GEOCACHE ALASKA! Inc.

Exploring the Last Frontier • www.geocachealaska.org

April 2013 NEWSLETTER

IN THIS ISSUE:

MARK YOUR CALENDAR—EVENTS

Forum & Website FUNdamentals - Anchorage &

Fairbanks, 4/18

National Hanging Out Day Flash Mob, 4/19, Fairbanks

Down Town Juneau Cache-Clean-up!, 4/20, Juneau

International CITO Weekend Fairbanks Edition, 4/20

Almost-Earth Day CITO, 4/21, Juneau
International CITO weekend Alaska style, 4/21, Portage

WWFM X - MatSu Valley, 5/4, Wasilla

WWFM X - Anchorage AK - Town Square Flash Mob 4, 5/4

WWFM X-Fairbanks AK Airport Road Corner Flash Mob, 5/4

RECENT EVENT HAPPENINGS

M0' PIE III, 3/14, Anchorage
Signature Item Design FUNdamentals - Fairbanks, 3/21
Signature Item Design FUNdamentals - Anchorage, 3/21

Intro to Geocaching EduVent, 3/23, Kenai

IndieInfoTech Exchange, 3/28, Anchorage

President's Corner, by Wes Skinner/NorthWes

We've experienced a delay in getting final approval for placing new caches in Chugach State Park, due to issues at the park completely unrelated to the scope our permit request. Our Advocacy Committee resubmitted our request through the statewide Park permitting office in Soldotna, where staff issued a special use permit for GeocacheAlaska! Inc. members covering Chugach State Park, Kenai River Special Management Area (which includes all Kenai peninsula park units), Kachemak Bay State Park (which has unique management concerns not related to our geocaching permit), and Prince William Sound State Parks (note – this does not include Chugach National Forest lands in western Prince William Sound, which are not open to cache placements). Chugach State Park was added to the permit issued earlier this year for the Kenai Park units, as part of a process underway between State Parks and GeocacheAlaska! Inc. to establish one uniform permit covering cache placements on State Park lands across all of Alaska. For precise details on what areas in Alaska have known restrictions or special requirements for geocache placements, visit the Land Manager section of our excellent and up to date website at geocachealaska.org for more information.

Elsewhere in this newsletter is an article outlining some of the stipulations regarding how to place caches under the new permit for 2013 covering Chugach State Park, Kenai Peninsula State Parks and Prince William Sound State Park units. Read the article and the permit with care. Further discussion is ongoing in our forums, where you can ask questions for clarification. Gaining the permit for Chugach State Park wasn't the easy several-day process that our Advocacy Chair cavyguy has carried out for the past several years. Complications within the park unit not related to our activity had spill-over consequences when our permit was delayed behind far more complicated commercial permit issues. Advantages we see in going to the statewide permit office with our application include a uniformity of permit stipulations across the state, as well as a streamlined procedure which has proven to be swift, responsive to questions, and efficient at issuing the permit in a timely fashion. A pointed disadvantage is we stand to lose personal contact with individual rangers in local park units, a deficiency we can remedy by working with local rangers to hold CITO Events in the park units were we as individuals have placed caches.

Our experience with this year's delay has pointed out areas for improvement in how, when, and where we'll be submitting the 2014 permit requests. If you'd like to be involved in the Advocacy Committee's important work of maintaining good working relationships with the land managers who allow us to play on public lands, please don't hesitate to contact me.

We're looking for a half-dozen persons to help build and maintain local contacts, host CITO events in neighborhood parks, and keep in touch with local parks staff. Tomanoble currently maintains our database of shape files and processes the cache placements through a shape file filter (using Geocaching Swiss Army Knife – GSAK) to build the lists of caches found inside state park boundaries, an action that is required for our annual report as a part of the permit stipulations. The Advocacy Committee as a whole needs more persons involved beyond just Tomanoble and cavyguy. Don't just complain or be curious about land management issues – get involved with the committee makes permits for placements possible. We'll help you learn how – we just need you to volunteer.

Our secretary (glenn.fish) will be contacting members by direct email shortly to remind them of their expired Sourdough membership status. Sourdough 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 it takes to make things happen. Also, because GeocacheAlaska! is an incorporated 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization, your membership dues are tax deductible. We have about 55 members (of our total Sourdough membership list of 166 persons) whose membership hasn't been renewed for 2013.

While listing a new cache placement recently I was personally embarrassed to be reminded by geocaching.com's website that I have several caches which have the 'needs maintenance' icon in active status, or which I've temporarily archived while working on replacement. As part of the cache placement guidelines we are tasked by Groundspeak with performing regular maintenance on our caches. Don't be embarrassed – check your profile and see if all your caches are in top shape for the spring caching season! And if you have caches which experience high visitor counts, it's a good idea to replace cache logs in preparation for the tourist season. My 'hotel zone' caches are already experiencing a refreshing uptick in visitor 'found it' logs. Spring is coming, and with it an increase of cachers afield looking for our cache placements.

GeocacheAlaska! License Plate Tags by
Mike Malvick/Ladybug Kids

The newest item in the GeocacheAlaska! store is the Alaska License Plate tag. The front of the tag features a plate first issued in 2001 and still available through the Alaska Department of Motor Vehicles. Key features are Ursa Major (the Big Dipper), Denali and the Alaska Range, a caribou, and ubiquitous black spruce forest. The back of the tag has fun facts including the Alaska statehood date, state motto, and other items.

The tag is one of a series of state license plates being produced by **Geoswag**. The original concept for the license plate tag was provided by Talkeetna geocacher **ONESPIRIT555** when she showed a Utah license plate tag to members of the GeocacheAlaska! Fundraising Committee. The Committee then viewed past Alaska license plates and chose the "caribou plate" at the design that would look best in this medium. A few iterations with the manufacturer resulted in this striking design.

So, if you see a trackable item that you think would work well with an Alaskan theme, tell a member of the Fundraising Committee (Ladybug Kids, SSO JOAT, Polgera, NorthWes, akgh519, and firemanak.

The license plate tags may be purchased at GeocacheAlaska! events in Soldotna, Fairbanks, and Anchorage, during March and April for $6. **Sourdough members** of GeocacheAlaska! may purchase the tags for $5. Beginning in May, the tags will also be available through mail order via the GeocacheAlaska! **online store**.

The activation code on the tags' packaging is incorrect. The code for all license plate tags is "ALASKA." One may also obtain activation codes from geocaching.com's **trackables webpage**.

Reviewer's Corner – Geocache Exclusion Zones, by Greatland Reviewer

Section I of the Geocaching Guidelines contains a list of restricted, prohibited, or otherwise inappropriate cache locations. These locations include, but are not limited highway bridges, major roadways, dams, government buildings, schools, military installations, hospitals, airports and other such locations. In Alaska, cache placements on military installations and schools come up the most. To my knowledge, no military installation in Alaska allows geocaches, so caches will not be published on military property with express written permission from the appropriate military authority. Permission for Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson (JBER) has been sought and denied several times after JBER expelled all geocaches in April 2009 due to issues regarding cache placement on JBER land without permission and geocachers not obtaining the required JBER iSportsman Recreation Access Permit (it had another name at the time) and not telling the truth about what they were doing on JBER land when approached by JBER personnel.

Many schools in Alaska are different than schools elsewhere in that they are central community points for cultural and recreational opportunities. As a result, if a cache is placed in close proximity to a school where the general public is expected to be doing other activities, I'll usually publish the cache. Examples of such activities include Frisbee golf near the Seward High School, Nordic skiing and other trail activities at Service High School and UAA/APU in Anchorage, and Nordic skiing and other trail activities at Skyview High School in Soldotna and Nikiski High School in Nikiski. However, I will ask the cache owner to relocate a cache that is placed on school grounds if it is placed in a location where school administrators or parents would not expect to see lurking unfamiliar adults. After all, none of us wants to read a cache log that tells the tale of a cacher being led away in handcuffs!

Continuous Story by Mike Malvick/Ladybug Kids

Ladybug Kids began a story in the GeocacheAlaska! forums with the intent of other cachers building the story one line at a time. Just add one line to whatever has gone before, and keep the continuity of storyline and relevance. Once the story reaches a natural conclusion, it will be published in this newsletter. If the story takes on a life of its own, it's possible it could become a serial in the newsletter, with installments published monthly. Click **this link** to find the thread in the GeocacheAlaska! forums

Getting around the GeocacheAlaska! Forums By Scott Aleckson/SSO JOAT

Our new forum upgrades continue at http://geocachealaska.proboards.com/, so come on in and join the conversation as there is a wealth of information available and it is a great place to ask questions about geocaching in Alaska.

When you login, click the "Profile" link in the top menu bar to view your current profile settings and make adjustments as desired. You can edit your profile by clicking the "Edit Profile" button at upper right corner of your profile pane while viewing your profile. From there you can set up the way you view the forum, set your personal settings and adjust how you will be notified when specific activities occur on the forum.

We are now conducting GeocacheAlaska! committee business and discussion in the forums. If you are interested in joining one of our committees, go to your profile and click the "Groups" tab to see a list of the committees. You can request to join any standing committee by clicking the button to the right of that committee. When added to the committee, you'll be given access to a special forum board for that committee where you can join in the discussion of the committee business.

Our committee work is where all the ground work for the organization takes place. More helpers provide more ideas and lighten the overall workload for everyone. If you have some time, please consider joining one of our committees to lend a hand.

US Snowshoe Day Flash Mob byLaura McDonald/MamaNanook

On March 16, 2013, three North Pole geocachers arrived at the Chena Lakes Boat launch to have snowshoe races. In attendance were Pathfinder01, Emeindl, and MamaNanook. We waited for more catchers to arrive but the time came and went. I did learn that another cacher was running late and missed us. We all decided to spend the day caching and capturing those last few caches left at the lakes.

Jimmy (Pathfinder01) was able to log three caches in addition to the event. Elaine (Emeindl) was able to log six caches in addition to the event. Laura (MamaNanook) was able to log three caches in addition to the event.

GC3KYAZ Flyers Wild Ride received a DNF. After searching trees and shoveling snow for about 30 minutes, we hated to leave without that smiley, but alas, we will be back.
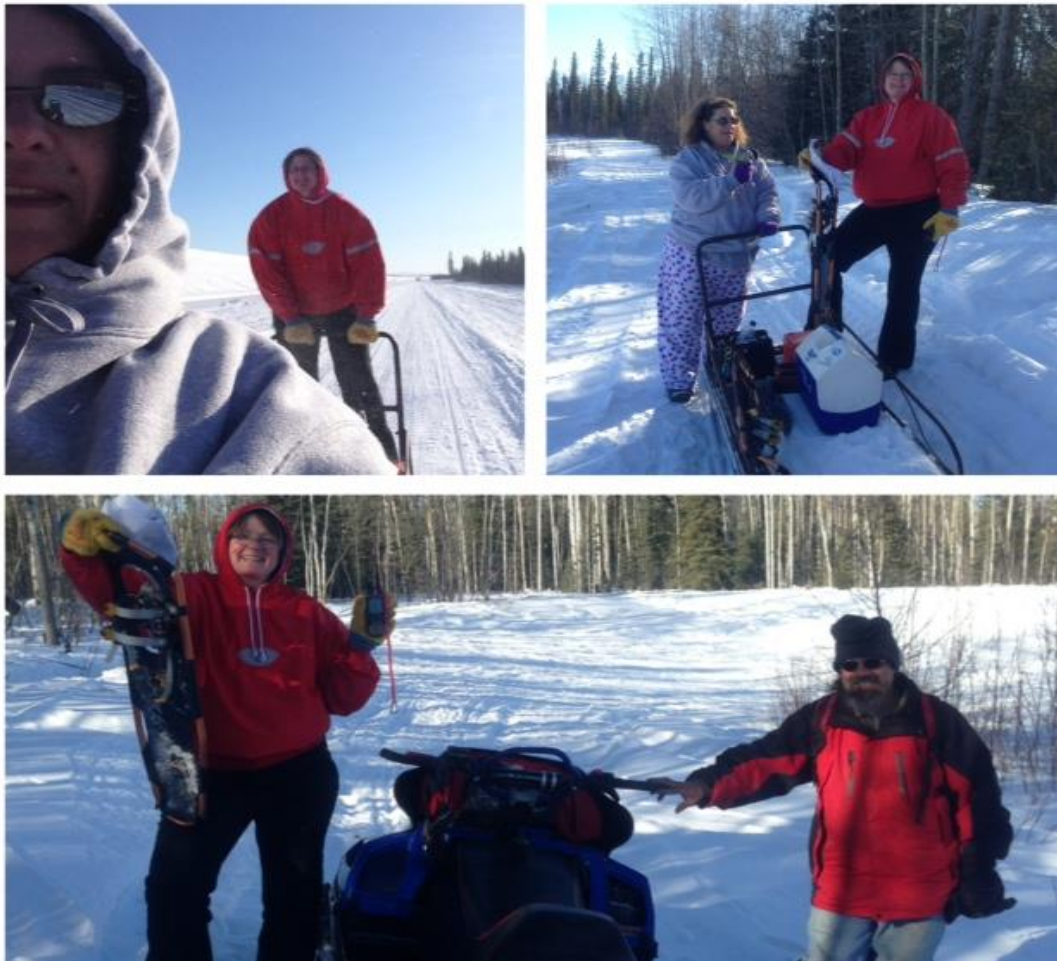
1st Annual March Birthday Flash Mob by Louise E Kempker/freeweez

The FREEWEEZ and WOCM 1st Annual March Birthday Flash Mob was held in Seward on Saturday, March 16th. What a great turnout for a cold, windy but very sunny event! After signing in, we drew for the FTF honors, and congrats goes to *BOG5150187* (Chris Bogart) from Kenai!! All Geocachers who attended were each given a special Pathtag commemorating the event. For those in attendance celebrating a March Birthday, they also received a birthday present! A rousing round of the Happy Birthday song was sung and everyone enjoyed cupcakes! We took several group photos, and best ending was that everyone lingered around to talk "shop" about the local geocaches in the area, and which ones were worth grabbing!! A special unexpected treat was the anonymous muggle who walked up to the Flash Mob and donated 7 boxes of Girl Scout Cookies to the gathering!! FREEWEEZ & WOCM plan to hold this as an annual event, so keep that in mind for March 2014!!
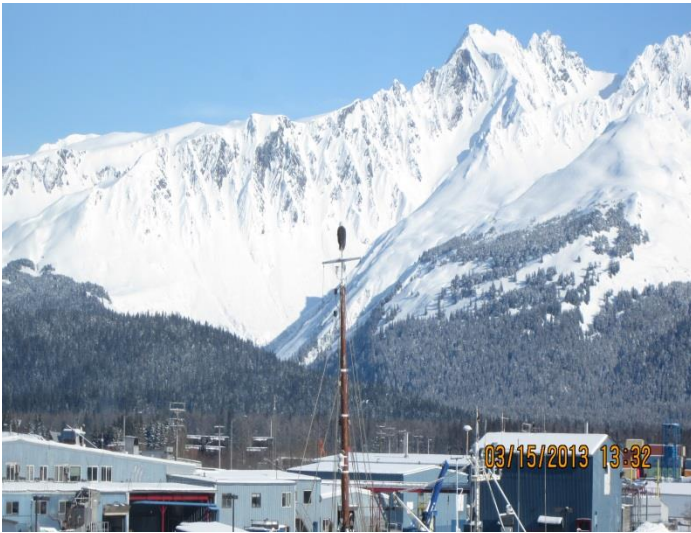
¿Do Geese See God? By Laura McDonald/MamaNanook

I'm not sure if geese see God, but I can definitely say the geocaching gods were looking down on three geocachers on a Thursday afternoon on the last day of February. Two Alaskan geocachers (Pathfinder01 and MamaNanook) and a visiting cacher from Arizona (Spidafly) sought to find a cache that had not been found in almost four (4) years. (Would it even still be there?). Neither of us had a clue what the trip to the cache would be like. We did know that we would be walking in frozen swamp land through the 51 inches of snow that fell this season.

After what seemed like years and a hint from the CO, I finally had the coordinates in hand. (Palindromes, got to love them). Now, I just had to find someone gullible enough to go with me. Did I say gullible? I meant, stupid. Wait, that's not the right word either. Someone who was itching for a cache, yes, that's the appropriate phrasing. Lo and behold, I found two such strong chivalrous men.

SpidaFly loves puzzle caches and actually asked if I would be interested in doing it. I was excited beyond words, but did manage to get out a YES! Now, just to find some more people to go. After all, the more the merrier! Pathfinder01 had the day off and a meeting time was scheduled and plans were made.

I picked up SpidaFly from a lunch date with his family and off we went to meet Pathfinder01 for what we expected to be an hour walk through the frozen swamp. Boy, did we underestimate the time on that one.

After arriving at our starting point we gathered our necessary items and started our adventure. A quick 10 minute walk down a trail or two, then came the time to put the snowshoes on. The beginning of the walk with snow shoes went smoothly, we would have this cache in our cold hands in no time. We soon realized we underestimated our outing time as we reached the swampy area.

With snow to our hips we took turns shoveling the snow out of our way. Pathfinder01 and SpidaFly were very chivalrous, or should I say shovelrous, when it came my turn to shovel. I didn't shovel for a long time, but I did shovel. Over the river and through the woods to LBK's cache we go. I was actually singing that for a while. Shovel, shovel, snowshoe stomp. I got very good at the snow shoe stomp.

After what seemed like hours, oh wait, it was hours, we finally got to GZ. SpidaFly started digging at the base of the first set of three spruce trees while Pathfinder01 started heading to the adjacent set of three spruce trees. I was beginning to dislike LBK. Did he realize how many sets of three small black spruce trees there were in the area? Of course he did!

Clank...what? SpidaFly quickly says "hey guys, what does this sound like"? Clank, clank, clank...nothing like the sound of metal against metal. SpidaFly sped up his shoveling and managed to free the cache from its icy cave. Having not been touched by human hands in close to four years, the cache was reluctant to let us inside, but with the persistence and strength of the men, the cache opened and it was the most beautiful site. We looked at what she had to offer eagerly seeking out the log. We all signed the log and looked around one last time.

The sun was setting so we closed the cache and buried it back in its icy cave, hoping it doesn't have to wait another four years before it once again feels the warmth of the human touch. We made our way back to our cars just as it got dark. We said our so longs and promised to stay in touch with SpidaFly, who will be back this summer for some more Alaskan style geocaching adventures. I'm sure they will be filled with adventure just like this one. I already have a few picked out. I wonder how the men feel about swimming to caches? It's got to be quicker than shoveling right?

Iditarod Crazy A, B, C by Victoria Noble/Blazingpathways

The first Saturday of March, the Anchorage community comes out in full force in support of the Ceremonial Start of the Iditarod Sled Dog Race. Downtown Anchorage's 4th Avenue and Cordova Streets become snowy, crowd-edged runways which catapult the competitors and their teams onto the city's trail system and toward the finish at Campbell Airstrip. The Iditarod Sled Dog Race, also dubbed the "Last Great Race", is a testament to the abilities of dogs and mushers alike as they brave the varying weather and trail conditions as they meander from checkpoint to checkpoint along nearly 1,000 miles of mostly wilderness trail from Willow to Nome.

This year, the geocaching community went Iditarod Crazy A, B, and C (GC43J4H, GC463R5, GC43J4K) as twenty some individuals had a small taste of the amount of effort required to "run" from checkpoint to checkpoint as they sprinted to 5 viewing areas within as many hours.

The downtown multi event focused on taking in the sights, sounds, tastes, and smells of the race. Awards were given for knowing Iditarod trivia and taking pictures of "special" things along the pathway that led from a prime viewing position on the 2nd floor of a parking garage; through the street vendors hocking reindeer sausage, furs, and daily newspapers with the Iditarod insert; past the sleds, harnesses, and trucks of canine athletes still bedded down in their little homes away from home; finally arriving at the throng of bodies pressed against the temporary picket fences that separated the crowd from the handlers holding back the yipping and yapping teams awaiting the announcer calling the 2-minute countdown that would free them for this day's jaunt.

Iditarod Crazy B moved participants to a more serene viewing area with superb angles for the camera buff. The competitors at the middle of the pack exited the tunnel under the Seward Highway to our cheers, sprayed snow from their sled's runners as they made the turn onto the bridge over Campbell Creek, and sometimes flung a much-prized bootie into the crowd. During this flash mob event, a modified form of Jeopardy brought laughter as participants repeatedly forgot to "buzz" before shouting out their answers.

The final event was almost a "no go" as the organizer was waylaid along with several other participants by the molasses-like movement of the bus used to move the masses from 3 parking areas to the Campbell Science Center activities. One of the highlights of this event and viewing area was the opportunity to "touch" the mushers as they completed our high fives as they paraded past Ground Zero and made their final turn out onto Campbell Airstrip. The pictures were perfect with blue skies and white snow-capped mountains as a backdrop and the antics of kids and adults alongside the teams in the foreground.

Geocaching with the USFWS and Events at the End of the Road by Joel Vos/NeverSummer

US Fish and Wildlife Service Park Ranger, and geocacher, Joel Vos presenting Alaska Maritime's Geocaching 101 class

Refuges across the nation are engaging in the Global Positioning System(GPS)-based activity of "Geocaching" as a way to engage the public with the activities and mission of the Refuges themselves. In the game of geocaching, a game player places a container and logbook in a precise location, takes GPS coordinates of that site, and posts the coordinates online. Using a site such as geocaching.com or opencaching.com, players can then decide on a geocache to seek, plug in the coordinates, and head out for a navigation-based adventure.

A rapt audience gets a dose of Geocaching 101

GPS technology is not only an excellent tool used in research within our Refuge Systems, but it also provides excellent outreach opportunities that reach a myriad of visitors to our Refuges. With many Refuges in the nation using carefully designed GPS programs as an outreach tool, visitors can navigate and discover hidden treasure—both natural and man-made!

Physical geocache containers, however, are not allowed on Refuge land. Burying or placing a geocache on Refuge land can damage sensitive natural or historic resources, and geocaching websites recognize these regulations. However, with some partnership and careful planning, geocaching has been brought to many Refuges with great success.

Several refuges, including Sacramento and Humboldt Bay Refuges, CA, Desert National Wildlife Refuge, NV, and Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, FL, have created geocaching scavenger hunts where geocachers follow clues to particular locations on the refuge where they learn something new, complete a task or answer questions. Once they complete the hunt, they can return to the administrative site for that Refuge and find the logbook and geocache. Alaska's own USFWS Region 7 Office worked with Anchorage geocachers to create the *Blue Goose GeoTour*, a virtual tour of Alaska's National Wildlife Refuges created by placements at Anchorage city parks.

coloReido and akgh519 get ready to work on their Passports

Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge joined the ranks of GPS outreach users by creating a Letterbox-hybrid scavenger hunt within their Alaska Islands and Ocean Visitor Center in Homer, Alaska. In addition, they maintain a containerless "Earthcache" that asks visitors to answer geology-related questions about the site the coordinates bring them to. By maintaining caches at the administrative site, geocachers can experience the research and history of Alaska Maritime, while not having to find a cache on Refuge land. With many visitors already, geocaching has proven to be an excellent way to connect visitors to the USFWS mission, and the resources of our Refuge. Alaska Maritime plans on more geocaches and Earthcaches to come.

On Saturday, March 2, 2013 from 1-3 p.m Park Ranger Joel Vos from the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge coordinated and presented a public GPS and Navigation lab, and a Geocaching 101 presentation. Visitors had the opportunity to learn about how Global Positioning Systems work, the history of navigation, how to use a GPS, games that can be played using navigation as a focus, and more.

Joel developed interpretive materials and games and, with coordination with Homer's Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Lake Clark National Park, Kachemak Bay Estuarine Research Reserve, Friends of Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska Region 7 headquarters, and GeocacheAlaska!, put on a well-received outreach program. Nearly 100 visitors came in to learn more about GPS use and geocaching.

Activities included hands-on lessons like demonstrating how GPS uses trilateration to find you on a map, orienteering courses inside and outside of the visitor center, creating your own compass, and GPS activities. The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary was on hand to talk about marine navigation and GPS use, and Steve Delehanty, Refuge Manager for Alaska Maritime presented ongoing research that uses GPS technology. Many attendees joined in the fun and completed a Geocache Passport, designed to guide visitors to 4 temporary "day caches" hidden around the grounds. Others discovered how accurate their GPS could be with another outdoor game.

Visitors came from as far away as Anchorage for the events, and 2 troops of Girl Scouts attended as part of earning their Geocaching badge. With plans in the works for more outreach including a GPS lending library, classes and labs about navigation and GPS, and events to reach out to geocachers around the globe, Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge looks forward to showing off their natural resources by using GPS technology and outdoor activities in the future.

With help from the board at GeocacheAlaska!, some door prizes were available for the attendees of the Geocaching 101 event. A mega bison and standard bison cache were won by some excited Girl Scouts, and a US Fish and Wildlife Service-provided Chico shopping bag also went to a Girl Scout.

Not all was lost for the geocachers in the audience, however. Akgh519 and coloReido made a trip down from Anchorage to attend both events. Ray even came in as the winner of the accuracy contest! With a 3-foot off mark of his flag, he narrowly beat the Refuge's manager, Steve Delehanty for the win. With many new caches in the Homer area to be found, the ET duo took some time out to find and even place caches around Homer.

The Firefly was on hand to help with the Geocache Passport activity, and with her expert stamp assistant on hand, helped many future geocachers cut their teeth on the game. There was another semi-retired geocacher in the audience, but she had been away from the game long enough to forget her username. Hopefully, soon enough, we start to see her participating in the geocaching scene!

With these events rekindling interest in the game down in Homer, cache listings are already pouring into the reviewer queue. Joel continues to work with Homer Girl Scout Troop 1935 on their Geocaching badge, and is excited to see what is to come for geocaching at the end of the Kenai Peninsula.   So come on down! Make the drive! Homer has more events in the works, and lots of new (and unfound!) caches to be found at the End of the Road.

Volunteer Daniel Perry introduces some Girl Scouts to the history of Geocaching

See you next time at the End of the Road!

Tips for Article Submission by The Editor/Scobey

Most of the time spent in preparing the newsletter each month is reformatting articles. You can help be following these tips:
- Please Use Times New Roman
- Use 10 pt.
- Don't use bold or italics
- Paragraph should be 1.0 spacing
- Left justify text

Please continue to submit not later than 5 days prior to the end of the month.

Thank you to this month's contributors who included freezwees, polgera, NorthWes, Ladybug Kids, blazingpathways, SSO JOAT, MamaNanook, and NeverSummer.

International Polar Bear Day Flash Mob by Laura McDonald/MamaNanook

On February 27, the second of twelve little known holiday flash mobs was held in honor of International Polar Bear Day. The idea of the flash mob was to come dressed in your best polar bear plunge outfit prepared to "bear" it all for a picture in a very public place. MamaNanook specifically asked Mother Nature for extremely cold weather in anticipation of getting into the -40 club, but she had other plans. Not only did we not make it into the -40 club, we didn't even make it to the below zero club. We did get a few honks from passing motorists and our photography crew had just as much fun as we did
In attendance were pathfinder01, SpidaFly, MamaNanook, and firemanak. While not there in person, PilsburyDoughBoy, was there in picture form with an awesome polar bear plunge outfit! Pathfinder01 won the contest for best outfit. SpidaFly won the furthest traveled, he came from Arizona. PilsburyDoughBoy received an honorable mention for his outfit.

The next flash mob will be held in honor of US Snowshoe Day, March 16. Come join us for some fun and races.

Chugach Permit by Wes Skinner/NorthWes

The Chugach State Park geocaching permit has been issued. It is posted on our Land Manager page here:

http://www.geocachealaska.org/documents/2013ASP-Permit-CSP-KRSMA-KBSP-PWS.pdf

Some stipulations in the permit have changed so read the entire permit carefully before planning your new cache placement. Existing geocaches placed under prior permits are subject to the general stipulations contained in the 2013 permit, and will be listed in the 'annual report' to the State Parks permit office. Chugach State Parks has been consolidated into one permit covering Chugach State Park, Kenai River Special Management Area (which includes Kenai peninsula parklands), Kachemak Bay State Park, and Prince William Sound parklands. This consolidation of multiple regions into a single State Park permit is a step forward towards having a permit for geocaching placements on State Park lands which covers all of Alaska with the same stipulations.

The cache container and logbook are to be marked as follows:

ALASKA STATE PARKS #13-KA-1289 GEOCACHE AK.

Alaska State Parks requires our caches to be marked in a simple manner to immediately identify the special permit holder (here,

GeocacheAlaska! Inc), as well as have the permit number for reference. They've shortened our name to GEOCACHE AK. What they're calling "simple" actually requires more copy on the container than just a permit number. The GeocacheAlaska! Inc. Store has ordered all-weather vinyl decals in two sizes which will have the correct permit language printed on them in 'permanent ink', as the permit requires. Those decals will be available at the next Eduvent for purchase.

There's lively discussion already underway in two locations on our Forum (Chugach State Park and Kenai State Park threads) regarding the permit's new more comprehensive set of stipulations. Please be sure your new cache placements are in compliance – we don't want one new non-conforming cache to create problems which could lead to the end of geocaching in Alaska State Parks! The stipulations closely correlate with what's asked of geocachers by Groundspeak as part of the Cache Placement Guidelines. Take time to visit our Land Manager page on our website (see link above) and read the permit in detail. Join the conversations on our forums. Most of all – let's go geocaching in the Parks!

Event Support by Roberta Bromlow/Polgera

Greetings event coordinators!

I was talking to some of our board members and it seems that we need a little follow-up for event support from GeocacheAlaska!

This organization belongs to all of you whether you are a Sourdough member or a Cheechako member. The board is here to support your efforts in supporting the game and the awareness of geocaching.
That said, how can we help?

There is little criterion for getting support. A couple of simple steps and we are more than happy to support your efforts. The board is working on Event Bling budgets, but until those are complete we are still trying to help.

One of the more important areas that we need to cover is that the event must support the geocaching community and the reported mission of GeocacheAlaska! of educating and encouraging geocaching as a healthy, fun, family activity. The GeocacheAlaska! purposes may be found in Article II of the By-Laws at http://www.geocachealaska.org/documents/geocachealaskabylaws.pdf

The other is that the event page needs to support GeocacheAlaska! by placing the organization's logo on the event page, this can be done by snagging a logo from our web site, at http://geocachealaska.org/gakartwork.htm and placing it on your event page. To insert the artwork, edit your cache page, scroll down to the "Details" section, check the box next to "The descriptions below are in HTML," copy the html code from under the logo you wish to use, and then paste the html into the "Long Description" box on your cache page. Scroll to the bottom of the edit page, check the two boxes acknowledging reading and understanding the guidelines and terms of use, and click "Submit Changes."

Need help with this? Many of you know Ladybug Kids and SSO JOAT as avid cachers but they are also html wizards and Board members that can help.

It is best if Event Forms are submitted at least 30 days prior to your planned event. This gives the board time make sure you have the proper support.

The link to the Event Form that needs to be submitted can be found at http://geocachealaska.org/documents/EventForm.pdf.

If you have any questions please feel free to correspond with any board member. Board member contact information can be found in the forums http://www.geocachealaska.org/contacts.htm

Happy Caching!

Ein Geocacher in Deutschland by Michael Malvick/Ladybug Kids

The day after **Aeon** and I drove up to Denmark, we headed to Hamburg, Germany, to meet up with cachers **Sanne&Kiki** for a day of caching around that historic port city. On the way there, Aeon took me to travel bug schloss (castle) **Schlosshotel Rasthof Stillhorn Ost** placed by local caching legend **Mystphi**. It was a must stop cache because I had a gallon-size ziplock of trackables to start distributing and the cache had 1300 favorite points (now 1654 and counting). I wasn't disappointed by the large-size cache inserted inside a bullard at an autobahn rest stop, secured by combination lock. The combination for the lock is obtained by manipulating the cache coordinates using information posted on the outside of the camo. The cache itself was about a meter long and contained several different rooms for TBs, geocoins, and other trackables further arranged by whether the trackables' goals were near or far away. While I achieved my initial goal of unloading a bunch of travelers from North America, I also collected quite a few to bring back across to the pond upon my return trip. With this find, I also earned a new souvenir for the German state of Hamburg.
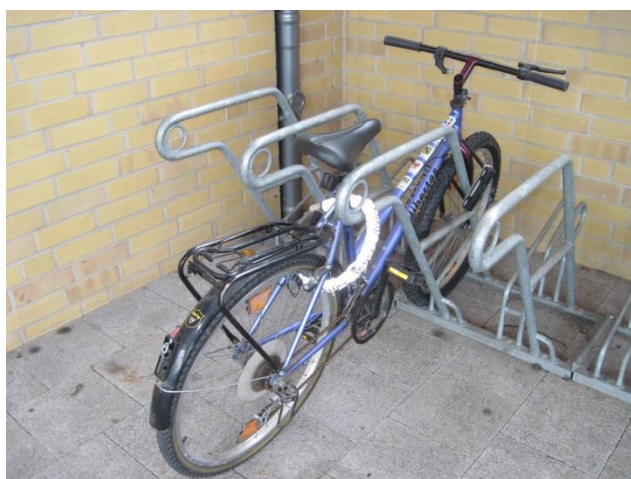
Our next stop was **Zielinskissimus Agetatio,** another cache by Mystphi. Aeon and I had just completed the first stage when Sanne&Kiki caught up with us and good naturedly heckled us as we worked the cache to completion. After reading from the cache page all the locations where the cache wasn't, Aeon finally found the information we needed associated with a bike parked at a commuter train station. That information led us to a tool kit that contained a couple of bike tools and a pair of keys required to unlock the bike and perform some maintenance to access the nearly muggle-proof cache. This cleverly done urban cache definitely deserves everyone one of the 800+ favorite points it's received to date.

Just when I'd thought I'd seen the best urban hide of my eight-plus years of geocaching, we moved on to the **Voss-Margarine**, currently sporting 1711 favorite points and nearly 3000 finds. We started in front of the salvaged façade of a now defunct margarine factory (a new insurance building now looms behind it) and had to count certain features of the old building to get the coordinates for the next stage of this three-stage multi-cache. Those coordinates led us to a large billboard along a busy thoroughfare, behind which was a locked tube that at first glance appeared to be part of the structure. Deciphering the combination from information gleaned at Stage 1 allows access to the tube from which a ten-foot long piece of copper or brass tubing with some threaded and keyed fittings may be extracted. Also inside are coordinates to the final stage. So now, a cacher has to walk down a busy street carrying this oversized tool of the trade to the final location, which upon inspection,

yields the cache about twelve feet overhead behind a large directional sign. I was amazed that I was able to go through the steps

required to retrieve the container (marked as an air quality monitoring device with the geocaching logo on it), sign the log and return the container while no one on the motorway nor the sidewalk even slowed down to take a closer look at what we were doing. Once the cache was returned, we had to return the tool to its spot and then we moved on to a more historic part of Hamburg.

All over Hamburg there were signs of how geo-friendly the city is, with most intersections sporting illuminated "Signal comes" signs.

It was also amusing to run into other familiar pop-culture figures such as James Bond. Once we reached the Speicherstadt (warehouse district), the largest timber-pile foundation warehouse district in the world and dating back to 1883, we stopped for a late lunch in a local cafe. I was pretty hungry, so I went for a traditional sausage and potato salad combination plate with a rhubarb pastry for dessert and orange Fanta to wash it down.

Feeling energized and warm, we headed back into the sub-freezing air to find some caches and tour the waterfront. Each brick warehouse (built of brick so a fire won't destroy the entire district) sits on wooden piles pounded into the harbor floor and features a crane to lift goods to and from boats below through large doors in the walls at several different levels. The harbor is tidal, so the waterways had to be designed and dredged to accommodate heavily laden ships during tidal cycles. The caches in this area were a lot of fun to find, being either small or regular magnetic containers with only one micro found in the bunch we visited. Some of the caches included **Traditionsschiffhafen,** placed where several historic ships are moored with interpretive signs providing fun facts about their history and **Lückenfüller I: Schiffschraube- und MiWuLa Blick,** placed near a large ship propeller and across a canal from a dungeon and museum of miniature scenes complete with operating model railroads.

Next, we visited **Der alte Elbtunnel**, a pair of tunnels passing eighty feet under the Elbe River that opened to car traffic in 1911 after four years of construction. The tunnels are still open to bicycles and pedestrians most of the time and open to cars on the weekends. A unique feature of the tunnel is that the cars enter via one of four elevators which lower the cars from street to tunnel level. The cars then drive under the river and enter an elevator on the other end of the tunnel for the trip back to the surface. The inside of the tunnels are lined with tiles and ceramic artwork periodically decorates the walls. After our our trip through the tunnel and back, Sanna and Kiki wished Aeon and me "good night" and Aeon and I spend some more time in the older part of Hamburg before driving back to Bremen.

The next day was a work day for Aeon, so I mapped out a walking tour of Bremen that covered about twelve miles and took me past the large Bremen soccer stadium, through pleasant residential areas, and into the heart of the historic city. Along the way, I found

several caches, including **Das Kind in Dir**, which required some tool of the trade fabrication on the spot since I was traveling along without much of a caching kit. Fortunately, the time of day and the falling snow kept the muggles at bay while I fooled around in the playground. I then came to the street (strasse) indicated on the sign below which sparked my appetite, so I searched for and found some currywurst for a snack.


Currywurst is steamed, then fried sausage seasoned with curry ketchup and is one of the favorite fast foods in Germany. It's even on the McDonald's menu!

I finally turned toward

the Bremen city center and the buildings got progressively older as I neared the old city (altstadt) within the original city walls. Along the way I took a small detour to **Mütterchens Bierhalle und Schankwirtschaft** (beerhall and tavern). I went there to find a cache, not get a beer and got an extra treat when the cache owner poked her head out the window, greeted me, and introduced me to her young son. Then her mother and husband joined us and we spent at least twenty minutes talking about the history of the Bierhall (brothel, tobacco drying facility, and now, private dwelling with extensive extreme makeover work to make the building inhabitable. The cache is in the left side of the photo in a small beer keg suspended above street level. Nearby was an interesting street mural portraying some street musicians which added a touch of whimsy to the neighborhood.

Finally, I passed within the old city walls and entered the main square which is dominated by St. Peter's Cathedral (St. Petri Dom zu Bremen) and the Parliament Building (known in German as the Rathaus, which seems seems appropriate if only Rathaus translated to Rat House). The original church was built in 789 and underwent several modifications over the next century only to suffer extensive damage in World War II. The church was restored between 1972 and 1981 to its Gothic form. I always make it a point to visit churches in Europe because there is nothing like them in North America. I especially enjoy looking at the stained glass and monstrous pipe organs. I check the schedule in the front of these old churches for an organ concert because the experience of hearing a big organ in a big space cannot be replicated anywhere else.
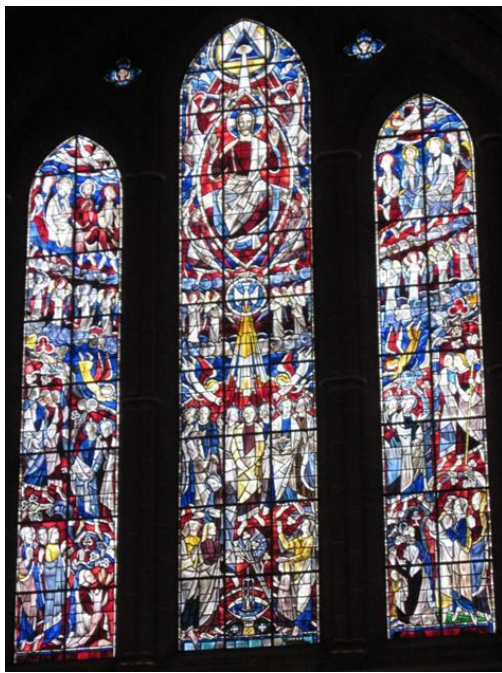
Juxtaposed with this old cathedral in the city center is a Starbucks with a cache just outside the entrance (**Die Mitte Bremens**), which also brought me face to face with the Musicians of Bremen, a troupe of farm animals that pooled their talents and thwarted a band of thieves in an old Brother Grimm fairy tail. These wily animals are prominently featured all over town in many artistic and fun ways.

I concluded my walking tour of Bremen with a journey through the walking district (no cars allowed during business hours). The entrances to the area were decorated with overhead lights the turned on as evening fell.

Soon, Aeon wrapped up work for the day and met me for a quick trolley ride back to his home. Once there, we hopped into his car and drove to an **event** at the   Outback Family Restaurant (das Familienrestaurant) complete with an Australian shepherd mascot. The event was a lot of fun, the food was traditional German and very good, and it was the perfect way to top off my much too short visit to Germany. Many thanks to my German hosts and tour guides Aeon, Kiki and

![Facebook icon] **FOLLOW 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 GeocacheAlaska! events and speak to any Board Member.

Find us online at:
1. GeocacheAlaska! Website: http://www.geocachealaska.org
2. GeocacheAlaska! Forums: http://geocachealaska.proboards.com/index.cgi
3. GeocacheAlaska! on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/pages/GeocacheAlaska-Inc/180089884756
   E-mail to contact@geocachealaska.org

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 2013 permit number for the Chugach State Park and State Parklands on the Kenai Peninsula is **13-KA-1289** and it must be on the cache container and the cache page. The 2013 permit number for the Mat-Su State Parks is **S12-061** 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" would like to hear from you. Submit articles or suggestions to scobey@geocachealaska.org
Subject: Around the State.