

# GEOCACHE ALASKA! INC.

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## NOVEMBER 2012 NEWSLETTER

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### MARK YOUR CALENDAR—EVENTS

**Calendar Photo Contest Ends, Sunday, October 28, midnight.** Click [here](#) for ballot.

**2013 Board of Directors Election, November 1-15, 2012.** Link to ballot will be sent to all Sourdough Members of GeocacheAlaska! See the sample ballot at the end of this newsletter for the slate of candidates and their Statements of Purpose.

**[2013 GeocacheAlaska! Pathtag Design Contest](#)** closes midnight Saturday, November 3. Here's your chance to have your ideas turned into reality. Voting November 4-15.

**[Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation](#),** November 2, 3, and 10, different times and locations. Please attend one of the remaining sessions and speak out for Geocaching in MatSu parklands.

**[Called to duty, boots on the ground](#),** Sunday, November 11, Anchorage. A cacher send off for fyshstyx, who will be heading off to Army training.

**[12-12-12-12 Flash Mob](#),** Wednesday, December 12, 12:12 p.m, Anchorage

**[8<sup>th</sup> Annual Geofest](#),** Friday, December 14, Anchorage. Hosted by GeocacheAlaska! by Polgera

Can you believe it? We have been having this gathering for eight years now and things just keeping getting better. We still need a dessert judge of two, and we can always use help with setup. If you are interested in helping with Geofest, let Polgera know.

Mark your calendar because this year's Geofest promises to once again be a fun time. Geofest will be held on Friday, December 14, 2012 at the BP Energy Center (you know, that place where he have Eduvents). The event will be held from

5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., three hours of food, fellowship, and fun

Since the dessert contest went over so well last year, we have decided to do it again this year. There are three categories for desserts: Pies/cobblers, cakes/cupcakes, and other (this one includes cookies, bars, and things unidentifiable.) Desserts are scored based on appearance and taste with additional points given for geocaching based creativity.

We request your presents, well and presence. We are going to change the gift exchange a little this year since the volume of gifts has become so large. So, if you are participating in the gift exchange, you might want to bring something that you would like to receive because there is a slight chance (very slight, but who knows) that you could go home with your own gift.

As always there will be Geo-Bingo but rumor has it that there will be another game to play called "Name that Cacher," we are still working on this one.

Additionally, the GeocacheAlaska! Bling Committee is working on get a new GeocacheAlaska! geocoin ready to be presented at Geofest. As always, the bling store will be there. However, get your bling early; we are planning to run the bling sales for a limited amount of time so that our store manager can enjoy the festivities also.

This year we have the ability to take credit cards, cash, and checks...maybe PayPal (that one depends on our internet access). But, thanks to technology, we can slide credit cards with an iPhone app.

Prizes galore, new bling, pizza, and laughs, what more could a cacher ask for?

**[Cache'n in the Banks Holiday Bash](#),** Saturday, December 15, Fairbanks. The Interior's finale hosted by poodle chic with prizes provided by GeocacheAlaska!



**President's Corner,** by Wes Skinner/NorthWes

**Your involvement matters to the success of GeocacheAlaska!**

Writing this while flying back from a two week vacation, I want to highlight the best similarities between Alaska and where I've just visited. They throw into sharp focus how

important your involvement with GeocacheAlaska! Inc. (your local well-organized geocaching community) is to playing the game in Alaska.

Here's areas visited and my best impressions of each:

**Bayonne, New Jersey** – an otherwise very industrial port zone which yielded a total of 14 caches in a short 2-hour visit to Liberty State Park. Eleven were earthcaches placed as a power trail for learning about the New Jersey side of the New York estuary / harbor area, while the others took me to the Holocaust Liberation Monument, a killer view of the Statue of Liberty against the New York City skyline, and a spot featuring the Manhattan skyline close-up, local railroad history (complete with benchmark), and a sobering 9/11 monument. Liberty State Park gets high marks for its cleanliness, ease of access and usability, its apparent safety (three different police agencies patrolling by foot/bike/vehicle, nearly always visible), and the cooperative work between geocachers, a local education foundation and the park's land managers.

**Bermuda** – an island not far off the Virginia coast which is populated with more than 200 caches drawn from nearly every type possible. Caches highlight great views, terrific beaches, historical locations, and outdoor activities such as snorkeling and hiking. Nearly all the caches feature meaningful hints (there's a very low DNF rate – they WANT you to find the cache quickly to help preclude muggle issues and a degradation of the hide site from over-active searching), well-written cache pages which introduce you to the hide site and why it matters, relatively good cache containers which are usually water-tight, and a system of cooperation amongst local cachers for keeping the geocaches well-maintained.

**Cumberland Gap National Historic Park** – straddling Tennessee, Kentucky and Virginia, this national park features several excellent earthcaches placed by cachers in cooperation with the land managers. Virginia's nearby Ft Wilderness State Park contains two park-system-sponsored physical caches containing swag which informs the finder about the local park as well as the rest of Virginia's park system, now celebrating its 75th year. Caches located just outside the parks continue the themes presented within, including conservation ethics modeled through park-friendly placements. These are all hallmarks of a local caching group's efforts to successfully build on the possibilities presented by a major 'tourist attraction' which also happens to be managed by fairly restrictive land managers.

**Great Smoky Mountains National Park** – America's most-visited park, and the largest wilderness area in the eastern United States. The wilderness aspect makes caching with a smart phone almost impossible here. Cachers established virtuals inside the park early on, and have done an excellent job of working with requests made by National Park staffers to alter those virtuals as needed to protect the physical sites (and to keep the virtuals in play). The virtuals and the earthcaches are spread between road-accessible and trail-only sites, which gives the park service a tool for monitoring the volume of

visits a particular site is receiving. Caches placed just outside the park boundaries usually feature relatively strong containers (reflecting the area's high density of black bears and the ever-curious raccoons) placed at or near sites of great visual or historic significance, coupled with practical hints to help ensure the cache gets found. There is an awareness apparent of where tourists are traveling, as the caches seem placed to make them readily-accessible to the auto-touring public as well as those seeking out the great hiking trails found here. It's evident that there's a great effort being made to work with the National Park Service (NPS), as the NPS puts a great deal of effort into keeping as much 'wilderness' as possible in this heavily-visited location and caching opportunities don't usually rank high on 'wilderness' land managers' list of most-favored activities.

The best experiences I had caching in these four locations highlights the value of a local geocaching organization such as GeocacheAlaska! Inc. Partnerships with local land managers are much easier when a user-group (geocachers) bands together to represent itself to the land managers. As an example, using practices learned from her home-town Central Ontario Geocachers group (COG), Darlene Smith has helped form Bermuda Island Geocachers (BIG), bringing a sense of community to island cachers through events, training, and good example. BIG has negotiated several land manager agreements, and is currently angling for recognition and support from the Bermuda Tourism Board as an activity which brings visitors to Bermuda – something only a local geocaching organization can do. Opening previously-closed areas to the possibility of earthcache placements (as is occurring with the US Fish & Wildlife Service's refuges here in Alaska) is best done with a group of known size and ability working alongside the land manager.

It's my desire that GeocacheAlaska! Inc. continues building up local cachers' skill sets (creative caches placed in good locations), fostering a sense of community for local cachers, representing our interests to local land managers, and creating a sense of "wow" for local and visiting cachers alike when the cache they find exceeds their expectations while "exploring the Great Land one cache at a time." This can only happen through your participation in GeocacheAlaska! Inc. Join (or renew your membership), participate in events (social, CITO, or educational), vote in the upcoming election for board of directors, vote in the contest for the calendar photos, sponsor an event (we'll gladly help), or write an article for your newsletter. Best of all, volunteer to serve on one of the standing committees – Education, Events, Bling, or Advocacy. Your involvement matters – it's what helps build success for GeocacheAlaska! Inc., and what helps make Alaska an exciting place to participate in the get-outdoors game of geocaching.

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## **RECENT EVENT HAPPENINGS**

[A Danish Treat](#), Thursday, October 4, Anchorage.

More than thirty cachers turned out to say hello to visiting Danish cacher [team sussifar.dk](#) and to enjoy unlimited pizza, salad, beverages, and fellowship.

### [October Flash Mob / a goodbye to a fellow cacher,](#)

Monday, October 8, Fairbanks. By poodle chic.

The term, "Flash mob" was added to the dictionary in July of 2004, where it is noted it as an "unusual and pointless act" separating it from other forms of mobs.

Unusual maybe but pointless, I highly doubt it. This Cache Mob came together in a flash, to send a fellow cacher, AKA "Avnx Scout", onto his future journeys by sharing one last meet and greet with him. It didn't matter that it was cold, wet and raining. The steadfast spirit of Those who Geocache in the Banks! shined through the misty drizzle of the day, even if it was just a flash in time.

We met at N 64° 50.718 W 147° 43.017 (Downtown Fairbanks, Alaska) had a drawing for awesome prizes donated by fellow cache members and GeocacheAlaska!, and then the group dispersed promptly. When I say dispersed one might envision everyone scattering way in all directions. Not so with this mob as they continued on together to flash a cache or two, or more...grin, before settling at a local eatery to warm up over a bowl of soup. Pointless certainly not, unusual... hum, while putting it this way, I would have to say I highly doubt it. The fellowship found in geocaching is one of the many great experiences of the sport; on that note I guess one could agree there is nothing unusual or pointless to this flash mob.

### [10-11-12, Flashmob,](#) Thursday, October 11, Anchorage.

More than twenty geocachers played hooky from work during their lunch hour to celebrate an "interesting" calendar date.



Li lgray dug into his stash of personal bling for prizes.

### [Intro to Geocaching EduVent,](#) Wednesday, October 17,

Soldotna. SSO JOAT hosted an introduction to caching evening for new cachers on the Kenai Peninsula.

### [GPS Ops & NW Trails FUNDamentals - Soldotna](#) and

[Anchorage,](#) Thursday, October 18 p.m. Cachers gathered in Soldotna, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Sitka, and other locations to attend the latest of GeocacheAlaska!'s FUNDamentals events.

## **Renew Your Sourdough Membership!!!**

Renewed or new GeocacheAlaska! Sourdough Memberships that are paid after October 1, 2012, are good through December 31, 2013. You may renew online or download a membership form to mail in by clicking [here](#). Sourdoughs receive a trackable Sourdough nametag, choose the Board of Directors, and receive discounts on bling and events.



## **Reviewer's Corner – Falls Sweeps, Downloading All Alaska Caches**

As mentioned in October's Newsletter, I performed a sweep of all Alaska geocaches that had several DNFs or had been temporarily disabled for an extended period of time. This is a great time to spruce up your caches before the snow makes maintenance difficult. Please consider adding the "Available in Winter" or "Not Available in Winter" attribute to your cache page(s). Failure to respond to a Reviewer Note may result in the cache being archived during the next sweep.

This sweep resulted in review of 275 caches that met the above criteria. Of those caches, 34 were archived because a prior Reviewer Note had not been responded to and/or the Cache Owner had not logged onto the geocaching.com website for several months and 161 caches received a Reviewer Note requesting the Cache Owner to check on their cache. Any archived cache may be Unarchived by the Reviewer if the Cache Owner contacts the Reviewer with an Unarchive request. Note that before a cache may be Unarchived, it must undergo a review for compliance with the current guidelines and not be too close to any new caches that may have been published while the cache was Archived. The remaining caches appeared to be all right, but perhaps difficult to find, the Cache Owner had recently written a status note to the cache page, or there were other indications the cache was most likely all right.

There are another 392 caches statewide with the "Needs Maintenance" attribute. Due to lack of Cache Owner response in the past, I am not going to write a Reviewer Note to all of those caches. As a reminder, only the Cache Owner can remove that attribute from a cache page, by writing an "Owner Maintenance" log to the cache page or by editing the attributes of the cache page and deselecting the attribute.

See you on the trails or an event!



# Welcome to the Blue Goose GeoTour!

By Tessa Johrendt/Blue\_Goose



Since you must fly or boat to get to nearly all of Alaska's Refuges, we (US Fish and Wildlife Service) are bringing the refuges to you! The Blue Goose GeoTour (BGGT) is a series of 16 geocaches that have been hidden at 16 of the 223 Anchorage Parks. Each geocache features one of Alaska's amazing National Wildlife Refuges.

The wild goose chase is underway with over 470 (as of 10.23.12) finds on the 16 Blue Goose GeoTour geocaches. The flight started at the Campbell Creek Science Center on September 29<sup>th</sup> celebrating National Public Lands Day. Geocachers young and old, newbies and those with seasoned geo-senses all gathered amidst the snow, sunshine, and smiles to get a jump start on the BGGT. Over 65 people, including the 37 geocachers who attended, participated in the geocaching activity making for a bustling station of geocaching enthusiasts.

A big thanks to NorthWes for organizing volunteers and to akgh519 for putting a collection of sample cache containers together to display at the event table. Another thanks to Cavyguy, FlightriskAK, akgh519, and Coloreido who volunteered as geocaching "field guides" for National Public Lands Day. Meanwhile, wolfmaster1 refreshed many geocachers on how to manually enter coordinates into the "old school" Garmin eTrex.

Congratulations to Cavyguy who was the first to finish the BGGT! So far, 16 cachers have completed the BGGT and are now entered into the drawing to be held in mid-November for prizes including a large photograph on canvas of a Pacific loon, gift certificates and more. Last call for entries is November 14<sup>th</sup>, so there's still time to complete the tour and earn your own custom Blue Goose GeoTour pathtag and be entered into the drawing for prizes!

Many thanks to the awesome members of GeocacheAlaska! for helping to get the BGGT



off the ground! Your enthusiasm and support has been amazing! Local cachers akgh519, NorthWes, and Coloreido camouflaged containers, while FlightRiskAK and Blazingpathways archived caches to host hide spots for a BGGT cache, and Tomanoble, Ladybug Kids, and FlightRiskAK helped to identify suitable park locations as well as hide numerous cache containers.



I think the BGGT has been successful in introducing cool new areas of Anchorage as well as old favorites to local cachers as well as providing a bit of information about Alaska's amazing National Wildlife Refuges. Blue\_Goose has certainly learned a lot from the HTML Event and from the many wonderful geocachers that I've had the pleasure of working with. Thank you all again for your help! Happy Blue Goose chasing!

To track your progress, 1) Link to the GPS coordinates on Geocaching.com by searching the Hidden by Username: "[Blue Goose](#)" or the Cache Name: "BGGT"; 2) With your GPS or smartphone find up to 16 refuge geocaches; 3) Within each cache is a passport card with a trivia question. Take a passport card and follow its virtual path to answer the question; 4) To track which caches you've visited and trivia

questions you've answered, download a [passport](#) and [postcard](#) ; 5) Submit your trivia answers via postcard to: Blue Goose GeoTour. Alaska NWRS MS 235, 1011 E Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99503 or via email to [wild4ak@gmail.com](mailto:wild4ak@gmail.com). The deadline for submitting entries is **November 14, 2012**.

You can also "stamp" your Anchorage Park Foundation Park Passport using the [Anchorage Parks app](#) and win prizes from that non-profit group, too. Good luck and happy geocaching!

## The Best of Times AND the Worst of Times

by Devin Nix/karma123

I often look back on my caching adventures, and although many of them have been memorable, one such adventure always comes to the forefront for being “the best of times AND the worst of times.” I have always been a fan of night caches, especially after doing my all-time favorite, Aliens Abducted Malcore’s Ducky ([GC172VM](#)), so on that fateful evening, September 5, 2008, to be exact, the word on the street was that Trove Rover was interested in doing a night cache. Not just any night cache, she wanted to do the infamous Torturous Slog ([GC1A1JS](#)). Someone suggested that this cache might best be done after the ground was frozen, but that person was quickly overridden, and off we went. We included myself, Tundra Tim, AKBike&Ski, Meljo, omonra, Trove Rover and Pearl, the poodle. As it turned out, this cache was not just a cache, but an event or as another member of the infamous Donner party, er, I mean, caching party stated, “a boggy, sloggy, circular cache trip to hell.” We met at the beginning of stage one dressed for a pleasant summer outing in our jeans and tennis shoes, all except for veteran cacher, Tundra Tim. He was nattily dressed in jeans and mud boots.

Stage 1 was accomplished without too much difficulty. We gamely found the firetacks evenly placed in the not too swampy part of the cache trail. I was doing fine and thinking that I’d made the right decision in joining this little adventure until I slipped in a steaming pile of bear scat. I guess I could mention at this point that I am doing a night cache without a flashlight, a decision which I would regret later. Not to worry, I told myself. Just stay in the middle of the pack behind Meljo and everything will be fine. After completing stage 1, we all had a lively discussion on the best way to tackle Stage 2, drive to the beginning or hike overland. The majority voted to drive, so we piled into the cars and headed to the next parking area.



Tundra Tim, Karma 123, Pearl the poodle, AKBike&Ski, 1/2 of Team Omonra, Meljo and Trove Rover

Admittedly, it took us awhile to find the first firetack of Stage 2. I’d like to say it got easier after that, but it didn’t. Those pesky firetacks seemed to be placed every 500’ or so on the straightaways, and most of the trail seemed to run down the middle of the creek

between sections of boggy muck. Plus, the slog meister had set a multitude of traps to impede our progress towards the ultimate goal. Complete darkness had set in by the time we started Stage 2, and I had to be careful where I placed my feet. I think I made it all of 100 feet down the trail without getting a shoe full of water. I noticed that Meljo, my guiding light, was struggling to remain upright and at one point, I panicked when I thought I'd lost sight of her, and realized that she had fallen into the odious bog mud and was struggling extricate herself from its grip. I think I stopped enjoying myself right about then when I, too, face planted into the creek. We courageously carried on with moments of nervous laughter, lots of groans, a fair amount of cursing, and an occasional sob. About an hour into the second stage, Meljo's flashlight batteries died about the same time she lost one of her shoes. Everyone pitched in to help her find it and we proceeded with one less flashlight and some sloshing, bog-filled shoes. Marching onward, we conquered several hazardous water crossings, battled numerous tree roots, and fought back ferocious tree limbs slapping at our faces as we raced to the finish. Hallucinating, Tundra Tim thought he was back in Florida and saw an alligator at one of the water crossings. After several hours of this, we knew we were getting closer to the prize when the firetacks started getting closer together. Pretty soon, the expedition leaders (those with flashlights) started circling a group of trees. Round and round and round we went. Those of us without flashlights were pretty useless at this maneuver, so we just kind of mulled around in the middle of the circlers. Suddenly we saw Trove Rover fall to her knees, shouting "Oh my God." I falsely assumed she was asking for forgiveness for putting us through this torture, but the next thing she shouted was, "Three tacks, three tacks." Those were just about the sweetest words I'd ever heard. We all rushed over to sign the log and I, for one, thought that we might just live to cache another day.

Of course, we took the most direct route out of the swamp, climbing over fallen logs, crossing several creeks and slogging thru heaven knows what, but soon we were back on terra firma, aka the bike path, and walked the .5 miles back to the cars. As customary after a geocaching event, we paused briefly for the event photo. Since it was after midnight, some of us were wondering how we were going to explain our whereabouts and our muddy, smelly clothes to those waiting and worrying at home.

Time does heal all wounds, both physical and psychological ones. Pearl, the poodle, only required six months of doggy therapy. Everyone survived our adventure and remain friends, even though many of the articles of clothing and shoes did not. The best advice I can offer is if you decide you are going to attempt the challenge of the tortuous slog...wait until the ground is frozen, carry a good flashlight with extra batteries, gather up several of your steadfast friends, and have a great caching adventure.

**Editor's Note:** This cache very recently underwent Owner Maintenance and conditions are about perfect to attempt it. Rumor has it that some guy recently completed it in running shoes and neoprene socks and kept his feet dry.

## **Newbie and the Bear**

by Mitch Nelson/abesimpson

I saw my first bear in Alaska a week after I arrived. When I moved from Kansas in August, my friends were so sure I was going to be eaten by a bear but which kind of bear would eat me. They weren't at all surprised that it was so quick before I was spotted by one – that I survived the encounter, that's the surprise.

It was an early August Friday night and I wandered out to Bicentennial Park near the Campbell Airstrip to do some caching and take in a bit of a walk in the woods. Like most trails around here, there were signs telling me to avoid the bears, watch out for the bears, don't feed the bears, and don't get eaten by the bears. Out of sheer newbie optimism I took on all the dos and don'ts they gave me just to tell my friends that I was being 'bear aware' – I turned up the music on my phone speakers to make noise, I kept my eyes roving as I hiked, and was very careful when I went off trail to not spook anything hiding behind (or near) a cache. That being said, I shrugged off the warnings because ... heck ... I am practically in town, not in the untamed Alaskan wilderness. I thought I had better chances of seeing a pizza delivery guy.

About a mile and a half in, and three geocaches found, I wandered out of a patch of overgrown area to hear a ruckus up ahead. Someone was yelling at their dog, and their dog was going haywire. I laughed to myself that I thought maybe it was bear related, but again the newbie in me raised my bear radar up. No sooner did I do that, but I heard a rustle in the woods just behind me, and as I turned ...there he was ... or she was ... Okay, for accuracy ... they were ... Three Black Bears, no more than 100ft away from me. I startled them, I think, as they jumped quickly up the side of a small hill and went over towards a road. They all seemed quite small, for the best I could tell, but there they were. While they were out of sight pretty quickly, I followed what I was told and moved away from the area, popping out of the woods and across the road to trails closer to the airstrip. Man, I was excited though. I

was thrilled to see a bear, and quickly posted on Facebook about the adventure. After I searched (but didn't find) a cache on the other side of the road, it was time to wander back to my car and home.

You may know this spot in the trail where the sled trails cross the road, then cross the foot trail to find a sled trail to the north. It creates a couple of intersections leading to a T where the sled trail goes east-west no more than 40ft from the road. All important details because as I reached the edge of the road, momma bear walked across that T ... 40 feet from me.

She would have come up to my waist while on all fours. Her coat was shiny black, her size broad as she packed on for the winter ahead. She took one look at making eye contact and lumbered on easily through the brush heading up the trail. If she wasn't clearly moving away from me & clearly aware I was there, I would be concerned. But even this newbie knew to wait, I spotted three before and as I waited the other two came. First, a much smaller cub moved deliberately across the same path. This guy didn't seem to take notice of me at first, but pulled up just on the cross trail to see me before moving onwards behind momma. Then the runt jumped across the cross trail soon after, doing his best to keep up. Runt gave me the clearest view of any of them. I could see the little guy's soft fur, his shape of muscles under his pelt, and that unmistakably cute brown patch over his face.

The whole encounter lasted seconds at the most, but I was in shock with how close I was to them. I did my best to take phone pictures all while slowly moving backwards facing them. But my photography skills leave much to be desired. Besides, I needed to back away and leave them as much room as possible, that much I knew to do. Shortly after I was on my way back to the car (now talking to myself out loud to alert any of the other fuzzy friends about) but my mind went through the five stages of stupidity:

- 1) Giddy: "Woot Woot, I just saw a bear."
- 2) Fear: "I just saw a ba-ba-ba-ba-ba-bear!!!!"
- 3) Post to Facebook: "I just saw a bear. Please share or the terrorists win."
- 4) Denial "That wasn't a real bear, that's just one of those stuffed bears they have for sale downtown."
- 5) Brainlessness (Aka: Darwin Award Nominee): "I bet if I a go back with a fish in my pocket, I could get a better picture."

By the time I made it back to my car, fulfilled not just for a good number of finds but basking in bearish afterglow, I looked down at my watch and noticed something great. I spotted the bear 6 days, 23 hours, 30 minutes after landing in Anchorage. In less than a week, I became face-to-face with the one thing I only joked about coming true. Not only did I follow all the bear aware precautions and came out uneaten, but I saw how beautiful those creatures are.

That day, I came to conclude two things: I am not in Kansas anymore ... and am I going to love it here!!

*Mitch Nelson (abesimpson) is the author of the self-published blog on moving to Alaska, The Bear Feed: [www.bearfeed.net](http://www.bearfeed.net). And by "self-published" it means that when he wants to publish something, he prints off a copy and reads it.*

## **Taking Better Photographs in the Outdoors**

*By SSO JOAT*

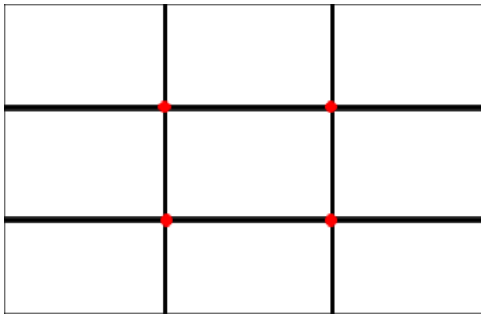
The Calendar Photo Contest for the 2013 Geocache Alaska! calendar has come to a close. We received 123 photo entries this year; most of them coming in at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour on the last day (which made a heck of a lot of work for the WebMaster over the next couple days!). There were a number of really good photos submitted this year. We certainly do have a few gifted photographers in our midst. So what is it that these people do to get those great shots? Like many things in life, they just follow a couple simple rules.

One of the most important features of a great outdoors photo is the composition. Composition is generally broken down into content and placement. The defining guideline for composition is known as the "Rule of Thirds". About 90% of all "great" photographs follow this rule in some form or another. The Rule of Thirds quite simply divides the photograph or image into thirds on both the horizontal and vertical planes. This is typically done by imagining the following grid pattern over the top of your scene as you view it



through the viewfinder or on the LCD screen of modern digital cameras. (Note: there are a few cameras that will overlay this grid on the LCD screen so you can actually see it as you compose the shot).

In general, you should break up your image so that you have primary features or natural lines running along one or more of the vertical or horizontal lines. If possible, you would use both vertical and horizontal lines if your image has them. For example, if the horizon is visible in your landscape, you want to place it at either the top or bottom third of the photo. And then if you have a single vertical object in the foreground (e.g. a tree or person), you would place it at either the left or right third line while maintaining the horizon at the top or bottom third.

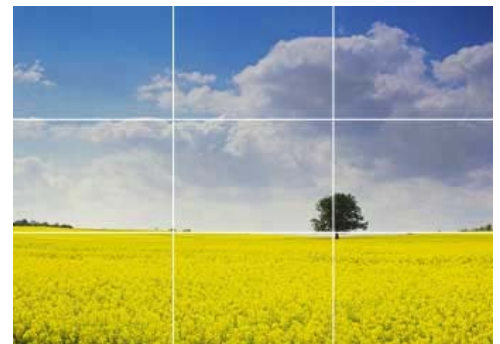


The four intersecting points of these lines are the Interest Points. The eye is naturally drawn to these points when you look at a photo. If you have a singular point of interest for your photo subject, place it at one of these 4 intersecting points. Maintain a horizontal or vertical line through the picture on the thirds at the same time if you can.

There are few situations where placing your point of interest in the center of the photo is going to be appropriate. And in fact, most of the good photos where there is something that appears to be in the center, you'll usually still find elements around it that make use of the Rule of Thirds and add balance to the image. Placement of your point of interest within the viewfinder using the Rule of Thirds is one of most important aspects of photography.

The following example places the horizon at the bottom horizontal third and the point of interest at the right vertical third. The result is a much more appealing photograph compared to placing the tree right in the center of the picture.

Another important element to Composition is the content. Pick only one or two points of interest for a given scene. This is generally going to be the subject of your image, be it a person, object, or terrain feature. Make sure that you do not have a distracting background or too many objects within the view. The most important element of your image should be quite clear. If other things are competing with your subject, change your point of view to remove them. (Advanced photographic techniques would use lens focal length, distance, and aperture to blur out background details that detract from your subject while keeping the subject in crisp focus, but that will have to be a lesson for another day.)



If your subject includes people or animals, it is usually better to place them on the third lines so that they are facing or moving into the picture instead of out of it.

Here is another method of laying out lines in your photos, which is called Leading Lines. Instead of (or in addition to) having lines along the horizontal and/or vertical paths, you would run the lines of an object or feature diagonally so that it leads your eye toward the subject. Note that the subject is usually best placed at one of the 4 point of interest intersections and the starting point for a leading line is best started at one of the third's lines.



A final tip to help your photo compositions is to use a technique called Framing. Often used in conjunction with the Rule of Thirds, place natural objects around your subject to box it in. The following image uses rock cliffs in the foreground to frame in the background scene. Note that the placement of most elements still follows the Rule of Thirds.



Now take these simple techniques and go practice! Let's see if you can get your best shot on the cover of the 2014 Calendar.



# SND83 HOSTS SPOOKIE HALLOWEEN EVENT

By fuzzybelly

Gruesome goodies and crazy costumes were on the slate for the evening at the [Halloween GeoCache Survivor Style](#) event. Dressed as "the Tramp", Charlie Chaplin that is, I had the pleasure of helping SND83 (Cleopatra) with this awesome event she had been planing.

She really outdid herself with the set up for this event and anyone who missed it will need to get it on your calendar for next year.

The gruesome goodies table had icky looking treats of all sorts. Deviled egg eyeballs, where much more tasty than they looked. With blood shot red eyes and green pupils, they did get eaten but they went slowly... no wonder. Chips were ready to be dipped into cups filled with dip that was topped off with a small spider crawling on it, and punch filled with ice cubes.....and worms. But whatever you do, don't eat the scary cupcakes, for some are filled with prizes that are to be saved for the end of the event.



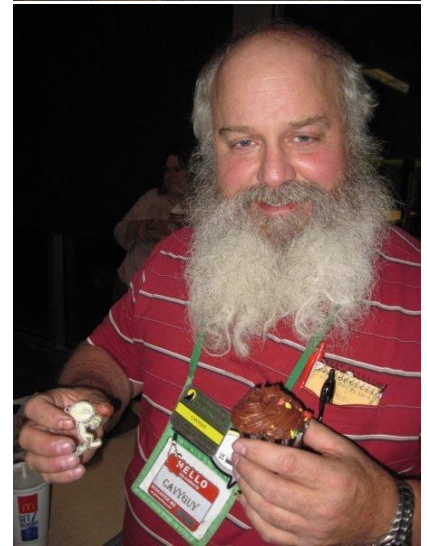
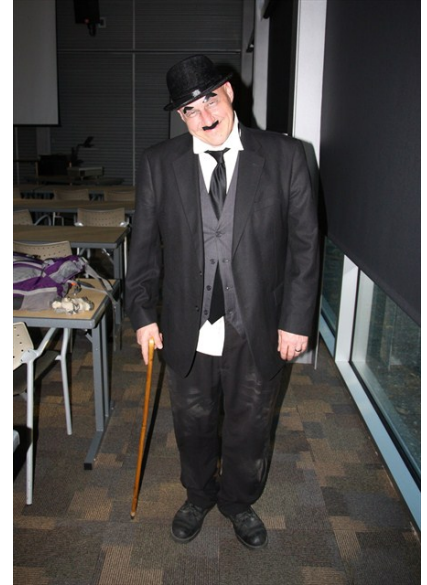
Over 20 people logged "attended" post, so it was a good showing for a Wednesday evening. AkLoisandClark showed up dressed as the last two contestants on the show Survivor, complete with torches and team flag. Lil'Snd83 was a vicious Cleopatra's cat, Polgera made it to the event dressed as a shark attack victim, although I'm not sure how she did with such a loss of blood. Tomanoble rode in from the cattle drive dressed as a cowboy without his posse and AkJoey was a little clown with a big smile. And many more showed up as muggles.

Cleopatra had asked cachers to bring their John Grisham gold bars they had just received. They were gathered together for people to discover, then she posed with them as if she was showing off with all her gold treasure.

Then came the costume contest. Cachers did secret voting on ballots that were later handed into the judges. There was a child and adult contest. The clown took home a close contest between her and the kitty, and Shark attack took home the trophy for the adults. Funny



works. One thing is for sure, you won't want to miss that one.



comments were made on the ballots too. One cacher thought that the Santa Claus outfit that Cavyguy wore was good, but thought the beard was fake :) And someone revealed a cupcake caper had occurred. CapSheldon was found to be the guilty party. He had somehow got by the Kitty who was guarding them. Of course he was forgiven, he wasn't aware and besides we all love 'em so :)

Finally it was time to pick a cupcake and maybe earn a prize. Don't eat them too quick, because the treats could be filled with an ammo can or little TB. Yep, SND83 hid little gifts in some of the cakes, and if you were lucky you would pick one with a prize.

As the night came to an end, rumors could be heard of how next year's event could be even better. And plans were already in the

# CACHERS UNITE ON A CHILLY MORNING TO EARN ALL TYPES OF SMILEYS

By: fuzzybelly, photos by karma123 and Onespirit555

Early Sunday morning at the Potters Marsh boardwalk, a vehicle came racing into the lot, backed into a spot, and Ladybug Kids jumped out, draped a towel over his georig's hood, and started placing out breakfast goodies of all sorts. Egg and cheese muffins, some with apple crisp, coffee cakes and bananas awaited all the cachers as they arrived for the [International EarthCache Day 2012](#), event. Snow still covered the ground from the past evening's late fall snow storm, and a chill in the air would force the group gathering into a tight ball of chatting cachers all wearing the first smileys of the day.

I was lucky enough to have the job of making sure each attendee got a ticket for prizes to be drawn (I got to say hello to each person who showed), even though we all knew it would be futile; the Glenn.fish family and dmzlsone family were both in attendance. Our only hope was that the Alaskavans family had failed to show. After a bit of mingling and munching, prizes were drawn for FTF and bling to be given away. Tiny cachers, akjoey, and Lil-Snd83 drew tickets from the ammo can that coloreido held, and gave a few prizes to some new folks attending, before getting them to the fish family too :). Lil-Snd83 is still in training:), she'll get the hang of it.

Now that the attendees had earned yet another smiley for the event, groups made plans to do Earthcaches. The main event for today's fun was a special tour of Ladybug Kids' Earthcache; Making of Potters Marsh, GC1EHA8, by the CO himself. They would drive around the marsh learning about it while stopped at different waypoints along the way.



Smiling cachers included Spiritone555, kbcarr, meljo, fuzzybelly, and burtonsinak

READY, SET, GO!!!

Cachers piled into georigs and headed down the road to the first waypoint. Rabbit Creek, along Rabbit Creek Road was the first stop. Cars quickly filled the small parking spot and started spilling out to beside the road, some on the north side and some on the south. With 15 to 20 people gathering along the side of the road, and some trying to cross, a kind APD officer stopped traffic with flashing lights to help the group cross safely.

This station taught the group two important facts: where Rabbit Creek originates, and also another most important one, this is not a good spot for fuzzy to go to alone, apparently bears really like it here.

The convoy continued down the "Old" Seward, to a spot overlooking the marsh. Here cachers earned two more smileys. It was a 2fer. A benchmark with a very cleverly disguised cache very nearby, by the master Scobey.





The next learning station was Little Rabbit Creek. Again we learned of its headwaters, and how it affects the marsh. The recent heavy rain had the swollen creeks full making one of the questions tough to answer, but there were clues to be found to help solve them.

Little Survivor creek was the next destination. The group learned why this tiny tributary is so important to the marsh. BurtonsinAk did his best anti beaver work by unblocking the pipe feeding the marsh, then it was time to head back to the boardwalk for the final station of learning.



The Earthcachers all headed down the boardwalk and gathered at the end. An eagle flew by as the lesson continued. The last questions were answered and observation made, and the very enjoyable group Earthcache was over.

I interviewed SND83 and here response was, "I loved caching with a bunch of people, gives it a different spin on the fun".

Everyone agreed that this was a unique and fun way to do an Earthcache, and they all looked forward to another.

And with that, yet more smileys went through the group.



“Under the Boardwalk...” An unsuccessful hunt for a Scobey cache, photo by Carol Lincoln/Onespirit555



# GEOCACHE ALASKA! INC.

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



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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](mailto:ladybugs@geocachealaska.org), attention "Around the State."*