

# GEOCACHE ALASKA! INC.

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## MAY 2012 NEWSLETTER

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### BOARD OF DIRECTORS CHANGES

On April 19, the GeocacheAlaska! Board of Directors appointed Lisa Echard (FlightRiskAK) to fill the Vice President vacancy created when Joe Edwards (akfossil) resigned for personal reasons. Scott Sagraves (fuzzybelly) was appointed from the membership to fill the Member at Large vacancy created when Lisa became Vice President. Please take time to congratulate both FlightRiskAK and fuzzybelly on their new 'jobs' with the GeocacheAlaska! Inc. Board of Directors, and join us in wishing Joe well in his future endeavors.

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR--EVENTS

[Geocache Submission and Review Fundamentals](#),

**Tuesday, May 15, 7:00 p.m., at the BP Energy Center in Anchorage.** Some of the topics to be discussed at this EduVent include cache planning, the submittal form, attributes, child waypoints, photos, and simple html to make your cache pages stand out.

Contact [SSO JOAT](#), if you are outside the immediate Anchorage area, but would like to attend via free WebEx streaming.

**[12 years of Caching](#) - Anchorage, Thursday, May 3, 6:00 p.m., China Lights Restaurant.** What makes May 3 special? For every geocacher in the world, our addiction started on that day twelve years ago. Dave Ulmer hid the first geocache in Oregon on May 3, 2000. Your local geocaching group will be celebrating this holiday with a gathering, better known as an Event Cache.

Like minded cachers, old friends and new, will meet to share stories and a meal. GeocacheAlaska! has secured a room at China Lights and will provide prizes and the GeocacheAlaska! bling store will be open for business. It is important to have a head count so please log your "will attend" on the cache page, [GC3GWT3](#).

For more information, visit the [Historical Marker Database](#).

**[El CITO de Mayo](#) – Saturday, May 5, Seward Highway near Girdwood.** The first of three Adopt-a-Highway CITO events for GeocacheAlaska!'s very own two-mile stretch of the Seward Highway, a National Scenic Byway. There will be fellowship, prizes, and treats. Breakfast burritos will be provided by GeocacheAlaska! to the first twenty-five or so geocachers who log a "will attend" by Friday, May 4.



The Adopt-a-Highway program started in the early 1980s. This cleanup program is popular in the United States, Canada, and outside North America and is promoted by national and local governments. Volunteer organizations are encouraged to adopt a 1 mile section of highway and keep that section of highway free of litter. In exchange, the organization is allowed to have its name posted on a sign on the section of highway they maintain.

Adopt-a-Highway is more than picking up trash, it includes safety training, the issuing of reflective vests and equipment, and posting of Adopt-a-Highway signs ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adopt\\_a\\_Highway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adopt_a_Highway))

**[GW X or BUST!!!](#) – Anchorage, Sunday, May 13, 2:00-3:00 p.m. at Margaret Egan Sullivan Park.** Let's give Cavyguy and other local cachers a rousing send off to Geowoodstock X in Sellersburg, Indiana, which will be held during Memorial Day weekend.

**[WWFM IX - Anchorage AK - Town Square Flash Mob 3](#) and [WWFM IX - Big Lake, Alaska](#), Saturday, June 9, at 9:00 a.m.** Join cachers from around the world in a large coordinated Flash Mob. Contact [NorthWes](#) for details about how to host a World Wide Flash Mob in your community. It's easy, it's free, and GeocacheAlaska! will provide prizes.

## WWFM IX on June 9 – Host One in Your Town!

by NorthWes/Wes Skinner

Thousands of geocachers gather at the same time at dozens of coordinated events spanning the globe for a quick burst of fun and geo-fellowship!

Sonny and Sandy of the [PodCacher](#) podcast came up with the WWFM idea in 2007 after attending a mega-event (where more than 500 cachers gather for all-day or all-weekend caching extravaganzas).

It was meant to be a fun “opposite” of a mega-event: all the cool aspects of a geocaching event, crammed into 15 minutes of excitement. An added dimension is represented by the letters “WW” - World Wide – meaning these events occur across the planet on the same day at (mostly) the same time! These events bring geocachers together in a creative way where social links with other geocachers are established or continued, in a format well-suited to the quick and mobile geocaching lifestyle.

### **Basic Requirements:**

- Hold the event on the official, announced day, preferably at the official time
- The event should last only 15 minutes (some locations hold separate “after” events for more fun)
- Take a group picture
- Collect the number of people attended for statistical purposes
- Be creative and Have fun!

GeocacheAlaska! or its members have sponsored WWFM events in 2007, 2008, 2011 and the event returns for 2012 with [WWFM IX - Anchorage AK - Town Square Flash Mob 3](#) held at 9am on June 9<sup>th</sup> in Anchorage Town Square and [WWFM IX - Big Lake, Alaska](#) in Big Lake. We often meet cachers visiting Alaska – so make sure you’re ready to demonstrate a generous helping of famous Alaskan hospitality towards folks you don’t recognize.

Visit for the fun, the bling give-aways, the fellowship, or to learn how easy it is to host a quick event!

Here’s a history of the WWFM events, and a photo of the 2011 Event... don’t miss WWFM IX – 2012!

Flash Mob	Date	Events	Countries	Attendee
WWFM I	May 2007	20	2	1000
WWFM II	Nov 2007	83	9	4406
WWFM III	May 2008	167	15	7907
WWFM IV	Nov 2008	154	20	7421
WWFM V	May 2009	154	20	7051
WWFM VI	Nov 2009	152	21	6832
WWFM VII	May 2010	139	19	5680
WWFM VIII	June 2011	215	25	9940



### **Reviewer’s Corner – Cache Proximity**

Many cachers have experienced placing a cache only to learn that the location was so ideal, someone has already placed a cache in the same immediate area. This can be particularly frustrating when one has developed a puzzle based on the final coordinates and then has to redesign the puzzle after finding a new location.

Groundspeak’s guidelines require *physical* caches to be at least 528’/161m from other *physical* caches or physical waypoints (also known as stages) for multi-caches. A multi-cache physical waypoint is defined as an object placed in the field by a cacher as part of the cache. Pre-existing objects such as monuments, plaques, and interpretive signs are not considered physical waypoints.

Cachers can check for proximity issues ahead of time by creating a draft of their cache page and entering the desired coordinates. To keep the cache page out of the reviewer queue, **do not** check the box next to “Enable cache listing. It is ready for review. (If the listing is not yet ready to be reviewed, uncheck this box.)” Click “submit changes,” at the bottom of the page, then scroll up to the top of the page and click “View Listing.” Scroll down the listing to the “Find...” section and click “...all nearby caches.” This action will open a page with a list of all the nearby caches traditional caches and the starting points for mystery, multi- and other non-physical caches with a distance and direction.

The list will not provide you with the intermediate or final states for Wherigo, Mystery, or Multi-caches, but it will provide clues that there may be stages for those types of caches in the area. If that is the case, you can solve/find those caches so you know where they are, you can hide your cache in a less cache dense area, you can contact [your reviewer](#) and ask for a coordinate check, or, if all looks good, proceed with enabling your cache and seeing if it gets published.



## A Sunny Easter Above the Arm

by Joanne Ackermann/Meljo

[Ice Pan Alley](#) cache just happened to post on a beautiful Easter Sunday morning. Karma123 and I, Meljo, decided to go for it. Akgh519, the cache owner, decided he would like to join us. This still being early spring we carried snow shoes especially knowing that they were used not long ago when the cache was placed. And since 519 placed the cache we let him lead the way. After some post holing (yep we didn't take the time to put on the snowshoes we were carrying) we were soon at a beautiful spot which was GZ overlooking Turnagain Arm. Karma and I quickly found the cache but were beat out by Fuzzybelly for FTF. Then we spent some time taking in the great views from here. There will be great views from this cache site any time of year!



akgh519 and karma123 sharing the sun.



Karma123 wonders why akgh519 carried his snowshoes all the way up here!

*Editor's note: Ice Pan Alley and many other caches are accessed from the Turnagain Arm Trail, also known as the Old Johnson Trail, which was featured in the December 2011 newsletter. The trail is typically the last to get snowed in during the Fall and the first to be hikeable in the Spring around Anchorage due to its southern exposure. Archives of GeocacheAlaska! newsletters may be found at <http://www.geocachealaska.org/newsletters.htm>.*

## Burning up the Milestones

by Joanne Ackermann/Meljo

Akgh519 and Meljo made an early spring (April 14) trip to the valley to do some of the ATV series put out by Toepunch. Our goal was to get as many as we could but definitely the ones on top of Burnt Butte. Following the advice of Williaw and AkBike&Ski, who did some of these caches the previous week, we wore break-up boots and brought snowshoes. Water proof boots were sure a must on the low boggy ATV trail. Then we began our ascent picking up caches along the way. Still a lot of snow in some places and others were clear and dry. Our rewards for climbing to the top were spectacular views, finding the cache, #800 for Akgh519 AND getting to watch four eagles soaring above, below, all around us! Once again a great adventure in beautiful Alaska thanks to geocaching.



akgh519 logged #800 with Pioneer Peak as his witness



Jim Lake, Swan Lake, and the Chugach Mountains stretch out to the west from Burnt Butte

*Editor's note: [ATV Series #31: 541'](#) is proving to be popular with cachers working on caching milestones. Not only did akgh519 find #800 here, Tundra Tim found #6000 here during the summer of 2011. SWAN benchmark, [UV4334](#), on top of the butte is still awaiting its first recovery since 1950.*

## Bear Awareness in the Municipality of Anchorage

The Municipality of Anchorage is Alaska's largest city. Its human population numbers about 280,000 in 2008, about 40% of the state's population. **Residents also include 250–350 American black bears and 55–65 brown bears.**

The municipality encompasses 1,958 mi<sup>2</sup>, including a large state park (773 mi<sup>2</sup>), two military reservations (118 mi<sup>2</sup>), a portion of Chugach National Forest (430 mi<sup>2</sup>), other lands managed by federal agencies (378 mi<sup>2</sup>), and a large state wildlife refuge. The area occupied by humans is only about 204 mi<sup>2</sup> (10.4%) of the total municipality; thus, the city is surrounded on all sides by bear habitat. **Essentially, 90% of Anchorage is Full-Time Bear Habitat.**

### Active Behaviors designed to enhance Bear Awareness:

1. **Buddy up.** You are safer in a group.
2. **Make Noise.** This will prevent you from surprising a bear.
3. **Use your senses** to stay aware. No headphones!
4. **Carry bear spray.** Have it accessible and know how to use it.
5. **Don't feed bears.** Handle food, fish and attractants responsibly.
6. **Slow down.** High speed equals high risk in bear habitat.
7. **Leash your pets.** Off-leash pets can bring bears back to you.
8. **Never run from a bear!**

As an example of proactive Bear Aware behavior, GeocacheAlaska! Inc has teamed with land managers at the BLM Campbell Tract in Anchorage to ensure a stream setback exists which keeps caches from being placed in critical habitat zones along branches of Campbell Creek within the Campbell Tract. These are areas of very high bear use as well as sensitive salmon spawning zones. More information is available at the land manager tab on the geocachealaska.org website.

MOA Bear Awareness site, including excellent Bear Range Maps:

<http://www.muni.org/Departments/parks/Pages/Bears.aspx>

ADFG Living with Bears online resource:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=livingwithbears.main>

Bear Aware Coloring Book:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/species/livingwithwildlife/bears/pdfs/bearawarecoloring.pdf>

## Anchorage Bear Signs



**The Anchorage Bear Committee** – composed of municipal, state and federal land management and law enforcement agencies, waste management companies and several nonprofits – formed in 2001 to share ideas, coordinate management efforts and make recommendations to reduce human-bear conflicts in Anchorage.

Here is what the committee has come up with for Anchorage bear signs:

- **A permanent metal sign with red letters on a white background** that begins with “You are traveling in bear country...” alerts people that they are recreating in bear country. These are permanently displayed at trailheads and city parks around town and are intended to give people practical tips and to remind them to always be alert and use caution when in bear country.
- **A temporary green sign with the outline of a bear** indicates a higher than normal likelihood of encountering a bear and urges people to use caution. A green sign might be used, for example, if a black bear is known to be hanging around a campground. These signs are used when biologists or land managers have noted a repeated pattern of a bear hanging out in a certain area and when they believe visitors should take note and use caution.
- **A temporary red sign with the outline of a bear** indicates that bears present a higher than normal threat to human safety. If you see one of these signs, stop and read it carefully. On the bottom of the sign, land managers will write in details about what happened and when. The sign will often close the trail until further notice, or it may indicate that people can continue to use the trail, but that they should exercise extreme caution. The red signs are used when a bear kills a moose on or near a trail, or when a brown bear has charged someone. Land managers and biologists try to remove moose carcasses from the trail as soon as they are reported but sometimes that may take some time or may not be possible, especially if the bear is still defending the carcass. Therefore, a sign is needed to keep people out of the area. Red signs are also used to alert people when a brown bear sow with cubs has been seen repeatedly in a particular area, increasing the likelihood that someone using the trail might surprise the sow at close range. **Take seriously the warnings and closures listed on temporary red signs!**

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*(Anchorage Bear Signs, continued from previous page)*

In addition to watching out for these warning signs put up by the bear committee, people should keep an eye out for signs posted by the bears themselves. Bears leave tracks on muddy trails and distinctive scat. If a trail is along a salmon spawning stream, bears can leave dead fish parts on the trail. A dead moose soon starts to smell (if you are downwind) and dead things attract scavenging birds. Spotting a group of magpies or ravens in summer is a potential warning that something dead is nearby.

Unfortunately, however, it may be difficult to notice these subtle signs when running or biking on city trails. The worst place to move fast is near a stream when adult salmon are present because brown bears often forage along these streams all summer and fall. Remember, bears will generally avoid you if they have time. You don't want to surprise a brown bear at close range.

*From an article by Elizabeth Manning, a writer and wildlife educator with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.*



Photo from NorthWes' [Bear Aware cache](#) page at BLM Campbell Tract, Anchorage AK

## Moose Awareness

### **Why are moose aggressive towards humans?**

Moose are not normally aggressive; however, they can be very aggressive in winter when they are hungry; tired of walking in deep snow; or harassed by people, dogs, and traffic. Kids and adults sometimes throw snowballs at moose or approach them far too closely for safety. Dogs chase moose out of backyards, and loose dogs bark at them and chase them. Moose consider dogs to be their enemies and will sometimes go out of their way to kick at one, even if the dog is on a leash or in a fenced yard. Give moose an extremely wide berth if you have a dog with you and don't let your dog chase a moose. When moose are on a road, driveway, or trail or when they are lying under a deck or up against a house, they are often trying to rest. When people repeatedly approach them closely or chase them away, moose become stressed. Each moose has a different breaking point, but if they are harassed enough, many moose will act aggressively.

### **Are there other seasons when moose tend to be aggressive?**

During the fall mating season, in late September and October, bull moose may be aggressive toward humans. In late spring and summer, cow moose with young calves are very protective and will attack humans who come too close. If you see a calf and not a cow, be very careful, because you may have walked between them, which is a very dangerous place to be.

### **How do you know when a moose might attack?**

The long hairs on its hump are raised, ears laid back (much like a dog or cat), and it may lick its lips (if you can see this, you are way too close). A moose that sees you and walks slowly towards you is not trying to be your friend; it may be looking for a handout or warning you to keep away. All of these are dangerous situations. Back off. Look for the nearest tree, fence, building, car, or other obstruction to duck behind.

Read more and watch an excellent 12 minute ADFG Moose Safety video (produced for Anchorage School District and shown to all 3<sup>rd</sup> graders in the district annually):

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=livewith.aggressivemoose>



## The Quest for Captain Kangaroo and His Surly Sidekicks

by Michael Malvick/Ladybug Kids, also featuring Skifast

I've lived in Alaska nearly a quarter of a century and had never visited Portage Glacier itself or crust skied in the area and the extreme blue day Southcentral Alaska experienced on April 11 seemed like the perfect time to go. The crust skiing reports for the valleys in the area at [Cross Country Alaska](#) looked good, so I left work ninety minutes early, interrupted skifast's Anchorage caching transect at Great Harvest Bread Company, and headed for Portage Valley. Once at the Portage Lake, we looked over the wall and saw skiers and walkers returning from the glacier on a firm crust, so we pulled the skate skis off the georig, unloaded geopointer Victor, and took off.

The skiing was great with rilled bases and Swix CH8 hydrocarbon wax. We sank only about an inch into the snow in the sunny areas and glided closer to the surface when passing through mountain shadows. The exposed southwest facing cliffs were unleashing a regular stream of snow, ice, and rock, so we stayed well away from them by skiing in the middle of the lake. After about twenty minutes of skiing, the glacier came into sight and we paused to take what would be the first of many photos. We approached carefully, and stopped at the first pressure ridge to take photos of an aquamarine reflecting pool in one of the troughs. The series of frozen ice ripples in front of the glacier provided plenty of evidence that the glacier is active in the winter as it continues its slow advance. Further along the glacier's face, we found snow and ice chunks that had been thrown more than one hundred yards across the surface of the lake that proved the glacier calves during the winter was well.



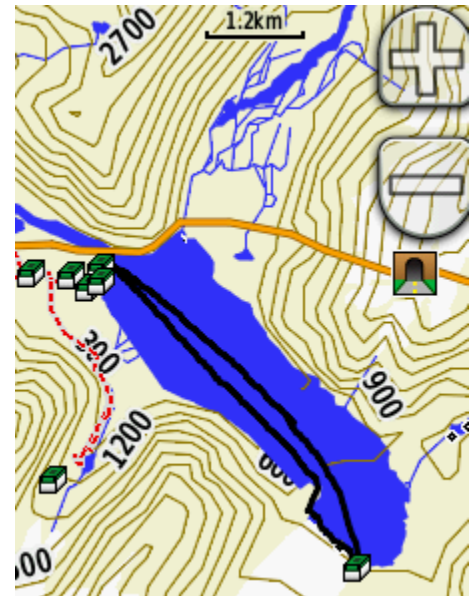
We continued toward ground zero for MTBoy's "Captain Kangaroo and His Surly Sidekicks," [GCWBAO](#), hopeful that the large boulder we saw near the lake shore was ground zero. However, it was not to be and we had to ski up a short spur and subsequently left the skis behind to kick step the rest of the way to ground zero. Once there, we got busy with the snow shovel, taking turns hacking through the eighteen-inch (that's 45 cm for skifast) hard crust to get to corn/sugar snow intermingled with layers of ice. While one of us dug, the other stood poised with a camera to attempt to catch an avalanche pouring down one of the nearby mountains. We dug extensively where our GPSs zeroed out and I went five feet down where my geosenses told me to dig within the EPE circle. I found the tip of a large boulder leaning against the exposed bedrock, but never did reach its base. In the meantime, Victor kept protective watch and chased off the noisy aggressive ptarmigan that were occupying the alders above us. Victor also kept us on our toes because he would occasionally launch a rock missile from above that would roll down the mountainside to the lake. After about an hour of digging and sunning, we reluctantly gave up the search, acknowledging that for all we knew, the cache was ten feet under the snow and ten feet from where we were digging. We probably would have quit digging even sooner if we'd read FoShiz\_AK's unsuccessful summertime bid to find the cache.

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*(Surly Sidekicks, continued from previous page)*

The ski back to the georig went even faster than the ski out (except for our extended stay in front of one of the cliffs to try to get some avalanche video) because most of the valley was in mountain shadow and the crust firmed up so we could zip right along, gliding seven to ten meters with each stride. Neither skifast nor I could stop grinning as we bombed along toward the visitor center at a clip that kept Victor loping rather than trotting. Once back at the georig, we mutually affirmed this was a sensational outing in a magnificent area on a beautiful day and the DNF on the cache didn't affect those thoughts one little bit. The only thing lacking was an additional couple of hours so we could have skied to nearby Portage Pass from the lake side, so we'll just have to come back and try that some time. As it was, our total trip distance was about 11.4 km (~7 miles) and the lake skiing was so good that we maintained skiing speeds of 10-12 mph during the longer stretches.

The conditions to cross the lake are this good for only a couple of weeks each Spring. This is an outing not to be missed, whether you seek the cache or not. At the time skifast and I did our ski, people were skiing, biking, snowshoeing, and walking the three miles across the lake to the glacier. However, crust conditions change rapidly during warm days, so time your trip to coincide with the cooler times of the day to avoid a slush slog, stay away from the mountainsides to avoid avalanches and rock falls, don't approach the glacier so as to avoid calving glacier ice and fractured lake ice, and you'll have one of the most memorable treks ever. Also, don't go out too late in the season and risk falling through rotting and thinning ice.





## STATE PARKS PERMITS

Remember, if you want to hide a cache in a State Park, you may need a permit number for your cache page and the geocache. The 2012 permit number for the Chugach State Park is **12-044** and it must be on the cache container and the cache page. The 2012 permit number for the Mat-Su State Parks is **S12-010** and it must be on the cache container and the cache page. Downloadable copies of the permits can be obtained from the GeocacheAlaska! [Land Manager webpage](#) or the GeocacheAlaska! [Land Use Forums](#).



## LIKE US ON FACEBOOK!

Follow GeocacheAlaska! Inc. on [Facebook!](#) Stay in touch and share your activities with fellow members of the geocaching community by visiting our [page](#) and clicking 'Like'. Stay tuned for more Facebook fun as our webmaster develops a new Facebook Group page 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.

## 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 that will run through December 31, 2012.
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 April Events at [GC3E93N](#) or [GC3ENRR](#) and speak to any Board Member.

## ONLINE ARCHIVES

Previous editions of "Around the State" are now on our website. If you have missed previous newsletters, check out the series (including previous Trail Reports) [here](#).

*The editors of 'Around the State' welcome your articles and photos. We'd love to publish your favorite trails in your own back yard! Send your articles, photographs and ideas to [ladybugs@geocachealaska.org](mailto:ladybugs@geocachealaska.org), attention "Around the State."*

# GEOCACHE ALASKA! INC.

Exploring the Last Frontier • [www.geocachealaska.org](http://www.geocachealaska.org)

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