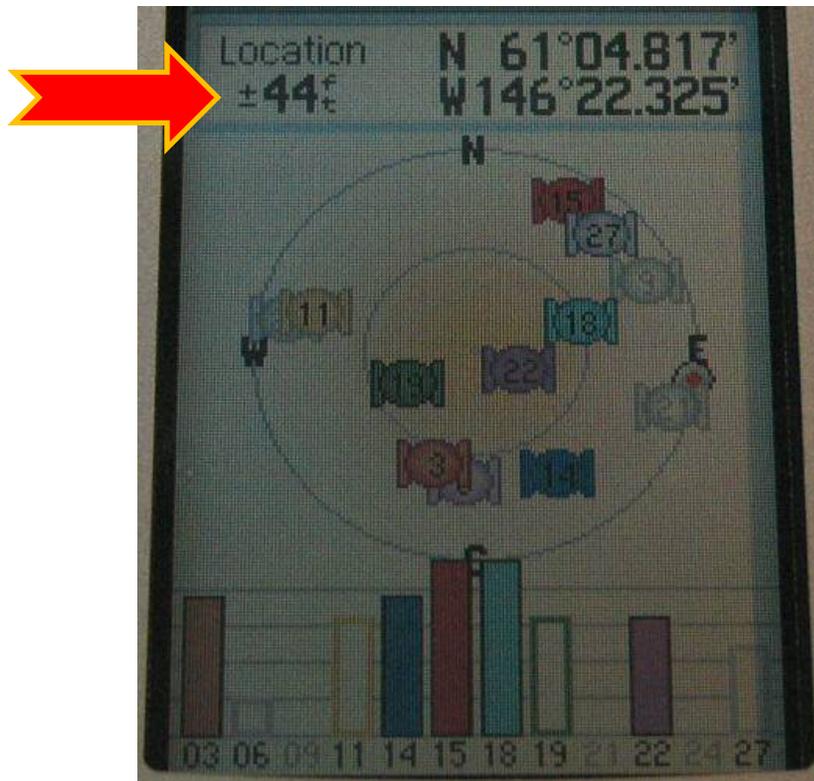- The second visit is to confirm the coords you recorded on your first visit

Obtaining Coordinates

Run your GPSr with a clear sky view for about 10 minutes
to allow it to download all current satellite almanac data:

Poor Accuracy   **Good Accuracy**

Obtaining Coordinates

"Averaging" your Waypoints produces the best results:

- Let the GPSr "settle" for a few minutes and then press the "mark" button to bring up a waypoint details screen

- Start the averaging process and let the unit sit still for a couple minutes to collect multiple position samples

- Save the averaged point and without moving the GPSr, look at the distance to the new waypoint. If it is less than 10 feet, then you have a pretty good waypoint. More than that and you should repeat the averaging process.

- You can also do this manually by saving several separate waypoints and mathematically averaging them

Proximity Saturation

✓ Geocaches cannot be placed closer together than one-tenth mile (0.10) or 528 feet *(see guidelines for rules & exceptions)*

✓ When you start the new cache creation process on geocaching.com, the first page has a proximity check

✓ The map will be centered on your home coordinates, click and drag the map to the area where you are going to place your cache and click the "refresh" button

✓ You will see red circles that represent the tenth mile circle around each existing traditional caches

✓ This map will NOT show you hidden caches such as puzzles or stages of multi-caches

Proximity Waypoints

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Cache Hiding Tips

- NEW GEOCACHERS! Please get out and find a couple dozen or more caches first!

- Hiding good caches is usually helped by finding a lot of good caches yourself

- Hide caches like what you want to find

- Scour the internet and caching forums for great examples of creative & unique hides

- Mix and match ideas to create some FUN

- Visit great locations and show them to us!

Cache Hiding Tips

- **Maintenance – Maintenance – Maintenance!**

- Placing the cache is but the first step to a life-long commitment to keeping your Geocache in good shape!

- Some Park Permits require annual Owner Maintenance visits to your Geocache

- Poodles make the best Geo-Dogs *(Say What?)*

- Visit our Education webpage to review presentations on building cache listings
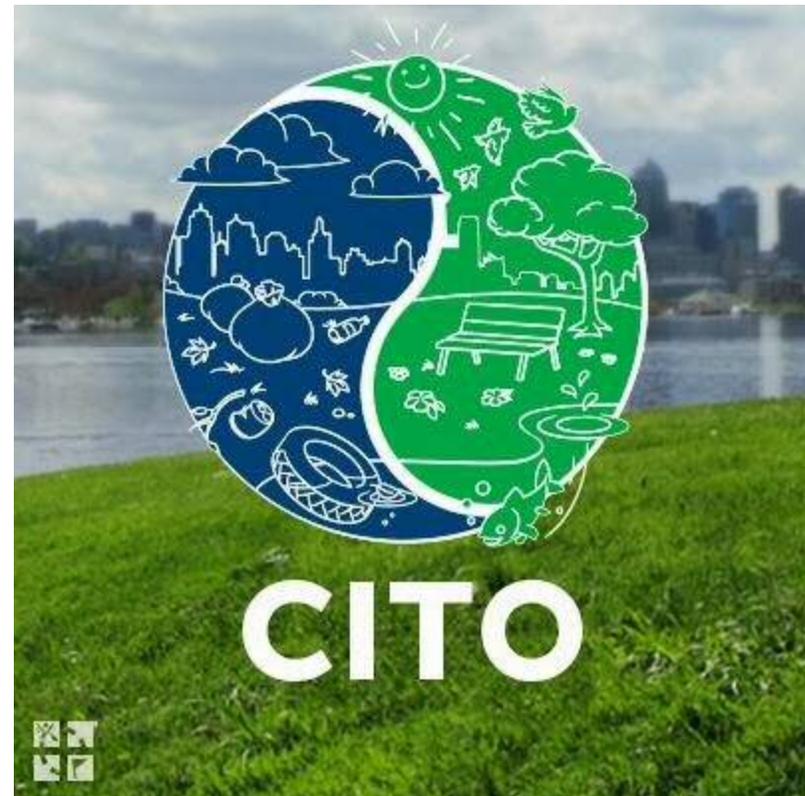
It's Time to CITO!

Saturday April 26th

Meet at 9:45AM at published coords
Event will run until about 11:30AM
Seward Highway for
2 Miles West of Girdwood
First of 3 required CITO under the
Alaska DOT Adopt-A-Highway

Sunday April 27th

Meet at 2:30PM at published coords
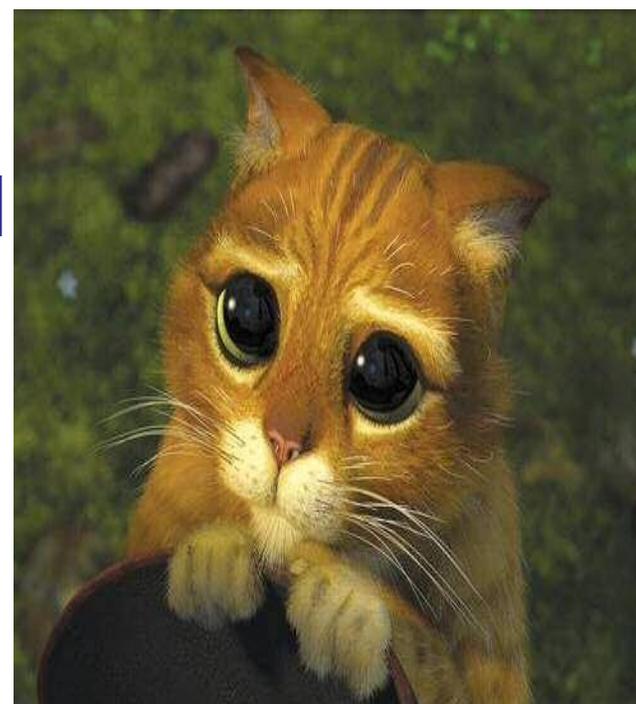Event will run until about 3:30PM
Kincaid Park

Join the party

GEOCACHE ALASKA!
WWW.GEOCACHEALASKA.ORG

- Your basic **Cheechako** Membership is vital & free!

- Your paid **Sourdough** Membership is appreciated

- Visit our online Forums and post something: a question, tip, geocaching story, or just feedback on any existing thread

Get Involved!

Please… Join Us

How could you possibly say no?

Resources

- GeocacheAlaska! Inc. Education Page:
  www.geocachealaska.org/education.htm

- Hiding your First Geocache:
  www.geocaching.com/about/hiding.aspx

- Groundspeak Help Center:
  support.groundspeak.com

- GeocacheAlaska! Forums:
  geocachealaska.proboards.com

- Geocache Listing Requirements / Guidelines:
  www.geocaching.com/about/guidelines.aspx