

GEOCACHE ALASKA! INC.

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SEPTEMBER 2012 NEWSLETTER

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR—EVENTS

[Creamers Field Event](#), Fairbanks, Saturday, September 15, 1-3 p.m.

[FUZZY BROS. AND BARNUM & BELLY CITO](#), Girdwood, Sunday, September 16, 10:00 a.m.

[2012 Indian Summer](#), Storck Park, Anchorage, Sunday, September 16, 2:00 p.m.

[Geocaching HTML & BBC Fundamentals](#), BP Energy Center, Anchorage, and WebEx upon request, Tuesday, September 18, 6:55 p.m.

[A Danish Treat](#), Uncle Joe's Pizzeria, Anchorage, Thursday, October 4, 6-8 p.m.

8th Annual Geofest, Friday, December 14, Anchorage. Hosted by GeocacheAlaska! Big finale for the year with a gift exchange, slide show, dinner and much more!



President's Corner, by Wes Skinner/NorthWes

GeocacheAlaska! Inc. has enjoyed a year of membership growth marked by seeing paid annual Sourdough memberships pass the 100 mark, with combined membership totals exceeding 200 persons. Membership numbers are important for several reasons – paid memberships help underwrite our modest operating expenses (funding events and providing seed money for 'bling' projects), and our mission to represent the interests of geocachers to land managers statewide is enhanced by the ability to say we speak for a large percentage of active cachers in Alaska. Several board members oversaw the creation of the Sourdough Member Trackable Nametag, a paid member benefit which helps identify cachers at events, gives members a way to follow their geo-journeys with a dedicated trackable traveler, and adds a sense of 'presence' for the organization at large events (at the recent Geocaching Block Party at Groundspeak Headquarters in Seattle, attendees were amazed at the 'huge numbers' of Alaskan cachers in attendance –

whose presence was magnified by wearing our Sourdough Member Nametags). Contest ideas are under development where the Sourdough Membership tag will be used to track miles traveled, or be the centerpiece of unique photos (see the contest begin in next month's newsletter).

We are seeking nominations for members to serve in various capacities on the Board of Directors of GeocacheAlaska! Inc. Members of the Board's Election Committee are seeking individuals to serve, and will be reaching out to persons they believe fit the profile of a successful board member. If you're interested in helping the geocaching game grow in Alaska, or in developing a particular idea or in serving fellow members with event activities, please submit your name to a Board member or via the [Nomination Thread](#) in the GeocacheAlaska! Inc. forums. Don't hesitate to nominate a fellow cacher whom you feel could bring great action and ideas to the organization. Service on the board requires only a willingness to put in between ten to twenty hours a month in (fun) activities – some which are public time, such as the monthly board meeting and event attendance/work time, and some hours which are 'behind the scenes' such as the occasional committee meeting, online collaboration with fellow board members via email conversations, and in development and implementation of 'great ideas' (such as was done with the Sourdough Member Trackable Nametag project). While we certainly need technical skill sets to carry out responsibilities such as webmaster activities and to fulfill the secretary and treasurer roles, our Members at Large need only to have a sense of enthusiasm and an attention to completing the activities they became involved with on the Board. If you have questions about what it involves contact, Wes Skinner by email at: president@geocachealaska.org

2013 Board of Directors Nominations, by Lisa Echard/FlightriskAK

It is that time of the year again! Elections for the 2013 Board of Directors will soon be here. Would you like to serve on your board? Do you know someone who is interested? All board of director seats will be up for election. Please think about serving your local geocachers. Board members can expect to spend upwards of 20 hours a month between meetings, events, and online work in support of organization objectives. We will be accepting nominations from September 15th through October 15th. You can email your nominations to the GeocacheAlaska Vice President, via the [Nominations Thread](#) in the GeocacheAlaska! forums, or state your interest to a present Board member. Voting will take place November 1-15th via survey monkey. The voting link will be sent to all Sourdough members by email.

RECENT EVENT HAPPENINGS

[While the Cat's Away: Puzzle Solving FUNDamentals.](#)

Thursday, August 16. By Polgera/Roberta Bromlow.

What is worse than not being able to solve a geocache puzzle? Not knowing where to start.

When a number board members of GeocacheAlaska! headed to the Block Party in Seattle, including the President and Secretary of the organization, those of us left behind decided to use the board meeting date, time, and facility to hold a puzzle solving event. The first part of the event was all about sharing, visiting and just working on unsolved puzzle problems. This included some helpful hints from Polgera on some of the puzzles she had placed.

At precisely 7:30, or close, the educational part of the event started. SSOJOAT had created the original puzzle solving presentation that I used but some of his stuff, as always, was beyond my scope of knowledge so the slide show was modified to include things that I was more knowledgeable about, like my own puzzles. Thanks to SSOJOAT for the original it was a great place to start.

Every puzzle is not the same, some harder some easier; but, they are all difficult if you do not even know where to start with the solving process. This particular FUNDamental event was to give cachers a better chance at solving puzzles by introducing them to some of the basics, like highlighting the page to see if there are any clues. Additionally, clues in the HTML code and how to look at code were discussed.



BurtonsinAK, Blazingpathways, Glen.fish, Zakthemaster, and Wolfmaster1 ponder puzzles.

Sometimes it just takes the planting of a seed of knowledge to get people thinking in a different direction. There were cachers at the event who said they had never solved a puzzle but thought they would try it now. There were also a couple of seasoned cachers who had “ah ha” moments, including me.



Tundra Tim gives karma123 a hint while Malcore does his own work.

There was a good turn out to the event, approximately 30 people, including caching veterans and newbies. As always, there were plenty of refreshments, thanks to the generosity of the caching community and the goodies they brought; as well as prizes. At the end of the presentation, we continued to share information, discuss headache-giving puzzles, and enjoyed our time together. I finally had to shoo the last of the group out of the room and the building so that the front desk at BP Energy Center could lock up and go home.



International Geocaching Day

was celebrated with Alaskan events in Hyder, Soldotna and Fairbanks this year, while several Alaskans attended the Groundspeak Block Party at the Lily Pad in Seattle.

[International Geocaching Day FlashMob in Soldotna.](#)

Saturday, August 18. By Scott Aleckson/SSO JOAT.

The day started with rain. Then the sun came out and all looked well. As the 4 o'clock start of our flashmob approached, the clouds once again cast forth their showers. But, like true Alaskan outdoors enthusiasts, the rain mattered not and as our atomic clocks struck 0100 hours UTM with an offset of negative nine, a half-dozen vehicles rolled into a little parking lot situated behind a residential neighborhood above the banks of the Kenai River just south of Soldotna. It is a hidden plot of public land that I vividly remember from my youth when we spent countless hours combing through this area as if we were 16th century explorers arriving in a New World. There were no roads or stairs or boardwalks back

then; just a bunch of kids on Huffy BMX bikes who marveled at watching the dozens of 60, 70 and 80 pound King salmon swimming in search of spawning grounds up the little creek below.



Slikok Creek State Park was developed in the 1980s and concerns over bank damage brought about the construction of stairs and boardwalks in recent years to allow visitors and fishermen to access the junction of Slikok Creek and the Kenai River without damage to the environment. The constructed trails are popular with some local residents for walking their dogs and they provide late-season fishermen access to the river to fish for Sockeye and Coho salmon. The Kenai River Campus of UAA is situated to the west on the other side of Slikok Creek and the trail system loops up to the back of the campus, returning to the park via a foot bridge situated upstream a bit. The park is a day use only area with ample parking, some picnic tables, and a well-maintained restroom facility. With all it has going for it, this park remains rather secretive in that there are no signs pointing it out to the tourist public driving by on Kalifornski Beach Road, less than a mile away or the Sterling Highway just a couple miles beyond that... unless you happen to be a Geocacher.

Within this little park are many secrets; secrets that only those willing to put in some extra time and effort are going to discover. Anyone can pull up to a park-n-grab Geocache at the entrance to some neat little spot that the Cache Owner (CO) knows about, but do most really get to experience why the CO brought them here? Many people automatically ignore puzzles and multi-caches. They require extra time and work. But, why do you go Geocaching? Does it mean nothing more than being the first, fastest, or having the most? If that's your game, then by all means play it. That's the nice thing about Geocaching. It's not a race. It's not a competition. There is no "winner" in the end. Each of us can choose to play it however we like. Some like the city. Some like the country. Some prefer remote, unspoiled wilderness. Some like to be challenged physically or intellectually. Some just want a quick and easy log to sign as they reach for 10,000 while others will pick and cherish each and every one of their 200. In any case, there is a Geocache out there waiting to fit each

Geocacher's personal goal. And thus, we have the 2nd International Geocaching Day celebration.

This little park contains a number of [Geocaches](#), but you won't see most of them on the [Map](#). Within about a mile radius of this spot, there are finals for about 14 Puzzle caches (including all of the [Harry Potter](#) series) and all the stages for the Slikok Cipher Project multi-cache [GC1FRYG](#) which take you on an easy, puzzle-filled journey through the Slikok Creek Park. There are a couple Traditional Geocaches in the area as well, so it seemed like a perfect spot to host a Flash Mob Event for International Geocaching Day ([GC3K9M9](#)). Attendees would have the chance to log the event, plus a traditional, multi-cache, and puzzle cache all at one stop. Naturally, that reminds me of how much we need to publish some EarthCaches in this area as well. Another project on my list!

I was surprised and delighted to see so many folks show up for the 2nd ever Flash Mob Event on the Central Kenai Peninsula. Especially with over half of them coming all the way down from the Anchorage area for a 15-minute event!

GeocacheAlaska! Inc. was nice enough to donate a set of [2012 Pathtags](#) as prizes along with a new [SuperChip Jeep Travel Bug](#). I had a full dozen Geocachers gathered around my GeocacheMobile, so I raffled off the Pathtags one at a time. Then everyone's names went back in the can to draw the Travel Bug. With the formalities of the Flash Mob out of the way, it was time to go Geocaching. About half the group got started on the multi-cache while I took the third that was interested over to my laptop computer to work out a nearby puzzle cache. It only took a few minutes of looking over the cache listing with a little prodding here and there before the light bulbs started coming on. Next thing you know, coordinates were being calculated and written down on bits of scratch paper and GPSr's were coming out of pockets to enter a final waypoint.

The multi-cache group had completed the first 2 stages by this



point, so I joined up with them to finish out the course. It's interesting as a CO to sit back and see how folks work out the pieces and parts of your puzzle creations. When building a puzzle, you have to try and put yourself in the shoes of the solver and really try to see what they will see, while placing

just enough hints and clues to lead them down the path you want them to take. It's a challenging balancing act to give enough info to make the puzzle solvable and enjoyable without making it too easy or worse yet, making it impossible to solve. So, I watched intently for the little things that would trip up the field puzzle solvers along the way. It was good to see that each predicted "hanging" point of each stage presented itself and then the cachers worked through and overcame each of these sticking points by applying a little logic or trial-and-error testing. I also found it rather amusing when the group started down a dead-end path and I would say, "I'll just wait here until you get back" and sure enough they'd be back within a minute or two, smiling about how I knew that was going to be a dead end. Well, of course I knew; after all, I designed this adventure. By the end of the trip, I was smiling about how most continued to charge down the trail without paying attention to where the CO would stop and wait, though there were one or two that started to pick up on it.

In the end, we all had a nice walk in a nice park on a nice day, shared stories and logged caches. There were no "good byes" at the end of this trail; it was an emphatic "See you at the next one". And we will, my friends. ;-)

Fairbanks International geocaching day event, Saturday, August 18, Fairbanks, Alaska.
By Tony Roof/firemanak.



On a warm, smoky day in Fairbanks, Alaska local geocachers came together to celebrate International Geocaching Day. This was the first celebration to be held in Fairbanks. While some cachers knew each other, others were meeting for the first time. The event attracted people who were new to the sport of geocaching as well. Seasoned cachers were more than happy to teach and even find two in the area. After everyone signed in, Firemanak welcomed everyone, gave a rundown of the event and shared his story of geocaching. In his short time caching; about 1 1/2 years, he has logged 324 finds, 2 hides, and 21 trackables.

Large yellow trash bags were passed to the cachers who headed out to pick up trash in the area. A total of 12-15 bags of trash were collected. Some of the cachers had to come back for either another bag or help to carry larger pieces of trash back to the pavilion. The smell of roasted hot dogs greeted cachers upon their return, full trash bags in tow. A pot luck feast commenced.

Once everyone had their fill, it was time to play trash bingo! Players used the trash they collected and the winner was the person who collected the most out of the 10 items listed. Items were glass bottles, coffee cups, money, and other items. The winner took a door prize from the prize box.

A good day was had by all. Good stories were exchanged, new friends made and ideas came together for future events. Firemanak was given a gift from other cachers for his effort and time he put in to this event, which was his first event ever attending, planning and running. Here Pathfinder01 hands off



the geocaching logo flag, he created to Firemanak. Thank you to all who attended and donated time or gave prize. If you live in Fairbanks, and are a geocacher, look us up on Facebook at facebook.com/groups/fairbanksgeocachers/ or contact Firemanak on geocaching.com. Please be safe, pick up trash, and don't destroy the beautiful outdoors while caching.



Thank you to Jody Thomas of Thomas Studio Photography for spending her Saturday with us, and getting some awesome photos! You can find out more about her at: www.thomasfamilyphotography.com

Share International Geocaching Day With A Bear.

Saturday, August 18, Hyder, Alaska. A sparse, but enthusiastic crowd of cachers met to celebrate the day, but the bruins stayed home.

Windy City Welcome at the New York Café.

Sunday, August 19, Ketchikan. Hosted by some cruisin' cachers and sounds like there was some storytelling and travel bug swapping. Photo by [Les Is More.](#)



O'Wimseycal Meet and Greet.

Sunday, August 26, Anchorage. By Michael Malvick/Ladybug Kids
In what may have been the most geographically diverse event hosted in Alaska, GeocacheAlaska! hosted a Dutch treat event at the Snow Goose Restaurant in downtown Anchorage.

Wimseyguy and Julie represented North Carolina, ODragon and Rachel represented Pennsylvania, IowaBeaver represented, well, Iowa, Trdball represented Nevada, Rusty and Libby represented Michigan (along with pathtags.com,

directmint.com, and a few other geobling companies), there was a couple from Ontario, Canada, (my apologies for my forgetfulness...should have written down your info. like shotgunsgm did), and StoweAK represented Valdez ;-). The Groundspeak Volunteer Reviewer Team was also well represented by NCRewriter, OReviewer, and -Rusty-.

Rabbit Creek Greenbelt Trail Party #2, Saturday, September 8. By Ladybug Kids/Michael Malvick

Fourteen cachers turned out with less than 24 hours notice to clean up the Rabbit Creek Green Belt. All over town, groups of volunteers reopened the trails after last week's wind storm and this three-mile trail system was ours to clean up to show geocachers' commitment to the parks we play in.

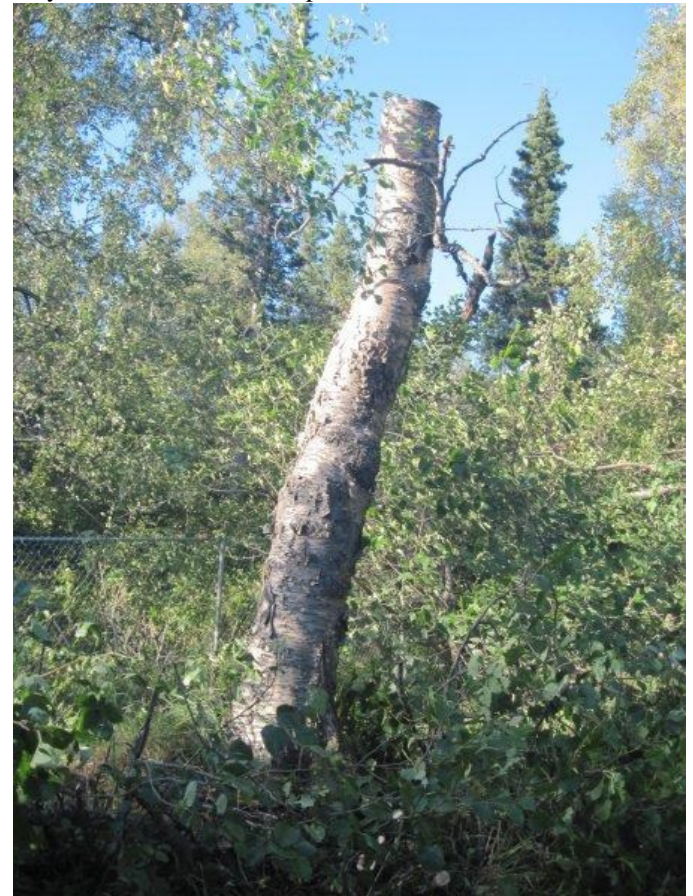
Highlights of the event included Li1gray cutting a fallen birch only to have it stand back up.



StoweAK, Julie, ODragon & Wimseyguy



Coloreido has signature items for at least the next six months!



The Resurrection Tree

GeocacheAlaska! contributed a geocoin, a 2012 pathtag set, and five loose pathtags for doorprizes, IowaBeaver contributed one of his personal geocoins that features Aleut artwork and language. Everyone got an extra kick out of the box of signature items that Coloreido received, even if its presentation didn't go off quite as planned. As someone quipped later, "give a couple of guys a simple task and watch them mess it up!"

Davemeister came prepared and willingly waded into the creek to clear the dam that was diverting the creek onto the trail. The bucket brigade of Tundra Tim, abesimpson, Flightriskak (who'd been up all night and became the self-designated Chief Empty Bucket Carrier), Wolfmaster1, and Zakthemaster hauling buckets of gravel to refill the box steps and the mid-trail barrel. I never said it would be easy work, but the stairs are now easy to transit again.

Good food, great local brew, and terrific fellowship made for an evening that will be long remembered. Thanks all who came out and made this event special.



Zakthemaster, Wolfmaster1, and FlihtriskAK touch up the stairs.

The Fish family rolled in after being out at last night's Flash Mob, too. Many thanks to Joey for drawing again, though I imagine she's going to get a talking to during the drive home for not drawing a family name for the first time in a long time. It was fun to talk on the phone with DaveMeister and hearing all the laughter in the background as some monkeys scrambled up the monster cottonwood root ball that is in the greenbelt.



The Lower Trails Chainsaw Crews Rendezvoused at this newly fallen Cottonwood Rootball.

Unfortunately, burtonsinak pulled up with big smiles on their faces ready to work, walked to the back of their truck, and realized two chain saws and gas cans had gone missing during a cross-town drive with the tailgate down. They retraced their route and didn't recover a thing.

Look for more of these service projects in the future. They have proven to be popular and they have a permanent positive impact on the parks.

Host Your Own Event and Earn an Icon!

by Ray Menzie/ akgh519

Are you enjoying all the Events this Summer???

Consider hosting one yourself!!! Whether it be a "Meet 'n' Greet," a Flash Mob, a group hike on your favorite trail or assist or lead one of GeocacheAlaska's annual events, think of the possibilities!!! Afraid it will be difficult? Ask for some assistance from the GeocacheAlaska! Event committee chair [Polgera](#), who can provide a written procedure and provide tips for a fun and successful event.

Have a favorite restaurant that has a room big enough for a group of 20-30 people? Have a Meet 'n' Greet. Reserve the room and write up a cache page.

Flash Mobs are fun quick an easy and can be had for any reason. A location and cache page are all that need be had for one of these.

Have a favorite hike? Write up a cache page and take some of your fellow cachers with you. A cache page and a date is all it takes. There are many places that some of us have been that others would like to see but don't know about!!!

Know a park or other public place that needs go good cleaning? Host a Cache In Trash Out Event (CITO)!

Volunteer to assist or lead a GeocacheAlaska! annual event (Geocaching's Anniversary, International Geocaching Day, Indian Summer, Geofest, etc.). Just because you are not a Board member does not mean you cannot help with the activities. The Board actually encourages you to participate. Who knows, you may decide you want to become a Board member after seeing all that goes on behind the scenes!


A few things to keep in mind, all events must be published two weeks prior to the event date. Also, GeocacheAlaska! will donate some bling from the store for an event raffle.

With all our different backgrounds, our 'quirks' and personality the possibilities are endless! I look forward to seeing what you can come up with and participating.

Geocachers who host events earn an event icon on the

personal profile page:  (Event),  (CITO).

Ultimately, if you a feeling particularly ambitious, you could start thinking about drawing enough cachers to your area to

host Alaska's first mega event: .

To qualify for mega status, an event must have confirmed attendance of 500 cachers. The most recent mega event hosted close to Alaska was the [Going Ape...at the Tunnel of Light](#) Mega in Snoqualmie Pass, Washington, on August 19.

Calendar Contest Deadline Approaching

by Tom Noble, aka Tomanoble

The September due date for photo contest entries is quickly approaching. As a reminder, this year's categories are:

People	Places/Locations
Containers	Flora
Wildlife/Fauna	Adventure/Extreme
Whimsy/Fun	Caching Children
Winter	

You may enter up to three photographs in each category. To be eligible for inclusion in the Calendar Contest the photographs must be taken in Alaska. Thirteen photos will be displayed full-size on the calendar with at least one picture chosen from each category. The photo garnering the most overall votes will be placed on the cover. Entries will be accepted through September 30, 2012, the voting will take place in October 15-31, 2012.

Photographs may be submitted by emailing a high resolution copy to PhotoContest@GeocacheAlaska.org. Please use the tag **[PHOTO CONTEST]** as the Subject Line of your message.

In the body of the message, please state which category the photo is being submitted to, the names and/or geonickname of any people appearing in the photo as well as the geocache the photo is associated with. Please provide the GC number and the cache name, or link directly to the cache page using the url format <http://coord.info/GCXXXXX>. Include the photographer's real name and their geonickname. Please include a title or caption for the image if you have one.



Reviewer's Corner – Smart Phones, Screws, GPS Error, and Fall Sweep

Many geocachers are entering the game playing almost exclusively with their **smart phones**. Smart phones do a pretty good job of leading a cacher to ground zero, but, they have their weaknesses when used to place a cache. Recently, several local cache hidiers have been chagrined to learn that their smart phone generated coordinates were anywhere from 50' to 300' off which has led to unnecessary frustration by the first seekers (not necessarily finders). One very easy way to be certain ones coordinates are accurate is to verify the coordinates with satellite imagery on GoogleEarth, Google maps, or another resource. The satellite imagery is very good for most of Anchorage, but is still more than 300' off in areas such as Turnagain Pass, so be sure to validate the area you are checking against a known set of coordinates. Each cache page has several links to mapping resources for coordination verification. Check them out!

Lately, there have been several caches placed using **screws** inserted or holes **drilled** into live trees. The original hides have spawned copycat hits which will most likely lead to even more hides of this sort. Inserting screws, drilling holes, carving, etc., are considered defacement under the Groundspeak guidelines. I can't tell how a cache has been hidden during the review process, but I do find these caches under my Ladybug Kids player account.

Section 1.1.4 of the guidelines states "Geocache placements do not damage, deface or destroy public or private property. Caches are placed so that the surrounding environment, whether natural or human-made, is safe from intentional or unintentional harm. Property must not be damaged or altered to provide a hiding place, clue, or means of logging a find."

Exceptions to the above can be made if express written permission is provided by the affected property owner and the information is provided on the cache page so the geocaching community knows the placement is a special case.

I'll be the first to admit that several of the cache placements are clever and new to Anchorage, but there are ways to create similar cache placements that are even more clever without defacing the object the container is attached to.

Shifting gears, there are currently more than twenty caches in the Alaska review queue that cannot be published due to **proximity** issues. Some of the issues occur because the cache hider hasn't solved the nearby mystery caches or gone through the stages of the nearby multi caches and placed their cache too close to the final stage of one of these other caches. The reviewer cannot divulge the exact location of the other caches, but can provide an approximate distance and heading to help the cache hider find a new location.

Another reason for proximity errors is that the cache hider doesn't account for the GPS error. I've received many responses from cachers after their cache fails to be published on the first pass that "my GPS said I was 0.1 mile away!" What that really means is that the GPS was indicating the next nearest cache is 0.1 mile +/- the GPS error. If the GPS error (displayed as Estimated Proximity Error or EPE on most models) is thirty feet when the GPS says it is 0.1 mile (528') from something, it is really somewhere in a circle 498 to 558' from the area of interest. With Groundspeak's saturation guideline requiring 528'/161m between caches, one should really go 528' plus the EPE away from the nearest cache to increase the likelihood of the cache being published on the first pass.

Of course, these issues can be almost entirely eliminated by placing the new cache in an area that doesn't already have caches. A side benefit of hiding a cache in a new area is that it introduces the rest of the community to a cool new spot!

Finally, I'll be performing a "sweep" of all caches that have three or more consecutive DNFs or have been temporarily disabled for more than a month or so during late-September/early-October. This is a great time to spruce up your caches before the snow flies (snow appeared on the mountains above Anchorage a few days ago) and even consider modifying the cache placement a bit to make it winter friendly or placing the "not available in winter" attribute on the cache page. Failure to respond to a Reviewer Note may result in the cache being archived during the next sweep.

See you on the trails or an event!

[Hanging Lake Cache](#)

by Michael Malvick/Ladybug Kids

I wasn't in the mood for a thigh-burning, lung-busting power hike on the evening of August 29th due to still recovering from the previous Saturday's South Suicide Peak traverse, so when I saw this cache sitting all by itself while panning the map, I knew this would fit the bill for a quick trip into the Chugach front range with skifast. However, it wasn't until we reached the trailhead parking lot that I really looked at the map and realized we'd be trying to cover ten miles roundtrip in three hours if we were going to beat darkness back to the parking lot. We decided to go for it and bought time by running the not too steep sections and power walking the steeps. That effort brought us to the South Fork bridge in thirty minutes and to the lake only seventy minutes later.

The evening was perfect for this trip with the low sunlight giving some of the tundra plants a neon glow and the cool air being just about perfect in temperature. We didn't see any wildlife coming or going except for three ducks on the hanging lake. Along the way, we enjoyed views of Cantata Peak, Harp Mountain, and Eagle River Overlook. Once at the lake, I was awestruck by the amphitheater formed by a

shoulder of Hurdygurdy Mountain and stayed busy taking



South Fork Eagle River, Skifast Casting Late Evening Shadows

photos while skifast kept gravitating toward the cache. Being mindful of sunset coming in only thirty minutes and darkness coming by 2200, I managed to tear myself away from the setting, found the cache, signed the log, took a celebratory photo for find #5500, and dropped in a Red Jeep TB. Being mostly downhill, the trip out went much faster until we reached the bridge and met up with uber mountain runner Kirsten Lippmann and her three dogs. We chatted for quite a while before skifast reminded us it was getting dark. She asked if she could run back with us, but knowing her talent, I gave her the lead and she just pranced away up the trail, leaving me in her wake. Skifast and I ran a good pace to the parking lot and reached it just as she was pulling out, so I was thinking we didn't get thumped too badly until he suggested that perhaps she groomed and fed her dogs before loading them into her rig.



LBK Celebrates Find #5500

This relatively lonely cache (one visit in 2010, none in 2011, six visits in 2012) really deserves more attention. The trip starts near tree line, gains only 1400' over five miles, and takes one through absolutely gorgeous countryside that one can truly enjoy because one isn't breathing too hard to look up and around.

Do you have a favorite hike or milestone story? Please submit it along with photos to [Ladybug Kids](#).

TRAVELING? EVENTS ARE THE WAY TO GO!

By Tom Noble/Tomanoble

My first event was Midnight Sun 2, which involved a tour of a container ship while it was in Anchorage's port. This was hosted by a geocacher who worked for a shipping company. Not only did I get an opportunity to visit something I never would have otherwise, I met a whole new group of geocachers. Up until then I had only met the occasional cacher on the trail and having cached for only a few months knew next to nobody who geocached. I still occasionally see some of the cachers from that tour.

The first event that blazingpathways (my wife and the person who started us geocaching) and I attended together was the original Indian Summer Geocaching Picnic in 2007. We had only been caching for about 5 months at this time and still knew next to no one who cached. That was about to change...at this event we met many of the active geocachers in the Anchorage area and heard many a good tale about geocaching and where it can take you. We were hooked on events!

Over the next couple of years, we attended many local events large and small. Then we read that a MEGA Event was happening in one of our old stomping grounds. We had to go! Not even a broken leg on my part could keep us away. GeocoinFest 2009 was happening in Salt Lake City! Not only did it feature one of the parts of geocaching we both like – geocoins, and a lot of them, - but we got a great deal on hotels and airfare. For those who don't know, a mega event has to have over 500 attendees.

Attending a mega event such as GeocoinFest or GeoWoodstock allows you to meet and cache with people from all over the world. Mega events often have special geocaching trail set up for attendees to find while at the event. The one we did involved taking a light rail train the length of its run and finding caches at stops along the way. The tickets allowed one to get off and re-board the train whenever you wanted and were good for the whole day. Since the trains ran every 10-15 minutes the trick was to try and find the cache at the stops before the next train arrived or you had to wait for the one after that. We did this trail with a family and 2 other couples, all from different states. People also attended from Europe and many of those flew in just for the weekend. If you enjoy geocoins, it was estimated that the value of geocoins at the event exceeded \$2,000,000. Our wallets were a bit lighter when we flew back to Alaska but our pockets were full of bling.

Over the years when we traveled we have developed the habit of looking at the Geocaching.com Events calendar to see if any will be held in the area we will be visiting. When we attended a meet and greet in Las Vegas after completing the ET Highway series we had the pleasure of meeting the owners of that series.



Tri-Cities Geocoin Challenge

This year when I decided to return to Montana to visit our grandkids and their parents (our kids) we discovered the TRI-CITY GEOCOIN CHALLENGE was the weekend before we planned to leave. We quickly revised our plan and posted our Will Attend. Sponsored by the Parks and Recreation Departments of Kennewick, Pasco, and Richland, WA, this event drew participants from three continents and several states and foreign countries. We met most of the over 200 attendees during the big day-long caching event. Those who found all 30 preset qualifying caches received 3 geocoins which when put together make a fourth coin. And this coin contains the clues for finding a bonus cache. All told, just from finding the caches put out for the event we logged 31 caches plus the event cache as well as several incidental finds we wandered across during or before the event. We teamed up with several other people to help find all the caches within the allotted 9 hours. All in all it was a great time and way to meet and cache with new to us cachers as well as the two cachers we already knew who also attended the event.



Another way to enjoy events while traveling is to hold your own! Since we were planning to be in Missoula on June 28th I co-hosted the TWICE AS NICE AS Pi event with a local cacher. It was an ice cream social. (For those of you who missed Fuzzybelly's 2 Pie event, $\text{Pi} = 3.14$ and June 28 can be written as 6.28, or twice Pi.)

So next time you travel why not do like we do and check out the geocaching.com event calendar to see what's happening where you go? All you need to do to find an event is after logging on click on the COMMUNITY heading then click on the subheading for EVENTS. The events are listed on the day that they will be held. Take September 16 for example. 31 events will take place in 31 locations around the world, including two in Anchorage. See you there!

Pacific NorthWes(t) Geocaching Road Trip **By Wes Skinner/NorthWes**

Groundspeak (owners of the geocaching.com website) held their annual Geocaching Block Party event at their Headquarters in Fremont (a quirky Seattle neighborhood self-billed as the 'Center of the Universe') on August 18, 2012 – in conjunction with International Geocaching Day. This Event became a starting point for a Geocaching Road Trip which began in Seattle and moved east to Pullman WA where my youngest daughter (and fellow cacher) was returning to Washington State University in her junior year of study.

My journey began at 12:30 a.m. on Saturday, when Ladybug Kids and akgh519 picked me up at the Seattle airport enroute to our night's rest at a hostel in Fremont (just a block away from the Event). As we careened across nearly-empty Seattle freeways in the late night, LBK and akgh519 filled me in on their caching odyssey which had begun in Portland two days earlier. Work commitments had kept me from joining them for those two days, and I admit to feeling more than a twinge of regret at hearing about what I'd missed! We were settled into our room and asleep by 2am, despite the presence below us of one of Fremont's best-known (and active) Irish pubs. I awoke at 5:30 a.m., filled with a sense of excitement at realizing where I was and how much fun lay ahead. By 5:45 a.m. I couldn't just lay there in the top bunk – I got up, showered & dressed for the day, figuring I'd sneak out of the room for a little local caching before breakfast. LBK groaned something about the consequences of having to room with over-excited squirrels and pulled himself together to accompany me out on the pre-dawn streets of Fremont. We roamed across the neighborhood, completing several Challenges, finding an old benchmark above the Aurora Bridge Troll's hideout, and signing the logs on several caches in the short time we had before returning to the hostel and linking up with akgh519 for breakfast. Then it was in the car to chase down more caches across the peak of Fremont for an hour, then back to find a parking place near the event. LBK headed off to a pre-event meeting for Groundspeak Volunteers while akgh519 and I continued to cache (meeting up with fellow Sourdough Member skifast, who'd driven down from his home in B.C.).

What followed was three hours of fun and fellowship at the event (who knew our Sourdough Member Nametags would prove so popular?), and then a madcap dash across more north Seattle neighborhoods as a six-pack caching crew. We'd added California cacher Team Geo-Ranger (who had hosted LBK, scobey and I years ago on a memorable desert caching journey in SoCal) and local Seattle-area cacher Cent5 (of Alaska Cache'n'Dash fame) to our adventuresome group by the time the Block Party ended. The six of us piled into Cent5's Geo-Suburban and utilized his local knowledge to find most of notorious Seattle-area cacher Dayspring's active hides – including the utterly-amazing Totally Tubular series. Yielding to Team Geo-Ranger's uncanny ability to organize ad-hoc walking tours added nearly a dozen more caches to my 'found' category for the day. It doesn't seem possible, given there was three hours of event activity in the middle of the day, but when Cent5 dropped me at the SEATAC airport gate at 6pm to catch my plane to eastern Washington, I'd logged nearly two dozen caches for the day as 'found'!



Thirsty Geocachers NorthWes and Skifast lap away, not realizing where the water came from.

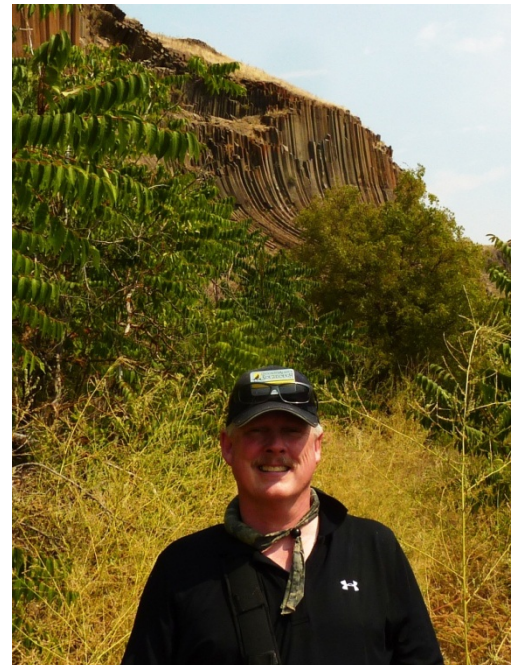
I met my wife at the airport that Saturday evening (she'd been to a wedding in Port Orchard), and we flew to Spokane, grabbed a rental car and drove south to Pullman WA. In less than thirty hours' time I'd come all the way from Anchorage, cached across north Seattle, and then settled in for the night at the far southeastern edge of Washington state. I was tired! Sunday was spent with my daughter, checking on how she was settling in to her campus routine. We took a Sunday afternoon drive to a park (more caches!) and then out across the backroads of the Palouse highlands to see farmers bringing in the wheat and lentil harvest. A stop at an old cemetery (which we'd never had seen without the cache hidden there) gave us a sense of history regarding the early farm settlers of this region.

Monday found my wife and I headed south on a thirty-minute drive down to Lewiston, Idaho, for a time of relaxation and hiking. The view as you tip over the top of the hill and descend into the Snake River country from the high Palouse is incredible – the states of Washington, Oregon and Idaho are visible from the overlook at the top of the hill. Of course, we took the 'old road' down which meant lots of caching opportunities at scenic pullouts along the way. After settling into our Red Lion hotel overlooking the confluence of the Clearwater and Snake Rivers we took off in the car to explore more of the scenery. A visit to the nearby Hells Gate State Park



helped us settle our bearings for our next day's hike up the Snake River into the Hells Gate gorge, and we managed to visit the several locations necessary to complete the requirements for an EarthCache focusing on the glacial-era floods which had shaped this landscape.

Noon Tuesday found us ready to hike up into Hells Gate State Park, seeking a series of caches centered on the [Snake River Basalt Earthcache](#). We kept cool in the 100° heat and sunshine using 'evaporation collars' around our necks and by drinking plentiful amounts of water. The five-mile round-trip hike took us alongside the Snake River (and its cool breezes) for the entire length, crossing grassy meadows as we approached the beginning of the river gorge (and the basalt exposures we'd come to study). As we entered the gorge, the trailside vegetation grew in height, closing in over our heads. At this point we realized there were spiders on everything – large thumb-sized spiders, perched on their webs across the trail, or waiting patiently on the branches for prey to entangle in their webs. I felt like Indiana Jones in the Temple of Doom tunnel sequence as I took a long stick and methodically swept the webs and tapped the brush clear (mostly) of the big critters. My wife took it all in stride, and we checked each other's clothing constantly to remove the ones that inevitably fell on us. Trust me, the scenery unfolding before us was worth sweeping aside spiders for a ¾ mile stretch. We had been brought to an earthcache which unveiled the most incredible basalt lava flows I'd ever seen! Photos don't do justice to the size and sheer enormity of the flows comprising the entire rock wall along the southeastern side of the river at this point. This section of the river has many many raptors (birds of prey) at work above, and we startled a large owl into flight at one of the physical caches we were uncovering. At one point my wife was startled to see two river otters peering up at us from the water just twenty feet away! Time constraints stopped our journey just a half-mile short of a cache placed on the watering trail for a band of bighorn sheep, but it's there waiting for my next visit to Lewiston.



Wednesday saw us driving north to Coeur d'Alene where my wife was going to be attending a conference for the next two days. I had to return to work so Spokane was my final destination. Of course, there were many caches to be found alongside the highway north, and I managed to find two benchmarks in a county where no geocacher benchmark recoveries had been reported to the NGS (I fixed that!). Looking back over the five days, I'd gone from attendance at a mega-event and concentrated urban caching to an incredible hike up a wild and scenic river where, surrounded by wildlife, I was brought face to face with one of this region's most compelling geologic oddities. Caching the Pacific Northwest offers a wide span of opportunities across a very accessible region.

Additionally, if you're a cacher interested in power trails Lewiston, Idaho may just be the next place you need to visit. Local cachers have built an extensive series of trails running up both sides of the Snake River on bike paths perched atop the levees. Additional 'cache trails' extend downstream, featuring caches of higher terrain difficulty where a boat might be needed to access some of the trail caches. There are more than 200 caches right off about twenty miles of these scenic paved bike paths on the river, as well as great cache strings located on hiking trails such as the one I took up the Hells Gate. Alaska Airlines offers service into Lewiston from Seattle, and there's a wide range of accommodations available in the city environs.

GEOCACHE ALASKA! INC.

Exploring the Last Frontier • www.geocachealaska.org



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Find us online at:

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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 GeocacheAlaska! events and speak to any Board Member.

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](#).

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, attention "Around the State."