Around The State

GEOCACHE ALASKA! Inc.
Exploring the Last Frontier • www.geocachealaska.org

May 2015

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Stammtisch - Kick Off To 15 Years Of Geocaching, May 2, 6am, Anchorage

Celebrating 15 Years of Geocaching!, May 3, 4pm, Anchorage

May the Fourth Be With You! Monday 5/4/15, May 4, 6pm, Anchorage

Biking for Star Power area 51, May 17, 10:30am, Girdwood
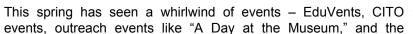
Midnight Sun Meet & Greet, June 23, 11:45pm, Barrow

NY to AK - Flash Mob Photo Event, June 29, 6pm, Fairbanks

Photo credit: Mike Malvick / Ladybug Kids
Spring beauty (claytonia sarmentosa), edible with flavor similar to
beet greens. Photo taken in Arctic Valley in June 2014,
near "Dancing with the Clouds"

GeocacheAlaska! Updates

President's Corner

By Wes Skinner / NorthWes

This spring has seen a whirlwind of events – EduVents, CITO events, outreach events like "A Day at the Museum," and the upcoming celebrations for 'May the Fourth,' Geocaching's 15th Birthday and GeocacheAlaska! Inc's 6th Birthday. Recent research indicates the best way to keep new geocachers involved in the game for the long run is to get them to attend events. After attending three events over the course of this past week, I understand completely why folks who attend events are enthusiasts for the long run with geocaching. Each of the events recently attended stirred me up to learn more, go afield to apply my learning, and to get together with geocaching friends to find more smileys.

GeocacheAlaska! Inc. has a three-fold mission – to advocate for the game, to educate about the game, and to provide social interaction opportunities related to the game. Help your organization be successful across those missions by inviting fellow geocachers to attend local events, and by stepping up to host events of your own. Limited event support is available by request to any of your board members, and we're looking for opportunities to say 'YES!' to event hosts. Help build up geocaching by hosting an event under your account – and get support from experienced geocachers to make it happen well!

Editor's Notes

By Cathy Wilmeth / The_Firefly

Thank you to everyone who submits articles and ideas for this newsletter. You are what makes this publication fantastic! I realized that for the last couple months I haven't been responding in a timely manner to each newsletter submission...my apologies! I am going to work toward getting back to doing that as a matter of course.

The submission deadline for the June issue of *Around The State* is **May 25, 2015**. I'm happy to help with any questions or concerns you may have about submitting! Send to editor@geocachealaska.org

Top Tens: Caching Achievements of Alaskan Cachers

By Scott Aleckson / SSO JOAT

This month's Top Ten list of Caching Achievements of Alaskan Cachers is another revisit of those who have found the Most Caches in Alaska... in One Day! Of course, we're not counting any caches that they found Outside of the Great Land. Surprisingly, the top two positions have not changed in the last year! We also see three new names on the list this year, with no change in the total find counts of the seven who remained from last year. And you can see there are ties at a couple positions on the list.

#1 mtndeal = 101
#2 li1gray = 100
#3 Akjo19 = 73
#4 glenn.fish = 71
#5 Karma! = 69
#6 getatm = 67
#7 Tundra Tim = 67
#8 firemanak = 64
#9 lunchlady495 = 64
#10 skifast = 63

Do you have what it takes to make the list? From midnight to midnight, how many caches do you think you can log in a single day in Alaska? The lack of Alaskan "Power Trails" makes this a true challenge; however, the number of smaller Power Trails available out there has been steadily increasing over the last year. So, who can plan out a caching day in Alaska that is good for 102 cache finds?

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GeocacheAlaska! Updates

Have You Lost Your Sourdough Nametag?

By Scott Aleckson / SSO JOAT

We are about to place an order for another batch of Sourdough nametags from our supplier. We have to order these in minimum batches, so we restock as our inventory gets low. We've been asked by several folks what they can do about buying a replacement for a lost nametag. When we place an order for new nametags, we can add in the tracking numbers of any existing nametags that we want. So, here is your once a year (roughly) chance to buy a replacement tag. It will cost $10 to get a new nametag to cover the actual costs (nametag + label + shipping), which will be payable before your replacement is sent out. We will put your GC nickname on the replacement tag and mail it out to you.

If you need a replacement nametag, please send an email to coinsales@geocachealaska.org with "Replacement Nametag" as the subject line. Put in a quick note explaining the demise of your original nametag along with your GC nickname. You must be a current Sourdough member in good standing to qualify and we will only replace the nametag with the original tracking number of the tag that you were issued.

Have you changed your name? There are a few folks who have changed their GC nickname since they joined up with GeocacheAlaska! If you have changed your name or the name label on the front of your tag is damaged in any way, just drop us a note at the same email as above and we will get you a new name label for the front of your tag. There is no charge for this service, but please do not ask for name labels to use on items other than your original nametag.

Phone Apps & GPS FUNdamentals

By Wes Skinner / NorthWes

GeocacheAlaska! Inc's April EduVent focused on how to use your 'smart phone' (and that GPS too) to better effect in seeking geocaches. Apparently it was a popular topic, drawing our usual long-distance membership from around the state, as well as overfilling our normal facility at the BP Energy Center. We twice had to raid nearby rooms for chairs to make sure attendees had somewhere to sit.

SSO JOAT developed an excellent presentation (and added 11 more slides to answer questions which arose during the initial portion of the evening). North-Wes provided voice, and had to admit that nearly every slide raised points which were new to him as well. Our purpose was to highlight how to get maximum accuracy from the smart phones in field use hunting geocaches, and that was well-received by the crowd. It's obvious the GPS is still the only effective tool to use right now during cache placement activities, but the apps found on the smart phones have become so good that there's no excuse not to be spontaneous when opportunities arise to look for a cache.

May's EduVent will return to the Geocaching Swiss Army Knife (GSAK) software 'tool', so watch for the EduVent to be published for details on what to bring along. This software tool is easy to learn (in the classroom!) and will make your time afield very profitable. It's highly recommended for everyone who caches, and is the most effective way to manage your geocaching while traveling (either around your neighborhood, or on that bucket list world journey).

GeocacheAlaska! 2015 Adopt-A-Highway Spring CITO

By Wes Skinner / NorthWes

NorthWes sets up for the CITO

April 25, 2015 marked the kick-off of the World-Wide CITO weekend, and twenty-five cachers arrived to scour the first three miles northwest out of Girdwood along the Seward Highway. GeocacheAlaska! Inc. sponsors three cleanups a year along this section of the highway in partnership with the Alaska Department of Transportation. AK DOT provides safety gear and trash bags, the Municipality of Anchorage provides free trash drop-off at the Girdwood Waste Transfer facility, and cachers provide the people-power to help keep this incredibly beautiful part of the Scenic Byway sparkling clean.

As cachers collected 28 full bags and various oversized pieces of debris, they were kept company by an occurrence of the famed Turnagain Arm Tidal Bore, a trio of beluga whales, and overwatch by the bald eagles who nest along this stretch of the highway. Temperatures rose above fifty degrees by mid-day and the sun was a constant companion. By the time the CITO effort was completed, plans had been made to hike several nearby trails to take advantage of dry ground and no mosquitoes to pick off strings of caches hidden in the northernmost section of rainforest found in Girdwood Valley. Cachers also uncovered one of the 1964 series of benchmarks during the cleanup – a mark which hadn't had any recorded recoveries in more than fifty years.

It's obvious the combined efforts of prior years of intensive trash pickup coupled with stepped-up trooper enforcement along this particular stretch the highway has paid off in reduced debris. One particular item we noticed had been greatly reduced in volume was discarded alcohol containers. Perhaps the low piece count was connected to the reduced winter recreational activity in the area due to the very mild winter – but it is nice to see our efforts making a difference in keeping this beautiful area kept relatively free of trash. Our first effort here several years ago completely filled three pickup trucks with trash bags, so we know geocachers are making a positive impact along the highway!

Attendees at one of the most beautiful CITO locations anywhere worldwide!

Recent Events

Recommended Caches

GeocacheAlaska! Inc. Spends a Day at the Musuem…

By Wes Skinner / NorthWes

The Anchorage Museum hosted GeocacheAlaska! Inc. during one of the museum's free admission days on Saturday April 18th. Geocacher-attendees were given the assignment to stroll about the museum galleries and make suggestions about how the Museum could design a cache placement which would help present the Museum's mission of educating visitors about life in the North. We were thrilled to be asked to become a partner in the Museum's mission, and set up an event (GC5QQAE) where a public information table was on-site within the Atrium during the middle four hours of Saturday. This turned out to be one of the most well-attended events of the past year, with more than 20 cacher accounts posting 'attended' logs. Many cachers signed up or renewed their memberships with GeocacheAlaska! Inc, and we presented the Geocaching game to many family groups who attended.

The Museum wants a cache placement which educates during the 'journey' through the galleries in the hunt for the final, and they intend to 'change up' the cache several times during the year. This means cachers will get to keep coming back to find new hides inside the museum itself. As well, there's talk of a partnership with the US Forest Service to help take this mission outside museum walls 'into the North.' Stay tuned for what comes next!

Kincaid Park CITO

CITO at Kincaid Park on Sunday, April 26th.   Many thanks to host DR-AK.

Ode to the Beaver Trail

By Louise Kempler / freeweez

upon the beaver trail we did embark

drove into girdwood at the east end did park and set out on foot upon the trail over hills and valleys and thru the dale as we wandered we wondered where?

oh where are all these caches here?

Fifteen were showing on our screen

we were going for 100%- nothing in between The day was clear and warm and dry weather was not to impede our try we began excited, pumped and ready to dash one was found, then another, freeweez logged her 500th Cache!

we forged ahead- heading west

the Hockeychicks half did her best

at climbing to those of terrain #four

There were only just a few more

And then it happened- one was elusive
we tried not to cry- or be too discouraged.
we checked the time - four hours flew by were we close to the end? how many more to try?

cache on my friend! continue to walk

the limbs were tired- there was less talk - the end was near - only one more down the paved trail to find and score- The beaver trail we did complete we finished the trek and stayed on our feet we laughed and said, "is there any remorse?"

NO--not a bit---we're cachers of course!!!

And--- NO—there were no beavers of course!

(The Beaver Trail is near Girdwood, running east/west and was tackled by ½ Hockeychicks and Freeweez on Saturday, April 25th.)

Reviewer's Corner

By Michael Malvick / Greatland Reviewer

This month's Reviewer's Corner covers a hodgepodge of topics that have come up over the past few weeks.

The Alaska State Park permit covers lands that fall under the jurisdiction of the Alaska State Parks. The permit number is not valid for National Forest, National Parks, or other public lands. You may download files to your GPS for the applicable land parcels from the GeocacheAlaska! Land Manager webpage.

A one-year Challenge Cache Moratorium went into effect on April 21, while Groundspeak evaluates how to manage Challenges. Groundspeak's announcement may be found here in the geocaching.com forums and you may provide ideas in this thread.

Some geocachers have placed caches on their private property. Sometimes those caches work out, but most of the time, they do not. During the past few months within the Anchorage area, cachers have been confronted by neighbors, interrogated by police, and stirred up many dogs. This happens because good neighbors are looking out for each other and when strangers show up at all hours of the day it can be cause for concern. When considering a cache on your property in an urban environment, please consider the effects of people going bump in the middle of the night with flashlights, even if you have had informational conversations with your neighbors. Requesting cachers to limit their visit to certain hours of the day is ineffective because the most cachers load and go with their GPS or select "next closest" on their phone app without ever reading the cache page. If you feel compelled to place a cache in your yard, please add the "Front Yard (Private Residence)" attribute, state explicitly on the cache page that cache is placed on your property, and place the cache with a bomb-proof hint so cachers can come and go with a minimum of fuss and triple-verify your coordinates are correct with your GPS, smart phone, and online satellite imagery. Taking these steps won't necessarily eliminate all the potential problems, BUT doing so reduces the likelihood of someone's cache hunt going badly and lets those cachers who absolutely don't like hunting yard caches filter them out.

During the past few months, a few Event Caches have been cancelled/archived after they were published. It is bad form to cancel an event at the relatively last minute, because not all cachers receive instant notifications. In many cases, another cacher would be happy to co-host if the host cannot attend. If you absolutely must cancel an event, give as much notice as possible, use the "Announcement" log which will go to all cachers who logged a "Will Attend," and then archive the cache. Conversely, cachers planning to attend an event should log a "Will Attend" so they will receive Announcements from the Event Host and the expectant host knows how many people will show up. It's simply good manners to let an Event Host know you are coming!

Many cachers struggle with what to put in the Reviewer Note box that appears during the last step of submitting a cache for review. The language on the cache submission page is, "Use this space to give your reviewer helpful details about your geocache. The more they know, the easier it is for them to publish your geocache." It is not helpful or informative for me to receive Reviewer Notes that contain simply "." or "?" or "I don't know what to put here." I see a lot of those kinds of notes.

The most helpful bit of information to provide in the box is information about the land owner and who provided the permission to place the cache. Otherwise, I'm acting on blind faith that the Cache Owner has received adequate permission as required by the guidelines. The information also makes it easy for me to knowledgeably reply to a land owner/manager/school administrator/neighbor or Groundspeak when a concern is raised.

Cache placement details are also helpful. If on an electrical box or power pole, the contact information of the power company representative who granted permission is useful. If buried/stuck in the ground, the guideline violation can be headed off at the pass before publishing. If inside a building, hours of operation and expectations for interacting with staff can be described. In most cases, a single sentence such as "this hide is an ammo can in a tree in the BLM area of the Campbell Creek tract outside the specified 150' waterway exclusion zone," or "this bison container is hidden with permission granted by the owner (name, e-mail or phone number) in a spruce tree in front of "Best Widgets," is sufficient.

Cachers can also provide the coordinates of where the dark chocolate homage placed in an animal proof container was placed.

Sourdough nametag statistics - ANSWERS!

By Victoria Noble / Blazingpathways

If you look up GeocacheAlaska! as a user on the geocaching.com website, you will find that GeocacheAlaska! currently has 270 Sourdough Nametags visible in the trackables area. While many of us have worn or seen those nametags at events, some of us may not know that 150 of those Sourdough nametags have also been logged as trackables into caches across the world. This crossword shines a light on the nametags that have traveled 50,000 miles or more. All correct entries were entered into a drawing for a GeocacheAlaska! prize. This contest was open to all GeocacheAlaska! Cheechako and Sourdough members.

Across

4	coloReido
6	Karma!
12	blazingpathways
13	NorthWes
15	gummybayer
17	glenn.fish
18	davidaknz
19	RCWard
20	akgh519

Down

1	Ester13
2	cavyguy
3	da HillBillies
5	ONESPIRIT555
7	skifast
8	AvnxScout
9	tomanoble
10	li1gray
11	burtonsinak
14	HawkeDoc
16	1hugh
18	DR-AK

Thank you to all those who participated in the nametag crossword puzzle contest!

Skadi
gummybayer
GATOULIS
tomnoble
team-sussifar.dk
Student Camper
Li1gray
Twinkywalks
Questing
KetchGirl
Hockeychicks
Valerieseaker

Congratulations to the winner:

team-sussifar.dk

An Alaska license plate trackable is on its way to you very soon!

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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.
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. Facebook Group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/geocachealaska/
4. GeocacheAlaska! Facebook Page: GeocacheAlaska! Page
5. E-mail to contact@geocachealaska.org

JOIN US ON FACEBOOK & Twitter!

Like our official GeocacheAlaska! Page on Facebook to keep up to date on things happening with GeocacheAlaska!

Also, join the official GeocacheAlaska! Group on Facebook to stay in touch and share your activities with fellow members of the geocaching community. This is 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. Visit our Group and request to Join so you can start viewing and participating with GeocacheAlaska! and your fellow geocachers.

@GeocacheAlaska Follow GeocacheAlaska! Inc. on Twitter!

STATE PARKS PERMITS

Caches may be published within Alaska State Parks! All caches must have the permit number on the inside of the cache along with the cache owner's contact information. On the outside of the cache, you must write "Alaska State Parks Permit #15-KA-1994 Geocache AK" in permanent marking. The cache listing must state "Cache placed under GeocacheAlaska! Park Use Permit #15-KA-1994" within the description section. Before submitting a cache listing within one of the parks, please thoroughly read the complete list of stipulations in the permit, which may be downloaded from the GeoacheAlaska! website.

NEWSLETTER INFORMATION

The editors of *Around the State* would like to hear from you. Submit articles or suggestions to editor@geocachealaska.org Previous editions of *Around the State* are now on our website. If you have missed previous newsletters, check out the series here.

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